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WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY IN ST. LOUIS

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From Tibetan Refugees to Transmigrants: Negotiating Cultural Continuity and Economic
Mobility through Migration

by

Namgyal Choedup

A dissertation presented to the
Graduate School of Arts & Sciences
of Washington University in
partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy

August 2015
St. Louis, Missouri

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Mobility Through Migration

by

Namgyal Choedup

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Professor Geoff Childs, Chair

This dissertation research, funded by International Dissertation Research Fellowship from Social Science Research Council, investigates how a group of people, who continues to valorize their “statelessness”, critically and actively engages with the powers and policies of host nation-states and international geopolitics to negotiate their individual and collective goals of socio-economic mobility and cultural continuity. Through the study of lived experiences of three generations of Tibetan exiles living as “stateless” people in India, the study investigates historical and contemporary expressions of nation-state, homeland, cultural and ethnic identity within the Tibetan exile communities in India with reference to two distinct phases of migration: the first being forced and historical displacement of 1959 which occurred in the aftermath of China’s assertion of control over Tibet and the consequent social and political upheavals that led to settling of Tibetan refugees in India, and the second displacement, more recent (starting in the 1990s) and voluntary, in the form of transnational migration from the Tibetan settlements in India to North America and Europe.

Much in the recent academics studies on Tibet has focused on the deconstruction of the largely Western manufactured and romanticized image of Tibet and Tibetans. There is a large gap in the literature on how ordinary Tibetan themselves are experiencing and negotiating their individual and collective identities vis-à-vis the Western representations of Tibet and Tibetans. This research study aims to move beyond the heavily romanticized/essentialized images of Tibet and Tibetans in the popular media as well as the current academic studies that have largely focused on the deconstruction of the above images and representational practices. Thus, the entry point of the research is the intersection of economic mobility, international migration, and ethnic identity that transpires in the context of migration decision-making, both at the individual and collective levels.

Eighteen months of dissertation fieldwork was conducted in India from October 2010 to February 2012. The bulk of this dissertation fieldwork was conducted in one of the largest Tibetan settlements in India, a place where Tibetan exiles have reconstructed a new homeland in exile, thereby complicating the idea of “triangular relationship” formed by the diaspora, the host country and the home country and the centrality of the “place of origin” for social and political imagination in transnational and diasporic studies. Furthermore, the research study investigates how issues of identity and cultural maintenance emerge not just after migrants have moved, but in the migration decision-making process itself by studying: how do Tibetan exiles living in India balance (a) individual and household-level desires to achieve socio-economic upward mobility through migration with (b) the individual and collective desire, reinforced through political rhetoric, to maintain cultural continuity and ethnic identity.

Chapter One: Introduction

In December 2009, I visited Doeguling Tibetan Settlement located near the Indian town of Mundgod in the state of Karnataka of south India to conduct preliminary dissertation fieldwork. I learned that the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) or more popularly referred to as the Tibetan Government in Exile (TGIE), has designated 2009 as “Thank You India Year” to commemorate 50 years in exile, which was marked by a number of festivities to honor the special relationship between India and Tibet. A song titled “Thank You India” was produced by the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts (TIPA), an autonomous institute under the CTA’s Department of Religion and Culture of CTA. The song lyrics echoed the CTA’s official discourse of India as a cherished second homeland and portrayed the relationship between India and Tibet as that of *Guru* (teacher) and *Chela* (disciple). In Doeguling, I saw flyers and banners in the public spaces commemorating Thank You India Year. A 400 page Tibetan language report on the history of Doeguling settlement was published on the occasion, which carried on its front cover the pictures of the Dalai Lama and the former chief minister of Mysore State (later renamed Karnataka) Mr. Ninjalingappa, the first Indian state leader to respond to Prime Minister Nehru’s request in 1959 to provide land for the resettlement of the Tibetan refugees. Today, Karnataka is home to five large Tibetan settlements in India and constitutes the largest

concentration of Tibetan population in the Tibetan diaspora. As a part of Thank You India Year celebration, a cultural event was organized in April 2009 at the town hall of nearby Indian city of Hubli by the Tibetans from Doeguling, where local Indian officials, leaders, and guests were invited and presented with Tibetan cultural performances including the TIPA's special thank you India song.

Despite the official portrayal of India as a cherished second home, I also discovered that the period between 2008 and 2009 in Doeguling was a tense moment in the local Indo-Tibetan relationship, which culminated in an anti-Tibetan protest march by a local Indian group calling itself Nagarika Hritheyrakshana Vedike Mundgod Taluk (translate as Citizen Interest Protection Group of Mundgod) in December of 2008. The group submitted a seven-page memorandum to the local Indian authorities and media, in which the group accused the Tibetans of mistreating the local Indian population and abusing the kindness of the Indian government and its people. The memorandum listed a long list of grievances against the alleged highhanded and arrogant behaviors of Tibetans, particularly the younger generations and the monks. It further portrayed Tibetans who arrived as refugees and their stay was meant to be temporary, as now being spoiled by foreign aid and indulging in illegal activities. The local news media and cable TV channels gave wide coverage to this event, creating a period of communal tension.

On the one hand, the majority of Tibetan exiles express deep appreciation to India and its people for the tremendous humanitarian support such as giving Tibetans land for resettlement, providing support for their economic well-being, and financing education. On the other hand, many individual Tibetans express feelings of insecurity and vulnerability when discussing their ambiguous legal status in India and their place in the Indian society. The local Indian community popularly call Doeguling as “mini-Tibet” and view Tibetans as refugees. In general, Tibetans are

regarded as temporary guests, both in the eyes of local Indians as well as the Indian state. The idea that the Tibetans will eventually return is articulated by the Tibetan exiles themselves by maintaining that India is just a temporary abode (*gnas tshang*) and Tibetans have no reasons to stay in India once freedom is restored in Tibet.

However, living for more than five decades as stateless people in India have brought about a more realistic understanding of India as a Tibetan place, particularly for the younger generations born in India, who have never seen or experienced life in Tibet but are strongly enculturated with a sense of Tibetan identity in the Tibetan settlements, schools and home settings. There is a widespread notion in the exile society that the vast majority of the younger generation of Tibetan exiles are afflicted with the desire to go abroad and that only the elderly and young children live year round in the settlements. Although high population mobility in the form of seasonal migration within India has long been a feature of the Tibetan settlements, the increasing desire among the younger Tibetans to go abroad is viewed as a threat to the viability of the Tibetan settlements in India, originally established as the sites of Tibetan identity maintenance and cultural preservation.

My dissertation research on Doeguling Tibetan settlement is situated in the context of two distinct phases of migration: the first being forced and historical displacement of 1959 in the aftermath of China's assertion of control over Tibet and the consequent social and political upheavals that led to Tibetans seeking refuge in India, and the second displacement, more recent and voluntary in the form of transnational migration from Tibetan settlements particularly to the West that began after the 1990 US Immigration Act granted 1,000 special immigrant visas to Tibetans living in India and Nepal. The entry point of this research is the intersection of economic mobility, international migration, and ethnic identity that transpires in the context of

migration decision-making, both at the individual and collective levels in the Tibetan settlements in South India. Specifically, I investigate how issues of identity and cultural maintenance emerge not just after migrants have moved, but in the migration decision-making process itself by studying how Tibetan exiles living in India balance (a) individual and household-level desires to achieve socio-economic upward mobility through migration with (b) the individual and collective desire, reinforced through political rhetoric, to maintain cultural continuity and ethnic identity.

Before I discuss further my main research questions, methodology, and organization of this dissertation research, I will turn to the theoretical and methodological framework which is situated broadly in the interrelated sub-disciplines of diaspora, migration, and transnational studies.

1.1 Connecting diasporic imaginary to transnational and migration studies.

In an era of global transformations characterized by large scale dispersal of people from their original homelands, the re-configurations of ethnic and race boundaries across national borders have led to renewed interest in the concept of “diaspora.” Until the 1960s, the term diaspora was associated with the historical exodus of Jewish people from the holy land and therefore confined to the histories of Jewish and Christian religions (Baumann 1997:385). The appropriation of the term “diaspora” in the social sciences has shorn away the “Jewish-centered definition” (Tölölyan 1996:15) and the associated soteriological concepts of “redemption” and “return” (Baumann 1997: 389) of the term. As the then editor of *Diaspora* Khachig Tölölyan notes, “the scholarly discourse of dispersion has shifted, and within humanities has shifted decisively to diaspora” and

that there has been a “move towards re-naming as diasporas the more recent communities of dispersion...which are known by other names until the late 1960s: as exile groups, oversea communities, ethnic and racial minorities, and so forth...[This] has increased both the number of global diasporas and the range and diversity of the new semantic domain that the term ‘diaspora’ inhabits” (1996:3-5). Despite the clear calls to move beyond the entanglement of the term diaspora with the Jewish historical experience, it is important to keep the connections in mind as James Clifford argues, “Jewish (and other historical) diasporas may be taken as non-normative starting points for a discourse that is traveling and hybridizing in new global conditions” (1997:249).

Likewise, in *Global Diasporas*, Robin Cohen notes that the term “diaspora” historically was associated with the Jews who are viewed as the prototypical “victim diaspora”—the normative way of thinking and defining diaspora. Cohen traces one historical origin of the term “diaspora” to “the Greek translation of the Bible and its original meaning in the verb “to sow” and the preposition “over” to argue the essentially positive connotation in the historical Greek diaspora of “expansion through plunder, military conquest, colonization, and migration” (1997:2). Noting the complex motivations for dispersal in the contemporary age of globalization, Cohen argues for a more expansive definition of diaspora by introducing the notion of “imperial diasporas,” “trade diasporas,” and “labor diasporas,” and “cultural diasporas.” He further directs attention to two important but not mutually exclusive features of contemporary diasporas: the first is the forced and involuntary dispersal from an original homeland to two or more foreign regions characterized by traumatic experience as a result of cataclysmic events, and the second is more voluntary dispersal in pursuit of work, trade, or colonial expansion (1997:26).

Despite the academic debates on the conceptual and analytical definition of the term diaspora, it is now commonly applied to refer to a variety of groups that ranges from victim, culture, trade, and expatriate diasporas. The underlying premise that grids diasporas involves concepts of dispersal, identity and belonging; and in that sense diasporas have become “exemplary communities of transnational moment” (Tölölyan 1991:5). In regard to the place of Tibetan exiles in diaspora studies, scholars have noted their relative neglect in major theoretical debates of diaspora, exile, and transnationalism (Korom 1997, Baumann 1997). More recent scholars on Tibetan exiles have begun to use the concept of diaspora to study the underlying tension between safeguarding cultural preservation and innovative adaptation in exile. These studies make the broad argument that transnational movements have not led to the demise of the nation-state but the continued pervasiveness of the nation state ideal. For instances, these studies have focused on the diasporic context of exile Tibetan’s mobilization of international supporters in the struggle for a Tibetan homeland (McLagan 1997), environmentalism (Huber 1997), the creation of Tibetan rock and roll music (Diehl 2002), and transnational identity and belonging through international migration (Hess 2009).

Although I situate my own dissertation research within the broad diaspora studies, I wish to add here that the Tibetan exiles form an under-researched and under-theorized category in diaspora, what is referred to as “political exiles” (Shain 1989). In a historical study, *The Frontier of Loyalty: Political Exiles in the Age of the Nation-State*, Yossi Shain notes that for exile groups seeking either “self-determination” or “decolonization”, the two issues of “national loyalty” and “international recognition” as crucial to the legitimacy and existence of a political exile group, which he defines as, “No exiles should be regarded as political unless they participate in exile politics. The reasons for the exile’s status—that is, why they left their country—then become

secondary, or at least they must be held in suspension, while attention shifts to exile activity abroad” (1989:14). During my fieldwork, I am constantly reminded of the highly political and politicized nature of the Tibetan exile situation as well as its transnational politics. For instance, my research informants see me, a native researcher, as an insider and thus expect me to participate actively in the exile politics and contribute to the common Tibetan cause (*spyi don* or *rtsa don* in Tibetan language which translate as “the common cause” or “fundamental cause” respectively).¹

In order to privilege this emic perspective and the defining characteristics of my research communities, I use the term “exile” throughout this dissertation to refer to the Tibetans living as stateless persons in India due to the following compelling reasons. First, the term exile is what the Tibetans refer to themselves because it carries much political significance for those living as stateless people in India. This will become more evident when I discuss in the following chapters how the Tibetan exiles view their presence in India and how the issue of cultural continuity and identity maintenance figure into migration decision making. For instance, they call themselves *btsan byol ba* (literally someone escaping from oppression, meaning China’s occupation of Tibet) and the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) as *bstan byol bod gzhung* or the Tibetan Government in Exile (TGIE). Second, the Tibetan term *skyabs bcol ba* (refugee) is also used interchangeably with the term exile, however, the term *btsan byol* is the predominant usage both in official and everyday contexts. Despite the official name change in Tibetan language from the Tibetan Government in Exile to Central Tibetan Administration, ordinary Tibetans still popularly

¹ Although the term Tibetan cause (*spyi don*) is commonly used by all the Tibetans, what it exactly means and proposes to achieve is not clearly articulated among ordinary people. Most Tibetans, while professing full support and faith in the leadership of the Dalai Lama and the legitimacy of his “middle path” policy in resolving the Tibetan issue through dialogue with China to achieve meaningful or genuine autonomy within the framework of the People’s Republic of China, still wish and believe that total independence or *rangzen* (*rang btsan*), is the basic right and final goal of the Tibetan struggle. This is something I explore in my research to capture the alternative voices and narratives within the exile construction of the imagined Tibetan nationhood.

refer to it as the Tibetan Government in Exile.² The name change in Tibetan language led to vociferous protests from certain sections of the Tibetan exile population who deemed it as an “erasure” of Tibetan history.

Second, the terms “refugee” and “exile” are used interchangeably by many ordinary Tibetans themselves. However, the application of the term “refugee” to the Tibetans living in India, Nepal and Bhutan is problematic due to the fact that all these countries are neither signatories to the international treaty on refugees nor do they officially regard the Tibetan exiles as “refugees” due to both domestic and international political imperatives, not the least being, antagonizing China. Finally, the term “diaspora” although increasingly used by the western academics and some exile Tibetan writers in English to describe the Tibetans living outside Tibet, for the majority of the Tibetan exiles and the exile leadership the term has neither political purchase nor any strong symbolic value since the Tibetan exiles valorize their statelessness and use it as an important resource for the project of an imagined nationhood in exile. Thus, I use the term “exile” specifically to refer to the Tibetans living as stateless people in India and Nepal and “diaspora” broadly to refer to Tibetans who are living outside of India and Nepal in order to consider the emic perspective and the very defining characteristic of the exile society in India as one that has recreated a government in exile and separate autonomous Tibetan spaces in the form of a second homeland.

² A major public debate occurred in the Tibetan exile community when the Tibetan Parliament in Exile in September 2012 made amendments to its Charter and officially change the name in Tibetan language from the Tibetan government in Exile to its English equivalent, the Central Tibetan Administration. Critics, including the Tibet Youth Congress, regarded it as an erasure of Tibetan history, compelling the Dalai Lama to speak emphatically on a few occasions why the name change was necessary to avoid political complications from the usage of the name Tibetan Government in Exile in a future where the current Dalai Lama is no more. This name change is also related to the middle way approach as well as pressure the Chinese government is putting on different countries to ban the Tibetan exile activities, citing them as political acts intended to harm China.

While migration have been a constant part of human history, it is true that contemporary transnational practices is different from the more historical immigration practices in the sense that it is located in time and space that traverses two or more nation-states, situation made possible by conditions of late modernity or time-space compression (Kearney 1995). Anthropological approaches towards globalization and transnational studies have also highlighted the need to move beyond the static understandings of identities, cultures and places bounded by the categories of nations, state societies, and ethnic groups to more fluid and contested understandings that are situated within the context of the new social reality of global or transnational flows that connect peoples, ideas, and commodities. While any refugee or diasporic community exists in a transnational or global society, people do live in very concrete localities with their own social structures and inequalities. Globalization or transnationalism has not led to a situation where localities have disappeared, as Gupta and Ferguson argue that “as actual places and localities become more blurred and indeterminate, *ideas* of culturally and ethnically distinct places become more salient” (1997:39). Their stress on the *ideas* illustrates the role of “imagination as a social practice” (Appadurai 1996:31) or what Axel referred to as “diasporic imaginary” (Axel 2002) to account for means other than “place of origin” to explain features constitutive of diasporic subjects as well as to emphasize the “identification processes generative of diasporic subjects” through the “formations of temporality, affect and corporeality” (Axel 2002: 411-412).

Given these insights, anthropologists have argued that it is important to look at the ‘historical present’ (Fox 1991), the ‘locality’ (Gupta and Ferguson 1997) or ‘global ethnoscapas’ (Appadurai 1991) to investigate how the production of space and identities occurs in a context where both the local and the global exist side by side and in relation to each other. In other

words, the new transnational realities and networks are also connected and firmly rooted in specific localities and nations, although not always bounded by them. In *Anthropology and Migration: Essays on Transnationalism, Ethnicity, and Identity*, Caroline Brettell advocates combining micro-level ethnographic observations with an appreciation of macro-level processes including political economic conditions:

An anthropological approach to migration should emphasize both structure and agency; it should look at macro-social contextual issues, micro-level strategies and decision-making, and the meso-level relational structure within which individuals operate. It needs to articulate both people and process. (2003:7).

Similarly, anthropologist Anna Tsing notes in an article that analyzes anthropological approaches to globalization, attention to “global flows” often lead scholars to ignore the importance of human agency (Tsing 2000). For my research, the transnational lens serves as a useful methodological tool to study the social and cultural transformations taking place within the exile Tibetan settlements due to migration and the emerging social and political economic contexts within which the Tibetan exiles negotiate their identities and livelihood strategies in relation to migration. The study will prioritize the transnational perspective through the methodological approach of using the household as the unit of analysis, the primary site where decisions to migrate are made in conjunction with negotiated constructions of identity. Scholars define transnationalism as the practices that enable certain groups of people, in particular migrants, to maintain multiple social relationships both at individual and collective levels (through familial, economic, political, and religious connections) across national boundaries, binding people together in countries of settlement and origin (Basch *et al* 1994, Vertovec 1999, Levitt 2001, Vertovec 1999). Transnationalism, therefore, is not about “simply individuals living one foot in two places that constitute the sole occupants of transnational

communities”, but is characterized by the strong social and symbolic ties that connects the migrants and non-migrants over time and space to networks.

Transnational migration takes place at significant financial and psychological costs not only to the individual but also to the household and its social networks (Kivisto 2001, de Haas 2007). Social networks operate as a form of social capital, defined as “the capacity of individuals to command scarce resources by the virtue of their membership in networks or broader social structure” (Portes 1995:2). These networks primarily help to reduce risks and costs associated with migration as well as mediate and perpetuate migration streams. The “new economics of migration” perspective prioritizes the household as the decision making unit of analysis (Stark and Bloom 1985, Massey 1990, Massey et al 1993). The household mediates between the individual and the outside world, so a focus on the household allows one to better understand how migration decision-making considers economic, political, and social conditions, as well as cultural norms (Brettell 2000:107). Massey and others have integrated network theory with the micro and macroeconomic perspectives through the concept of “cumulative causation” to explain the feedback mechanisms that contribute to the self-perpetuation of migration streams as well as creating a “culture of migration” (Massey et al 1993, Bohra and Massey 2006). From the perspective of migrant sending areas, remittances from migrants can be viewed as “risk spreading and co-insurance livelihood strategies” (de Haas 2007:7) that improve the well-being of non-migrants and stimulate economic growth, but that can create new forms of social inequality through conspicuous consumption and competitive spending of remittances (Levitt 2001, Brettell 2003).

Following the above calls for paying attention to both the structure and agency, I approach the transnational practices amongst the exile Tibetans in relation to the construction of

a new homeland in India. This construction of a new homeland in exile is informed not only by the idea of cultural resistance and revitalization in the context of continued occupation of Tibet by China but should also be understood in this particular relationship of the Tibetan diaspora headed by the Dalai Lama and the local host country of India, which has been very positive and accepting of the Tibetan exiles. In that sense, the Tibetan settlements could be viewed as a form “intentional community” (Brown 2002, Pitzer 1997), or active sites of experimenting with a form of Tibetan culture that is in dialectic relationship with the perceived ‘taintedness’ of Tibet culture inside Tibet due to the alleged “cultural genocide” perpetrated by the Chinese state.

Most studies on Tibetan exile society focus largely on issues concerning international representations of Tibetan culture, the ambiguous position of Tibetan exiles, and the changing Western consciousness about Tibet (Dodin and Räther 2001, Lopez 1998, Korom 1997a, Korom 1997b) and are based on an unrepresentative group of intellectuals, artists and performers, lamas, and administrators, many of whom are concentrated in the small exile capital of Dharamsala. The exploration of identity formation in the context of diaspora amongst the ordinary Tibetans and the settlements as re-constructed places of “authentic” Tibetan culture is largely missing.

My research is therefore designed to bring the everyday and ordinary experiences of Tibetans into the picture by paying attention to the intersection of socioeconomic mobility, ethnic identity and nation in the migration decision making process. The focus of my dissertation project derives from three major transitions occurring within the Tibetan settlements in India: a) a transition from the early years of refugee experience when adaptation and survival were the primary concerns (Goldstein 1975, Subba 1978, Palakshappa 1978, Saklani 1984) to the current balancing sought between socio-economic mobility and cultural continuity; b) a fertility transition, driven in part by the desire for upward socioeconomic mobility, that has resulted in a

small family norm and significant investments in children's education that influences the younger generation's propensity to migrate by giving them skills and an international outlook (Childs 2008); and c) a migration transition whereby a significant proportion of the younger generation is seeking socioeconomic mobility through international migration (Hess 2009).

The three major transitions detailed above are seen by many exile leaders as a threat to the viability of the settlements, thereby bringing individuals' desires to migrate into direct conflict with political desires to maintain cultural continuity. The US Immigration Act of 1990 started the major immigration stream from exile settlements in India to North America by granting visas to 1,000 Tibetan exiles, mainly young and economically active individuals, who have acted as a bridgehead for subsequent migrants. As a result, population mobility has become an important feature of the Tibetan settlements, which have transformed into "lifephase spaces" rather than "lifecourse spaces" (Knight 2002:121), that is, sites of enculturation wherein people are born and raised in a Tibetan cultural milieu but from where many ultimately leave seeking higher education, employment, and upward mobility through migration. Meanwhile, the settlements are facing intensive pressure to maintain themselves as sites of cultural continuity through "integrated development" projects that seek to ensure their economic viability and ability to maintain their central role as places of enculturation (Planning Commission 2003). The political context is crucial to note here: for decades Tibetan exile leaders have projected a vision of a Tibetan population facing the threat of genocide (Klieger 1992), and the exile settlements as the means to counter this threat by maintaining them as centers of cultural preservation.

In order to understand how the above processes play out, the following set of research questions are addressed in this dissertation:

- a) Empirical questions on migration: Who migrates? What influences the propensity to migrate (e.g., gender, economic status, social network, education, family composition)?
- b) Macro-level social and political questions: In what way do political leaders envision migration as a threat to the viability of maintaining the settlements as places of cultural preservation? How are such threats addressed through policy initiatives and public political discourse?
- c) Individual and household decision-making questions: How do individuals and households balance their desires for socioeconomic mobility with the pressures to maintain cultural continuity and the viability of settlements? What are the key areas of contestation and negotiation within households with regard to migration? How are these contestations resolved?
- d) Transnational ties questions: What social networks do individuals and households draw upon to assist with their desires to migrate? In what ways do migrants assist in maintaining settlements as sites of cultural preservation? What roles and impacts do remittances have on the local economy, in particular, support for cultural institutions like monasteries, old people's homes, and education?

1.2 Research Site and Methodology

1.2.1 Rationale for Choosing the Particular Fieldwork Site

Doeguling Tibetan Settlement, known also as Mundgod Tibetan Colony by the local Indian community, was selected for the following main reasons. First, much of the anthropological studies on the Tibetan exiles have focused predominantly on Dharamsala, the seat of the Tibetan government in exile (de Voe 1983, Nowak 1984, Klieger 1992, Deihl 2002). By virtue of

Dharamsala being the residence of the political and social elite and a transit route for many young Tibetan exiles, research on Tibetan exiles tend to be biased toward an elite perspective by focusing on this non-representative segment of the population. The few anthropological studies on the Tibetan settlements were conducted in the early years of refugee resettlement and rehabilitation and focused on adaptation and cultural survival (Palakshappa 1978, Saklani 1984, Subba 1990). Much remains unknown about the more contemporary and everyday experience of the Tibetan exiles living in the settlements.

Second, being one of the largest Tibetan settlements in India and also the center of the two largest Tibetan monasteries, Doeguling Tibetan Settlement is an ideal site to study the processes of cultural preservation in exile. This settlement, established in 1965 with an initial population of 4,500 Tibetan refugees (Settlement Office 2009), now has a total population of the settlement is around 13,000 and ten monasteries and one nunnery with a total monastic population of about 7,000 (Doeguling Settlement Office 2009, Survey 2011). Third, Doeguling has long been a focus of transnational activities in the form of monastic and educational support by foreign patrons dedicated to preserving Tibetan culture. Finally, established initially as a farming community, Doeguling has recently undergone a transition from high to low fertility and has seen a rise in outmigration, thereby resulting in economic transformations, a rapidly aging population, and high youth mobility.

1.2.2 Situating the anthropologist

My position as an anthropologist in this particular fieldwork is complicated by being both an insider and an outsider to my research informants. As an exile-born Tibetan who grow up in one of the Tibetan settlements in South India and also served nine years of community service with

the Tibetan government in exile until 2005, I am an insider. This intimate connection with the research community has its own advantages and disadvantages. Before dwelling into the anthropological reflexivity, I wish to add here that neither the dissertation fieldwork site nor the research focus were part of my original advanced graduate training. I have done most of my advanced coursework in anthropology on development studies and contemporary China in order to study China's development model for ethnic minorities within Tibet. However, in spring of 2008 massive political protests occurred all over the Tibetan Plateau, leading to more repressive measures by the Chinese state on Tibetans and to a virtual lockdown on the Tibetan areas, thus making it impossible to secure permission to visit Tibet. In 2009, I twice applied for visa to the Chinese Consulate in Chicago and was denied both times. In the second attempt, I had to provide details on my previous visit to Tibet in 2002, and family connections inside Tibet. I sought an interview with the consular officer, who politely informed me that I would not be granted a visa but refused to give me any reason. I was told to apply at a later time.

Therefore, this dissertation research materialized as the fallback plan, which meant going back to my native community and doing anthropology "back home". The only obvious advantage of being a 'native' researcher is that I was able to plunge right away into data collection without facing major cultural and language barriers. However, the downside to being a native researcher in this particular context is that I was constantly challenged by the need to remain detached and not get drawn personally into the emotionally and politically charged issues because I was seen by my research informants as an "insider" and an educated Tibetan exile, therefore, expected to be concerned about and to participate in the exile politics and the struggle for "Tibetan cause" (*spyi don* or *rtsa don* which translate as "common cause" or "fundamental

cause” respectively, also related to my investigation of the issue of cultural continuity and the construction of the imagined Tibetan nationhood in exile)³.

When I informed my Tibetan acquaintances and former colleagues about my plan to conduct dissertation fieldwork on the Tibetan exile community, a few advised me to hone my skills on Tibetan Buddhism since they believe that to be the essence of the Tibetan collective identity. Others offered me encouragement and at the same time reminded me of the responsibility of every Tibetan towards the common cause of the Tibetan people. Throughout the fieldwork, I did stumble upon moments and stages where it became hard to stay focused on the main research questions. For instances, in interactions and discussions with young monks who had secular education and exposure to the world beyond monastic life, they were very keen on reforms in the monastic community and strongly encouraged me to research the clash of ideas and practices between traditional monastic education and modern secular education. This is closely related to the idea of becoming a twenty-first century Buddhist (actively promoted and encouraged by the Dalai Lama in his addresses to young Tibetans) and the intertwining of the struggle for Tibetan cause with the preservation of Tibetan cultural heritage, especially Tibetan Buddhism. The Dalai Lama in encouraging young Tibetans to pay more attention to their cultural heritage emphasizes the fact Buddhism could be differentiated into three categories: science, philosophy, and practice. Another interesting subject, worthwhile studying, is the concept of reincarnation and ‘after life’ in the Tibetan Buddhist cultural context. In other words, my own limited training in Tibetan Buddhism coupled with emphatic suggestions from some of the

³ Although the term Tibetan cause (*spyi don*) is commonly used by all the Tibetans, what it exactly means and proposes to achieve is not clearly articulated amongst the ordinary Tibetans. Most Tibetans, while professing full support and faith in the leadership of the Dalai Lama and the legitimacy of his “middle path” policy in resolving the Tibetan issue through dialogue with Beijing to achieve meaningful or genuine autonomy within the framework of People’s Republic of China, still wish and believe that total independence or *rangzen*, is the basic right and final goal of the Tibetan struggle. This is something I am exploring further in my research to capture the alternative voices and narratives within the exile construction of the imagined Tibetan nationhood.

research informants that I should focus on Tibetan Buddhism to gain a better understanding of the Tibetan society put me in situations at times where I had to make conscious efforts not to digress from my main research questions while at the same time making notes and recording all these experiences and conversations as part of ethnographic data.

Finally, there were times and occasions when my own position as an ‘insider’ gave me access to information and situations that might be too sensitive, both legally and politically, to the collective Tibetan cause and image. This led ultimately to choices whether or not to pursue the particular issue further, which entailed weighing professional integrity and academic purpose against my own position as an insider who is trusted as a concerned member of the exile community. This dissertation research and the write-up represents a personal balancing act between my identity as a Tibetan born in the exile cultural milieu and imbued with a strong sense of responsibility for the Tibetan collective struggle and my training in critical academic engagement within the academic discipline of anthropology.

1.2.4 Research Methods

The dissertation fieldwork, funded through the Social Science Research Council’s 2010 International Dissertation Research Fellowship, was conducted over a period of 18 months from September 2010 to February 2012 in India. I spent 13 continuous months conducting fieldwork mainly in the primary fieldwork site of Doeguling or Mundgod Tibetan settlement in South India and three months in Dharamsala in North India, the Tibetan exile headquarter. Additional archival research and interviews in USA and Canada were conducted in the summer of 2012 to complement the primary dissertation fieldwork in India since USA and Canada are the two major destinations for the Tibetan emigrants from the primary fieldwork site of Doeguling Tibetan

settlement. Although the dissertation was not designed to be a multi-sited ethnographic study, the summer research in North America complements the main dissertation fieldwork carried out in India by providing a more integrated and transnational perspective on the negotiation of cultural continuity and migration in the Tibetan exile community. I conducted the following four main research activities during the fieldwork: survey, archival research, interviews, and participant observation.

Survey: In the first two months of fieldwork, I administered a four page household survey to all the households in the settlement. The sampling frame was the entire settlement, which turned out to be 934 households. Administering the survey to all households in the settlement by visiting each and spending on average twenty minutes was time consuming but worthwhile experience because it provided a great opportunity to introduce the project to the research community, to interact with ordinary Tibetans, and to observe their living conditions. The household survey produced detailed demographic and economic data on individual households as well as empirical data on who has migrated by gender, age, education, economic status, and household composition. The survey data is analyzed further in tandem with the general census carried out by the Planning Commission of CTA in 2008 and the national census by the government of India in 2010 and confirms the presumed trends of socio-economic, fertility and migration transitions taking place within the Tibetan refugee settlements. The survey data also provides descriptive statistics on migration, livelihood, education, and remittances. For instance, the increasing popularity of professions like nursing is revealed through the survey data which supports the ethnographic evidence that some professions are viewed as important qualifications that can facilitate immigration.

The household survey data is used to address the first research question on who has migrated, and which variables (e.g., age, gender, education, socio-economic status, family composition) are associated with the propensity to migrate. It also addresses the fourth question by documenting transnational ties between households and migrants, and by documenting the contributions migrants make to cultural maintenance through remittances. In addition to generating baseline data, the survey data revealed two major surprises, something not envisioned in the research proposal. First, despite the official discourse of outmigration from the Tibetan settlements, Doeguling settlement received significant in-migration in the form of non-Tibetan exile monks who constitute around 33 percent of the total monastic population. Of this in-migration into Doeguling Tibetan Settlement, the largest groups of non-Tibetan monks were from the Himalayan region of India, Bhutan and Nepal, followed by around 350 Mongolian monks from Mongolia and Kalmyk and Buryat region in Russia, and some monks and nuns from Europe, America, and Southeast Asia. The Tibetan monastic institutions in the fieldwork site, while manifesting new trends of transnational connections through the Buddhist followers and patrons predominantly in the West and Southeast Asia, could also be viewed as a continuation of their traditional role in old Tibet as the seat of higher learning in Buddhist studies for not just Tibetans, but for the Himalayan and Mongolian regions as well. This phenomenon of non-Tibetan monks visiting the settlement will be linked to the discussion of the Tibetan refugee settlements as sites of enculturation and construction of an “authentic” Tibetan culture in exile and how this is mediated through transnational networks and connections.

A second interesting finding is the significance of employment in the military service for many young Tibetans who come from poor family background and are less educated. There is official encouragement for high school students who do not perform well in their high school

exams to join the military service (referred to as “*dbang slob*” meaning “voluntary service” in Tibetan). From the survey data and household interviews, this sector continues to be a significant source of employment for many young Tibetans refugees in the settlement, an especially attractive alternative for those who do not perform well in their high school exams and thus have very little prospect for higher education.

One problem encountered on the survey is obtaining accurate figures on household income. This is most likely due to the following reasons. First, there is a general sense of apprehension in the exile Tibetan community when it comes to reporting income. Most Tibetans do not file tax returns since they are employed in the informal economy like seasonal sweater selling and unregulated petty businesses. Second, foreign remittances form an important part of income for many households that have family members or close relatives who have emigrated abroad. Finally, many Tibetan households, categorized as ‘poor’, receive welfare assistance from the Central Tibetan Administration and other development organizations in the form of child sponsorship, medical aid, and monthly stipends for elder members in a household. Despite assurance that disclosure of income figures in the household survey would not result in termination of any of the welfare benefits they are receiving from the CTA, most Tibetans are reluctant to disclose their true incomes. It is not only members of the poor households which are receiving economic support in the form of child sponsorship who are reluctant to share information, but wealthier households as well. Furthermore, I did not want to jeopardize my relationship with the informants by being too persistent when gathering data on incomes.

In addition to the survey data, additional statistics on ongoing immigration have been collected through the records maintained by the settlement office of those who applied for exit permits that are needed for travelling abroad from India. Tibetan refugees in India travelling

abroad have to apply for identity certificate (IC, popularly known as yellow book) and exit permit, a recent immigration procedure by the Government of India that must be surrendered at the immigration counter before departing India. The settlement office provides a support letter based on which the local Indian authorities issue the exit permit. I have been able to access the official lists from 2009 onwards, which is another valuable data set that complements the survey data on immigration.

Interviews: In-depth interviews can be grouped into three main categories: a) Political leaders and officials in the Tibetan exile community; b) In-depth interviews with members of 50 households selected purposely on the basis of the survey to include those which have one or more members who have migrated; and c) Interviews with high school students and youths about their future academic careers, understanding of homeland, and migration plans.

The first category of interviews included 23 local officials and leaders including the settlement officer, the presidents and executive members of the Local Tibetan Assembly, Tibetan Freedom Movement, Regional Tibetan Youth Congress, Regional Tibetan Women's Association, National Democratic Party of Tibet, and other non-governmental organizations. These interviews generated in-depth information on the official policies and views on the viability of the settlements, threats of outmigration of young population from the settlements, and issues of maintaining cultural and national identity. The interviews were semi-structured allowing me to be more flexible and to follow up with probe questions to incorporate projects and activities aimed at revitalizing the Tibetan settlements. The two themes of revitalizing the Tibetan settlements and maintaining "Tibetan-ness" came up regularly in the interviews suggesting the strong political concerns and efforts to maintain the Tibetan settlement as an important site of enculturation. The concern of revitalizing the Tibetan settlements is strongly

shared by all the respondents and viewed as a huge challenge in light of socio-economic factors that are pushing the highly mobile young population out of the settlement.

The second category of in-depth interviews with members of selected households were also semi-structured and focused on life story narratives, views on immigration, social and economic changes in the settlement and the issue of cultural identity and the struggle for the Tibetan cause. Each interview took on average two hours and generally started out by asking the respondents to narrate their life stories followed by probes to generate information on the early years of coming into exile and establishment of the settlements. This was followed by general questions on socio-economic changes and the importance of immigration, and probes on plans to emigrate including details on networking and securing visas. Finally, the interview ended with questions on recent developments in the exile politics and cultural and national identity. My sample was stratified by economic status and by whether or not the household had migrants. These interviews aimed to address the third and fourth research questions by documenting how issues of identity maintenance and the desire for economic mobility are balanced in the migration decision-making process, to document social networks households draw upon to assist with migration, and to gather data on the role that remittances play in maintaining transnational connections and fostering cultural preservation in the settlements. The interviews also helped to capture the social upheavals caused by migration through disruption of family life, social envy due to conspicuous consumption by visiting migrants as well as the households that have foreign remittances, and the heightened desire to migrate.

The final category of interviews included high school students and local youths. These interviews were arranged through the hostel warden, the school rector and the workshops arranged by the settlement office. At one hostel supported by Tibetan Children's Village, a talk

to a group of 65 high school students was arranged by the hostel warden in return for interviews with ten high school students. The interviews focused mainly on career aspirations and the reasons why they want to pursue particular profession, family pressure on career choice, exposure to Tibetan cultural and religious practices, and their general knowledge of Tibet and current Tibet news and the struggle for the Tibetan cause. The hostel wardens and school officials wanted me to share my experience of growing up in the settlement and pursuit of higher education abroad so as to serve as role model for the students.

Participant observation: Participant observation allowed me to understand better the public discourse on immigration and how it relates to identity issues (my third research question). It further provided me opportunities to interact with the younger generation—potential migrants—in order to gain a better understanding of their perceptions on migration, and how they utilize networks to decide where to migrate and to secure the necessary financial means and documents to migrate (my first and third research questions). Through interaction in the public gatherings, I was able to identify potential key informants on the basis of their rich and in-depth knowledge of the history of the settlement as well as their community service. It also helped refine my semi-structured interview questionnaire to incorporate current social issues that affect the exile society. My ethnographic investigation involved attending community meetings, ceremonies, religious teachings, election campaigns and speeches. At times, it led to unexpected participation in the local meetings. For instance, in June 2012, I went as an observer to a meeting of local leaders and officials convened by the settlement officer to discuss the assessment report on revitalizing Tibetan settlements by one development organization, funded by USAID as part of humanitarian assistance to the Tibetan exiles. The attendees were divided into four different discussion groups and the settlement officer asked me to chair one of the four group discussions

at the meeting despite my protestation that I am at the meeting as an observer. I then ended up with the task of reviewing and giving feedback on the list of project proposals from the discussion groups. In retrospect, I also gained more insight into development issues in the settlement and made more contacts with potential research informants. Over the next three months, I attended three more meetings with a small group of local leaders and officials to help write a project proposal template and to lead brainstorming sessions on project proposals aimed at generating sustainable development in the settlement.

The timing of my dissertation fieldwork also coincided with two major political developments in the history of Tibetan exile society. The first was the primary election held on March 20, 2011 and the election of a young Tibetan born in exile, educated and employed as a research fellow at Harvard, to the post of *Kalon Tripa* (popularly referred to as the Prime Minister), the directly elected leader of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA or popularly referred to as the Tibetan government in exile). The second political development in the exile politics was the decision by the Dalai Lama in March 2011 to devolve all the political powers to a democratically elected leadership to make way for a full functioning democratic set up in the Tibetan exile community. The above two political developments have triggered debates and discussions about secularization and democratization in exile politics. This contributed greatly to my own investigation of how these political developments affect and shape the ordinary Tibetan understanding of their life in exile and ramifications for their future in exile as well as struggle for the Tibetan cause.

In addition, other major cultural events were the week-long visit of the Dalai Lama in February 2011 and the annual Gyalyum Chenmo Memorial (GCM) soccer tournament (in memory of the late mother of the Dalai Lama) in September that same year. Thousands of

Tibetan exiles visited the Tibetan settlement during the Dalai Lama's visit and fourteen teams from different Tibetan exile communities in India and Nepal participated in the soccer tournament. These events provided me with another great opportunity to observe major sport and cultural events where politics and culture easily blend.

Finally, in the second half of my fieldwork I get to observe closely another galvanizing political event that has impacted the research communities: reactions in the aftermath of self-immolations by young Tibetans inside Tibet to protest against the Chinese state. Since March 2011, regular acts of political protest through self-immolations by young Tibetans occurred inside Tibet. To date, 139 Tibetans have self-immolated. The Tibetan exiles in the settlement express their solidarity with their fellow countrymen in Tibet through mass prayers, fasts, peace marches, and candle-light vigils. However, many Tibetans express their frustration with what they see as the political dead end to the Tibetan freedom movement due to China's hard line stance on Tibet. Although the self-immolations inside Tibet are officially and publicly portrayed as act of non-violence, some see it as an act of frustration and question the act of taking one's own lives from a Buddhist perspective while other see it as a sign that the Tibetans both inside and outside Tibet will choose more drastic actions if the Tibet issue is not resolved soon. All the above developments produce rich environments where the social process of constructing an imagined Tibetan nationhood and personal connections to an imagined homeland and national community could be ethnographically observed and documented.

Throughout the fieldwork research, I attended and participated in all the major public events and meetings to record discussions on migration, preservation of cultural and national identity, and transnational social networking. In addition to the public events and meetings, I also gathered information on public discourses in more informal settings like market squares and

through everyday interactions with youths, monks and lay population. In addition, I was asked to be one of the resource persons at two workshops organized by the Tibet settlement office as part of annual project activities supported by Christian Children Fund (also known as Child Fund India) that has supported education in Doeguling for over 20 years. The first workshop was life skill development for a group of 70 high school students, during which I administered a questionnaire to the students on their career aspirations, general knowledge of current Tibetan politics, and what Tibet means to them personally. The second workshop was on leadership training for Tibetan youths. The two workshops provided me great opportunities to interact with young Tibetans and exchange views on range of issues relating to career aspirations, current exile politics and community development.

Archival research: Considerable time was spent on archival research in the primary fieldwork site as well as the central archives of the exile Tibetan administration. The two primary archival resources are: a) the household register and official correspondence and documents from the early years of the establishment of the settlement. The household register provides an in-depth historical perspective on the first research question by identifying when people started to migrate, and who were the first ones to migrate by age, gender, education, and household composition. In addition, this archival material generates a wealth of information ranging from the early years of development of the settlements, involvement of different governmental agencies, foreign development organizations, voluntary agencies and individuals to relationship with the host society. b) Archival records on official interchanges between the settlement and different departments and agencies of Central Tibetan Administration form another important data set that I use, in conjunction with interviews with political leaders, to further analyze official policies on migration and its perceived impacts on the viability of the settlements. These archives

provide more historical depth and a longitudinal perspective on my second research question pertaining to political discourse concerning migration and its impacts on the exile settlements.

In January and February 2011, I carried out archival research by going through piles of office files and records dating from the initial year of establishment of the Tibetan settlement in 1967. I photographed these old official files and documents and later uploaded them to a computer. Another archive that I have been able to access was the official records and files stored at the local Indian town office, the Tashildar office, on Second Tibetan Refugee and Rehabilitation Scheme (IITRRS), a central government agency set up by India in 1967 to oversee the Tibetan settlement and which later merged with the Tashildar office. The local Indian town office or the Tashildar Office allowed me access to the old official files after applying through the Right to Information (RTI) Act. These archival materials provide a rich historical perspective on the early years of the settlement and the involvement of the different government agencies in India, foreign development organizations and the Central Tibetan Administration in the rehabilitation of Tibetan refugees from different parts of northern India into a distinct Tibetan community. Further, the official correspondences present rich material on resource competition between the local Indian farmers and the Tibetan community as well as the delicate political status of the Tibetan refugees living in the settlement. The second phase of archival research was conducted over a period of three months in Dharamsala and Delhi to acquire a broader historical perspective on the Tibetan settlements in India and Nepal. Archival research was mainly conducted at the following institutions: the archive section under the Cabinet Secretariat of Central Tibetan Administration, and the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives.

1.3 Structure of the Dissertation

In Chapter One, I have laid out the theoretical and methodological aspects of the dissertation study by locating my study in broad diaspora and transnational migration studies. In Chapter Two, I provide a historical overview of the Tibetan exile reconstruction of collective identity. I map out the history of the Tibetan exile politics to trace the evolution of Tibetan imagined nationhood that is not limited by its past and how the Tibetan exiles have resorted to innovative strategies to find space and voice within the international order of nation-states. For instance, the current exile leadership's Middle Way Approach and demand for united Tibetan entity in the form of three provinces (*cholka gsum*, itself a historical construct which corresponds to what the Chinese label greater Tibet), is a demand not for territorial sovereignty but a form of regional arrangement that respects the Chinese constitution. It is another matter that the current Chinese leadership view the call for genuine autonomy as independence in disguise and rebuffs any international appeals on resolving the human rights and cultural autonomy of Tibetans as interfering in China's internal matter and challenging its territorial sovereignty. In this chapter, I discuss broadly the overall project of Tibetan-ness, an ongoing project that needs to be situated in two large socio-political contexts of China's repressive and spiritually stifling policies on Tibetan religion and language inside Tibet and living in exile confronted by cultural assimilation and dissolution through migration abroad.

In Chapter Three, I provide a historical account of how Tibetan exiles have re-created Tibetan spaces in the host nation state of India. Immediately after coming into exile, the temporal and spiritual leader of the Tibetan people, then just 25 years old and in the unenviable position of leading the Tibetan people in its darkest period of history, personally initiated three projects in India which are now seen by Tibetans as visionary and critical to sustaining cultural and national

identity in exile. The three projects are: a) the establishment of Tibetan settlements in India, b) the establishment of separate schools for Tibetan children, and c) the organizing of non-sectarian establishments to rehabilitate Tibetan monks who had just fled their homeland. The three projects are intimately connected with the project of reconstructing Tibetan culture and nationhood in exile. The first part of this chapter begins with a detailed description of the fieldwork site, including demographic composition and trends, as well as the roles of the Government of India, the Central Tibetan Administration, multilateral and bilateral agencies, foreign development organizations and individuals in the establishment of this particular settlement; governance, school system, monastic and cultural institutions.

In Chapter Four, I examine the local-Indo Tibetan relationship and examine a fraught and ambivalent relationship. I also discuss the idea of statelessness and how a notion of Tibetan citizenship in exile becomes more critical and the institution of CTA and democracy becomes central to the process. For instance, the Tibetan Charter allows for dual citizenship and views the exile set up as key to representing the legitimate voice of Tibetans inside Tibet. As I will demonstrate in Chapter Five, despite the dual citizenship clause in the Tibetan Charter, for Tibetans living in India, remaining stateless is very much a political act that defines the very purpose of being in exile. I examine a new debate among certain section of younger generations who argue that becoming Indian citizens does not mean being unloyal to the Tibetan cause. I also argue that the Tibetan exiles are engaging in a form of “flexible citizenship” at the collective level.

In Chapter Five, I lay out the broader political economic contexts within which migration decision making takes place by examining the macro-level social and political questions of tension between settlement and mobility in the exile society. It addresses the key research theme

of tensions between the collective desire to maintain cultural and ethnic identity envisaged in the project of resettlements of Tibetan exiles and the individual needs and desires to achieve socio-economic mobility through migration. It will draw mainly on the analyses of the household survey, demographic data on the monastic institutions, official censuses and household registers to provide empirical insights into migration trends including how many have left the settlement, the composition and types of the migrants and their families. Qualitative data in the form of in-depth interviews with household members, officials and leaders, public discussions and debates, media and web blogs and discussions will be used to generate ethnographic perspectives on the tensions between individual and collective desires with regard to high population mobility in the Tibetan exile community.

Chapter Six draws closely on micro-level ethnographic observations at the individual and household levels to elucidate how the migration process looks from the ground up. The purpose of this chapter is to provide an empirical perspective that illuminates certain processes that take place in migration decision making at the household and individual levels. I will begin this chapter by presenting eight case studies of households to highlight the range of diversity in economic conditions, family composition, and migration. These case studies are presented to capture the different migration streams from the perspective of households that have different resources and opportunities available to facilitate migration from the settlements. Finally, in Chapter Seven, I conclude by linking some of the research findings to the theoretical debates in diaspora, transnational, and migration studies.

Chapter 2: Constructing Collective Identity in Exile

In Chapter Two, I provide a historical and conceptual perspective on contemporary expressions of nationhood, homeland, cultural and ethnic identity amongst the Tibetan exiles. What follows is neither a definitive account of the Tibetan nationalist movement nor an in-depth historical analysis of Tibetan nationhood. Rather, the chapter attempts to situate the overarching research question of the Tibetan exile's negotiation of their collective desire for cultural continuity and identity maintenance with the individual and household desires to achieve socio-economic mobility through migration in its proper historical and geo-political contexts. This contextualization helps us understand how certain key concepts like nation, culture and identity have become central to the Tibetan articulation of national identity. This chapter further examines what Tibet means as a geopolitical entity and the dialectic relationship of Tibetan nationhood in exile at three broad spheres of interaction: first dealing with the international community—the West in particular—to gather outside political support for the Tibetan cause;

second confronting the Chinese state building project and its troubled effort to incorporate Tibet; and finally within the Tibetan community itself to reterritorialize Tibetan nation and culture in exile. By revisiting major theories related to nationalism, identity and representation, I highlight the relational and historically contingent nature of Tibetan national identity as well as the role of non-state actors in the construction of national identity through the concept of “identity insecurity” (borrowed from the doctoral work on the Sino-Tibet issue by an exile Tibetan political scientist Tsering Topgyal). The majority of the Tibetans living in India are ‘stateless refugees’⁴ and the collective decision of not seeking citizenship in India, Nepal and Bhutan is viewed as crucial to the Tibetan struggle as well as preserving their national identity in exile. More in-depth discussion on practice of citizenship and statelessness as a form of citizenship and how it influences the individual and household desires to migrate will follow in the chapters on the reconstruction of separate Tibetan spaces in India and the ethnographic discussion of continuing tensions between resettlement and mobility in the Tibetan settlements.

2.1 Locating the Tibetan Nation

The ideas of nation, culture and ethnic identity have heavy circulation in the contemporary context of a globalizing world and are being continually reconstructed and reinterpreted by different actors in different times and spaces. Anthropology as a discipline is closely linked with the analysis of concepts such as culture, race, nation, ethnicity, and identity as well as with the project of modernization through its historically complicated relationship with Western

⁴ India is not signatory to the UN conventions and protocols on refugees, and does not have a refugee law. So, technically Tibetans are regarded as foreigners and have to register themselves with the local police as alien or foreigners by applying for Registration Certificate (RC) which permits Tibetans to renew their stay in India every year. In practice, the Tibetan receive special treatment as will be discussed in the following chapters.

imperialism. Recent anthropological studies have increasingly questioned the historical meta-narratives on identity, race, and nations in order to avoid the traps of reification and essentialization associated with using these terms as analytical categories. Ideas of identity and culture are problematic because in social practice they are conceptually unstable and not bounded but share certain characteristics of fluidity, contingency, and hybridity or creolization (Malkki 1995, Hall 1992, Appadurai 1996, Brah 1996, Bhabha 1994). Further, anthropology as a discipline has taken a critical view of these ideas not only because of its own historical relationship with the project of Western imperialism but because these ideas and concepts are appropriated in popular discourses and take on local meanings that become crucial in the politics of difference. Anthropologist John Comaroff notes that globalization has resulted in the eroding of borders as people draw upon different forms of identity. He sums up this effect as:

[A] nation-state on the defensive and a rising cognizance (almost) everywhere of local cultural difference – and the product is a newly animated politics of identity; a politics expressed, especially, in the explosion of ethnonationalisms. (Comaroff 1996:174)

Here, I will discuss the project of modern nationalism and the politics of difference along the lines of nation-states, or the “international order of things” (Malkki 1995), through what historian Prasenjit Duara calls “the final triumph of nationalism and national self-determination over imperialism as hegemonic social ideology in the twentieth century” (1995:37). There is a critical view of nation-state systems at large—in particular the state-centric approach and uncontested nature of nation-state system with its secular ideology and territorial sovereignty (Duara 1995; Comaroff 1996; Tambiah 1996). The two extremes on the academic debate on the emergence of nationalism and its historical product, ethnicity, ranges from the primordialist to modernist/instrumentalist positions. The primordialist position traces the roots of nationalism back thousands of years and attribute essentialist characteristics to nations and prioritize the role

of kinship and origin myths (Smith 1996). For primordialists (the most apt example would be national leaders), a nation is a certain population that shares a historic territory, memories, myths, a mass public culture, common economy and common legal rights for its members (Smith 1996). On the other hand, Benedict Anderson views the origin of national consciousness—what he calls “imagined national communities”—in the emergence of print-capitalism and shared vernacular languages as crucial historical moments in the development of nationalist consciousness. Anderson notes that, “These fellow-readers, to whom they were connected through print, formed, in their secular, particular, visible invisibility, the embryo of the nationally imagined community” (Anderson 1983:44). National consciousness is therefore viewed as essentially a modern construct because the modern nation-state requires an effective infrastructure through which to disseminate its ideology (Gellner 1983). In *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*, Eric Hobsbawm takes a less complicated view of nationalism and “assumes no a priori definition of what constitutes a nation. As an initial working assumption any sufficiently large body of people whose members regard themselves as members of a ‘nation’ will be treated as such” (1990: 6). Duara argues that there is nothing novel or radical about modern nationalism since “modern societies are not the only ones capable of creating self-conscious political communities” (Duara 1996:153) and notes that:

What is novel about modern nationalism is not political self-consciousness, but the world *system* of the nation-states. This system, which has become globalized in the last hundred years of so, sanctions the nation-state as the only legitimate forms of polity. It is a political form with distinct territorial boundaries with which the sovereign state, “representing” the nation-people, has steadily expanded its rule and power. The ideology of the nation-state systems has sanctioned the penetration of state power into areas that were once dominated by local authority structures. (Duara 1996:157, emphasis original).

This definition is helpful not only because it cautions us against reification of nationalism in the nation-state but also opens up space beyond the primordialist and modernist positions on

nationalisms, to view nationalism as a site where different views of the nation could contest and negotiate with each other. Further, in *Rescuing the Nation from History*, Duara takes a critical view of Anderson's theories of nationalism that locate the nation in modernity and assume a radical break with pre-modern political communities (1995). He criticizes this linear model of history in the evolution of nationalism by noting the continuity and links between pre-modern and modern forms of imagination of political communities and emphasizes the multiplicity of identity at all times and resemblances between traditional and national identities (Duara 1995). Anthropologists John Comaroff (1996) and Stanley Tambiah (1996) term this dominant nation-state system as Euronationalism and broadly identify three ideal types of nationalisms in the age of globalization: Euronationalism, ethnonationalism, and hetero-nationalism (pluralism/multiculturalism). Comaroff argues that all nationalisms contain certain aspect of "metaphysical essentialism" and contrasts *ethnonationalism* to Euronationalism by noting that while Euronationalism "envisages a secular state founded on universalist principles of citizenship and a social contract", ethnonationalism "celebrates cultural particularity, claims a spiritual charter, and grants membership by ascription—which is taken to ensure an especially deep emotional attachment" (Comaroff 1996:175). Comaroff further demonstrate the essentialism inherent in nationalism by identifying the importance of chronology and cosmology to each form of nationalism. While Euronationalism typically traces its origins to the actions of human agents in history, in ethnonationalism "cosmology may take precedence over chronology; collective memory and knowledge, usually the preserve of (male) elders, is assumed to be critically important to collective survival" (Comaroff 1996:176). He further notes that, to the adherents of each form of national identity, the alternative is inadequate: "From the perspective of Euronationalism, all ethnonationalisms appear primitive, irrational, magical, and, above all,

threatening; in the eyes of ethnonationalism, Euronationalism remains inherently colonizing, lacking in humanity, and bereft of social conscience” (Comaroff 1996:176).

Anthropological studies have also challenged the two opposing views on globalization—that globalization either signifies a “clash” of cultures (Huntington 1996) or cultural homogenization (Fukuyama 1993)—and have instead directed attention to emergent cultural forms to better appreciate the diverse and conflicting social interactions that make up our contemporary world. With regard to studying the politics of difference in the context of ethnonationalism, Tambiah offers two investigating methods: first, by tracking the processes by which ethnic identities are constructed and assumed an essentialized and natural quality, and second, by showing how these identities translate into certain political attitudes and demands (1996: 140-141). From the above discussion on nationalism, we could see that the modern nationalism, the one rooted in the nation-state and “the hegemonic social ideology” (Duara 1995), is not without resistance and contestation.

Historically, the rise of political consciousness of nationalism in the Third World is closely linked to decolonization. However, certain peoples like the Palestinians and Tibetans have lost out at the crucial moment of decolonization in what Halliday (2008 cited in Yeh 2009:993) calls “the syndrome of post-colonial sequestration”, a moment of international change when Western imperial powers were retreating and many countries became independent nation-states. Therefore, if we approach national identity as relational identity as Duara (1995) suggests, then the Tibetan nationalism could be viewed in dialectic relationship with the state-building project of the modern Chinese state—the People’s Republic of China—viewed by the Tibetan exiles as inherently a violent geopolitical state that now applies the model of global capitalism and state nationalism to threaten the very existence of Tibetan nation and its cultural identity. I

further view the Tibetan exile's construction of nationhood in exile as a form of transnational articulation through which cultural production and translation takes place in dialectical relationship to global meta-narratives of international order of nation-states as well as the state-building of China, now an aspiring world superpower. The Tibetan exile case study exhibits certain historical peculiarity. The study of transnational/global social processes is framed in the context of post colonialism, yet there is nothing 'postcolonial' about Tibet as it remains the largest geopolitical territory colonized in the twenty-first century.⁵ Modern Tibetan nationalism then is a reaction and a form of resistance to colonization but it is a colonization by a neighboring country China, with whom Tibet shared a long and complex historical relationship that cannot be explained and understood purely through the lens of Euronationalism or the dominant nation-state system based on Westphalian sovereignty.⁶

Here, I am not arguing for Tibetan exceptionalism (Hansen 2003, Anand 2010) per se but calling attention to the historically contingent nature of Tibet's status vis-à-vis China, and how this is essential to understand how and why the concepts of nation, culture and identity are so emotionally and politically charged for the research subjects. The historical displacement in the aftermath of China's occupation of Tibet and the failed uprising of March 1959—the subsequent flight of the Dalai Lama and 80,000 Tibetan refugees into India, Nepal and Bhutan—led to the

⁵ The current political leader of the Tibetan exile, *Sikyong* or popularly the Tibetan Prime Minister Lobsang Sangay, explicitly uses the term colonization to describe current China's occupation of Tibet.

⁶ Scholars in political science and international relations identified the emergence of modern, Western originated, international system/order of nation-states to the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, which is primarily based on the idea of territorial integrity or the idea of sovereignty based on territory. This treaty is connected to the rise of nationalism and the notion of nation-state based on territorial sovereignties and the term Westphalian System is used as a shorthand by academics to refer to the systems of nation-states that is dominant in the world today. However, this dominant and normative view is challenged and becomes problematic when applied to non-Western contexts where territorial sovereignty is not the only source of sovereignty (e.g., Krasner 1993). In the context of Sino-Tibet political relationship, Anand writes extensively to challenge this state-centric approach and implicates British imperial policies in constructing politically ambiguous terms like suzerainty to serve its own colonial interests, as a form of "strategic hypocrisy" (Anand 2012).

detritorialization of the Tibetan nation and culture for the Tibetan exiles due to the uprooting from their familiar cultural and physical habitats. Here, it is important to note that the Tibetan exile case study does not fit nicely as a typical diaspora in that the Tibetan exiles have a functioning government in exile based on Indian soil—although not officially recognized by India nor any other nation-states in the world—with its own democratic system, a Constitution and ‘legitimate sovereignty’ in the eyes of the majority of the Tibetan exiles. In other words, the Tibetan exiles have reterritorialized the Tibetan nation and culture through the creation of a “second homeland” in India, which serves not only as the *diasporic center* for the Tibetan exiles but as the legitimate government in the eyes of the majority of Tibetan exiles. The very purpose of being in exile is framed as a struggle for the common Tibetan cause, evidenced by the popular saying, “Every upright walking Tibetan including the children born yesterday children has the responsibility of the common Tibetan cause on their shoulders” (*bod mi spyi bo gnam bstan gdang skye phyi ban yen la bod spyi ba’i ’gan yod*).⁷

The discussion so far of modern nationalism by questioning the nation-states system at large and emphasizing the relational aspects of national identity is helpful for situating the case study of Tibetan nationalism in its proper historical context. It also helps to answer the following set of questions: Can there be a national identity and historical consciousness without the notion of a nation-state? Why have the Tibetan exiles resorted to religious ideologies and culturalism—the idea that the Self’s culture is the main criteria of difference from the Others—to construct Tibetan national identity? Scholars of Tibet like George Dreyfus and Ashild Kolas have noted the role of religious ideologies in the Tibetan construction of national identity. For instance, Kolas notes that if the concept of “modern nationalism” is to be understood solely in terms of

⁷ Many of my research informants cite the above quote when describing the reasons why the Tibetan continue to live in exile and some even attribute the quote directly to the Dalai Lama.

being a secular ideological formation, then the Tibetan nationalism becomes an “aberration” (Kolas 1995). I take the position that, although Tibetan nationalism that we see today is very much a modern construct, it shares many continuities and links to pre-modern forms of identity as Duara (1995) notes in the case of national identities in India and China. I am not providing here a precise definition of what Tibetan nation means because the Tibetan exile project of nation-building is ever-evolving and yet shares many historical links and continuities between pre-modern and modern forms of imagining a political community. Further, this evolution is taking place in the changing global contexts, which occurs mainly at three levels or spheres of interaction: gathering outside support for the political cause of Tibet, in particular in the Western countries; confronting the Chinese state to forge a solution to the unresolved political issue of Tibet; and to forge a national and cultural identity in exile.

Now I will examine Tibet and its historical relationship with colonialisms by looking at both the Western and Chinese representations, followed by a discussion of how the Tibetan exiles themselves have appropriated these in the form of self-representations for their own political, economic and ideological interests.

2.2 Representing Tibet: Colonialisms and Tibet

If national or collective identity is framed as the process of Othering, then the representation of Tibet in Western colonial and Chinese discourses provides ample materials to understand how knowledge about Tibet and its culture was produced through this project of Othering. I would argue that both the Western colonial and Chinese representations of Tibet have played a strong role in producing of certain knowledge about Tibet and Tibetans, leading to many contradictory images of Tibetans at different stages of history but also some striking commonalities in the

sense that these portrayals share certain ambivalence and see the Tibetans essentially as the Other. Scholars like Dibyesh Anand go so far as to suggest, “In this era of post-modernism and post-colonialism, if there is a name that conjures up visions of mystery and fantasy, of spirituality and exotica, it is Tibet” (2000:271).

This mystification has its roots in colonialism and its product, Orientalism. Although Tibet was never colonized by any European powers, it assumes a prominent position in the discourse of Western colonialism through Orientalism, described by Edward Said as a European mode for gaining authority over the Orient through which the Orientals were controlled politically or epistemologically by the scholars in Europe and colonial officials in Asia (1977). This mode was rooted in language and power and resulted in certain representations through the production of knowledge of Orientals, who were seen as incapable of speaking for themselves and thus needing the scholarships of European Orientalists. According to Said, this textual representation has the power to “create not only knowledge but also the very reality it appears to describe” (1977:94) by essentializing and naturalizing the object of knowledge, the Orient and the Orientals.

Many academic studies have deconstructed this romantic and mystified image of Tibet, which has its roots in Orientalist discourse (Lopez 1998, Bishop 1989). These studies have focused largely on the Western imaginations and representations of Tibet, popularly referred to as Shangri-la, a utopian place that stands for Tibet in the Western imagination. Historically, in fictional works like *Lost Horizon* after which a Hollywood movie was made, Tibet was depicted as mystical utopia somewhere in the high Himalayas and labeled as Shangri-la (possibly inspired by the Tibetan Buddhist mystical realm of Shambala). In addition, the image of Tibet as a mythical paradise in the Western and colonial representations has had an impact on academic

studies (Anand 2010). In *Prisoners of Shangri-La*, Donald Lopez analyzes accounts of the study of Tibetan Buddhism in the West by colonial diplomats, Oriental philologists, Theosophists, popular enthusiasts, and scholars of Buddhism as a world religion, and how the complex interplay between Tibetan Buddhism and New Age spiritual movements in the West has revived older Orientalist representations (Lopez 1998). In more recent history, Tibetan Buddhism also became an important component of the New Age movement and part of the 60s hippie counterculture (Miller 1999:112) and beyond. The involvement of Hollywood celebrities in the Tibet issue has further added glamour and mystification to the Tibetan cause. In analyzing the media representations of Tibet in Western popular culture, Peter Bishop notes that the Tibetans are caught in a crossfire with which the Tibet issue has nothing to do, resulting from the backlash against the promotional culture and idealization of Hollywood movies (1998). It should be noted that Hollywood has moved ahead. Tibet is neither a chic subject nor economically attractive anymore for the Hollywood industry that is driven by its own sets of interests, the foremost being economic, which shows its willingness to censor itself to enter the biggest market in entertainment, China.

Interestingly, as academics in the West call for deconstruction of these Orientalist representations of Tibet, modern China is increasingly promoting some of these very Orientalist representations, which anthropologist Louisa Schien refers to as “internal Orientalism” (1997). In 2002, China even designated a Tibetan county of Gyalthang (Ch: Zhongdian county) as the official Shangri-la county to promote ethnic tourism, a booming industry in the Tibetan region. In modern China, ethnic minorities including the Tibetans have re-entered the national imagination as the primitive Other against which China’s modern national identity can be constructed. Within contemporary Chinese art, literature, and cinema, the ethnic minorities are

generally portrayed as ‘primitive’ and ‘exotic’ in contrast with the norms of the modern Han Chinese citizen (Gladney 1994, Harrell 1995, Schien 1997, Hillman and Henfry 2006). Ethnic tourism is not unique only to Tibet or Tibetan ethnic minorities; in fact scholars refer to “ethnic tourism” becoming the pillar industry in the early 1990s (Lew et al 2003, Oakes 1997). China also invokes a ‘civilizing mission’ in its approach to the minorities on the frontiers, treating them as backward people who need to be brought into the modern world by the developmental state (Harrell 1995, Schein 1997). At the same time, China also espouses an ideology of equality and multiculturalism, allowing for certain expression of ethnic pride and consciousness. China’s classification and identification of its ethnic groups is based on a form of primordialism, which classifies the fifty-five ethnic minorities according to certain ‘essential’ cultural characteristics (Gladney 1994, Harrell 1995).

Today, television documentaries and lifestyle magazines in China seem obsessed with images of Tibet, stressing its mystical landscapes—the majestic mountains, pristine rivers, and lush meadows, its exotic culture and mysterious spirituality. All the websites on tourism, controlled primarily by the state tourism bureaus and Han operators in big cities, project idealized images of Tibetan landscapes and glamorous images of Tibetan people. On the whole, China’s policy on the ethnic minorities has been that of fostering some ‘benign’ form of ethnic pride and expressions but clamping down on any ethnic differences that are viewed by the state as impediments to progress and threats to the stability and the unity of the nation. The official policy on Tibet is to separate culture and religion, and to foster those aspects of culture which foster ethnic pride. But anything that fosters “ethno-nationalism” or “separatism” is heavily repressed. In the process, ethnic clothes become “costumes”, ethnic culture become “festivals” (Harrell 1995, Oakes 1997). In China, constructing minority identities is directly related to the

majority discourse because it is essential to the creation of the majority as an “unmarked” category, in contrast to subordinate, “stigmatized”, and “marked” minority (Gladney 1994, Schien 1997, Zhang 1997). Although the portrayal of Tibetans as “primitive” and “backward” is a recurring theme in official discourse, a new exotic image through the commodification of Tibetan culture and Tibetan landscapes is also taking shape due to the booming ethnic tourism. Commodification of ethnic culture has led to a new “cultural” interaction between the Tibetans and the Han majority that will affect the construction of identities of Tibetans by contrasting it with rich urban Han and foreign tourists as well as the Chinese state agencies (Jinba 2014).

In contemporary Tibet, negotiating identity and ethnicity has to be seen in the context of a clearly hierarchized social system which is defined by the state civilizing mission and reinforced by the traditional Han “superior culture”. Popular expressions of Tibetan identity are said to rely heavily on “religious symbolism” (Kolas 1996). Ethnic culture, in the forms of festivals and cultural encounters with both international and domestic tourists, become an active site of construction of ethnic identity as well as an important resource for participating in economic development. Despite the fact that the festivals are ways through which the state commodify Tibetan culture and offer it as services in a booming tourism industry, Tibetans themselves are not passive but active participants in these activities to express their identity. Hillman and Henfry (2006) mention that Tibetan men spoke proudly of their singing and dancing prowess and that it enabled them to express themselves both as Tibetans and as men, indicating that the identity construction in these festivals is not a one-way process. Tibetans are showing their agency in this exercise.

In a short essay, *Who are the Real Orientalists?*, the Tibetan writer and activist based in Beijing, Tsering Woeser, writes that it is interesting to note that while some Chinese scholars and

writers ridicule the West's Shangri-la myth as "nothing but mysterious Orientalism", they are ignoring China's own Orientalism on Tibet. She notes:

I have previously written that Tibet is by no means the "Pure Land" that people imagine it to be. Tibet is just like any other place in the world, it is a place where people live. The only difference is that it has strong beliefs and is thus a place shining in maroon-red (the color of the monks' robes). In history, there have existed two stereotypical attitudes towards Tibet: demonization and sanctification. The result, however, has always been the same: Tibet and its people have been distorted. (Woeser 2012)

It is evident that the Orientalist discourse has had a huge impact on the Western and Chinese perceptions of Tibet and Tibetans, but it is not the only form of interaction and representation. Another argument that Lopez makes is how this Western fascination has influenced the self-perceptions of the Tibetan themselves and that Tibetans have become "the hapless prisoners of Shangri-La" (Lopez 1998:197). But this argument is not backed up and has been critiqued for its neglect of the agency and institutional creativity of the Tibetan exiles and for certain ahistorical representations (Shakya 2001, Germano 2001, Dreyfus 1998, Dreyfus 2005). Germano (2001) notes how ethnic Tibetans living in the Himalayas have undertaken creative adoption of exogenous forms in order to develop strategies for their own cultural identity and survival, and my own dissertation fieldwork demonstrates the emergence of a pan-Tibetan identity that covers the ethnic Tibetan populations of the Himalayas in India, Nepal and Bhutan, that is fostered by the revival of Tibetan exile monasteries and schools as site of enculturation. Historian Tsering Shakya notes that, "[t]he Tibetan invocation of popular political rhetoric is a strategic calculation rather than transformation of Tibetan value system" (1999:189). This is an important distinction and in fact many Tibet scholars have deconstructed the self-representations of the Tibetan exiles, which I argue is similar to the concept of "strategic essentialism" (Spivak 1998). These studies have deconstructed self-representations by the

Tibetan exile elites that strategically deployed certain Tibetan images that draw upon popular rhetoric on environmentalism (Huber 1997, 2001), human rights and democracy (McLagan 1997), democracy (Magnusson 2002), and non-violence (Sperling 2001, McGranahan 2005). I will argue later in this chapter that these self-representation by the Tibetan exiles, a form of strategic essentialism that is externally oriented to garner international support for the common Tibetan cause, is not unchallenged within the Tibetan exile community. These forms of self-representations, in particular by the exile leadership, are also evolving and Tibetan exiles are increasingly realizing the limitations and consequences of these representational strategies on the Tibetan struggle itself. The Tibetans exile leaders have invested and participated in certain forms of representations of Tibet for strategic and tactical purposes, as form of “soft power” (Magnusson 2001).

On the whole, these representations have profound effects on the Tibetan exile’s relationship with the West. The most obvious positive aspect is that the Tibetans enjoy huge international sympathy which has translated into substantial economic support. In the initial years of exile, some Western countries accepted Tibetan refugees for settlement, especially Switzerland and Canada (Tethong 2005, Gyalthag 1996). The US government accepted 1,000 Tibetans for resettlement through the US 1990 Immigration Act, and there is ongoing US legislation that, if passed in Congress, would accept another 5,000 Tibetans for immigration. The Canadian government is in the process of resettling 1,000 Tibetans from India in Canada. These are examples of how the popular and positive images of Tibetans have been turned into material support for the Tibetan exiles through the work of Tibet support groups. The material support of Western aid agencies and individual donors is even more remarkable in the initial years of the rehabilitation projects of Tibetans in India and Nepal. Anthropologist Dorsh Marie de Voe, in

her doctoral study of gift giving by the Western sponsors and donors to the Tibetan refugees, notes how the western aid agencies working with the Tibetan refugees are “a rare breed” (1983: 73) in that they share genuine concern for the Tibetan cause and expect nothing in return except for some spiritual connection with a future Tibet. In another doctoral research, anthropologist Christian Klieger studied the reproduction of the traditional Tibetan practices of *chos yon* (priest patron) relationship and *sbyin bdag* (sponsor or patrons) and noted how both the Tibetan clergy and laity in exile have gained direct access to outside support in the form of foreign aid by incorporating Westerners into their cultural model as patrons (Klieger 1989). Other recent anthropological studies have also noted how the Tibetan refugees in India and Nepal have benefitted from foreign aid (Prost 2008, Frechette 2002). In my own fieldwork site Tibetan Refugee Aids Society, a Canadian NGO established in 1960s to help in the rehabilitation of the Tibetan refugees, continues to support children’s education and elderly people in the settlements. Further, the monastic institutions in the Tibetan settlements have extensive transnational connections through their networks of Buddhist centers around the world. It is not only the western Buddhist patrons but increasingly East and Southeast Asian patrons including Chinese Buddhists from Taiwan, Singapore and Malaysia, who are supporting the monastic institutions as well as health and education projects in the Tibetan communities. For instance, of the three allopathic hospitals in my fieldworks site, two are built by monasteries with the financial support of rich patrons from Taiwan and other Asian countries. There are at least five NGOs established through the monastic links in Western countries including Germany, Holland, France, and USA that help with children’s sponsorships and help for the poor and aged Tibetans in the fieldwork site. This continuing and growing financial support is part of the transnational links that are forged through the spread of Tibetan Buddhism in the West and other Asian countries.

There is also a growing concern within the Tibetan exile community that continued dependence on foreign sponsorship is leading to a form of dependency syndrome both at the individual and collective levels. The current exile Tibetan administration claims that 'self-reliance'⁸ is one of its three main principles, and has recently initiated two projects, Tibetan Corps and Tibetan Sister Projects, to encourage Tibetans living in the affluent countries in the West to take more active part in supporting the Tibetan administration in its welfare programs including education, health and infrastructural developments in the Tibetan settlements in India and Nepal. The more vocal critics of dependence on foreign sponsorship and the role of Western supporters comes from more radical elements, especially the *Rangzen*⁹ advocates. A former president of Tibetan Youth Congress, that claims to be the largest Tibetan NGO and has taken a consistent stand of total independence, is known for his famous quote that the Tibetan exiles have become so complacent and dependent on foreign support that they expect the Western supporters to deliver Tibet's independence as a gift.¹⁰

This rhetoric should be viewed as a response to another general misconception, that the West has been a great champion of the Tibetan cause. Here, it is important to differentiate the term West between the Western nation-states and its public and civil society. In fact, the Western

⁸ The current Tibetan Administration under Sikyong Lobsang Sangay promotes their principles of Unity, Innovation, and Self-Reliance.

⁹ Rangzen or *rang bstan* means total independence, a stance the Dalai Lama and CTA adopted until 1974. Today, it is mainly the Tibetan Youth Congress that continues to seek total independence. Historically in the exile reconstruction of national identity, call for *Rangzen* or total independence from China has been the main rallying point of national unity among the exile community. The CTA's political goal has evolved from total independence or Rangzen to what is now called Middle Way Approach which calls for genuine autonomy for all the Tibetan areas inside China. If there is one main source of political tension and divisions within the exile community, it is the debate between those who support total independence and CTA's policy of seeking genuine autonomy.

¹⁰ Tsetan Norbu, former president of Tibetan Youth Congress and also a former member of the Tibetan parliament, gave this famous quote during a speech at a March 10th rally in Dharamsala. His quote has become a popular for many Tibetan exiles to critique perceived dependency syndrome be it pandering to the Westerners for sponsorships or support for the Tibetan cause. The popular people's uprising on March 10, 1959 in Lhasa, which culminated in the escape of the Dalai Lama into exile and China's total occupation of Tibet, is commemorated every year in exile as the Tibetan national uprising day.

nation-states, including the US and Britain, have never supported the Tibetan call for independence and historically have taken a consistent stance not to antagonize the Chinese state on the Tibet issue. It has been the general public and civil societies in the West that has shown consistent and strong support for the Tibetan cause. In fact, the Dalai Lama could not visit the US until 1973 due to the USA's policy of not antagonizing China. In an interesting article on spread of Tibetan Buddhism in the West, particularly in the US, a Buryat American Buddhist writes that the first visit of the Dalai Lama to the US in 1973 came about mainly due to efforts by a Buryat Tibetan Buddhist teacher and his American disciples (Urubshurow 2013). However, the notion that the Western governments are behind the Tibet support groups in the West is another myth that is propagated by pro-China media and intellectuals. To demonstrate a negative influence of such representations, Emily Yeh argues that because the Tibetans are often romanticized they are viewed as "unfortunate ideological victims of US-funded propaganda" by many left-leaning, radical scholars through what she terms "radical reductionism" that denies political agency to the Tibetans and their "historically sedimented memories" (2009:988). The following excerpt from a book *Shadow Tibet*, a collection of essay by the Tibetan exile writer and one of the most prominent *Rangzen* (Independence) activists Jamyang Norbu, is more blunt and polemical about the romanticized image of Tibet in the West. I use this to present one form of representation from a vocal critic:

Like alternate worlds in science fiction, two distinct Tibets co-exist these days. One flourishes in the light of celebrity patronage, museum openings, career opportunities, pop spirituality and New Age fashions. This is the Tibet that has captured the romantic fantasy of the West and which has drawn much of the interest that the Tibet issue receives at the moment. Here, Tibet is far more than the issue of Tibetan freedom and represents the millenarian aspirations of the affluent and the established for spiritual solace, ecological harmony and world peace. Here the problems of Tibet: the nation of the Tibetans, is nowhere as relevant or important as that of Tibet: the repository of a secret wisdom to save a materialistic and self-destructive West.

The other Tibet exists in the shadow of a cruel and relentless Darwinian reality. Under Chinese Communist occupation it is a world of paid informers, secret police, prison walls, torture, executions, unemployment, racism, threat of extinction, and overwhelming cultural loss; revealing itself in individual lives (like sores on plague victims) in alcoholism, broken families, violence and growing hopelessness. In exile, it manifests itself, especially in the leadership, in cynical apathy, intellectual confusion, religious bickering and complete loss of political direction. Yet, this is also a world, unacknowledged perhaps, of selfless service, loyalty, love of country — and when called upon — of heroism and sacrifice. This is the world I have attempted to write about. This is Shadow Tibet (2006:13).

For a host of complicated political and ideological reasons, we can see that Tibet continues to be a highly mystified and misunderstood place. In that sense, I agree with Lopez's argument that until the image of Tibet is unshackled from the mystified image of Shangri-la and understood for its "real history, then Tibet's real history will not be taken seriously (Lopez 1998, 1995). But the questions arise: How does one define what "real history" is? Is history more about the present than the past? Or is it more about memory than history? These questions are complex with no definite answers. To historicize the nation, Duara suggests: "...the nation, even when it is manifestly not a recent invention, is hardly the realization of an original essence, but a historical configuration which is designed to include certain groups and exclude and marginalize others—often violently" (Duara 1996: 163). Taking heed of Duara's suggestion, I will now attempt a more critical view of historical representations through the lens of collective memory and national narratives.

2.3 Historicizing the Tibetan nation: Tibet as a Geo-political Entity

From the discussion so far, it is evident that the seemingly simple question “What is Tibet?” is fraught with ambiguities and contradictions. There are two competing national narratives on the “Tibet issue or question”, one from the official Chinese viewpoint and the other based on Tibetan exiles’ claims. Both historical representations have been extensively studied (Shakya 1999, Powers 2004, Goldstein 1997). Melyvn Goldstein, an anthropologist and renowned scholar on modern Tibetan history succinctly sums up the Tibet question,

Objective assessment of the situation in Tibet since 1950 has become entangled in the politics of the ‘Tibet Question’, that is, in the political status of Tibet vis-à-vis China... have produced diametrically contradictory versions of modern history from Beijing and the Tibetan exiles in Dharamsala (and their supporters in the United States and Europe).” (1994:77)

Goldstein argues that the Tibet issue is essentially an “intractable national conflict” that is rooted in diametrically contradictory historical interpretations. Recalling Duara’s caution against the reification of the nation-state as the only loci of historical and political consciousness, it is important to question the historical representations. Political scientists like Anand (2010) and Topgyal (2012) critique Goldstein’s privileging of the nation-state system with its territorial sovereignty as a state-centric approach. Anand argues that the state-centric approach does not lend itself to incorporate the historical Sino-Tibet relationship because of the British imperial legacy of suzerainty and autonomy that acts as proxies for sovereignty and independence (Anand 2012). Topgyal (2012) also argues against the nation-state system of territorial sovereignty and instead looks at “security dilemmas” to explain why the Chinese prize sovereignty and the Tibetan exiles prize autonomy. Topgyal uses the concept of ‘identity insecurity’ to explain what is

driving the Tibetan political struggle and frames the Sino-Tibet conflict as based on reaction and response to each other's security dilemmas and perceived threats to each other's core interests. Further, Topgyal argues that there is a form of self-censorship when it comes to defining Tibet in its geopolitical context and notes how political studies, in particular International Relations, have been marginalized in Tibetology which is "dominated by anthropologists, Buddhologists, and historians" (Topgyal 2012:5). This self-censorship by academics on Tibet is related to another political reality: the Chinese state denying visas to some academics and journalists which in turn ensures that academics self-censor so that they have continued access to their fieldwork sites inside China (Makley 2009, Yeh 2005, Link 2002).

Another example of how politically entrenched nature of the representations of Tibet in the international discourses is given by Tibet Scholar Robert Barnett who observes that:

...the debate between China and Western promoters of Tibetan claims is not really a debate—in other words, it is not a process in which arguments either to facts or interpretations are put forward by each side with the intent that the most persuasive argument wins. It is more the representation by each side of strongly held *collective imagining* that is persuasive only to those who share that imagining. In both cases, the primordality is the driving force of the argument: On the one hand, China has existed as a unified state including Tibet for centuries, and on the other, Tibetan culture, identity, or society has existed independently for millennia (2001:271 emphasis added).

The above observation aptly captures the current political stalemate on the Tibet issue. Here, I discuss the project of collective imagining in my discussion of the nexus between history, collective memory and national narrative. It should be noted the claims are based on representations that privilege certain accounts and elides the role of language and power as "[r]epresentation is always an act of power. This power is at its peak if representation is able to disguise its origins and values" (Bleiker 2001: 512). What Barnett refers to as Western promoters or supporters of the Tibetan claims are not state actors but an assemblage of organizations and

individuals sympathetic to the Tibetan cause either through personal or religious ties to the Tibetan exiles (McLagan 1997). Here is another example of the politicized nature of the Tibet issue, in which Yeh analyzes “radical reductionist” representation of the Tibet issue by the Chinese state and its supporters in the media and academic circles:

The “feudal” past is a staple of Chinese state discourse, which uses comparisons between Tibetan livelihoods under the PRC today and those 50 years ago as a basis for Tibetans’ requisite gratitude. It implies that without the interventions of the PRC, Tibetans would have remained in absolute stasis, undergoing no change whatsoever from the conditions of half a century past, incapable of “progress” or indeed any kind of temporal movement except by the intervention of the PRC. This erases the agency of historical figures such as Baba Phuntsog Wangyal, who established a secret Tibetan Communist Party in the 1930s with the intention of establishing a communist, independent Tibet (Goldstein, Sherap and Siebenschuh 2004). When this became impossible, Wangyal and others created a Tibetan branch of the CCP, but he was later imprisoned for 18 years for criticizing harsh reforms in the 1950s; rehabilitated, he is today both a committed Communist and one of the most outspoken internal critics of China’s Tibet policy. (Yeh 2009:990)

When it comes to much of the narratives relating to Tibet, there is clearly a lack of critical studies. Hansen (2003) argues that, for the period since 1950 when Tibetans have lived under the Chinese rule, Tibetans occupy a recognizably “subaltern” position. Therefore, scholars must question “Tibetan exceptionalism” or the lack of critical studies on the Tibet issue (2003:8). Within the academic circles, there is a clear call for critical studies of the historical representations of the Tibet issue (Sperling 2004, Powers 2004, Huber 2001, Magnusson 2002, Lopez 1998). The reasons for the lack of critical studies on Tibet, something similar to postcolonial studies, could be attributed partly to the following factors: Tibet was not subject to direct European colonization, but an Asian colonization and remained closed to international academics until the mid-1980s. With regard to the voice of “people” or “subalterns” in the narratives on Tibet, there have been a few autobiographies written to recover or preserve “voices” from Tibet after coming into exile. The fact that Tibet is politically sensitive and not

fully open to academics makes it more difficult to write about and represent objectively current political and social studies inside Tibet. Chinese publications about Tibet also use the voices of “ordinary” Tibetans but primarily to support its claims and legitimacy (Powers 2004, Hansen 2003). Taking up the call for more critical reflection in contemporary Tibetan studies, in the following section, I will examine the dominant Chinese and Tibetan exile representations of Tibet in order to interrogate the myths of Tibet produced by both Chinese and Tibetan nationalisms. It should be noted here that Tibet has virtually remained closed to the academic circles until the mid-1980s, and currently it is extremely difficult to secure permission to conduct fieldwork in Tibet.

What do the above politics of representations have to do with the construction of collective identity amongst the Tibetan exiles? Here, I argue that Tibetan-ness is more than just about identity, it is control over the meaning of Tibet and its history. For instance, the dominant exile discourse on the Tibet issue is framed and understood as a matter of life or death of Tibet as a nation. For the Tibetan exiles, whether one is a supporter of the Dalai Lama’s more conciliatory middle way approach (MWA) or total independence, Tibet is going through its most critical time in its history. The question is framed as whether Tibet as a nation will survive or become extinct. The common phrase used by all the Tibetans, from the top to the bottom is, *bod ’di chags ’jigs kyi mtshams la slabs yod*¹¹ meaning “Tibet is at a critical time, whether it will remain or become extinct”. This demonstrates what Topgyal (2012) refers to “identity insecurity” on the part of Tibetan exiles. The current political stalemate has resulted in what Topgyal refers to as “the cyclical action-reaction process, understood in terms of Chinese state

¹¹ The Dalai Lama often open up his talks about Tibet’s current situation when addressing the Tibetans, and it has become the part of the official speech making. The particular quote is even used in a patriotic Tibetan song.

building policies and practices and the Tibetan resistance against them...and reactions to them” (2012:2).

2.4 Tibetan Exile Politics: History, Collective Memory and National Narrative

In a personal discussion with a graduate student from Tibet pursuing further higher study in the US, he said when it comes to the historical basis of Tibetan independence, a common refrain amongst his friends inside Tibet is that “history is a whore of politics.”¹² This sentiment echoes a similar quote by the French philosopher Ernest Renan, “getting history wrong is being a part of the nation”. The contradictory versions of modern history of Tibet are more about claims and counter-claims based on selective appropriation and interpretation of the past than an objective and analytical understanding from a historical perspective. Here, I am not specifically concerned about where the truth or historical accuracy of these representations lies. Instead, I view these representations as a form of selective appropriation of the past, in which history itself becomes an inevitable tool and resource to legitimize each side’s political and ideological claims. By focusing on the making of claims about Tibet’s past, present, and future through these historical representations, we can see the crucial role these historical representations play in the construction of nationalism and the making of collective memory for both the Chinese and Tibetans.

Writing history is an interpretive science, and narrative forms an important element of how history is written and documented today. White (1987) emphasizes the fact that although

¹² *Rgyal rab ni chab srid kyi smad tshong ma red.*

narrative is not the only way of understanding the past, narrative forms an important element in writing history and it inevitably involves ascribing motivations to past actors, and creating a plot to past events, and in the process risking a certain “moralizing impulse” in the project of writing history. Despite its methodological bias and assumptions, history as a discipline is an endeavor to understand and document what really happened. At the same time, it has to be acknowledged that the exact and exhaustive meaning and account of what has happened in the past is impossible to document and agree upon. In this sense, both collective memory and history are susceptible to differing interpretations and contestations. However, to summarize the distinction between the two in memory studies, history is acknowledged to be more analytical, detached, and have no “particular social framework”; while collective memory is more subjective, have a “single committed perspective”, and reflects a “particular group’s perspective” (Wertsch 2009:127). Collective memory as much as it makes claims about the past is very much relevant to the present since it is crucial in maintaining the continuity and coherence of a social unit. In order to distinguish the nexus and conflation between history and memory, Blight (2009) uses the term “historical remembrance” to refer to instances when history becomes a tool and resources for strategic purposes by nation-states and social groups.

From a national or state level perspective, the project of collective memory is mediated by various institutional practices through which the state exercises its power to create particular form of memory, narratives, and images. I examine how historical representations by both the Tibetan exiles and Chinese state are grounded in the efforts to reinforce social cohesiveness and group identity through invoking iconic stories and images, and rituals that evoke emotional or affective aspect of identification. These could also been seen as one of the cultural tools that are used to organize and legitimize certain narratives and moral posturing. In this sense, the act of

collective remembering is practice-based and reproductive. Collective remembering and historical representations are not only practices that foster social relations but has also have the potential to transform them through the continued exchange and tinkering with opinions, beliefs, and emotions. In the case of the historical representations of Tibet, because it is very much a part of the lived social reality, I argue that “history as propaganda” (Powers 2004) becomes a “usable past” (Wertsch 2009: 122) that serves the very important function of nation-building and the related project of fostering national identity and unity for both the Chinese and Tibetans. Since the use of history representations and interpretations is closely linked with nation-building, national narratives assume an important function in structuring and defining how individuals in a community imagine and think about themselves and others. Theorists of nation-states and nationalisms have shown that a sense of “imagined community” is crucial to nation-building and is made possible through “print capitalism” through which books and media are produced in vernacular for maximum and accessible mass consumption (Anderson 1983), and through the “invention” of national “traditions and customs” (Hobsbwam and Ranger 1992) whereby traditions of recent historic origin are given social and thus fictitious continuity with the historical past. I interpret these theories to include historical representations and its propagation as essential components of the nation-building process and fostering the imagining of national community. James Wertsch uses the term “national narrative template” (Werstch 2009) to expand on what Frederick Bartlett called “schemata” that orders and defines how we see and explain things, making it a simple but effective cultural code to influence how we think as member of a family, social group, or national community. He notes that narrative templates are “schematic” because they function as an “abstract and generalized” knowledge structure that underlies a narrative, even though the specifics of setting, characters, and date might differ

(2009:129). He cautions that the narrative templates are not of a “universal archetype” but may vary from one socio-cultural setting to another, and that narrative templates are “not readily accessible to the conscious reflection of those using them” (2009:130). Taking this concept of national narrative templates as a heuristic tool for understanding the competing national narratives on Tibet issue, I demonstrate in the following discussion how specific narratives on Tibet have changed and adapted without necessarily affecting the national narrative template, and how history is (re)interpreted and (re)presented to suit each side’s political and ideological interests.

2.5 Tibet: History War

The Tibet issue or question, in addition to being emotionally charged and heavily politicized, is also very much part of daily lived experiences of Tibetans inside and outside Tibet and is closely connected to the current social and political realities. Therefore, we can discern and analyze how certain political and social practices, artifacts, and emotions are utilized in the making of claims about the past and the present by different actors or groups, including the Tibetans living inside China, the Tibetan exiles, and the state apparatuses of China. In this section, I lay out the two master narratives on Tibet’s past and present by examining how history as a tool is utilized by both the Chinese and Tibetan sides to construct an image of Tibet that suit each side’s political agendas. French theorist Pierre Nora described the idea of “site of memory” or *les lieux de memoire*, “where memory crystallizes and secretes itself...originate with the sense that there is no spontaneous memory, that we must deliberately create archives, maintain anniversaries, organize celebrations, pronounce eulogies, and notarize bills because such activities no longer occur naturally (Nora 1989:149). In the case of the Tibet issue, we can see how historical events are represented and commemorated as part of “collective memory” (in the sense of being a part

of the past) and how a certain form of “historical remembrance” is used actively as “propaganda” (Powers 2004) for fostering national unity and patriotism and claiming legitimacy as a nation-state. The discourse on national unity and remembering a century of humiliation or other tragic events does not function in a vacuum but must be seen in the socio-political and emotional contexts and needs.

2.5.1 Peaceful Liberation or Invasion of Tibet and the March Uprising of 1959

China claims that it has “peacefully liberated” Tibet in 1950 from imperialist and feudal forces, and saved Tibet from a dark feudalistic hell, while the Tibetan exiles popularly call the “peaceful liberation” *dus log*, literally meaning “reversal of time” or “bad time”, and view it as the beginning of a living hell in Tibet. China claims that Tibet has been an integral part of China since the Yuan period (1279-1368) through to the Qing period (1644-1911), and that Tibet temporarily became separated from China in the first half of twentieth century because China was weak and foreign imperial powers attempted to wrest Tibet from the motherland (Powers 2004). But the Tibetan exiles claim that during the period since the Qing empire collapsed and PRC “invaded” Tibet in 1950, Tibet was de facto “independent” and that Tibet was never historically part of China (Goldstein 1989, Smith 1998). The Tibetans argue that its relationship to the two imperial periods of Yuan and Qing was based on the principle of *chos yon* (priest-patron) relationship that was more religious and cultural than political (Klieger 1992, Smith 1998, Powers 2004, Sperling 2004). This raises the question of whether the premises of nation-states and its arguments could be applied to explain the historical relationship between Tibet and China during the Yuan and Qing period. If Sperling (2004) argues that Tibet was a “vassal state” under the Qing period, Barnett (2009) notes that historically that there was never direct rule by the Chinese imperial rulers over Tibet but Tibet owed only nominal and symbolic allegiance to

the Chinese empires, something referred to by an ambiguous term, “suzerainty” to describe the complex (and not easily covered by current political terminology) historical relationship between Tibet and China (Anand 2010, Sperling 2004).

In essence, modern China claims territorial rights and sovereignty over Tibet without necessarily acknowledging the complex historical relationship and the imperial legacy of the past empires. The Tibetan exiles claim that the pre-1950 Tibetan government, called ‘theocratic government’, was based on the ideology of “union of the religious and the political” (Tibetan: *chos srid zung ‘brel*) with the Dalai Lama at the apex of both political and religious hierarchies. This dual authority is based on the belief that the Dalai Lama, (the present Dalai Lama is the 14th) is a reincarnation of *Chenrezig* (Sanskrit: Avalokitsevara), the Bodhisattva of compassion and protector deity of Tibet, and also linked to the very origin myth of the Tibetan people themselves (Kolas 1996, Dreyfus 2005). Most scholars of Tibetan politics and history agree that Tibet did not have a strong sense of nationalism of the modern nation-state era before 1950 (for that matter scholars argue whether a Chinese nation-state as we know today existed before the turn of twentieth century). It was only after 1950, with the encounter with Communist China and then the Western world, that the nascent awareness or primordial sense of Tibetan collective identity, referred to as “proto-nationalism”, developed into the modern Tibetan nationalism we see and read about today (Powers 2004, Dreyfus 2005). In 1957, a group of Tibetans traders and resistance fighters mostly from eastern Tibet formed the *sbtan srung dang langd dmag* (Volunteer Force in Defense of Dharma) later renamed the Four Rivers Six Ranges (Tibetan: *chu bzhi sgang drug*) that became the first armed popular resistance group against the Chinese forces, who were perceived as the enemies of Buddhism. The late political scientist Dawa Norbu noted that the Tibetan resistance against the Chinese state was framed not in terms of clashes of

national interests but clashes of value systems (1994). In 1971, after the US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger under Nixon's administration visited China bringing a thaw to US-China relationship, help to the Tibetan resistance group was cut off. For the US, the support of the Tibetan guerilla had to do with its ideological war against Communism, while the Tibetan fighters believed that the US genuinely supported the just cause of Tibetan freedom (Knaus 2001).

History therefore becomes a major stumbling block in the current negotiation process between the Dalai Lama's envoys and Beijing. China wants the Dalai Lama to accept that Tibet has been historically a part of China. The Dalai Lama says he is willing to accept China's rule and is seeking "genuine autonomy" with the framework of People's Republic of China, however, he is not willing to accept that Tibet has been historically part of China. The following extract from the 1989 Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech by the Dalai Lama illustrates the importance of history and how he negotiate this sensitive issue of history:

...Any relationship between Tibet and China will have to be based on the principle of equality, respect, trust and mutual benefit. It will also have to be based on the principle which the wise rulers of Tibet and of China laid down in a treaty as early as 823 AD, carved on the pillar which still stands today in front of the Jokhang, Tibet's holiest shrine, in Lhasa, that *Tibetans will live happily in the great land of Tibet, and the Chinese will live happily in the great land of China.* (emphasis added)

If China claims that Tibet has been an integral part of China since the Yuan period (1279-1368), the Dalai Lama goes further back into history to the Tang Period (608-907 AD) when the Tibetan Yarlung Dynasty was Tang's contemporary and equal in power, and draws attention to a 823 AD treaty between the Tibetan and Chinese emperors to emphasize his argument that history is best left up to the historians. Interestingly, until the 1990s China claimed that Tibet became a part of China during the Tang period (Wang and Gyancian 1997), but stopped using this official

assertion as historical evidence because during the Tang period the Tibetans ransacked the capital of the Tang empire at Xian and installed a puppet emperor who ruled for two weeks (Sperling 2004). Another related fact is the marriage of the Tang Princess Wencheng to the Tibetan king Songtsen Gampo in 641 AD, but this was never a strong argument for assertion of China's control over Tibet when the same Tibetan king had also taken a Nepalese princess in addition to at least three princesses from other regions, which indicated the strength and independence of Tibet rather than subjugation by China. In other words, history and historical events are used to support and legitimize China's rule and control over Tibet, however, historical evidence on both sides run into a deadlock when it is forced to fit into the tight premises and arguments from the perspective of a nation-state system (Anand 2010, Sperling 2004).

In more recent Tibetan history, the People's Uprising of March 10, 1959 in Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, is perhaps the most crucial event which is viewed as the first popular expression of Tibetan nationalism and also referred to as "the profound expression of subaltern agency" (Hansen 2003: 9). China officially labels the March Uprising of 1959 as a rebellion and the handiwork of the upper social strata and the local Tibetan government forces, while the Tibetan exiles all over the world commemorate March 10 every year as the Tibetan National Uprising Day. This day, an official holiday in the exile Tibetan community, has become a secular ritual like event, which is characterized by official speeches, singing of the Tibetan national anthem while raising Tibetan national flag, singing of *mi mang lang lu* or people's uprising song, followed by slogans and waving of Tibetan national flags and placards, painting of face and bodies with Tibetan national flags, and marches and protests against the Chinese rule in Tibet in major cities and towns everywhere Tibetan exiles reside. The March 14 incidents of 2008 in Tibet, referred to as "riots" or "protests" depending on whether it is Chinese or Tibetan

narratives and discussed later in the paper, is also linked to the commemoration of the March 10 Uprising Day.

In *The Dragon in the Land of Snows* historian Tsering Shakya (1999) provides significant details, complexity, and depth to the history of the 1959 March Uprising. He attempts to navigate between differing nationalist interpretations of the Lhasa uprising by offering a more nuanced understanding of the event by incorporating the ordinary Tibetan or subaltern perspective. He notes that widespread rumor of an alleged Chinese plot to kidnap the Dalai Lama during his proposed visit to a theatrical performance in the auditorium of the Tibet Area Command of the People's Liberation Army in Lhasa on March 10, 1959 ignited the gathering of around 10,000 people around the Dalai Lama's summer palace at Norbulingka, Lhasa. This Uprising was led by the *Mimang Tsongdu* or People's Assembly, a spontaneous and unpremeditated movement to protest against both the Chinese armed forces and the Tibetan elites for not standing up to the Chinese armed forces. According to Shakya, shortly after the Chinese invasion in 1950, groups in Lhasa began to organize in the name of the "people" and the largest of these was *Mimang Tsongdu* (People's Assembly), founded in 1954, which is considered the first popular movement in Tibetan history. Furthermore, Shakya notes: "The name 'Mimang Tsongdu' was deliberately defiant. The Tibetan term 'Mimang' had been coined by the Communists who had created it from Tibetan to mean 'people' as understood in Western political terminology. Other scholars refer to this period as a time when a pre-1950 consciousness of Tibetan proto-nationalism took more concrete shape and morphed into a pan-Tibetan nationalism, which we see today in the Tibetan exile movement and the surge of nationalism inside Tibet (Dreyfus 1998, Shakya 1999, McGranahan 2005).

To understand the socio-political context behind the Uprising, it should be noted that religion is inextricably linked with this surge of nationalism, making it hard for historians to disentangle historical motivations from religious sentiments and expressions. Goldstein (2007) describes the period between 1950 and 1959 as an “uneasy calm” between the Dalai Lama led Tibetan government and the Chinese armed forces. From the autobiography of the Dalai Lama, who had to take the leadership at the young age of sixteen, we could see that he was basically attempting to negotiate between the Chinese forces and the Tibetan public, but this attempt was ultimately unsuccessful and led to his exile in 1959 after the March Uprising. The Dalai Lama sums up the volatile situation by contrasting the people’s movements and the Chinese armed forces: “I felt as if I were standing between two volcanoes, each likely to erupt at any moment” (Dalai Lama 1962:173). In his autobiography, the Dalai Lama assigns responsibility for the Uprising to the “the people themselves” who took action after they feared for his safety, and it is interesting to note that the figure of the Dalai Lama become crucial in understanding the socio-political context of the Uprising.

Shakya (1999) attempts to document the events leading up to the Uprising by incorporating the lay perspective and notes that the first slogans shouted by the demonstrators targeted the Tibetan elite, and a Tibetan official dressed in Chinese attire was killed and dragged around the market in Lhasa. Only later did the demonstration become more consistently anti-Chinese and he notes: “The demonstration thus displayed the gulf between the people and the aristocracy in Tibet. It also marked the irreparable breakdown of the relationship between the Chinese and the Tibetan masses” (Shakya 1999:195). He noted that the language used to describe the demonstrators— crowd, people, “masses”—has obvious limitations. For the Tibetan masses, although the central issue seems to the question of the Dalai Lama’s safety, power, and

status (which the Tibetans commonly referred to as *go gnas*), this perceived decline in the Dalai Lama's authority was more complex than a mere loss of political power in the Western sense; it was equated with the degeneration of Buddhist Tibet (Shakya 1999: 209).

The historical narration and documentation of the Uprising are largely based on secondary and tertiary discourses and sources, which removes it further from the crucial contexts that led to the eventual uprising in 1959. Nonetheless, for the Tibetan exiles, the popular uprising of the Tibetan people in Lhasa on 10 March 1959 against the Chinese rule was the culmination and continuation of the Tibetan nationalist movement which started with the Chinese entry into Tibet in 1950. From the Chinese perspective it was the successful crushing of the rebellion led by imperialist and reactionary forces that firmly brought Tibet into the motherland. We do not know much about the lay people's reasons and motivations for participating in the Uprising and their voices are subsumed by the two larger competing national narratives. Even when the voices of ordinary people are incorporated into the two larger narratives, it is to reinforce the dominant official national narrative rather than give space and voices to alternative and critical stories. The historical events leading up to the Uprising in one sense culminated in homogenizing "Tibetan identity" through a discourse of common ethnicity, religion and culture, civilization, and language. The period of uneasy calm from 1950 to 1959 contributed to concretization of a pan-Tibetan nationalism that built upon a primordial sense of shared identity in the concept of Tibetans as 'the insiders' (*nang pa*), and their identification of others as 'outsiders' (*phyi pa*) (Norbu 1994) and in the process overrode internal divisions.

The intertwining of religion and politics became more vexing as China continues to crack down on the religious motive that is seen as a proxy for Tibetan independence that in one sense led to the ethnic unrests in 2008. It further confounds the works of historians and modern Tibet

scholars in incorporating the religious or the supernatural to explain historical events, in some ways similar to what Jennifer Cole (2001) found in her work on the limitations of the Western theories of memory to explain the working of collective memory and politics in the case of Madagascar. There is definitely the tension of analytically distinguishing between religious beliefs and cultural practices, and the pervasive influence of “religion” in Tibet is often represented as constituting the essential element of “Tibetan exceptionalism” (Hansen 2003:11). I would argue that Tibet is not really exceptional but there is a crucial need to conduct ethnographic research to understand the complex relationship between religion and politics by making these relationships an object of anthropological analysis. This would help to ground religion and politics by acknowledging the plurality and contestations of voices and agency in the historian’s narrative by incorporating critical analyses of popular memories and national myths into academic histories.

So far, I have discussed how the narratives from the official Chinese and Tibetan sides tend to give much less attention to historical continuities before and after the uprising. In the mid-1950s, the revolts in eastern Tibet that led to the formation of the first resistance group, and the birth of Mimang Tsongdu, movements essentially founded to ensure the safety of the Dalai Lama, are complexities that are obscured by the nationalist narratives from both the Chinese and Tibetans in what Shakya calls a “denial of history” (1999: xxii) or McGranahan refers to as “arrested histories” (2005). To understand better how this denial or silencing of history takes place in the Tibetan exile context, I now turn to the issue of imagined nationhood, or nation without territory, in order to examine the Tibetan exile narrative on the Tibet issue.

2.6. Tibetan Exile's Imagined Nationhood or Nation without Territory

In the aftermath the March 1959 Uprising and political and social upheavals after China's assertion of control over Tibet, the Dalai Lama and thousands of Tibetans came into exile and sought asylum primarily in India but with a sizeable population ending up in the neighboring countries of Nepal and Bhutan. The experience of displacement and living in exile for the past five decades has brought in new means of imagining their existence and identities. Living in exile brought an increasing accumulation of ideas and imaginations that reinforce collective memories and identities: discourse on human rights, democracy, environment, and self-determination have become integral parts of the Tibetan exile's struggle for their imagined nationhood. I have referred to them as "strategic essentialisms", a form of "reverse orientalism" (Anand 2010, Magnusson 2002, Huber 2001) to gather international sympathy and outside political support for the Tibetan cause. The Tibetan exiles under the leadership of the Dalai Lama has very early on focused on the preservation of their culture and identity as the main purpose of their exile existence, and have sought to establish separate settlements where the Tibetans could live together and stress on education and collective identity.

After coming into exile, the pre-1950 era's divisions and difference across regional and religious line were subsumed by an exile narrative that stresses pan-Tibetan identity and unity. Strategic representations by the Tibetan exile leaders have greatly impacted Tibetan narratives and identities both internally and externally. To the outside world, especially the West, the Tibetan exiles have successfully used strategic representations as a form of "soft power" (Magnusson 2002) to gather international sympathy and audiences, largely due to the

international appeal of the Dalai Lama and the romantic images of Tibet as the mythical Shangri La in the West (Magnusson 2002). In the process, electronic mass media also became a form of global “weapon of the weak” (Scott 1985) that could be used to reach across national and political boundaries. Interestingly, in the aftermath of self-immolations all over the Tibetan Plateau since 2009 and the consequent lockdown by the Chinese state denying the foreign media access to Tibetan areas, mobile phones and social media have become very important source of information flow between Tibet and the rest of the world.

At the same time, these strategic representations have resulted in an elitist and essentialized view of Tibet, the Tibetan exiles and their struggle. This essentialized image of the Tibetan exiles and Tibetan struggle is closely linked with the master narrative from the Tibetan government in exile and its supporters. The exile leadership has created a sense of Tibetan-ness that is primarily based on religiosity, suffering, and peaceful resistance. In the process, suffering, hardship, religious fervor of dedication, and stories of Chinese oppression become symbolic realities of Tibetan existence. Furthermore, the exile’s representations of Tibetans as non-violent and as having always lived in harmony with nature became a dominant part of the discourse starting in the early 1980s. The Tibetan narrative calls for protection of Tibet’s environment not only for its own sake but for global significance due to Tibet’s unique location as the source of many of Asia’s major rivers. Huber (2001) sees these strategic representations or essentialisms as appealing to potential supporters sharing similar liberal norms and values for the Tibetan cause. In the making of collective memory, Connerton (2008) argues that forgetting is as crucial as remembering and suggests seven types of forgetting practices that involve different agents and happen at different levels. Among the seven, he attributes the first two, “repressive erasure” and “prescriptive forgetting”, to the state and national agency in the construction of new identity. In

the case of the Tibetan exile narrative template, what is silenced or “forgotten” is essentially the heterogeneity in the exile Tibetan community or frictions along regional and religious lines which is veiled through the emphasis on national unity in the form of a pan-Tibetan identity that is rooted in the shared cultural and political imaginary. McGranahan (2005) uses the term “arrested histories” to refer to the silencing aspect of the exile national narrative, through which Tibetans who were part of the violent resistance to China during the 1960s and 1970s are silenced or censored from voicing their experiences and narratives because of the divisive influence it could have.

What the exile national narrative template does is to define and contextualize individual lives and in the process create a collective memory by elevating a pan-Tibetan identity above sectarian and regional identities. It promotes an image of peaceful and religiously focused resistance made possible through the influence of the Dalai Lama and his international appeal. Displacement and living in diaspora has also helped to forge a strong deterritorialized identity within the exile community by emphasizing similarity in political experiences over other differences based on socio-economic status, region, and religious sect within the exile community. In the process, personal memories and experiences are overridden by a collective memory that focuses on a monolithic suffering and religiosity to gain international audiences and support.

2.6.1 Tibet as the Dalai Lama

The Dalai Lama constantly tells the media wherever he visits that he has given up independence or separation from the Chinese nation-state and that he is seeking a genuine autonomy for all the Tibetans inside Tibet, a political solution that is framed as mutually beneficial to both the

Chinese and Tibetans. In 2008, the Tibetan government in exile, through the special envoys of the Dalai Lama, presented to its Chinese counterparts the official demands of the Tibetan people in a document titled, *Memorandum on Genuine Autonomy for the Tibetan People*. However, Beijing still views the Dalai Lama's stance that history is something that is best left up to the historians as an indication that he has not given up the desire for independence. Furthermore, the exile's claim of genuine autonomy that includes all the ethnic Tibetan regions, referred to as "greater Tibet", is another political obstacle to the negotiation process between the Dalai Lama's envoys and Beijing. Beijing continues to denounce the Dalai Lama as a "separatist" with the intention of breaking up China and scheming to revive the feudal serfdom in Tibet. Since 1994, display and indeed possession of his photographs have been banned, and as part of "patriotic education" campaigns, monks and nuns have been required to personally denounce him and to "draw a clear line" between themselves and the "Dalai clique" (Barnett 2009). Elaborate struggle between Tibetans and the apparatuses of the state takes place in Tibet whereby public spaces are strictly monitored and investigated for any hidden meanings and references to the Dalai Lama. For instance, Tibetan singers land in trouble for songs seen to be referring to or having hidden meanings about the Dalai Lama or Tibetan nationalism. The strong reactions from the state and increased official criticisms of the Dalai Lama in the state media seems to have the opposite effect of reinforcing the sense of "imagined nationhood" among the Tibetan populace across Tibet. An internal memo of the Chinese Communist Party's Commission for Discipline Inspection of the TAR accused the "internal dissidents within our Party" of "*suckling at the breast of the Chinese Communist Party, while calling the Dalai Lama mother,*" implying that some Tibetans were simply using the Party while secretly following the Dalai Lama (Radio Free Asia 2007).

What does the figure of the Dalai Lama signify for Tibetans inside Tibet and those in exile? The Tibetan exile Charter or Constitution opens with the following introductory statement: “Where ever there is the Kashag and the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan people will accept it as the legitimate government of Tibet.” In April 1959, the Dalai Lama gave the above statement in a press release from his temporary residence of Mussorrie in Northern India, signaling not only the establishment of a Tibetan government in exile but also its historical continuity and legitimacy for the Tibetans. A few days later, the Government of India came out with a press statement there is no government in exile in India and the Dalai Lama was informed that the Indian government does not support the idea of the Tibetan government in exile. The official name of the Tibetan government in exile became the Central Tibetan Administration of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. However, if national loyalty and legitimacy are the sole criteria of an exile government, as Yossi Shain argues (1989), then it is safe to argue that Central Tibetan Administration is the sole legitimate government of Tibet for the majority of exiles. This legitimacy once deeply Buddhist and hegemonic has now become political as well because the exile government is a fully functioning democracy, albeit a nascent democracy, after the Dalai Lama devolve all political powers invested in him by the Tibetan exile charter to a democratically elected political leadership in March 2011.

If the process of collective remembering is not just how individuals relate to each other but how a special link is formed to a definite event or issue, in the Tibetan case, the historical and contemporary relations of the Tibetan people to the iconic figure of the Dalai Lama can be said to embody the Tibetan national identity. In her doctoral study on Tibetan refugees, Margaret Nowak views the Dalai Lama as the “summarizing symbol”, a concept that brings disparate meanings together in “an emotionally powerful and socially undifferentiated way”(1984:117).

This concept is however rooted in the idea of individual charisma and traditional authority, and fails to capture the changing political and institutionalized practices. In expanding upon Weber's notion of individual charisma and traditional authority, Stanley Tambiah in his studies of Buddhist revival in Sri Lanka and Thailand argues the need to address the collective nature of charisma and how charisma in the Buddhist context could be viewed as the symbiotic effort of personal charisma and institutionalized practices (Tambiah 1996). One very common term that my research subjects use to identify the Tibetan nationhood is *Bod bstan pa chab srid* or *Bod bstan srid* (Tibetan Dharma and Politics). For instance, the preamble of the exile Charter refers to the Dalai Lama as the "protector and symbol" of the Tibetan nation. The Exile Charter also still retains the term *chos srid zung 'brel*, (union of the spiritual and the political). Although the Dalai Lama has devolved all political powers to the democratically elected leadership in March 2011 and termed this act the fulfillment of a long cherished dream of a fully democratized Tibetan society, Tibetans inside and outside Tibet still look up to the Dalai Lama as their leader. One common slogan amongst the 129 self-immolators inside Tibet since 2009 is the call for the return of the Dalai Lama. Since 1985, the Dalai Lama has been saying that he might be the last Dalai Lama, and he stresses the point that whether the Dalai Lama institution will continue in the future depends on the Tibetan people.

To understand the institutionalized practice through which the Dalai Lama is viewed, I discuss here how the Tibetan exile struggle is framed. Under the political leadership of the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan government in exile describes the goal of the Tibetan struggle as:

The purpose of the Tibetans in exile is two-fold, viz., to seek justice for our homeland and, to preserve our identity and language by practicing our culture and traditions. The first purpose is dependent on many factors including international situation, political changes within China etc. that are beyond our control... The second purpose is not dependent on external factors and can be fulfilled by every Tibetans in exile, irrespective of gender, age and education, whether lay or monk/nun. (CTA 2003:17)

What is this Tibetan identity based on culture and traditions? Is it based on some essential Tibetan Buddhist values and ideals? How are the two stated goals of CTA, the goal of seeking justice for the homeland and preserving Tibetan culture and tradition reconciled and put into practice? Here, I emphasize the fact that the Tibetan common cause espoused by the Dalai Lama and the current exile leadership shares lots of similarities with a historical project of cultural resistance and revitalization, *Gandhian Utopia*, which Fox describes as a form of cultural innovation occurring in the context of people's resistance to and struggle against cultural meanings. Fox presents Gandhian utopia as "a set or structure of cultural meanings" and as a "dream of a future India, perfected on the basis of its presumed ancient culture" (1989:37), a form of "affirmative Orientalism" that strives to uphold the positive aspects of Indian culture while rejecting its negative aspects, such as the caste system and sectarian politics (1989:107). This historical project of cultural resistance has strong resonance with the exile Tibetan leaders' project of reconstructing their culture through a practice of cultural resistance and revitalization that is dialectic with the repressive state policies of China and also ignores many of the historical inequities that characterized Tibet. Both the Dalai Lama and the first directly elected leader of the Tibetan exiles, Prime Minister Samdhong Rinpoche, are admirers of Gandhian philosophy of non-violence and truth. In addition to the Dalai Lama's promotion of non-violence and his future vision of Tibet as a zone of *ahimsa* (avoidance of violence) and demilitarized zone of peace, the Central Tibetan Administration under Samdhong Rinpoche has actively adopted the principles of non-violence, sustainability, truth and democratic governance as 'directive principles' of the exile government. This policy has translated into the selection of Doeguling as a model Tibetan Cooperative society in 2005, and one village has been selected as a model organic farming

village in 2007, with the plan to convert the whole settlement to organic farming. These cultural practices of environmental sustainability and non-violence complicates the charges of strategic essentialisms associated with the exile self-representation of “green” Tibetans or “non-violent” and “peace loving” Tibetans (Huber 1998, Lopez 1998). It is evident that it is not only strategic deployment of certain self-representations for garnering international political support for the Tibetan cause, but also part of how the Tibetan exiles are reconstructing and appropriating certain external values and ideas into their own value systems.

2.7 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have contextualized the historical and geopolitical contexts within which the Tibetan exile construct a collective identity by examining the three broad arenas of interaction: dealing with the international geopolitical order and community for outside political and material support for the Tibetan cause, confronting Chinese state building and its effort to incorporate Tibet into modern China; and within the Tibetan exile community to forge a national identity. I discussed how historical representations are constructed through national narratives and collective memory in order to serve the very important function of nation-building and the related project of fostering national identity and unity for both the Chinese and Tibetans. I also discussed some key components of the national narrative template of the Tibetan exiles and how it serves an important cultural tool in providing a simplified and readily understood view that obscures or silences ambiguities and contradictions that challenges that narrative. In the process, I have attempted to lay out the historical context for interpreting ethnographic accounts of the lived social reality of the Tibetan exiles by introducing a more nuanced understanding of the blurred lines between the externally-oriented discourse (toward the West to garner sympathy, a

form of “strategic essentialisms”) and the internally-oriented discourse (to reconstruct a strong sense of imagined nationhood and national identity, a form of “invention of tradition”).

In the next chapter, I examine more closely the history and development of Tibetan exiles in India due to the historical displacement of 1959 and discuss how Tibetans have made India their “second homeland”, that is, the site of Tibetan collective struggle as well as preservation of Tibetan cultural and national identity. The first part provides a brief historical perspective on Tibetan exiles in India and documents the role of the Tibetan government in exile, the Indian government and international development agencies in the rehabilitation of Tibetan refugees in India. The second part introduces the primary fieldwork site of Doeguling and provides a descriptive analyses of the fieldwork site to set up the background political, socio-economic and demographic structures for my later discussion of tensions between mobility and settlement.

Chapter Three: Recreating Tibetan Spaces in India

In the preceding chapter on reconstructing collective identity in exile, I discussed the historical and geopolitical contexts within which construction of collective identity takes place within the exile community. In this chapter, I discuss recreating of Tibetan spaces in India through the establishment of separate Tibetan settlements in India. Until the middle of last century, India assumed a highly idealized place in the Tibetan imagination and was referred to as the Holy Land due to its association with the origin of Buddhism. The historical displacement of 1959 that led to the settling of Tibetans in India has transformed this idealized image of India; over the past five decades, Tibetans have made India their “second homeland”, that is, the site of Tibetan collective struggle as well as preservation of Tibetan cultural and national identity. Right after coming into exile, the Dalai Lama, then 25 years old and entrusted with the huge challenges of leading the Tibetan people in arguably its darkest period of modern history, initiated the following three projects in India: a) the establishment of Tibetan settlements, b) the establishment of separate

schools for Tibetan children, and c) the establishment of non-sectarian monastic institutes to rehabilitate the Tibetan monks who had just fled their homeland. The above three projects, as I demonstrate in this chapter, are intimately connected with the project of reconstructing Tibetan culture and nationhood in exile. In retrospect, the Tibetan exiles view these projects as visionary and crucial to the survival of Tibetan national and cultural identity in exile.

This chapter is divided into two broad sections. First, based primarily on archival research, I present a brief history and development of Tibetan exiles in India and document the role of the Tibetan government in exile, the Indian government and international development agencies in the rehabilitation of Tibetan refugees in India. Second, I introduced the fieldwork site of Doeguling, one of largest Tibetan settlements in India, and document its early establishment history. I then provide more descriptive analyses of the physical layout, demographic structure, governance, and livelihood strategies of the settlement. In other words, this chapter provides historical and descriptive information on Doeguling and sets the foundation for my later discussions of the Tibetan exile practice of maintaining the settlement as separate Tibetan space in India, the local Indo-Tibetan interface, and the increasing feelings of insecurity and vulnerability due to their protracted stay in India, their ambiguous legal status, and their place in Indian society.

3.1 History and Development of Tibetan Exiles in India

Tibetan exiles have been the subject of much academic research, but Tibetan settlements as the primary object of study have so far received little attention. This is partly explained by the question of access to the Tibetan settlements, which are considered as ‘restricted’ or ‘protected

areas' by the government of India.¹³ For many researchers, it has been easier to conduct studies in less restricted areas in places like Dharamasala (De Voe 1983, Nowak 1984), Darjeeling (Subba 1990, Saklani 1989), and Nepal (von Furer-Haimendorf 1990, Corlin 1975, Forbes 1989). Dharamasala, for the obvious reasons of easy access and being the center of the Tibetan exile politics, is over represented in the study of Tibetan exiles.

General information on the early years of the Tibetan settlements in South India can be gleaned from the reports by the CTA, development officials and organizations (Woodcock 1970, Conway 1975, Pulman 1989) and a travelogue (Powell 1980). One anthropological study was conducted in the 1960s in the first Tibetan settlement established in India near Bylakuppe but its focus was on the traditional Tibetan socio-political organization of the pre-1950 Tibetan administrative system. Nevertheless, a paper was published on the impacts of Tibetan settlement on the local economy and Indo-Tibetan relationship (Goldstein 1975).

There have been only two comprehensive research studies on the Tibetan settlements in South India. Both were conducted in the 1970s by Indian anthropologists on Doeguling Tibetan settlement near Mundgod in Karnataka—the same settlement I chose for this dissertation fieldwork. The two studies focused on “uprootedness” and the process of adaptation, and used primarily household surveys through the help of Tibetan interpreters to assess change and adaptation of the Tibetan society. The two studies provide a very general description on the organization and rehabilitation of the Tibetan settlement (Palakshappa 1989, Arakeri 1998). Two more recent papers on the first Tibetan settlement in India, Lungsung Samdupling Settlement

¹³Any foreigner, including (technically) any Tibetan who is settled abroad, needs a special permit called the Protected Area Permit (PAP) from India's Ministry of Home Affairs to enter and stay in the Tibetan settlements. The restriction came about when the Tibetans were resettled in the non-Himalayan part of India. Thus, the Tibetan settlements in Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh (now Chattisgarh), Orissa, and Maharashtra are all designated as 'protected areas'. For entry into the Tibetan settlements in Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal, it is not required to have PAP, but it is increasingly become more monitored due to recent incidents of foreigners found living and staying in some monasteries.

near Bylakuppe in Karnataka state have reconstructed the early history and development of Tibetan exiles through archival research, retrospective interviews, and demographic analyses (Magnusson 2010, Magnusson et al 2008).

To give an overall picture of refugees in India, different groups have received different treatment and identities from the Indian state. The first refugees in the aftermath of the Partition of India from Pakistan in 1947 become Indian citizens; followed by the refugees from Bangladesh after 1971 Indo-Pak War who were repatriated; and in the case of Tamil refugees from Sri Lanka, some have repatriated and some continue to live in and out of camps (Tarodi 2011, Samaddar 2003, Chimni 2003). In contrast to the other groups, it is commonly assumed that the Tibetans received preferential treatment from the Indian government. The Tibetans differ from other refugee groups in India in that they have a central administration under the leadership of the Dalai Lama, which has been given a tacit form of recognition by the Indian state. In general, India's policy on the Tibetans to date shares two important features: first, the policy of not exerting pressure on the Tibetans to become Indian citizens or be repatriated, and second, the policy of minimal interference in the internal matters of the Tibetans. It could be also argued that the generous and preferential treatment of Tibetans in India fitted very well with the normative anti-assimilation model of India's "multicultural democracy" that gives explicit state recognition and protection to religious, linguistic, and cultural diversities (Mahajan 2005).

India's position on Tibet was deeply influenced by the British colonial legacy. During British colonial rule, Tibetans did not require passports and visas to enter India; this practice continued until 1950 when the number of Tibetans entering India began to increase after the so-called 'peaceful liberation' of Tibet by China. It was only after the mass exodus of 1959 that India was forced to rethink the large presence of Tibetans in the country. In 1951, the

Government of India reported the total number of Tibetans in India as 4,774 (TPPRC 2009:53). In response to the steady increase in number of Tibetans before 1959, India began to register the Tibetan population and some Tibetans recall about India's plan to deport the newly arrived Tibetans. Among them were many ordinary Tibetans who came under the guise of pilgrims as well as wealthy Tibetan noble families and merchants who had moved their portable wealth to India. The latter group lived mainly in the Darjeeling-Kalimpong region and Calcutta and sent their young children to private schools.

In the spring of 1959, the exodus began on large scale, and thousands of Tibetans crossed the borders into India, Nepal and Bhutan to seek asylum in the aftermath of the flight of the Dalai Lama into exile. On April 4, 1959, the Indian government, in anticipation of a large influx of Tibetan refugees and based on its own experience of dealing with refugees from the Partition of India, formed the Central Relief Committee for Tibetan Refugees (CRCT)—an autonomous body headed by Archarya JB Kripalani, the then leader of the opposition in India's parliament. This organization was responsible for the coordination of both domestic and international relief efforts on behalf of the Tibetan refugees in India (Oberoi 2006:88). Soon after, the Ministry of External Affairs was given the responsibility of overseeing the administration of relief and rehabilitation of Tibetan refugees, and a senior official in the ministry, B N Nanda (fondly remembered by the Dalai Lama and older Tibetan officials) was appointed "Officer on Special Duty" (CTA 1970).

India set up two main transit camps in Missamari and Buxa Duar in the northeastern states of Assam and West Bengal as a temporary relief measure. Makeshift camps were also set up at the border region by the army in Ladakh in the northwestern state of Jammu and Kashmir. The Indian government provided food, clothing, and medical aid. Soon the government was

overwhelmed with the large numbers of Tibetan refugees in a short time in these transit camps. A CTA report on the first ten years in exile notes how within a few weeks after the setting up the two transit camps, 6,000 refugees arrived at Missamari and 1,000 at Buxa Duar, overwhelming the capacity of the camps to provide immediate relief. Between 1959 and 1960, 167 children and 65 adults died at the Missamari camp due to heat and diseases (Department of Home 2010: xv). The exodus of Tibetans continued in a steady trickle throughout the 1960s. Most of the Tibetans from the Western Tibet continue to arrive in the late 1960s (some Tibetans from Doeguling Tibetan settlement recall coming to India as late as 1967).

With regard to the transit camps, one Western development official notes that “The Indian government avoided as far as possible the creation of the kind of large-scale refugee centers that so quickly take on the form of concentration camps (though one tuberculosis-ridden “temporary” settlement of 1,200 monks at Buxa near the Bhutanese border did acquire a justly unsavoury reputation during the decade before it was dispersed in 1969)” (Woodcock 1970:412). The Indian government also faced certain political constraints arising out of large camps for Tibetan refugees. First, the international political concern of maintaining peace with China, and second the domestic political concern due to “the possibility of discontent among Bengali refugees if they had any reason to believe the Tibetans were better treated than they” (Woodcock 1970:412).

The initial years of aid to Tibetans between 1959 and 1964 was described as “haphazard and dominated by sense of emergency” (Woodcock 1970: 415). The Tibetan survivors described it as period when only “the open sky and the earth were familiar.”¹⁴ Some Tibetans recall begging for alms in the Indian villages and working for food from the Indian Army stationed

¹⁴ The commonly used Tibetan phrase is *gnam dang sa ma gtogs ngo mi shes pa* to described the totally alien environment they arrived.

along the borders. Before the resettlement projects were initiated, the immediate problem was saving the Tibetan refugees from “starvation.” Many less fortunate Tibetans who did not possess any personal jewels and religious objects to sell resorted to begging by joining the “existing mendicant population of India, living for periods of months and years on begging and small distribution of food by missionaries or relief organizations” (Woodcock 1970:415). Tanka B. Subba in his study of Tibetan refugees in Darjeeling and Sikkim areas characterizes the initial years from 1959 to the establishment of settlements as “the phase of alm collectors” (1990:4). He recalls as a young boy he would see at least two to three Tibetans every day visiting Indian homes to collect alms; and they would be seen carrying a sling bag on their shoulders and a rosary in their hands and reciting the mantra *om mani padme hum* as they went around begging (1990:40).

As more refugees started to arrive, the Indian government decided to disperse them for road building projects in the cooler regions of North India to prevent fatalities due to intense heat, overcrowding, and epidemics of amoebic dysentery and tuberculosis. The first batch of 3,394 people was sent for roadwork in Sikkim in September 1959 (CTA 1970). Soon after, most of these refugees were transferred to the cooler climates in the Himalayas, mainly in the state of Himachal Pradesh, along the 95 road construction sites established by the Indian government for the Tibetan refugees as a temporary measure. They were employed in the improvement of mountain roads for the better surveillance of the India’s northern borders. The older refugees recall the unsanitary and hazardous living conditions; most live in tents or improvised hovels. The Tibetans organized themselves into road gangs (Tib. *brgya shog* literally meaning hundred wings or units) under a group leader (Tib. *brgya dpon* or leader of hundred who was helped by

sections leaders, Tib. *bcu dpon*, or leader of ten).¹⁵ The more fortunate refugees found themselves in the handicrafts centers newly established in Dharamsala, Dalhousie, Darjeeling, Simla and Kalimpong. A few young Tibetans were sent to industrial training centers all over India.

From 1959 to 1962, some of the prominent international agencies were CARE, Red Cross, YMCA, Catholic Relief Services, Tibet Society of UK, TRAS Canada, Schweizer Tibethilfe, and AECTR or American Emergency Committee for Tibetan Refugees (Woodcock 1970). Most of the international development agencies continued to help until the Tibetan settlements became self-supporting. The UNHCR provided support for Tibetans for a few years in the 1960s but it stopped its operation in India after China gained entry into the United Nations in 1971. The Indian government's attitude toward foreign volunteers working among the Tibetans also hardened by the end of 1962 due to, as Woodcock says, "a tactless criticism of Indian official policy published by a young Dutch volunteer who had returned home led to a ban by the Indian Government on individual volunteers working among the Tibetans" (1970:411). By 1966, a few foreign voluntary organizations were told to leave. AECTR stopped its operations abruptly in 1968 when China-USA contact began (Grunfeld 1987:1990).

Right after coming into exile, Tibetans began to organize themselves under the central administration of the Dalai Lama. On 25 April, 1959 the Dalai Lama called an emergency meeting in Mussoorie of the few senior Tibetan officials who accompanied him from Tibet and those who arrived earlier in India to discuss the current situation and future direction of the Tibetan cause (Phuntso and Dongchung 1985:23). The meeting resulted in the re-establishment

¹⁵ According to Dawa Norbu this "decimally" based organization of people has its historical origins from imperial Tibet and later under Mongol military organization (2001:217). The village leaders in the Tibetan settlements are also commonly referred as *brgya dpon* along with its more modern term *spyi mi* (community leader).

of the Tibetan government in exile and the twin goals of the CTA: seeking justice for Tibet and rehabilitating Tibetan refugees in exile. The first goal focused on pursuing the Tibetan issue at the United Nations and gathering and disseminating information regarding the plight of Tibetans inside and outside Tibet. The second goal of rehabilitation involved educating the Tibetan children, preserving the Tibetan culture and identity, and promoting unity among the Tibetan refugee community.¹⁶ Although India officially recognized neither the Dalai Lama as a head of state nor his government in exile, in practice the Indian government and most foreign agencies dealt directly with the Dalai Lama's administration or the CTA in coordinating, selecting, and organizing the Tibetan refugees into different settlement projects.¹⁷

Right from the beginning, the nascent Tibetan government in exile under the Dalai Lama worked systematically to locate and organize Tibetan refugees into groups and coordinate with the Indian authorities in their settlement projects. During this period, there was an acute need of staff with English skills and modern education. Many children of aristocratic families studying in the Indian schools joined the Tibetan administration. Under the newly established Tibetan government in exile, the pre-1959 practice of hereditary appointments to the civil service and

¹⁶ On 28 April, 1959, the Dalai Lama announced the re-establishment of the Tibetan government in exile, and a quote from the above statement, "Wherever I (the Dalai Lama) and my Kashag (Tibetan Cabinet) reside, the Tibetan people will recognize it as the legitimate government of Tibet" is cited in the preamble the Tibetan Exile Charter to emphasize the continuity of Gaden Phodrang Government from pre-1950 Tibet as the legitimate government of Tibet and Tibetans in exile.

¹⁷ A few days after the Dalai Lama's press state on the re-establishment of Tibetan government in exile, the Indian government came out with a press statement saying that there is no government in exile on Indian soil. The Dalai Lama was advised against carrying out any political activities. The Tibetan government in exile was conveniently named Central Tibetan Administration of the Dalai Lama in English, while in the Tibetan language it was referred to as the Tibetan government in exile. On May 1, 1960 at the suggestion of the Indian government, the Dalai Lama moved to Dharamsala along with newly established Tibetan government in exile. Some see this as a move by India to shift the Dalai Lama to a remote place to reduce international attention on the Tibetan issue. India understandably was caught in a bind; on the one hand, India and its people deeply sympathized with the plight of the Tibetan people while on the other hand, the geopolitical reality meant that Indian could not afford to antagonize China. The brief war of 1962 between China and India became a huge factor when India became more overtly supportive of the Tibetan refugees. However, on the political front, the Indian government has taken a consistent stand to recognize Tibet as "an autonomous region" of China.

appointments of monk and lay offices to each administrative office was abolished under a new constitution promulgated by the Dalai Lama in 1960 (TPPRC 2012:13). His young age, international stature and charisma, and the exile conditions all contributed to the uncontested leadership of the Dalai Lama and use of the institution of the Dalai Lama to introduce drastic changes in the Tibetan exile society including democratic reforms that led to the election of one representative from each of the four religious sects and three representatives from each of the three provinces (*chol kha gsum*).¹⁸

It was also a period when the sectarian and regional differences of pre-1959 Tibet era were elided in order to create a unified pan-Tibetan national identity under the CTA. There were instances of a few regional and sectarian groups that remained independent of the CTA; some foreign agencies dealt with them directly in the early years (Woodcock 1970, Roemer 2008:117). In 1965, Tibetans belonging to certain regional and sectarian groups formed a separate association calling themselves ‘thirteen associations’ (*tshogs pa bcu gsum*) that remained independent of the CTA (Roemer 2008:72). In 1971 this group petitioned the Indian government for Indian citizenship, which was firmly opposed by the CTA (De Voe 1987:56, Saklani 1998:353).

Right from the beginning, educating children was treated as a matter of utmost priority through the establishment of separate schools. The first Tibetan school in exile was founded in 1960 at Mussorrie with the initial funding provided by the Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama and many Tibetan exiles fondly remember the special and personal interests that the Indian Prime

¹⁸ On September 2, 1960 the newly elected representatives took their oath of office and this legislative body was named Commission of Tibetan People’s Deputies, which later became the Assembly of Tibetan People’s Deputies also called the Tibetan Parliament in exile. The above day has since been commemorated as Democracy Day and is a Tibetan national holiday. The term *chol kha gsum*, meaning the three provinces of Tibet, was a recent historical development to foster pan-Tibetan unity.

Minister Nehru took in the education of Tibetan children. A Tibetan School Society (later renamed as Central Tibetan Schools Administration) was established in 1961 under the Ministry of Human Resources which continues to provide full financing for schools. This society soon took over the financial responsibility of five residential or boarding school (Mussoorie, Simla, Dalhousie, Kalimpong, and Darjeeling) which were initially established through the help from different voluntary foreign agencies. A few more residential schools were set up in Mount Abu and Panchmari. These schools were set up for children above five years of age who were taken from their parents working in the road construction camps. This also started an important practice of sending young children to residential schools because the parents view it as imparting better educational opportunities as well as instilling Tibetan values and national identity. A nursery for orphaned and destitute children called Tibetan Children Nursery (later named Tibetan Children's Village) in was set up in 1961 by the Dalai Lama's sisters. This school has served thousands of Tibetan children both within exile and new arrivals from Tibet. Another school called Tibetan Homes Foundation was founded in 1963 by Mrs. Rinchen Dolma Taring, an educated Tibetan noble woman, and her husband.¹⁹

As early as 1959, the Dalai Lama had anticipated an urgent need for long-term rehabilitation of the Tibetan refugees and envisioned forming large, homogenous Tibetan communities to perpetuate Tibetan language, religion, culture, and national identity. The Indian government under then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru was approached for assistance. In the early 1960s, wide tracts of uninhabited forestlands were made available for the rehabilitation of Tibetan refugees after the Prime Minister wrote to different states. The Indian states that

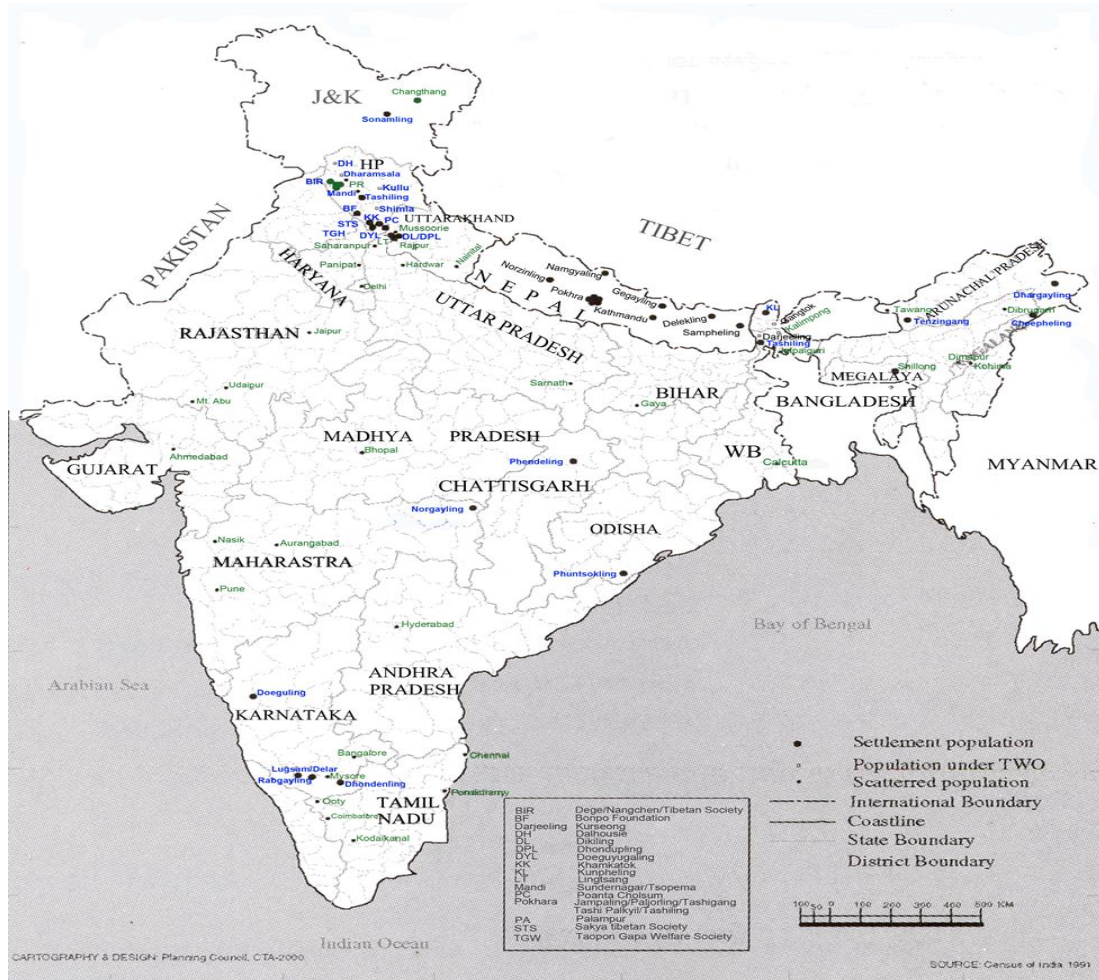
¹⁹ In addition to the Tibetan schools funded by India through CTSA, TCV and THF schools funded primarily through foreign voluntary agencies are an important part of the Tibetan exile school system; the latter two serve primarily orphaned and destitute children in exile and children from Tibet.

volunteered to grant Tibetans land include Karnataka, Orissa, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh. The first state to respond was Karnataka (then Mysore State) which offered forested land in the Cauvery River Valley. The first Tibetan settlement in South India was founded in 1960 near Bylakuppe on 3,000 acres of land. Karnataka state was itself an “underdeveloped” region and Goldstein noted that some Indian politicians expected economic development of backward rural areas through the Tibetan resettlement projects (Goldstein 1975). The Tibetans view the decision of Karnataka in more humanitarian terms.²⁰ Karnataka gradually offered more land for resettlement between 1960 and 1975, leading to four other settlements of Doeguling near Mundgod, Dickey Larsoe near Bylakuppe, Rabgyaling near Hunsur, and Dhondenling near Kollegal. Today, these five agricultural settlements form the largest cluster of the Tibetan exile population in India.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the government of India took the full responsibility of rehabilitating the Tibetan refugees; it delegated the Ministry of Rehabilitation, also known as the Department of Rehabilitation (originally established by the Indian government to rehabilitate India’s Partition refugees) to implement the project through the Tibetan Refugee Rehabilitation Scheme (TRRS). After both the Indian government and the CTA agreed on the long term rehabilitation of Tibetans in permanent settlements, the resettlement projects became more coordinated and focused; India depended on the international relief and aid agencies like UNHCR and bilateral agencies for funding. By 1968, one concrete result was the establishment of an Indian NGO dedicated to the rehabilitation of Tibetan refugees called Mysore Rural and Agricultural Development Authority (MYRADA), with a seed funding of 3.5 million dollars

²⁰ For example, the Dalai Lama in his speeches recall the then Chief Minister Ninjalingappa (also a former president of Indian National Congress) as a personal friend whom he met first in 1956 and who was a sympathizer of the Tibetan people.

from the Common Project for Tibetan Refugees from European Refugee Commission and additional funding from USA, Australia and other Western Countries. MYRADA played a crucial role in developing the infrastructure for permanent settlement of Tibetans in Karnataka. The Indian government also made a condition that the local neighboring India communities would receive development benefits to reduce any friction with the Tibetan community.²¹



Map of Tibetans settlements in India: Source: Department of Home, CTA.

²¹ MYRADA therefore initiated rural development for landless and tribal groups near all the four Tibetan settlements in Karnataka. MYRADA is today one the largest rural development NGOs in India and South Asia.

For the Tibetan administration, the ideal resettlement plan was to have all the Tibetans in one large homogenous area. But it turned out to be practically impossible due to the unavailability of such vast land as well as the potential political implication of forming a large Tibetan community in India. Thus, agricultural farming settlements were established mainly in the states of Karnataka, Maharashtra, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh. Today, there are about 58 Tibetan settlements established and administered by the CTA in India, Nepal and Bhutan. The settlements in India are directly administered by the CTA's Department of Home through its respective Representatives (commonly known as the settlement officer) or welfare officers; 15 of these are agricultural settlements, 14 handicraft based settlements, and 10 scattered or 'cluster' communities. The outreach of the CTA in the Tibetan settlements in Nepal and Bhutan is more tenuous and unstable due to the political circumstances and the geopolitical realities of small nation-states that are wedged between China and India (Frechette 2002, Tibet Justice Center 2010). The CTA administer the Tibetan settlements in Nepal presently through NGOs like the Snow Lion Foundation. In the case of Bhutan, the relationship is even more tenuous. In the 1970s, there were about nine Tibetan settlements with a total population of 4,000. In 1974 the royal Bhutanese government gave the Tibetan refugees an ultimatum either to become Bhutanese citizens (by cutting their hair and changing their dress habits) or be deported back to Tibet. Around 1,500 Tibetans refused to take Bhutanese citizenship and were accepted for rehabilitation by the Indian government on the request of the CTA. The majority of them were resettled in the two Tibetan settlements of Dickyiling near Rajpur in Uttarakhand and Doeguling near Mundgod in Karnataka. About 540 Tibetan refugees from Bhutan later became the ninth village of Doeguling Tibetan settlement.

3.2 Doeguling Tibetan Settlement: A Brief History

On June 6, 1966, at a meeting in Bangalore, the capital of Karnataka, a detailed plan was laid out on the implementation of the second Tibetan settlement in Karnataka through what was called the Tibetan Refugee Rehabilitation Scheme II (TRRSII). Karnataka State granted 4,000 acres of land in Malnad region in northern Karnataka to accommodate 4,000 people in a farming settlement. The estimated budget of this resettlement was around 15 million Indian Rupees; unlike the earlier Tibetan settlements elsewhere in India which were mainly supported by the Indian government, foreign voluntary agencies took up the maximum responsibility in establishing this settlement. The following international development agencies became closely involved in the initial establishment of Doeguling settlement: Swiss Technical Aid Mission, Sharan,²² Catholic Relief Services, Oxfam, CASA (Christian Association for Social Action, also known as World Christian Organization).

The majority of the original settlers were from the road construction camps in Dharamsala, Kulu, Ladakh, Simla, Dalhousie, and temporary refugee camps in UP. A small group of Tibetans were also sent from detention centers in Rajasthan and other places.²³ The Tibetans refugees were sent in batches by road and railway under escorts appointed by the Indian authorities. The first two batches of about 300 people arrived in November 1966 from road construction camps near Dharamsala. They were sent under escorts through Pathankot railway station to Hubli, then brought in transport trucks to Mundgod, and housed in tents. Later, bamboo huts, and mud houses were built as a temporary measure while the settlers cleared and

²² Also known as the Christian Agency for Rehabilitation of Tibetan Refugees which was very active in the initial years of rehabilitation of Tibetans in Doeguling Tibetan settlement from 1967 to 1969.

²³ These were mainly Tibetan refugees who arrived as individuals after the 1962 Sino-Indian War and were detained by the Indian intelligence agencies to verify their antecedents. Most of them were not allowed to leave the settlement for travel within India for many years.

burned the trees taken down by four bulldozers (two donated by UNHCR and one each by OXFAM UK and Swiss government) that were operated by the Swiss Technical Company, a mission set up the Swiss government to aid the Tibetan refugees. The operating expenses of fuel and drivers were provided by the Indian government while the maintenance and procurement of spare parts were provided by the Swiss government.

In addition to clearing and burning the trees uprooted by the bulldozers, the Tibetans also worked on making roads in the newly cleared forestland. Some older Tibetans recall that some of the forest was already cleared and had regrown, which supports Palakshappa's finding (1978) that the area was originally planned for rehabilitation of refugees from India's Partition era who later moved to cities, mostly in Ulhasnagar and Pimpri. A former Indian official who worked in the early rehabilitation project mentioned that only about five or six families of the original refugees stayed back. They form part of one Indian village near the Tibetan settlement.

In the years when the Tibetans were clearing the forest, drinking water was a major problem. Water, supplied by the Public Works Department (PWD), was rationed and Tibetans recall that two tractor loads of water was supplied to one *brgya shog* (hundred households) which has about 600 people and each person received about a handful of water. The Indian government gave food aid of bulgur wheat, cooking oil, and powdered milk, and daily wages for all the Tibetan workers during the land reclamation stage. Tibetans remember the image of a "hand sign" on the food aid, indicating that the Tibetan refugees received USAID PL 480 food aid to India that was routed through CRS.

Many older Tibetans remember the early days as very difficult period. At the same time, they say people were happy go lucky (*snang ba skyi bo*) and most believed that they would return to Tibet after a few years. They remember nostalgically the communitarian spirit of the

early years; after a day of hard manual work, bonfires would be made around and everyone would participate in folk dancing (*sgor gzhas*) and singing late into the night. A make-shift school was set up in tents for young children; and for those above 12 years old who went to work during the day, an evening school was arranged where they were taught basic Tibetan language. Many children were also studying at residential schools in Kalimpong and Simla when their parents moved to the settlement; some of them later came to the settlement for vacation, did not return to the schools, and ended up joining their parents.

After the land reclamation was completed in 1972, 4,055 acres of forest land was allotted by the Indian government on lease for 99 years, out of which 3,054 acres were distributed for agriculture and the remaining 1,001 acres were designated for building purposes and communal use.²⁴ The land and housing allocation was based on the administrative division of nine lay villages and two monastic villages. The two monastic villages consist of Drepung, Gaden, Sakya and Nyingma monasteries, representing the four sects of Tibetan Buddhism. All the monks who founded these monasteries came from the non-sectarian institute set up in Buxa and were part of 1,200 monks who were assembled by the CTA at a temporary center for continuing their Buddhist studies. The four monasteries formed a separate cooperative called the Tibetan Lama Cooperative Society Ltd in 1971. The general land distribution in the settlement was based on the original population recorded when the settlement was established and children born in India were not allocated land by the Indian government. Technically, the land of the deceased Tibetans

²⁴ Unlike some other Tibetan settlements in Karnataka, where the individual Tibetan families have been issued land lease in the form of Right to Cultivate (RTC) documents and rents are paid by individuals, the land in Mundgod is yet to be converted to individual lease and is still registered as forest land and rent is paid collectively through the Tibetan Cooperative Society. The lands are designated purely for agricultural use, and no development or building are to be constructed without proper approval from the Tashildar's Office and District Commissioner who monitors land and revenue matters.

was to be returned to the Indian government and redistributed to the new arrivals and new born children, but in practice the land allotment remained in the name of Tibetan settlers at the time of original distribution.

The Indian government stopped paying minimum daily wages after the land reclamation was completed because the settlement was expected to achieve self-sufficiency once cultivation began. The food rations of wheat, powdered milk and cooking oil, mostly through foreign aid, continued for many years. The building of village houses, a hospital and schools were carried out by MYRADA. UNCHR funded the building of the Old People's Home for elderly, disabled, and infirm people, and also funded the Bachanaki dam that was built by the irrigation department of Karnataka. About three hundred Tibetans were employed in the dam construction. The dam was intended to induce agricultural growth by serving both the Tibetans and Indian farmers.

However, the Tibetans never really took up irrigated farming because it required year-round intensive work that interfered with seasonal sweater selling in winter. In 1981, another batch of Tibetan refugees from Bhutan were rehabilitated in Doeguling and formed the ninth Tibetan camp; the German Aid to Tibetans and MYRADA provided major funding for the building of the houses while the Tibetans contributed the labor.

To introduce the Tibetans to farming in the lowlands of India, land was collectively farmed for the first two years. Swiss Aid to Tibetans through Swiss Technical Company maintained a team of four Swiss agricultural extensions officers to impart mechanized and scientific farming to the Tibetans, first in Bylakuppe and later in Mundgod. The first eighteen Massey Ferguson tractors with complete farming implements were donated by foreign NGOs. Catholic Relief Services donated two tractors and World Christian Organization or CASA donated sixteen tractors. It is widely claimed that one Swiss agricultural trainer, fondly called Pa

Luthi, was instrumental in introducing hybrid maize to the Tibetans, which was later adopted by the local Indian farmers. One Tibetan farmer narrated a story about how the Swiss agricultural officer, Pa Luthi, burned a currency note to drive home the point that the Tibetans were wasting precious resources by burning the dry maize husks and stalks. Many older Tibetan farmers say the maize is a wonderful crop because one can use every part of the plant, husks and stalks for cattle feed and cobs as cooking fuel.

In the beginning, for many former nomads, growing crops and leading a settled farming life was a new experience. Tibetan farmers were more familiar with growing only highland crops like barley and pulses (*sran ma*). The older refugees recall how it was a period of learning everything new. While the Swiss agricultural experts trained them in growing maize, they learned how to grow rice from the local Indian farmers. The Tibetans learned how to make their traditional staples like *tsampa* (roasted flour) from white hybrid maize, and *sran* (porridge) from flour made out of yellow maize. Today, the majority of Tibetan farmers grow maize and rice as cash crops. Only a few older Tibetans still consume the maize and rice they produce.

A Tibetan Cooperative Society was set up as early as 1967; it provided the Tibetan farmers agricultural credit in the form of seeds, fertilizers and tractor services. During the early years, although the yield was high because of the newly converted forest soils, wild boars caused much damage. Farmers put up thatched huts in the field and guarded the crops at night from attack by wild animals. Tibetans recall how almost half the crops were eaten by wild boars in the early days. From the remaining crops, half was handed over to the cooperative society for repaying seeds and fertilizers, and what remained was enough to subsist. Later, a pair of draught animals was given to every two five-member households (*bcu khang*) which helped greatly in easing farm work. Before that, older Tibetans recall making lighter ploughs that could be pulled

by people, and using wood stakes to plant maize. When the farmers learned how to grow maize, one year they had a bumper harvest, but the price went down so they began to diversify. After a few years, Tibetan learned from the Indian farmers to grow paddy. There was a time when only rice was planted. In the 1980s, cotton was planted for a few years.

When the Tibetan settlement was established, a separate residence for the elderly and infirm called Old People's Home was founded. There were originally 600 residents, most of them single elderly, infirm, and disabled persons. Today, there are 134 elderly people in this home, and it serves any Tibetan who has no dependents. For monks, the monasteries run their own elderly homes. In 2009, as commemoration of 50 years in exile, which was officially declared Thank You India Year by the CTA, the settlement office formed a five member committee in order to interview older Tibetans to document the experience of early years of the resettlement project. This document was published in Tibetan language to express gratitude for the older generations for their role in laying the foundation of the settlement and to serve as an important historical knowledge for the younger generations. In short, the early years of the settlement was characterized by dependence on the Indian government aid, international assistance, and farming. Many older Tibetans still farm and raise livestock and take pride in their livelihood because they view it as following the advice of the Dalai Lama in maintaining the settlement as a farming community. Although the settlement was originally intended as a farming settlement, as I will discuss later, Tibetans have since engaged in a diverse range of livelihood strategies. Farming is not seen as a viable economic strategy by the younger generations, who are increasingly looking at options beyond the settlement for their future.

3.3 Physical layout of the settlement

Situated 300 kilometers from the nearest airport of Goa and 57 kilometers from the nearest railway station of Hubli, Doeguling Tibetan settlement near Mundgod is commonly referred to as “mini-Tibet”, “Tibetan camp” or “Tibetan colony” by the local Indians. The Tibetan name of the settlement, Doeguling (*’dod rgu gling*), was given by the Dalai Lama and means Wish Fulfilling Place. On entering, the Tibetan settlement strikes one as a different place from the surrounding rural Indian villages. One is greeted by the sight of fluttering prayer flags, yellow gleaming roofs of imposing monasteries, flocks of red robed monks, and women dressed in traditional Tibetan attire. For a keen observer, the relative affluence of the Tibetan settlement in contrast to the surrounding rural villages is striking.

As part of the original pattern, the settlement is divided into nine villages, named as Camp 1 to 9, that are dispersed across the reclaimed forested land. The largest village, Camp 4, has about 200 households while the smallest, Camp 5, has about 50 households. The village houses are arranged in square shapes, with inner arterial roads separating a block of four houses. The original houses of brick cemented walls and tiled roofs were built on elevated land by MYRADA in large clusters of blocks of twin houses.²⁵ Each house was meant for a five member household and was partitioned into a two person and three person units, with an inbuilt toilet and a small verandah. A small kitchen garden was allotted for each twin house. In practice, due to the large variations in family size and composition, it caused considerable inconvenience for

²⁵ The planning of houses into twin houses of five member household is largely affected by the expediency of carrying out large scale housing. Looking at the pattern of housing in the oldest Tibetan settlement of Bylakuppe, Magnusson comments that it has also to do with the political ideology of centrally planned and socialist development of India in the 1960s (2006). Generally, in the later resettlement projects in Karnataka, although MYRADA followed the twin house models, it improvised by forming smaller village clusters, providing more spaces between houses, and building toilets at a distance from the houses.

families that had more or less than five members because it meant sharing the house. Further, the houses did not have space for an altar room and kitchen, so soon after the inbuilt toilet—a totally alien practice for traditional Tibetans—was converted into a storeroom or extra housing space. Depending upon financial conditions, Tibetans renovated, expanded and added new housing spaces to the original house allocated by the Indian government. Until the mid-1990s, the majority of the houses did not have toilets and used open spaces along the village roads and fields, leading to major health concerns. A few NGOs including ApTT (Appropriate Technology for Tibetans), CCF, ADER and others provided help with building small toilets and renovating houses. Today, the majority of the houses have toilets and bathrooms. SOIR-IM, another NGO from Sweden that has long supported Doeguling, has provided funding and training in solid waste management. Doeguling banned the use of plastic bags in 2009, shops or hotels are regularly checked by the local environment committee, and anyone found using plastic bags is fined, with fines increasing with each repeat offence.

There are twelve monasteries and one nunnery in Doeguling settlement. The four biggest monasteries are the two colleges of Drepung and Gaden: Loseling, Gomang, Shartse and Jangtse.²⁶ The next three big monasteries are Sakya monastery, followed by Nyingma and Kagyu monasteries. The other five are small monasteries located in the villages. The nunnery was established in 1985 when the then Tibetan settlement officer followed up on the suggestion of the Dalai Lama who also donated initial seed money for the building of the nunnery. The larger monasteries form two monastic villages called Lama Camp 1 and 2, comprising the two monastic colleges of Gaden and Drepung, one Sakya and one Nyingma monastery. Unlike the

²⁶ Most of these monasteries renamed after the original monasteries inside Tibet, which were closed and many completely destroyed during the period of Cultural Revolution. These monasteries in exile were built by the former monks who escaped into exile and seen as important part of cultural and religious preservation in exile.

lay population, they were provided rows of block houses and common kitchens. Today only a few of these tiled roof houses can be seen. Most have been taken down and new buildings of monastic residences and halls built in their place. In fact, the monasteries, with their elaborate and distinct architectures, are increasingly becoming a local tourist attraction.

The hub of the settlement is the Camp 3 market square, where Tibetans run grocery and stationery shops, hotels, travel agencies, internet cafes, tailoring shops, welding shops, restaurants, and tea shops. Within the walkable distance of the market square are the Tibetan Settlement Office and the Tibetan Cooperative Society's (TCS) office. Nearby is the senior secondary school with a hostel. The office of local Indian police, post office, Foreigners Registration Office, two Indian state banks and one Western Union bank that serve mainly the Tibetan populace are all located near the market square. TCS owns most of the buildings in the market square and runs a tractor workshop station, and a newly constructed rice mill to process organic rice produced by the Tibetan farmers. The TCS also manages two shopping centers that can be rented out only to the Tibetan residents of the settlement.

In the market square, there are three taxi stands of the Tibetan taxi drivers, local Indian autos and local Indian jeeps. The monastery cooperative's office is also located in the market square. In addition, the offices of Regional Tibetan Youth Congress, Regional Tibetan Women's Association, and Tibetan Ex-Soldier's Association are all located near the market square. Doeguling's Tibetan Opera Group also has its office and hall near the market square, and Tibetan opera is performed for the public every year after the Tibetan New Year. Also nearby are the settlement hospital, Old People's Home and Jangchubling Nunnery.

The Tibetan villages, scattered across the settlement's landscape, can be reached by roads that lead off the only paved road that runs through the settlement. The nine Tibetan villages can

be seen nested in groves of tall trees including eucalyptus and other tropical fruit trees like coconut, mango, guava and cashew nuts. Each village has a community hall, viewed as the center of village activity, a crèche and a kindergarten. Although the main road going through the settlement is paved, the roads leading to the villages are dirt roads that get muddy and slippery for motorcycles during the rainy season.

In the villages, one comes across three types of houses: old tiled roofed houses interspersed with sheet roofed houses and concrete buildings—one can use these houses as a rough indicator of the relative wealth of households. Most houses are fenced by trimmed thicket of shrubs and have gates with wooden poles. Wealthier households have cement block fences with tall iron gates. Some Tibetans still keep cows and buffaloes, and tiled roofed and bare brick walled cow sheds and barns and open pit dung piles are located by the side within the fences. Some families grow a small plot of vegetables in the kitchen gardens. Most houses have well-kept flowers and ornamental shrubs around the houses.

3.4 Demographic description

Based on the settlement records, the original population is listed as 4,306 which increased to 15,947 in 2009. The CTA's 2009 census listed the total population of Doeguling as 9,754 but this figure does not include the monks from the Himalayan region of India, Nepal and Bhutan and other parts of the world. My 2010 survey data shows that the population is closer to around 13,000 after accounting for the monks from the Himalayan region. Doeguling has the largest monastic population in exile, and my demographic data shows that the total monastic population in nine monasteries and one nunnery is 5,048, out of which 2,468 monks and nuns are from the Himalayan region, representing about 33 percent of total monastic population. The above

monastic population does not include a break-away monastery of Shar Gaden that claims on its website about 850 residents out of which majority are from the Himalayan region of Nepal. For example, on 8 July 2012, a fresh recruit of 67 young children were brought from rural Nepal to this monastery.²⁷

Although the outmigration of young people, as I discuss later, is a strong feature of Doeguling, there has been significant in-migration of mainly monks from Tibet until the early 2000s and from the Himalayan region since then. The overall population of Doeguling settlement has increased over the last decade; for example CTA 2009 Census noted 1.6 percent growth in the total population of Doeguling from 1998 to 2008. The increase is partly driven by the increase in the monastic population and to a lesser extent in-migration of new arrivals from Tibet who are called Sarjorwa (*gsar 'byor ba*).²⁸

Here, I present analyses of demographic data of the lay population in three graphs: one is a population pyramid, the other two show migration by age group. The data reveal two important characteristics of Doeguling settlement. First, the settlement has already undergone a fertility transition. Second, there is a high rate of outmigration among the young people. These findings support the general Tibetan exile discourses on outmigration from the settlement and the fear of population decline.

²⁷ This monastery decided to break away from the parent monastery of Gaden Shartse in the light of the difference over propitiation of a controversial deity Shugden. The information on monastic population is gleaned mostly from the particular monastery's website, <http://shargadenpa.org/> (Accessed September 19, 2013).

²⁸ The new arrivals have recently formed an association in Doeguling and claim over 100 members. This association was officially recognized by the settlement office as a new *brgya shog* (a group equivalent). Although no housing and land can be allocated to them, the settlement office promised to provide official recommendation letters and all necessary assistance in getting them to stay and engage in different economic activities in the settlement.

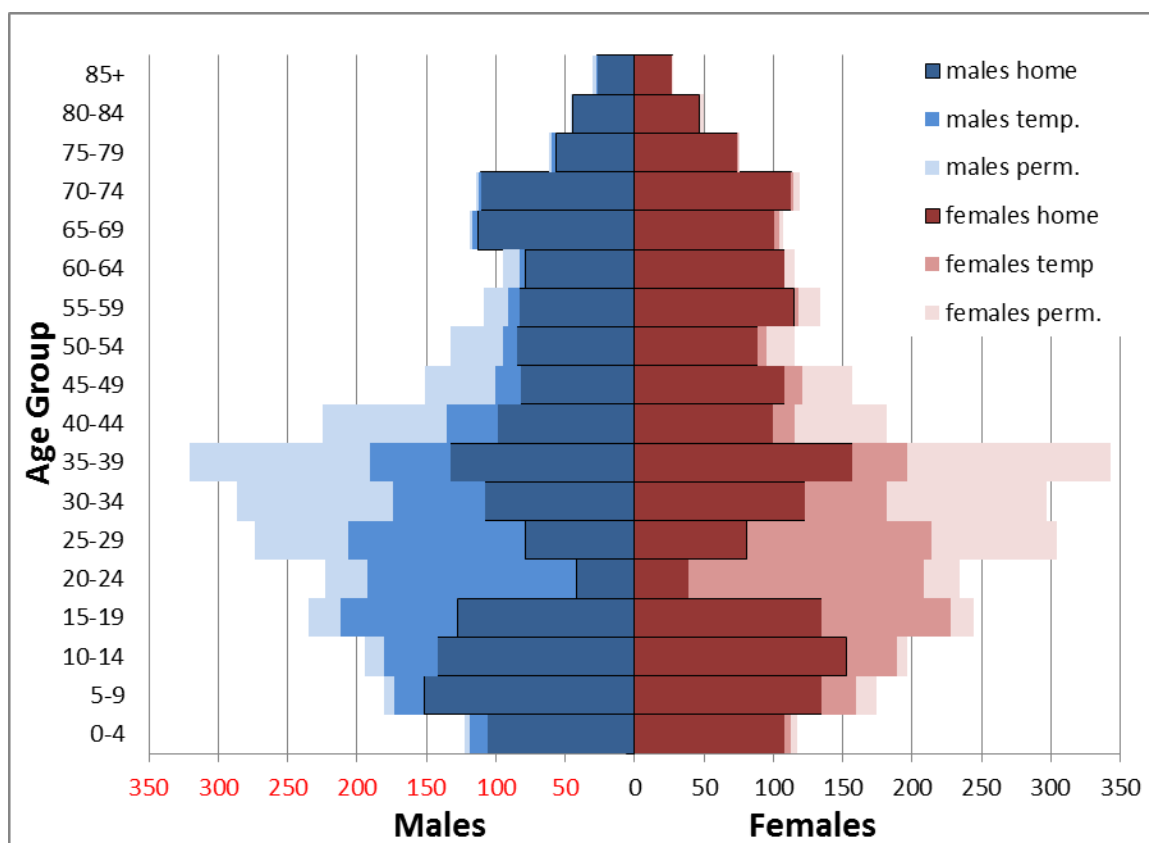


Figure 3.1: Population pyramid of the lay population of Doeguling. Source: 2010 Doeguling Household Survey.

The population pyramid illustrates the shrinking cohorts of the population in the age groups under 10-14, which is an indication that Doeguling has already undergone a fertility transition like the rest of the Tibetan exile population in India. A demographic study of the Tibetan exiles in India revealed the onset of fertility transition in the 1980s and found that the total fertility rate dropped to 1.7 births per woman in 1998 from 6.3 births per woman in the 1980s (Childs et al 2005). The study explained that such a rapid decline in the level of fertility can be only achieved through the widespread usage of modern contraception. The fertility rate for exile women aged 19 to 40 dropped further to 1.18 births per woman in 2009, well below the replacement level of 2.1 (CTA 2009:30).

My own 2010 survey data clearly supports the fertility transition and reveals two important features in Doeguling's population with regard to fertility: late age of marriage for both males and females and a high frequency of female non-marriage in the age group 30-34 and above, which are consistent with the findings of the CTA 2009 Census. Further, the Tibetan settlements were introduced to the family planning programs very early on by the Indian authorities. A study shows that population growth in one of the earliest settlement of Bylakuppe was very high through the 1970s (Magnusson et al 2008). Population growth and Malthusian thinking have long been integral parts of the Indian state's policy on family planning, and Tibetan settlements were also included in the family planning drive which created tension between the Tibetan administrators and their Indian counterparts. The visit of Indian family planning teams to the Tibetan settlement became a source of tension (Magnusson and Subramanyam 2005, Magnusson 2010). In my own fieldwork, the government hospital in Mundgod from early on would send women health workers (referred to as "sisters") to the Tibetan settlement who would go door to door educating people about the benefits of planning family and the free services of birth control medicines and surgeries.

For example, one 62 year old woman, a village leader with long experience of community service, adopted birth control in 1992 after giving birth to four children despite objections from her husband. She recalls three other women from her village who went together to undergo free birth control service at the Indian government hospital in Mungdod, which sent their vehicle to fetch them. She notes the widespread practice of birth control among Tibetan women her age and the role of the Indian family planning workers who spread awareness and educating Tibetan women about family planning services through frequent door to door visits. I also came across many younger women in their forties who said they adopted birth control after

giving birth to two children. Two women reported receiving free steel utensils as part of Indian government's planning family incentives for undergoing birth control at the local Indian government hospital.

The fertility decline has been a source of concern for the Tibetan exile leaders, who view this as leading to the decline of a future Tibetan population and conflate it with the perceived threats to the identity of Tibetan people as a distinct group. For example, a study of the CTA's publications on public health in the 1990s documented the strong emphasis on pro-natalism and ethnic endogamy by the Tibetan exile leaders as essential measures to maintain Tibetan collective strength against the threats of perceived genocide in their homeland and assimilation in exile (Childs and Barkin 2006).

During my field work, the messages of ethnic endogamy and pro-natalism were recurrent themes. To illustrate the pro-natal view, during the 2011 election campaign for the Kalon Tripa, one of the themes in the debates was the issue of "population decline" due to the decreasing fertility rate. One candidate, Lobsang Jinpa (former private secretary of the Dalai Lama, then living in the US), listed one of his political agendas as providing scholarships for every Tibetan family who has more than three children. The current CTA administration has recently initiated a policy of offering scholarship to families who have three or more children.

In Doeguling too, I observed the pro-natal viewpoints expressed frequently by some local leaders of NGOs. For example, on October 10, 2010, the Regional Tibetan Youth Congress (RTYC) of Doeguling at its annual founding day event offered scarves and certificates of appreciation to three women who had given birth to 11, 10 and nine children respectively. The year before, three women who had given birth to 12 and 13 children were felicitated. The RTYC executives extol the Tibetan women to reproduce more as a service to the collective Tibetan

cause. When I interviewed the RTYC leaders they expressed concern about fertility decline and viewed reproduction of more children as an important contribution to the Tibetan struggle. These pro-natal messages are however viewed by most Tibetans as symbolic gestures that will not have any impact on the ground. The majority of Tibetan parents express the common viewpoint that having two children is ideal and providing quality education is the most important as well the most challenging responsibility of parents.

In addition to fertility transition, the population pyramid is shaded by migration status to reveal that the vast majority of persons who live year round in the settlement are in the age group below 19 and above 50. This supports the argument that the settlement is being transformed into a “lifephase space” for many young Tibetans who are raised in a Tibetan cultural milieu from where they ultimately leave seeking higher education, employment, and upward mobility through migration. The settlement is also seen as a place for elderly and retired people, something I discuss in more detail later in relation to the tensions between settlement and mobility. There are increasing numbers of families where the young married children are either settled elsewhere in India or abroad, and who built new houses in which their elderly parents live. At present, the children visit for vacations and some claim that they will return when they retire. In my household survey, I came across three returnees, two from USA and one from

Switzerland. But it is too early to tell if much return migration will occur in the future.

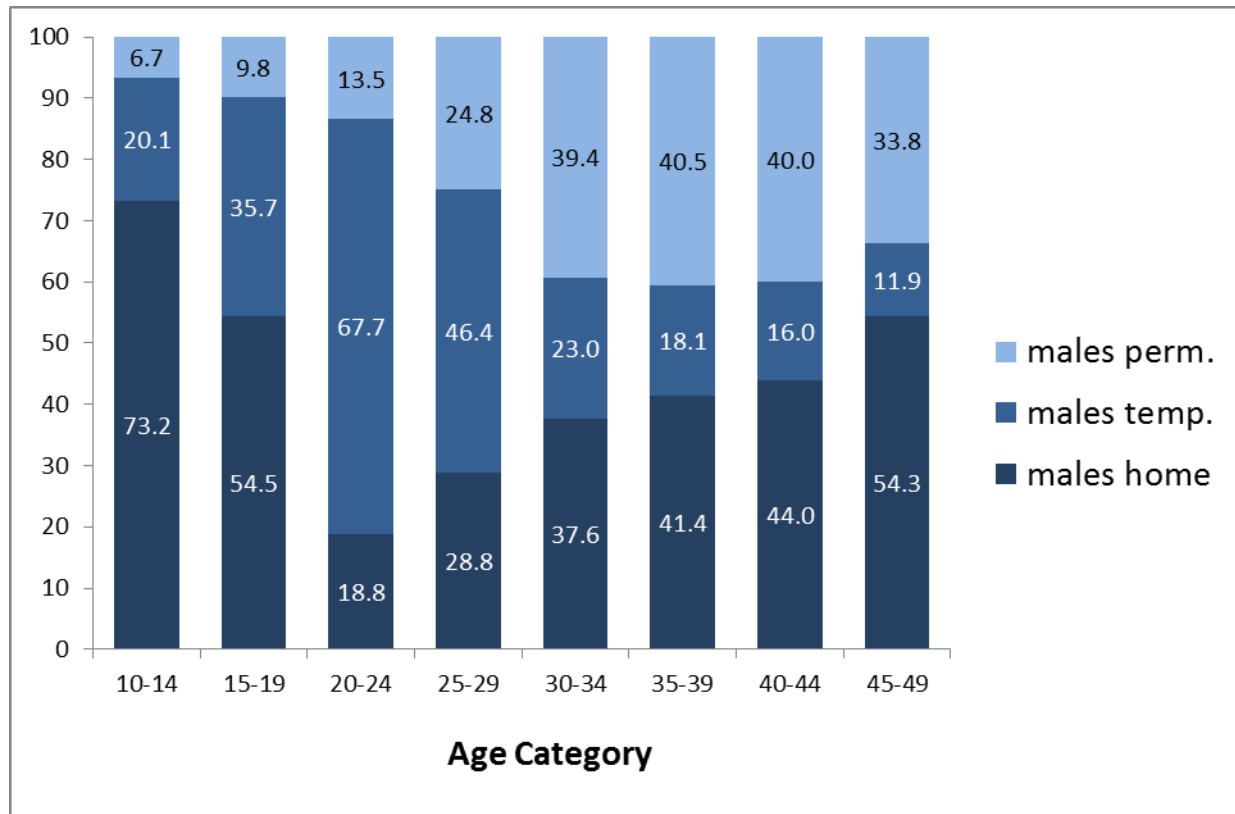


Figure 3.2: Male migration by age group. Source: 2010 Doeguling Household Survey.

Migration data by age group presented in Figures 2 and 3 reveal little difference by gender. The slightly higher percentage of women in the age group 20-24 under temporary migration category, 72.2 % compared to 67.7 % for men, is explained by the fact that women are slightly more employed in sweater selling than men . But the percentage decreases in the next age group 25-29 because that is when women are more likely to have children and cannot leave for sweater selling.

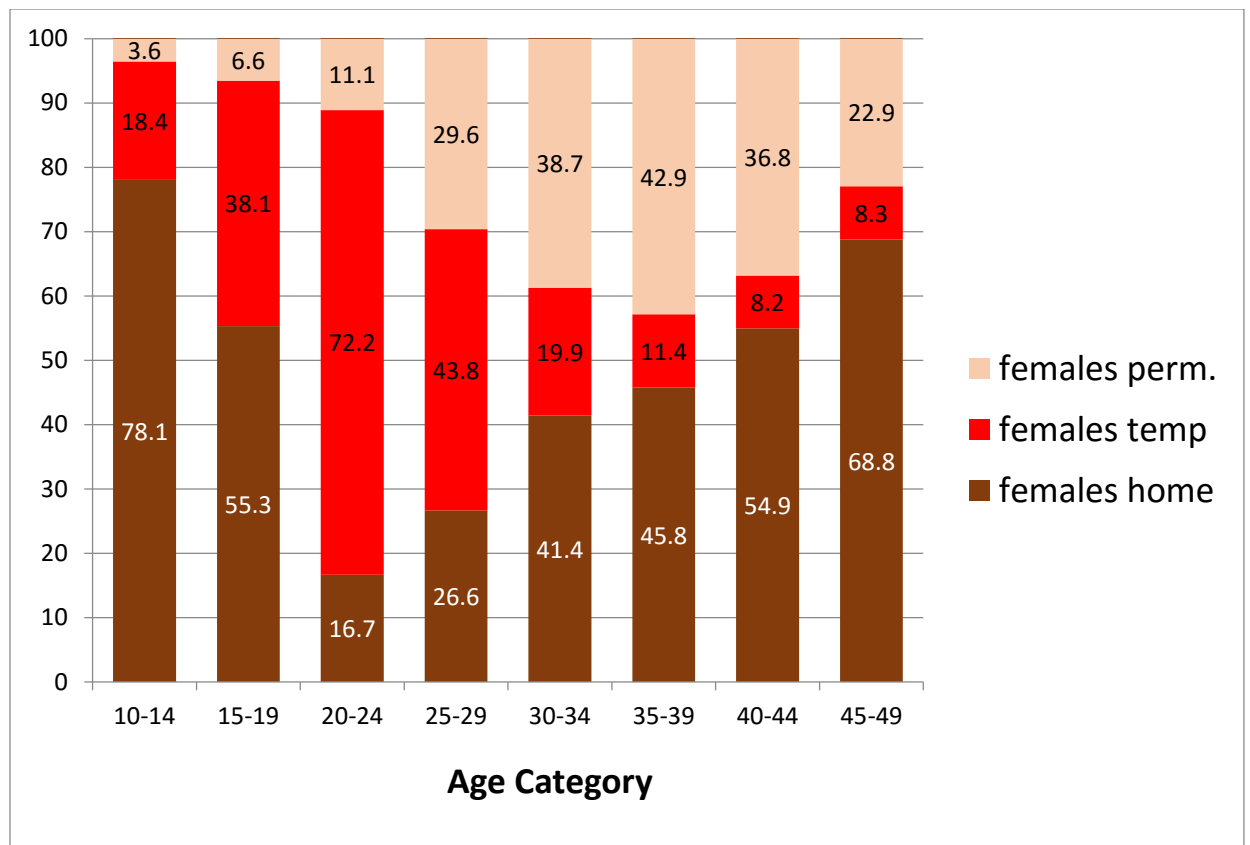


Figure 3.3: Female migration by age group. Source: 2010 Doeguling Household Survey.

Population mobility is therefore a strong feature of Doeguling settlement. Until recently, mobility was temporary and occurred in the form of seasonal sweater selling and employment in the army. Over the years, as a result of universal education and the pursuit of higher education and job opportunities outside the settlement for majority of the college educated Tibetans, outmigration increased dramatically. For example, in Figures 2 and 3 outmigration peaks in the age groups 20-24 and 25-29.

Outmigration is grouped under two categories: permanent and temporary. Temporary migration includes those who live outside of the settlement for more than six months a year and is comprised mainly of sweater sellers and petty traders, members of the military service, students in boarding schools, colleges and vocational training institutes, and those seeking urban

jobs. Permanent migration includes those who have either settled elsewhere in India or moved abroad, with the latter forming the majority of the category. In the temporary migration category, the majority are those pursuing further studies and urban jobs, most of whom eventually migrate permanently. Those who remain in India are undergoing vocational training run by the CTA's Department of Home mostly in hairdressing, hotel service and management, computer training, tailoring and painting. In recent years the nursing profession has become attractive particularly for girls due to the easy availability of jobs and its potential for future emigration. Among boys, hotel management is seen as an attractive employment option.

In summary, Doeguling like many other Tibetan settlements in India is undergoing three major transitions: a) a transition from the early years of refugee experience when adaptation and survival were the primary concerns to the current balancing sought between socioeconomic mobility and cultural continuity; b) a fertility transition, driven in part by the desire for upward socioeconomic mobility, that has resulted in a small family norm and significant investments in children's education that influences the younger generation's propensity to migrate by giving them skills and an international outlook ; and c) a migration transition whereby a significant proportion of the younger generation is seeking socioeconomic mobility through international migration. In the later chapters I will discuss the individual and household desire to achieve socio-economic mobility through migration, which essentially started with the US Immigration Act of 1990 that started the major immigration stream to North America by granting visas to 1,000 Tibetan exiles. I also discuss how the outmigration of mainly young and economically active individuals is serving as a bridgehead for subsequent migrants through the increased social networks and transnational connections.

3.5 Administration

In the initial years, the settlement was administered through the representative of the Indian government, also known as the “special officer on duty”, who maintained an office at Hubli and the Tibetan administration representative that overlooks daily administration. In the late 1980s, the Indian government merged the former office with the local town office, Tashildar Office,²⁹ and delegated the state government to handle the administrative duty of liaising with the Tibetan administration. The Tibetans settlements are designated as “restricted areas” that come directly under the Ministry of Home Affairs. In general, the Tibetan settlements come under the purview of the central government and respective state laws. In practice they function more as autonomous spaces administered directly by the CTA through its Department of Home. The latter appoints its representative who is called the Settlement officer or head (*sa gnas gzhis 'go*). The settlement officer is in charge of the overall administration of the settlement, and also acts as the chairman of the settlement hospital and the vice-chairman of the local advisory committee of the schools.

In the current Tibetan exile democratic setup, the settlement office is seen as the executive extension of the CTA and its legislative counterpart is the Local Tibetan Assembly (LTA), which was established in the early 1990s to serve the important role of oversight of the administration and to formulate local rules and regulations concerned with the overall welfare of the settlement. The LTA of Doeguling, established in 1992 following the 1991 Tibetan exile

²⁹ Tashildar's Office is the main administrative unit at the level of village clusters (Taluka) in India. Although this office deals primarily with land and revenue administration, the office also serves as the chief magistrate office, handles public distribution system and monitors elections. For the Tibetan settlements, the primary dealings with the Tashildar occur in land lease payments and land dispute management, and in securing official documents like birth, death, and resident certificates.

charter, plays a very important role in legislating local rules and regulations that the settlement office has to implement. Until 1999, the members of this assembly were elected on the basis of villages and monasteries, with 20 lay members and 14 monk members. Today, the members are directly elected by the whole settlement population without proportional representation for villages or monasteries. Until the sixth local assembly, observers could attend the assembly session and raise issues directly like a town house meeting. At present, anyone can attend the assembly as observers (*zur nyan*) but they cannot participate directly in the deliberations in the assembly.

The LTA holds two sessions, summer and winter, for a period of at least one week. In addition, a seven member standing committee meets twice every week to deal with the settlement office on pressing matters. During the two sessions, the LTA members deliberate on local issues, raises questions and seek clarifications about workings of the settlement administration, pass resolutions and local laws. For example, in 1992, the LTA passed a resolution that effectively banned all cable TV connections in the settlement except for the national TV channel citing the negative influence of cable TV on the younger generation. Later this resolution was relaxed; however no individual could install cable TV and the local cable TV was allowed to be run by the Tibetan Cooperative Society. Another resolution was passed during the third LTA to ban the Tibetan dice game (*sho*), mahjong and any gambling in the settlement except during public holidays and community gatherings. It also banned dance and disco parties and night gatherings. For all the above activities, prior permission from the settlement officer has to be obtained. The local assembly also prohibited snooker halls in the settlement.

During the fifth local assembly, another resolution was passed that prohibits any Tibetan farmer from leasing their land to Indian farmers due to increasing cases of land encroachment

and disputes between the Tibetan and Indian farmers. A seventeen member committee was formed in 2011 to curb the selling of liquor and running of gambling houses within the settlement. The local assembly regularly establish committees to oversee overall development needs and social issues, including maintaining cordial relationship with the local Indian community.

Under the settlement office are the village leaders and village council. The village leaders are elected by the villagers for a term of one year, and are helped by section leaders (*bcu dpon*) for every 10 twin houses or wards (*bcu shog*) of village. The section leaders assist the village leaders in carrying out community rituals, announcing meetings, collecting water tax and the village leader's salary, collecting contributions to the community causes and political rallies, and organizing the community work force. The village leader is also helped by an accountant and treasurer who are elected on the bases of next highest votes received during the village election. To resolve any civil matters within the village and between the villages, there is a village council (*drong sde lhan tshogs*) of five members. Most village leaders express the opinion that resolving family disputes is the most difficult responsibility of a village leader. The village leader also overlooks the running of village crèche and kindergarten and liaising between the settlement office and the villagers. Most civil matters are generally resolved at the local village level by the village leader or through the village council, and the settlement office is approached only as the last resort.

There are three Indian-government funded schools called Central School for Tibetans (CST): a senior secondary school up to twelfth grade near Camp 3, a primary school up to fifth grade near Gaden monastery, and a senior secondary school up to eighth grade near Camp 6. The Drepung Loseling monastery also runs a school for its monk students. In 2008, the total

population of children in these four schools was 1,418. In addition there are three hostels, one CST school for the Tibetan students from outside the settlement attending eleventh and twelfth grades, one TCV branch hostel that serves the Tibetan students of the settlement, and Pema Tsal hostel that admits gifted children from the settlements.

There are three hospitals, two healthcare clinics, and two Tibetan medicine clinics that cater mainly to the Tibetan population. The main hospital is called Doeguling Tibetan Refugee (DTR) Hospital, and it was built by MYRADA in 1970. Today it is managed under the CTA's Department of Health. It also runs a small clinic in Camp 6. In addition to outpatient service, DTR has a dental clinic and TB sanatorium. The other two hospitals are built and managed by the two monasteries of Drepung Loseling and Gaden Jangtse. Another monastery runs a small clinic mainly for its monks. The Tibetan Medical and Astrological Institute runs two Tibetan medicine clinics, and one private Tibetan medicine practitioner runs a clinic from his home. The Tibetan medicine clinics are also visited by many local Indian patients.

In addition, there is a registered society under the Tibetan Cooperative Society that serves the settlement through agricultural credit and a tractor workshop and income generating activities in the form of shops, a commercial shopping complex, an incense factory, a rice mill and a local cable TV service. The three large NGOS in the settlement are Regional Tibetan Freedom Movement (TFM), Regional Tibetan Youth Congress (RTYC), and Regional Tibetan Women's Association (RTWA). RTFM, formed in 1972 and formerly under the settlement office, is an autonomous body whose members are elected by the settlement people. It follows the guidance of the Department of Finance in the collection of voluntary freedom tax. In the past, RTFM was active in coordinating political rallies with other NGOs in the settlement. It opens office twice a

week to handle the collection, and issue recommendation letters for the Tibetan settlers who applying for travel documents.

RTYC and RTWA are more active in organizing political rallies and marches for the Tibetan cause; they also provide social services. For instance, RTWA local village chapters take turns at visiting the Old People's Home twice every month to wash the clothes of elderly people and help in bathing disabled elderly. Meanwhile, RTYC's local village chapters take turns at providing funerary services for the elderly who pass away. In addition, RTYC's chapters raise funds for basketball courts in their respective villages, and organize sports and games events in the settlement.

3.6 Livelihood

Although started as an agricultural settlement, farming is not the main means of livelihood in the settlement today. Of the 934 households, only 327 households reported engaging in active farming; their main crops are maize and rice. Of these, there were less than 20 households who could be said to be large farmers. The biggest farmed around 30 acres and the rest between 10 to 15 acres. The average acres farmed was less than five acres, which according to the Indian government category is regarded as small and marginal. Further, farming is dependent on monsoon rains and only one crop is grown in a year, and droughts and unpredictable rains cause major problems. For instance, in 2001 a drought resulted in total failure of crops, and in 2014 most farmers could not plant on time due to incessant rains. Of all the farming households, only the large farmers report that farming is their main source of income.

Until the 1990s, most farmers raised livestock as well; the CTA and some NGOs including CCF provided financial subsidies to purchase cows as part of an income generating

project. A cooperative dairy was also formed in the 1980s. The settlement annual reports on number of livestock in the villages reveal that, until the early 1990s, raising livestock was an important income generating activity. For example, there were about 2,500 cows and buffaloes in 1985, while my household survey listed only 300 cows and buffaloes in 2010. Most families cite that livestock raising is no longer taken up by the younger generation. Furthermore, the ban on cattle grazing in the forests by the Indian forest department has made livestock raising more difficult.

In 2002 the CTA decided to shift from conventional farming to organic farming in the Tibetan agricultural settlements due to concerns about declining soil fertility and underground water resources resulting from three decades of conventional farming that relied heavily on fertilizers. The CTA eventually hopes to transform all 15 Tibetan agricultural settlements to organic farming. In 2005, Doeguling Tibetan settlement was selected as a model Tibetan co-operative society by the CTA and an organic farming project was introduced whereby three villages volunteered for the pilot project. The local leaders had to draw a lottery to select the one village as the site of the pilot project. By 2010, two villages have fully converted to organic farming and other villages are planning to follow. However, I observed that many of the organic crops that Tibetan farmers grow are not for local consumption. For instance, the variety of rice grown by the Tibetan farmers is not locally consumed because this variety, although best suited to the settlement soil and climate, is more popular in the coastal region of Kerala. Tibetans have not developed a taste for it.

Despite the huge efforts and resources put forth by the CTA with the assistance of many outside agencies in revitalizing agriculture in the Tibetan settlement, farming is not viewed as a viable economic strategy by the younger generations because the landholding per family is too

small. The settlement also faces pressure from the local Indian authorities about Tibetans not cultivating their land and leasing land to Indian farmers. In response, the settlement office has made rules that the Tibetans cannot lease their land to Indian farmers nor leave land uncultivated. Many families are resorting to agro-forestry and horticulture in order to avoid the penalty of leaving land fallow; and a few progressive Tibetan farmers have started to sink bore wells to irrigate their land to grow crops year round but it is too early to tell whether large scale irrigation could take off since the CTA officially banned bore wells under the previous administration in order to conserve underground water resources.

The most important livelihood of the settlement today is seasonal sweater selling, one lucrative economic niche that the Tibetans created in India from the early refugee years. Tibetans hawking sweaters on the streets in winter has become a regular feature of the urban Indian landscape. In Doeguling settlement, 419 of the total 934 households reported engaging in sweater selling and the survey data revealed more than 30 cities that the Tibetans go to sell sweaters, including Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Indore, Goa, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Baroda, Nasik, and Pune. They buy their sweaters in bulk from the Indian hosiery in Ludhiana in the north Indian state of Punjab and sell them to customers all over India. The Tibetans have established a strong relationship based on mutual trust and benefits with the Ludhiana manufactures (known as Lalas) and are able to purchase substantial portion of their sweaters on credit. In the early days, Tibetans would pawn their gold jewelries with the Lalas to buy sweaters more in bulk. The Tibetans also obtain short term loans from the local banks, monasteries, the Tibetan cooperative societies to pursue sweater selling.

One common story about how Tibetans originally took to this seasonal trading is that many refugees during road construction days would knit sweaters, socks, and caps, and sell them

to the local Indians to earn much needed extra income. Older Tibetans who worked in the road construction sites in Kulu recall how the women would spin the yarn from local Manali wool, and men would help knit. They recall how people would gather and knit sweaters even during rest breaks on road construction. In winter when the road construction is stopped, the Tibetans would move to nearby towns to sell their wares. A 52 two year old Tibetan in Camp 1 told me some Tibetans in Doeguling continued to knit sweaters until the early 1970s and would go to Goa to sell their products in winter. As Tibetans began to sell their hand knitted sweaters they found that there is a large demand in the Indian cities. More enterprising Tibetans chanced upon manufactured sweaters from synthetic materials from Ludhiana that could be bought wholesale and sold at very profitable margin. Some attribute the popularity of sweater selling to one particular Tibetan based in Calcutta who used to employ many Tibetans in the 1970s to sell sweaters. Those who did not have capital and labor started out by working for the monasteries and wealthier Tibetans as sweater help (*mi bla*). After gaining some experience they started on their own by raising capital through bank loans and private Tibetan lenders including the monasteries.

Sweater selling has been viewed ambivalently by the CTA. On the one hand, it has made substantial contributions to the economic well-being of the Tibetans, while on the other hand it is also the source of outmigration from the settlements—and its negative influence on farming and other year round income generating activities in the settlement—as well as source of health concern related to the unsanitary conditions of hawking in the dirty streets, living in crowded housing, and the effects of young mobile Tibetans visiting brothels.³⁰

³⁰ The Health Department of CTA carried out health awareness programs particularly on HIV-AIDS and TB that are targeted at the sweater selling population.

Another important livelihood is military service. The Indian government established a special force in high mountain surveillance and combat in 1962 called Special Frontier Force—commonly referred by Tibetan as 22 Army. In the early years, it was an attractive employment opportunity for young Tibetans who did not receive schooling. It provides an attractive salary (higher than average CTA service and call center jobs) and benefits including family insurance. In another Tibetan settlement more than a hundred people signed up to join the army in the 1960s causing concern over outmigration of young able bodied people (Magnusson et al 2006:13). During fieldwork in Doeguling, the local Tibetan Ex-Soldier's Association which claims around 377 members, sent one of its executive members to escort seventeen Tibetan recruits to the army headquarter in Dehradun. My household survey shows that there are 246 persons who are actively serving in the army. There is also a substantial number of people who live year round in the settlement and are engaged in a range of occupations from public services in the settlement office and cooperative societies, schools, monasteries and hospitals to running private shops, restaurants and small businesses.

When discussing the livelihood of the settlement, it is important to note that the monasteries have a huge influence on the economy. Doeguling has the largest monastic population in exile; in addition to its primary role of religious services, monasteries provide benefits to the local economy. The monasteries have expanded over the years due to the large number of monk recruits from Tibet until the early 2000s and the highland regions of India, Nepal, and Bhutan. This necessitated the building of new residences, monastic assembly halls, schools, canteens, and clinics. Today, the foremost economic impact has been the boom in construction projects, which employ largely Indian labor with a few Tibetans employed as

overseers. In the next chapter I discuss the economic impacts of this construction on the Indo-Tibetan relationship.

Two other direct economic benefits of the large monastic population are the demand for local transport and restaurants. People claim that hotels and Tibetan taxis would be out of business without the patronage of the monks. For example, during monastic retreats when monks are not allowed to go outside the monastery compounds, the hotels and taxis literally remain idle. My household survey listed only 41 Tibetan taxi drivers, but the local Tibetan Taxi Drivers' Association claim more than 80 members. All the Tibetan taxi drivers claim that they are mainly dependent on the monks for their taxi business.

Another important source of income, which is increasingly transforming the settlement, is remittances. In the household survey, 381 households reported receiving some remittances from family members, relatives and friends who are abroad. Although the exact amount of remittances is impossible to obtain, it is increasingly becoming one of the most important sources of income for many households in the settlement today. In a later discussions I will focus on the general impacts of remittances, both positive and negative, on the settlement and the local Indo-Tibetan relationship.

Finally, there are numerous welfare benefits provided by the CTA and foreign sponsorships to the poor, elderly, sick, and disabled in the settlement. The CTA through its three department of home, health, and education provides welfare in the form of monthly economic subsidies, health subsidies, school sponsorships, and financial support to start small income generating activities to those who are listed under its official designation of 'poor and destitute' (*nyams thag*). Although most NGOs work with the settlement office, a few NGOs like Thinley Djinpa and individual Tibetan lamas provide direct support to some poor families. In the 2010

survey, at least 366 households reported receiving at least one sponsorship for a child. Some receive substantial assistance. For example, one poor household with seven children receives sponsorships from nine different sources. If the average sponsorship is taken as a monthly stipend of Indian Rupees (INR) 1,100 Rupees (US \$ 22)—the average amount provided by CTA-related sponsorships—this poor household receives an average monthly income of INR 9,900 (\$198),³¹ which is higher than the average salary of a staff worker in the Tibetan Cooperative Society.

To give a rough idea of the international development assistance that the Tibetan refugees receive, I came across at least 25 different intergovernmental agencies and NGOS that are actively supporting a range of projects in Doeguling. A 2009 report by the settlement office listed more than 20 organizations as currently providing assistance to the settlement.³² Furthermore, as discussed above, the monastic institutions in the settlement have developed extensive transnational connections through their networks of Buddhist centers around the world. It is not only the western Buddhist patrons but increasingly Asian patrons including Chinese Buddhists from Taiwan, Singapore and Malaysia, who are supporting the monastic institutions as

³¹ The official exchange rate during the time of fieldwork averaged about INR 50 for \$1 (with the lowest rate of INR 44 and the highest of INR 56 for \$1). Since, US dollars has steadily gained in value against Indian rupees and the average exchange rate has remained above INR 60 for US \$1 for the past two years or so.

³² During my fieldwork, I came across many Western NGOs that maintain long term support to the Tibetan settlements. For example, German Aid to Tibetans helps primarily in child sponsorships and institutional development. Tibetan Refugee Aid Society (now Trans-Himalayan Aid Society) is a Canadian NGO established in the 1960s to help in the rehabilitation of the Tibetan refugees in Mundgod Tibetan settlement and continues to support education and elderly people. In addition, the Christian Children Fund was involved in education, economic livelihood and health projects from 1981 to 2011, ADER from France helped in the renovation of settlement houses, Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) helps in agricultural development and organic farming projects, Dagpo Rinpoche Land of Compassion built creches and community halls, and Old People's Home, Entraide Franco Tibetan from France funded 10 residence buildings for Old People's Home, Thupten Rinpoche funded two school buses and a roof for the settlement community hall, Trinley Djinpa from France funded creches and community halls and provides sponsorships, SOIR-IM from Sweden funds environmental and drinking water projects, Charitable Foundation from Australia funds soil and water conservation project, FOTSI-USAR provides sponsorships for children and the poor, Dr. Raffaella Chionna from Italy with child sponsorships and AIDS awareness programs, COSPE from Italy supports organic farming projects, Sticking Tibet Fond Dolma Foundation from Holland provides sponsorship for children and the elderly. Other projects run through the CTA are funded by intergovernmental agencies like USAID, NORAD, DANIDA and European Union.

well as health and education projects in the Tibetan refugee communities. For instance, of the three hospitals in Mundgod Tibetan settlement, two are built by monasteries with the financial support of rich patrons from Taiwan and other Asian countries. There are at least five NGOs established through the monastic links in Western countries including Germany, Holland, France, and the US that help in finding sponsors for children, the poor and the elderly in Mundgod Tibetan settlement. This continued and growing financial support is part of the transnational links that are forged through the spread of transnational Tibetan Buddhism to the West and other Asian countries.

3.7 Chapter Summary

Today, the Tibetan settlements in India are known for economic success and retaining the foundation of Tibetan culture and identity. Economic success has been achieved through a host of inter-related factors. In the early years, the Indian government and international development agencies provided tremendous assistance to lay the foundation of the settlement economy. Many international development agencies continue to support the settlement through a range of projects from direct sponsorship to income generating projects and agricultural revitalization.

Monasteries, through their extensive transnational connections, also make strong economic impacts on the settlement economy, and remittances have risen in importance in association with the high level of outmigration that is transforming the settlement today.

The Tibetan themselves have successfully created economic niches within India in the form of sweater selling and petty businesses. Military service has been another important source of income for the settlers from the early years. There has been setbacks in livelihood strategies as well. One of those discussed above, is livestock raising, and another is carpet weaving. Until the

mid-1990s, the TCS ran a carpet weaving factory which employed a few hundred Tibetans at its peak. However, the carpet factory is closed today due to two major reasons: low quality of the carpet and the negative effect of allegations of child labor in the carpet factories in Nepal on the international Tibetan carpet business.

Today, the CTA is trying to revitalize the Tibetan settlements as sites of cultural continuity through “integrated development” projects that seek to ensure the economic viability of settlements and maintain their central role as places of enculturation. The political context is crucial to note here: for decades Tibetan exile leaders have projected a vision of a Tibetan population facing the threat of genocide, and viable exile settlements as the means to counter this threat by maintaining them as centers of cultural preservation. Meanwhile, as a result of settlement-based economic strategies (e.g., farming and sweater selling) that many see as limited, international ties forged through assistance, and high levels of education, population mobility has become an important feature of the younger generation. Migration is transforming the settlements into “lifephase spaces” rather than “lifecourse spaces”. Nowadays the settlements are increasingly sites of enculturation wherein people are born and raised in a Tibetan cultural milieu but from where many ultimately leave seeking higher education, employment, and upward mobility through migration. In the next chapter, I focus on the local Indo-Tibetan interface in order to tease out some of the tensions arising out of the protracted stay of Tibetans on Indian soil and how this is reinforcing collective Tibetan identity as well as shaping the outlook of the younger generation toward seeking a better life outside India. Finally, I discuss how preferential treatment of the Tibetan refugees from the Indian state and foreign aid is being played out in the context of the local Indo-Tibetan relationship. I problematize this further by looking at the three distinct political identities the Tibetans living in Indian assume: as the Tibetan citizens/nationals

in the eye of the Tibetan government in exile, as “foreigners” in the eyes of the Indian state, and as “refugees” in the eyes of the international community. This chapter sets the foundation for my discussion of tensions between resettlement and mobility in the Tibetan exile community.

Chapter Four: Doeguling as a Tibetan Place

We have spent more than half of our lives in India, India has thus become our second homeland (*pha yul gnyis pa*). Despite having its own difficulties, both the central and state governments have provided tremendous support to us. Likewise, the Indian people have been very kind to us. In short, during our most critical times of helplessness and no protection (*skyabs med dgon med*), India and its people provided us special care. This will be forever set as a new chapter in Tibet's history. The Tibetans can never forget the kindness of India and its people. Until the time when the sun of happiness rise again in Tibet, we will have to stay in India. I am fully confident that India and its people will continue to support us.

The Dalai Lama, Collected Statements on Indo-Tibetan Relationship, 1995

On December 20, 2009, I arrived at the Hubli railway station in the early morning after an overnight train journey from Bangalore to conduct one month preliminary fieldwork in Doeguling. I had called ahead to arrange for a Tibetan taxi driver to pick me up at the railway station so as to avoid the inconvenience of haggling with Indian taxi drivers in the early morning to go to Doeguling, which lies about 55 kilometers away. During the hour long journey the

Tibetan taxi driver, who I will call Tashi*, put on old Hindi film songs for most part of the journey. He also put on Tibetan songs, one was the newly released Thank You India song by the Dharmasala-based Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts, which commemorates Tibetan's 50 years in exile and expresses gratitude to India and its people for its tremendous support for the Tibetans. As we got off the national highway road and hit the narrow roads that pass through several Indian villages, he slowed down and drove with extra care not only to maneuver around the potholes but also to avoid buffaloes, cattle, goats and chickens meandering along the road. Tashi told me that Tibetan drivers have to be very careful these days while driving through the Indian villages because there have been a few recent incidents of Indian villagers forming mobs and beating up Tibetan drivers on one pretext or another. In 2008, a Tibetan taxi driver was beaten badly by a group of village youths when he expressed annoyance with frequent stops for donation (Hindi. *chanda*) to a Hindu religious festival of *Ganapati puja*. If a Tibetan driver accidentally hits a buffalo or goat, the Indian bystanders would gang up and try to extort money from him. I could sense tension in his voice as he further told me about the recent anti-Tibetan statements in the local media and TV channels, which I discuss more in this chapter.

As we approached the settlement, he became more relaxed and said to me, "We are almost home. You know, the settlement is our *phayul*." In this one hour taxi journey, one could gauge the ambivalent attitude of ordinary Tibetans toward India as a Tibetan place. On the one hand Tashi refers to Doeguling as his *phayul*, which literally translates as father land.³³ On the

* All the names of research informants throughout the dissertation are pseudonyms so as to ensure their anonymity. However, in the case of exile leaders and leaders and their interviews, real names and their official positions and roles are explicitly mentioned.

³³ The Tibetan term *pha yul* generally is used to mean the country of Tibet, and the name of one of the most popular website in Tibetan exile is www.phayul.com. However, the term also connotes different meanings based on context.

other hand, his comments on the local Indo-Tibetan relationship reveal the underlying tension of Tibetans living as “foreigners” and “refugees” in India for the past five decades.

Tashi, 45 years old and unmarried, was born in Simla when his parents were working on road construction. He was about three years old when his parents moved to the settlement. He attended the settlement school and dropped out after the fifth grade to help his parents in farming. Due to family circumstances, he joined the army at the age of 18 and served there for 22 years. He is the eldest of six children, his parents made the middle son a monk in a Sakya Monastery in North India and the youngest daughter a nun in 1985 when a nunnery was first founded in the settlement. Both of them later defrocked³⁴ and are married now. His youngest brother joined the army after dropping out of school in the seventh grade. His three sisters are all married in the settlement and have children of their own. The two older sisters are sweater sellers and the younger sister is a housewife and married to a Tibetan who is serving in the army. The defrocked brother is the only one who moved permanently out of the settlement and now lives with his wife’s family in a Tibetan settlement in North India.

With the retirement benefits from the army, Tashi bought a second hand Maruti van and has been driving it as a taxi since 2006. His parents passed away a few years ago. He is now facing constant pressure from his sisters to marry and settle down, but he is adamant that he does not want to marry. He frequently visits the local liquor shops in and around the settlement after a hard day of taxi driving, something that his sisters constantly harp and worry about. When he is

For example, if a Tibetan born in India is asked about his phayul, he is most likely to respond Tibet but may then qualify by explaining that Tibet is the birthplace of his parents.

³⁴ In the Christian society, a person is said to be “defrocked” when priests, monks, nuns, and church officials leave the church, and their symbolic dress referred to as frocks are taken away. In the Tibetan context, the term “disrobed” is commonly used, but it is not used here to avoid the confusion of the term with the act of taking one’s clothes off.

sober, he is a very likable person and extremely easy to get along with. Many older Tibetans from his village and the neighboring village hire his taxi to take them to hospitals, monasteries, and for other local travel purposes. Before I got hold of an old scooter to travel in the settlement, I would often hire his taxi to conduct fieldwork and the household survey. I have to tell him in advance if I need his taxi because he is always busy.

For people like Tashi, who are born in India, the settlement is the only home they know and Tibet is an imagined land, not a lived reality or memory, what one anthropologist calls “the absent presence” (Hess 2009:22). Tashi does not envision himself leaving the settlement, and he is content driving a taxi. But he thinks that the younger and more educated Tibetans do not want to live in the settlement. For example, he believes that all his nieces and nephews (eight in total, the children of his three sisters) will eventually settle elsewhere in India or move abroad. One nephew is actively pursuing immigration to the US as part of family reunion through the nephew’s paternal uncle, who moved to the US in 2008. Three nephews and two nieces have training, and jobs outside the settlement. A seven year old niece was recently sent to an Indian convent boarding school in North India.

In the previous chapter on construction of Tibetan spaces in India, I discussed how the Tibetan exiles have recreated large, homogenous communities through the three key projects of establishing separate Tibetan settlements, modern Tibetan schools, and monasteries in exile. Rehabilitation of Tibetans in India is considered one of the more successful refugee stories and many scholars have commented on how Tibetans have maintained a cohesive community and adapted successfully without any adverse psychological and socio-economic problems typically faced by refugee communities (Goldstein 1975; Subba 1990; De Voe 1983; von Fürer-Haimendorf 1990).

In this chapter, I examine how the Tibetans are actively engaged in maintaining the settlement as a separate Tibetan space and the challenges they face due to their protracted stay in exile, their ambiguous legal status, and their general place in Indian society. On the one hand, Tibetans acknowledge that India has been very generous to the Tibetans by giving them land for settlement, providing support for their economic well-being, and financing education. On the other hand, many individual Tibetans express feelings of insecurity and vulnerability when discussing their legal status in India and their place in Indian society. The local Indian community acknowledge the Tibetan settlements as a separate Tibetan space and refers to the Tibetans as the “people of the Dalai Lama.” The Tibetans are regarded as temporary guests, both in the eyes of local Indians as well as the Indian state. The idea that the Tibetans will eventually return is articulated by the exiles by maintaining that India is just a temporary abode (*gnas tshang*) and Tibetans have no reasons to stay in Indian once freedom is restored in Tibet.

However, fifty years in exile has taken its toll on the Tibetan exiles, particularly on the younger generations born in India, who have never seen or experienced life in Tibet but are strongly enculturated with a sense of Tibetan identity in the settlements, schools, and home settings. Living as stateless people for the past five decades have brought a more realistic understanding of India as a Tibetan place; this has to be viewed in the broader context of place making of India as a Tibetan place. In this chapter, I start by examining the official discourse framed by the Dalai Lama and CTA that emphasizes the historic links between India and Tibet and the idea of India as second homeland. I then examine the socio-political practices as well as everyday experiences of Tibetans exiles in maintaining the settlement as a Tibetan place and in the process document the fraught and ambivalent attitude of ordinary Tibetans towards India. I conclude by discussing how the protracted stay in exile and the ambiguous legal status of

Tibetans living as stateless people are contributing to a sense of vulnerability, insecurity, and anxiety among the younger generations of Tibetans born in India.

4.1 Official Discourse on Indo-Tibetan Relationship

In early Tibetan historiography, India is commonly referred to as the Holy Land (Tib: *phags pa'i yul* or Arya Bhumi in Sanskrit) because India is viewed as the birthplace of Buddha and the source of Tibetan Buddhism. In *The Holy Land Reborn: Pilgrimage and the Tibetan Reinvention of Buddhist India*, Toni Huber (2005) provides a rich analysis of India as the Holy Land by contrasting the cultural and historical realities of Tibet's relations with India and its current manifestations in the context of two modern phases, archaeological excavations and Buddhist modernism. Huber focused particularly on the role of Tibetan religious elites in the social construction of modern day India as a sacred landscape through the cultural practice of pilgrimage and ritualistic dimensions attached to pilgrimage. Today, for both the Indian and Tibetan leaders, the historical, religious, and cultural ties through the lens of Buddhism serve a very important cultural resource to frame and explain the contemporary relationship between India and Tibet.

Building upon the centuries old Tibetan thinking, the Dalai Lama often refers to himself as a “son of India” and deploys the parent-child metaphor in what Huber refers to as “the selective memory borne of a particular historiographical tradition” through which “Tibetans have consistently and almost exclusively focused upon India as the ‘mother’ of everything they value in their civilization” (2005:3). Another dimension of this representation is the master-disciple metaphor (*bla ma 'm dge rgan dang dge phrug lta bu'i 'brel ba*) and India as a safe abode for the

Tibetans. As the Dalai Lama says, “During our most difficult time, we, the disciples, sought refuge in India, the land of the master.” As a result, India is often represented as “the second homeland”, as illustrated by the opening quote of the chapter in which the Dalai Lama uses the Tibetan term *pha yul gnyis pa*.

This idealized view of India as a sacred place and second homeland is a strong recurrent theme in the CTA official discourses. For example, the year 2009 was commemorated all over India by the Tibetan exiles as 50 Years in Exile and officially announced as the Thank You India Year. Throughout the year, cultural programs and events were organized in different Indian cities and towns to express gratitude to the Indian government and the people of India for their generous support to the Tibetans. The Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts established by the CTA in 1959, now an autonomous body under the CTA’s Department of Religion and Culture, produced a special song titled *Thank You India*. The song, interspersed with messages in Hindi and English, describes India as the “center of the world, a cradle of civilization” and the bond between India and Tibet as “most tight” and a “result of collective karma”. I provide here an extract of the song’s lyrics:

Especially due to time’s degeneration
When Tibet and its people were assailed by hostile forces
It is India who came to our relief
A half a century has gone by
Today we commemorate this passage
Thank you, India!

India, the cradle of knowledge
You are our teacher
The abode of refugee during our hard times
Given love and kindness by its people
We have been in your refuge since 1959
We are your disciples
To this great land and its kind people
We salute you, Vande Mantaram!

Under the leadership of the Lotus Holder [the Dalai Lama]
To tens of thousands of us Tibetans
You provide us a respite from agony
You gave us a *home away from home* [Tib. *rang khyim gnyis pa* or second home]

Even though we are dispersed in diaspora
Enjoying freedom of body and mind
We were able to re-establish
A firm base for our culture and religion
From 1959 to this year 2009
A half a century has gone by
Today we commemorate this passage

From the invention of Tibetan script
To the sublime Dharma, the source of benefit for all
Tibet is indebted to India
From Nalanda to Vikramalashila
Many a famed master and adept
Of India's great learning centers
Lived and taught in the Land of Snows [Tibet]
Thank you, India!³⁵

This song has also been made into a video, which depicts images of Tibetan culture and religion thriving in exile and flourishing young Tibetans in schools. It goes on to present images of renowned Buddhist scholars who lived and taught in India. The song captures the idealized view of India as the Holy Land and cradle of civilization, frames the relationship between India and Tibet as that of *Guru* and *Chela*, India as the teacher and Tibet as the disciple. This song would be frequently played during the public functions and daily life in the Tibetan shops and restaurants in Doeguling. I came across several Tibetans who expressed being very moved after listening to the song and viewed it as a very useful reminder to the Tibetans of the generosity of India and its people.

³⁵ The translation is based on the subtitles online. Accessed April 2010.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EbA2jC25B5I>

In Doeguling, as part of the official Thank You India Year commemoration, one cultural event was held in the town hall in Hubli, where the Indian officials and political leaders were the invited guests. In addition to cultural dances and songs and speeches by the Indian and Tibetan dignitaries, one Tibetan recipient of gallantry award for his service in the Kargil War of 1999 was also felicitated by the local Indian authorities. For the Tibetan exiles, it was an important opportunity to remind the local Indian community that the Tibetan exiles are also “model guests” who repay India through the service of Tibetan young men in the Indian army to safeguard India's borders. As the president of the Ex-Tibetan Soldier’s Association told me, most of the Indian public are very poorly informed about the Tibetan issue. Informing the Indian public about the role of Tibetans in the Indian army serves very useful purposes in not only clearing misunderstandings about Tibetans in India but in developing beneficial official connections.

To further illustrate the general discourse of India as the second homeland, during the 2011 primary election campaign for the post of Kalon Tripa (the exile political leader, popular referred to as the Tibetan Prime Minister), the Kalong Tripa elect Lobsang Sangay described India as his “second home” by emphasizing his possession of an Identity Certificate (travel document issued by the Government of India for the exile Tibetans in India) to prove his “stateless” Tibetan identity and personal sacrifice of material benefits in not taking US citizenship where he has lived since 1995 (first as a Fulbright scholar, then as a graduate student and research fellow at Harvard).³⁶

At the official level, both Indian and Tibetan leaders express respect and support for each other. However, the official rhetoric does not fully capture the more complex and complicated

³⁶ This was used by his supporters as a major political strength in opposition to the candidacy of Tenzin Namgyal Tethong, who has taken up US citizenship. Many of my research informants viewed the above as one of the important factors why Tibetans should vote for Lobsang Sangay.

understanding of ordinary Tibetans toward India, where they are resettled in pockets across the vast landscape. This resettlement of Tibetan refugees in predominantly rural India is bound to have deep impacts on the local social, political, and economic dynamics. In the following section, I turn to the local Indo-Tibetan interface to capture the dynamics of this relationship.

4.2 Historicizing the Local Indo-Tibetan interface

When the settlements of Tibetan refugees in rural Karnataka were established, great efforts were taken by both the Indian and Tibetan authorities to prevent the arousal of jealousy which could result in hostility towards the newcomers (Woodcock 1970:419). In the early years, the CTA tried to ensure that local Indians also received direct benefits from the establishment of Tibetans settlements in the form of tractor and truck services, agricultural labor and technological services (von Furer-Haimendorf 1990:77, Pullman 1984: 23). For example, as part of the conditions laid out by the Indian government, MYRADA, along with its primary responsibility of building infrastructure including housing, hospitals, schools, electricity, and water supply in the Tibetan settlements, carried out parallel rural development for the neighboring Indian community near all the four Tibetan settlements (Woodcock 1970, Pullman 1984).

Most studies on the Tibetan refugees elsewhere in India have documented the general non-assimilative nature of Tibetan communities as well as a certain degree of resentment and jealousy by the local Indian towards the economic success of Tibetans and foreign aid to the Tibetans (De Voe 1983, Saklani 1984:356-62, Norbu 2001: 220-221, Deihl 2002:110-23). In a study of the Tibetan settlement of Bylakuppe on the economic structure and relationship with the local Indian community in the 1960s, Melyvn Goldstein presented a positive picture of the

Indo-Tibetan relationship and noted that competition over resources was minimized by the Tibetan settlement's policy of "farming only" (1975). A recent paper on the early history and development of the same settlement presented a more complex picture of the Indo-Tibetan interface that noted continuous friction between the Indian administrators and communities and the Tibetan settlement (Magnusson et al. 2008). These frictions occurred over issue of land encroachment, cattle grazing, forest resource extraction, and "unauthorized" Tibetans living in the settlement.

In another paper that looked at the Indo-Tibetan relationship in two Tibetan refugees communities in Northern India, the author argued that the "inequitable distribution of welfare benefits on the basis of ethnicity" is one factor that is "partly responsible for Tibetan/Indian violence in Northern India" (Penny-Dimri 1994:293). In other words, the author suggests that the degree of inter-communal conflict correlates to the extent to which Indians benefit from external welfare; the more Indians benefit, the lower the level of conflict.

Palakshappa's study of Doeguling in the 1970s presented a very positive picture of the Indo-Tibetan relationship and predicted a "progressive" development in the future (1978:111). Arakeri who studied later in the 1980s pointed out that the relationship between the two communities occurred only in the economic sphere, and although this interaction has a very positive effect on the local economy, he argued that cultural misunderstandings and difference in cultural beliefs and practices are major sticking points between the two communities (1998: 302). Arakeri did note one incident whereby a few Tibetans were cheated by local Indian farmers who leased their already mortgaged land to the Tibetans by taking land rent of five years in advance (1989:217). In Doeguling, the Tibetan and Indian leaders describe the relationship between the Tibetans and the local Indian community in the early years as one of harmonious co-

existence. While the Tibetans describe the older Indians as generally very “humble” (*nyam chung*), the Indians echoed the same by describing the older Tibetans as “honest and hardworking.” Tibetans have been living in the settlement for more than forty years, and familiarity certainly can breed contempt as evidenced by the general complaints of the local Indian leaders about the “arrogant behavior” of the younger generation of Tibetans, something I discuss in detail later in this chapter.

Although there were no major Indo-Tibetan violent conflicts reported in Doeguling, I came across several incidents of friction between the Tibetans and Indian community over land encroachments, selling liquor, economic competition, and anti-Tibetan sentiments instigated for political and business reasons. From archival research, I found that in 1979, the Department of Home (then Council for Home Affairs) had convened a meeting of representatives of the Tibetan settlements and formulated “rules and regulations governing Tibetan refugees rehabilitated in various settlement camps in India” and listed 15 articles on administration of land and “general conduct”. It states:

Article 1: (a) All Tibetans shall abide by the laws promulgated by the Central and the State Governments of Indian and co-exist in complete harmony with the local Indian authorities and the populace.

(b) Within the community, all Tibetans must conduct themselves with the advices of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and follow the social and economic guidelines so prescribed by His Holiness’s Administration-in-exile. All the Tibetans in their respective settlement camps shall remain resolutely united without sectarian and regional petty considerations from any section of the Tibetan society.

Any local Indo-Tibetan conflict is treated with utmost concern by the Tibetan leaders who say that every step must be taken to maintain cordial relationship with the local Indian community. A few major violent conflicts involving Indians and Tibetans occurred in North India in the 1990s. In April 1994, Indians stoned Tibetan offices and schools and looted Tibetan

businesses in Dharamsala after a political leader incited them after the murder of an Indian youth by a Tibetan in a fight over an India-Pakistan cricket match (Tibetan Review 1995). This incident prompted the Dalai Lama to announce that the Tibetans would move to some larger Indian cities if the Tibetan presence in Dharamsala is causing inconvenience to the local Indian community. In 1992, Indian mobs attacked and burned down houses in a Tibetan village in Chauntra, about 50 kilometers from Dharamsala, after an Indian youth was stabbed by his Tibetan drinking buddy over sexual teasing of the murdered youth's sister (Penny-Dimri 2004: 23). In July 1999, 140 Tibetan-owned shops in Manali in Himachal Pradesh were looted and burned by the Indians over the stabbing to death of an Indian youth by a Tibetan boy during a fight (World Tibet News 1999).

The 1994 anti-Tibetan riot of Dharamasla became an eye-opener for the Tibetan exile community about the resentment of local Indians towards Tibetans and how this could be easily exploited by local politicians for vote bank politics. The CTA was caught unaware and even criticized in a special report by the Delhi based Tibetan Review, an independent Tibetan monthly magazine, for its indecision and wanting to play down the crisis, especially when it assumed a communal angle (Tibetan Review 1994). The report expressed particular disappointment with the response of the CTA officials to the crisis:

It was only six days after the rioting that some Tibetan officials paid a visit to the school on their way from somewhere else. After all that the school had gone through, the only thing the bureaucrats did was publicly admonish the staff for indulging in flashy or colorful life-style, which the locals disliked. (1994: 17)

After the anti-Tibetan riot in April 1994, the CTA has taken extra efforts by instructing all the Tibetan settlements to maintain harmonious relationship with the local Indian community and to make every effort to avoid any local Indian-Tibetan conflict turning into a communal

issue. The settlements were instructed to report all criminal matters directly to the Indian legal authorities. In 1995, a pamphlet in Tibetan language containing the main gist of speeches the Dalai Lama has given over the years on the Indo-Tibetan relationship was distributed to all the Tibetan settlements. An excerpt from the pamphlet reads:

I have said many times that ‘if one drinks the water of the land then one must follow the law of the land’ (Tib. *yul chu thung na yul khrims ’kyer*). It is very important that the Tibetans should respect the law of the land. More specifically, the Tibetans must not look down upon and mistreat the local people, must not interfere in the internal matters of the country, and must not harm the national interests of the country.

Because we are foreigners in India, we all must do our best to maintain harmonious relationship with the local people. We must avoid any actions, speeches, and behaviors that are ‘unbecoming’ (*mi mzhesh pa’i bya spyod dang smra brjod rnam agyur ngan pa*) in the eyes of the general Indian community and neighbors.

Due to bad behaviors of a few ignorant Tibetans sometimes, it give a bad name to the Tibetan community leading to communal animosities. We must learn from this experience and take firm responsibility to prevent such incidents in the future. Tibetans must never get into verbal fights with Indians. In the case of small conflicts, Tibetans must not form mobs, express bad attitude, speak harsh words, fight or use knives and other weapons.

Since it is natural to have conflicts in human society, the respective leaders as well as teachers and parents as part of their daily duties must educate the general Tibetan society about proper moral conduct and behavior in order to maintain cordial relationship between communities. Likewise, other community organizations must pay special attention and cooperate in this effort.

In the case of conflicts between individual Tibetans and Indians, it must not be ignored as an isolated incident. It is very sad if such incidents blow up into communal issues.

I quote the above statement in length because it is not only the official policy of the CTA on local Indo-Tibetan relationship but is something the Tibetans have deeply internalized as well. In Doeguling, the local Tibetan leaders, starting from the settlement officer to camp leaders, invariably quotes from the “advices” of the Dalai Lama in the community meetings and emphasize that Tibetans should maintain harmonious relationship with the Indians at all cost. The message has impacted the general conduct of the Tibetans in India. For instance, in all the Indian cities where Tibetan go to sell sweaters, Tibetans have formed associations and made

rules on general conduct. Tibetan women have to wear traditional Tibetan dress while the men have to wear shirt and pants, and Tibetans can't speak harshly to the Indian customers nor fight with Indians.

With regard to maintaining harmonious relationship with the local Indian community at the official level, the settlement office takes the main responsibility through officially established organizations like the Indo-Tibetan Friendship Society and Bharat Tibet Sanyog Manch.³⁷ As part of the official Indo-Tibetan relationship, the Indian officials and leaders are invited as guests to Tibetan events like His Holiness' birthday and other cultural events. To my question about if there is any form of relationship that is maintained with these villages, one local Tibetan leader says:

No, there are no other ways of keeping direct relationship with the villages. It is mainly through the settlement office that the local Indian village leaders are invited to different Tibetan cultural events like Losar, His Holiness's Birthday, and Nobel Peace Prize Day. It is through the settlement office, the official invitations are sent to the local RSS leaders, Bharat Tibet Sanyog Manch and others... Personally, I follow His Holiness' advice and try to do my best to keep a good relationship with the local community.

In the recent years in Doeguling, Tibetans have also taken proactive steps in reaching out to the local Indian community. For instance, Sakya Monastery as part of social service helped several poor Indian families by providing free housing and monthly stipends for children's education to four poor families. In 2008, the Dalai Lama donated ten million Indian rupees (\$200,000) to build a technical institute for local youths at Naserkeet near Mundgod. The Dalai Lama also grants INR 100,000 rupees (\$ 20,000) every year to a home for disabled children in Mundgod. During the 2011 visit, the Dalai Lama donated another 50,000 Rupees for disabled

³⁷ The two organizations are often headed by retired Indian bureaucrats or political leaders and focus on generating support for the Tibetan cause amongst the Indian public.

children. One high lama from Gaden Monastery who is based in Singapore provides monthly food rations and clothing to these children. Another lama and his disciples from Gaden Shartse Monastery based in Spain are building a home for disabled children near Mundgod. They already completed one such home in Haveri, about 100 kilometers from Mundgod. Another high lama from Gaden Shartse Monastery is planning to build an animal shelter in the Tibetan settlement. The local Indian leaders and officials have expressed full support for the project but it is awaiting official approval to build on agricultural land.

4.3 Boundary Maintenance: Indian Servants and Inter-marriages

Scholars have commented on the general non-assimilative characteristic of the Tibetan communities in India. While the rural Indian communities have their own cultural practices of purity and pollution, intermingling, and marriage, the Tibetans emphasize the preservation of their national and cultural identity and thereby practice marital endogamy to maintain social and political boundaries. To illustrate how Tibetans in Doeguling monitor and maintain boundaries between themselves and the local Indian community, I look at two specific practices, employing Indians as servants and inter-marriages.

In the early years of settlement, dependence on local Indian labor was minimal because Tibetans were too poor to hire labor. Most Tibetans formed mutual labor exchange groups called *lag re* or *snga lag* whereby a few Tibetan families, mostly relatives and family friends, would pool their labor to help each other in farming. Over the years, as the result of sending children to schools and increasing outmigration of young able bodied people, Tibetans began to depend

more and more on local Indian labor for farming and sweater selling. The Tibetans also resorted to keeping servants, something that was widely practiced in traditional Tibet among the upper classes. In Doeguling it however meant keeping Indian servants, mostly children from very poor families who were happy to receive a little salary and free food for their young children. In the 1980s and 1990s, it became a very common practice for Tibetans to bring young children from Bihar and Orissa to work as house servants. The Indian parents are usually paid a yearly salary in advance, and these children are kept for several years until they attain marriageable age.

Starting in the early 1990s, there has been a sustained effort by the CTA through the respective settlement administrative heads to stop the practice of keeping young Indian boys and girls as servants. This practice was viewed by the CTA as problematic for many reasons. First, it harmed the Tibetan collective image because keeping Indian servants was increasingly seen as incompatible with the general image of Tibetans as poor refugees deserving of foreign aid and sponsorship. Second, many local Indian officials and leaders reacted negatively to the image of refugees keeping Indian citizens as servants because they resent the economic success of Tibetans who are perceived to be receiving preferential treatment from the Indian government and foreign donors. Finally, the issue of child labor, which gained international media attention starting in the 1990s, became a major reason why this practice was actively discouraged by the CTA. In 1995, the local Tibetan assembly in Doeguling passed a resolution stating that no Tibetan should keep an Indian servant who is below the age of 14.

During my fieldwork, I also noticed a strong negative reaction to the keeping of Indian servants by some Tibetans who expressed the common refrain that welfare is spoiling Tibetans leading to certain stereotypical image of welfare recipients who keep Indian servants to do even household chores. Through my household survey, I came across only a few households that hire

Indian servants, mostly women to help in the chores of cooking, washing dishes and clothes. One such household is listed in the CTA's poor category. When I asked the head of household whether the Indian woman is a house servant, she told me that the woman was hired on daily wage for a few days because of her own poor health. I came across only two instances of young Indian servants (clear cases of child labor). When I asked the first household head, a widowed Tibetan woman, if she knew about the recent announcement by the settlement officer about legal implications of child labor, she expressed her knowledge of it but said she is helpless because she has so many young children and grandchildren to take care of. I also found some Tibetan restaurants in the settlement employing young Indian workers although it is hard to if they are below of the age of 14.

During fieldwork, the settlement officer announced regularly at public meetings that the settlement office will not be in any position to provide any assistance if a Tibetan is charged with child labor because it is a legal matter. The settlement officer frequently cited an incident in 2008 when an elderly Tibetan hotel owner in Dehradun (in northern India) was arrested by the Indian police at Bherampur railway station in Odisha (in eastern India) because the man was found travelling with four Indian children. The Indian police charged him with trafficking in minors although the children's parents acknowledged that they had consented to send their children with the man. To emphasize his message, the settlement officer explained that the Tibetan man is undergoing immense hardship in attending the frequent court hearings in Orissa for which he has to travel all the way from his home in Dehradun.

Some Tibetans view keeping young Indian boys and girls very negatively on the basis that intimate living might lead to sexual relationships. In general, both the Tibetans and local Indian community practice marital endogamy. In the exile society, intermarriage is generally

looked down upon and socially discouraged because marital endogamy is seen as crucial to preserving Tibetans as a distinct ethnic group and to mitigate the threats of genocide inside Tibet and assimilation in exile (Childs and Barkin 2006).

In the household survey, among 934 households there were only eight instances of intermarriage. Of the eight, only four have resulted in children. Three of the Indian spouses live with their Tibetan partners and children in the settlement; and one marriage is, interestingly, polygamous with two Indian sisters married to a Tibetan husband. The remaining four intermarriages were all remarried widows or divorcees with no children resulting from the current union. In 2007, in Camp 4, after a Tibetan woman married a local Indian fight erupted with the Tibetan family. Afterwards, a group of Indians belonging to the nearby village of Hungund came in a tractor one night and beat up three Tibetans including a young school girl. All three were severely beaten with stones and rods and ended up in the hospital with broken jaws and other severe injuries. The Tibetans view this incident as another reason why intermarriage in the settlement is problematic and a source of communal tension. I was told that the Tibetan woman and her Indian husband do not live in the settlement, and suspect that the couple has been socially ostracized for creating communal tension.

In Doeguling, one can see local Tibetan leaders take efforts to maintain the social and political boundaries between the Tibetan and Indian communities by emphasizing the collective goals of national and cultural identity through restricting the keeping of Indian servants and encouraging marital endogamy. I now turn to the maintenance of Doeguling as a separate moral space by looking at the sale of liquor and gambling, long viewed as potential sources of conflict between the two communities.

4.4 Maintaining moral space: liquor sale and gambling prohibition

In a study of Doeguling in the 1970s, Arakeri makes a passing reference to the number of local Indians frequently visiting the Tibetan settlement to drink *chang* (home-made Tibetan brew from rice and millet) and Tibetan made liquor, which was seen by the Indian authorities as illegal and a source of potential conflict between the two communities (1998:300). In the settlement office records, I found three clippings of local news report in the early 1980s on the issue of Tibetans selling *chang*. One news weekly, *Nehru of India* dated April 10, 1983, carried on its front page a report captioned as “Illicit Liquor from Tibetans: Loss of Lakhs of Rupees for Government” and says,

Tibetans openly deal in illicit liquor and supply it across Mundgod Taluk. No officer dare to visit the Tibetan colony, it is heard that they are threatened with big knives and spears...

The illicit liquor making Tibetans who make lakhs every month don't fear anyone. Even women make and sell liquor. If the government does not take proper action, what is going to happen? ³⁸

The above newsweekly also carried a photo of Tibetans kneeling behind a row of jerkins containing the seized *chang* and Indian excise officials standing behind them. While the local Indian authorities frame the Tibetan liquor selling as essentially breaking Indian laws, the local Indian community viewed it as a social problem and complained about Indian laborers wasting their hard earned daily wages on Tibetan *chang* and thus disrupting family life. I came across a

³⁸ This weekly is now defunct. The original news clippings in Kannada language can be found in the official correspondences file of Doeguling Tibetan Settlement Office.

letter from the Tibetan settlement officer to the Indian authorities citing the importance of chang in traditional Tibetan ceremonies and rituals, and to reconsider the blanket ban on chang making, which was causing hardship to ordinary Tibetans who make it for their own consumption and ritual and social purposes. He assured the Indian authorities that appropriate action would be taken against those Tibetans who are found selling chang.

Older Tibetans recall that it took the settlement office considerable effort to stop the selling of chang. They also explain the main reason for blocking the Indian officials in their raids was that many Tibetans view the raids as intruding upon Tibetan space. Although this view is still shared by many Tibetans who wished to maintain the settlement as a separate space, they are also cognizant of the reality that living in India means following the law of the land. In an interview with a local Tibetan assembly member on the issue of Tibetans selling chang in the early years, he says:

Yes, *chang* was openly sold mostly to the local Indian workers. The local Indians complained that this was spoiling the Indian people, and how Indian men are wasting all their hard earned daily wage on chang. And that these drunk men disrupt family life. There were frequent complaints, and the local excise officials came with the police to raid the Tibetan houses, and confiscate jerrycans and jerrycans of chang. I think it was a major problem back then. One could see drunk Indian laborers passed out by the roadside. I remember one particular local group headed by some Muslim leaders in Mundgod. They would go around the settlement checking local Indians working in the settlement for alcohol drinking and pour cold water on the heads of those who are found to have consumed chang. They punished them in order to stop the social problem of alcoholism in their own community.

In the early years, some Tibetans took a more pragmatic approach (*sdig pa mi rtsun*) and engaged in selling chang to make a living because it is a lucrative business that requires little capital or labor. Today, the selling of chang is generally viewed as an “unethical” livelihood as well as an act that harms the collective Tibetan image. In recent years, the CTA has taken a strong stand against Tibetans engaging in illegal and unethical livelihoods including selling

chang, running gambling houses, and smuggling endangered animal parts. For instance, the Tibetan colony of Majnu ka Tilla in Delhi—popular for its chang among the rickshaw pullers and Delhi University students—stopped selling chang in 2006. This happened after one Indian police official approached the CTA directly about this illegal activity, which was also viewed as causing a bad name to the Tibetan’s collective image. In 2006, the Private Office of the Dalai Lama provided financial assistance of INR 75,000 (\$1,500) each to the chang sellers to start alternative livelihoods (Phayul 2006, IANS 2006).

In Doeguling today, Tibetans do make chang but only for certain occasions like Losar (Tibetan New Year), weddings, and certain rituals.³⁹ The increased wealth of Tibetans and change in drinking habits have all contributed to the rise of illegal liquor shops in and around the settlement. Until the mid-2000s, it was the sale of locally made Indian liquor popularly called “shit arak” (*rkyag pa a rag*). It came in plastic bags. Due to its very cheap price (around 10 rupees per bag) and high potency, it became widely consumed in the settlement, especially among older people and young people who can’t afford the more expensive liquor.

As in the rest of rural India, the shit arak business was controlled by the liquor contractors with the connivance of local politicians. About the sale of shit arak, one local Tibetan leader says:

I think it was locally made and sold through the state excise granted licensed shops. It has been stopped now. Particularly, during elections, these were available in plenty and used to be brought from Sirsi. Jeeps would deliver bags of liquor to different shops in the Indian villages, and strict accounts of delivery maintained.

³⁹ As an anecdotal evidence of changing drinking habits, I attended a Tibetan wedding in Doeguling where drinking play a big part. This wedding was no different with drinks aplenty served by Tibetan wine ladies (*chang ma*) singing traditional drinking songs and picking on gullible guests to drink bottoms up. There were plenty of drink choices from brand name whiskies, rums, beers, wines and chang. I was told by the host, who is also the local agricultural extension officer on organic farming, that only two people (a Tibetan elder and I) were drinking chang at the wedding. I made a sarcastic remark about how ironic it is for a settlement that talks so much about organic farming and consuming locally produced foods and drinks.

A few Tibetans would buy this liquor in bulk from the local Indian contractor and resell it at a markup price in the settlement. In October 1994, a Tibetan woman was murdered by four Indians in her home. At the scene of the murder, the police found empty packets of shit arak and cash strewn around. Although the real motive for murder is still not clear, it is rumored that it is related to dispute over the sale of shit arak. A local member of the Tibetan assembly says:

Yes, a Tibetan woman was murdered over a dispute on the sale of shit arak. I suspect she was selling it. The two Indian culprits was later caught and are in prison now. Now the sale of shit arak has stopped. Unlike the clear colored shit arak that used to come in plastic bags, there is now another locally made liquor that is brownish in color and it comes in plain bottles. The shit arak was sold between 8 to 10 Rupees per package, and this new local arak costs between 40 to 50 Rupees.⁴⁰

In 2006, one Tibetan doctor working at Doeguling Tibetan Refugee hospital wrote about the rampant sale of shit arak and its detrimental health effects because this liquor probably contained high levels of methanol (Dolkar 2006). She noted that some elderly residents of Old People's Home and few young people were regular consumers of this illicit cheap liquor. Although I have been unable to document figures, the general refrain is that there is a rise of alcoholism among the younger generation and deaths from liver failure.⁴¹ During my fieldwork, I learned about three deaths of men in their fifties, and the causes were attributed to alcoholism. In Camp 5, one household survey respondent was a 23 years old girl who had to drop out of college in the middle of her nursing study in order to take care of her 52 years old father who is an alcoholic and became bedridden due to liver cirrhosis. Her father passed away during my fieldwork. The taxi driver I mentioned in the opening of this chapter has quit drinking a few times; his sisters are pleading with him to join a counseling and rehabilitation program, which is

⁴⁰ There are frequent deaths among poor people from consumption of these cheap and spurious liquors.

⁴¹ According to CTA 2009 Census, Doeguling is listed with the highest overall morbidity cases among the Tibetan settlements in India, and it has the most life-style related illness and second most cases of liver cirrhosis after Dharamsala.

financially supported by the CTA's health department.⁴² Tashi refuses to seek counseling because he says that he can give up alcohol on his own and does not want to be seen as having alcohol addiction problem.

During my fieldwork, I found out that Tibetans are regular costumers at five liquor shops run by Indians, all located near the Tibetan villages. I had to pass by one such shop at the road corner leading to Camp 8 and would sometimes find young Tibetans passed out by the roadside. I ended up visiting that shop one afternoon with a Tibetan friend because all the restaurants in the settlement were closed on occasion of a Tibetan holiday. We ordered tea and some snacks, and sat at a table facing the road. I could see a few Tibetans drinking inside the shop. Two Tibetans came in to buy liquor to take it to home. One was a young boy who said that he was running an errand for his uncle. My friend chatted with the Indian shop owner about his liquor business. The Indian shop owner was forthright and proudly told us that his customers are mostly Tibetans. When asked whether the local police give him any trouble, he replied that he pays regular bribes to the police and some high people in Mundgod to keep his business going. In 2008, the Tibetan village leaders met with the local police and filed complaints about the illegal liquor shops in and around the settlement. One LTA member notes:

After our complaints, the local police arrested a few of the people running these illegal liquor shops and showed to the Tibetan village leaders a few cases of liquor bottles that were seized. But, only an intimation notice was given by the police to the shop owners, and no police cases were filed. The police did nothing to completely ban these illegal shops. For that, we need to approach the higher police authorities either in Sirsi or the SP (Superintendent of Police) in Karwar. The SP has the ultimate authority to close all these shops. But, it ultimately depends on the type of SP in the office. If a corrupt SP comes, then these shops will be open again. Further, if we approach the SP, then these local

⁴² During my fieldwork, the CTA's health department held a three-day workshop on substance abuse and HIV/AIDS awareness where people were informed about free treatment and rehabilitation programs for alcohol and substance abuse, and that those who are rehabilitated will be provided with life skills training. My interview with the CTA's health staff reveal social stigma associated with alcoholism and substance abuse as one of the main reasons why many alcohol abusers do not seek counseling and rehabilitation. To overcome this social stigma, the CTA provides regular training to the local health workers to deal with alcohol and substance abuse cases.

Indians will become more hostile towards the Tibetans and will create troubles for the Tibetans on one pretext or another. Ultimately the fault lies with our own people who don't think about the harm to the Tibetan community and visit these shops. If our people don't drink and stop visiting these shops, there is no reason for any problem with the local Indians to arise in the first place. The Indians who set up shops around the Tibetan villages, if they are selling foods and vegetables, it is perfectly fine because everyone needs to make a living. Nobody should discriminate between Indian or Tibetan shops. But selling liquor is altogether a different matter.

But, the help might come from an unexpected quarter. In September 2011, a group of local Indian women in nearby Indoor village staged a protest in front of the illegal shops in their village with brooms in their hands.⁴³ Some Tibetans are hopeful that more protests like these by the local Indians and media attention might finally force the authorities to crack down upon these illegal liquor shops.

The issue of selling liquor and gambling were raised many times in the local Tibetan assembly and resolutions were passed to ban the sale of liquor, snooker games, and gambling in Doeguling. The local Tibetan assembly expressed serious concerns about rising alcoholism and gambling among the younger generations and viewed it as a serious threat to the moral and social fabric of the Tibetan community and as harming the life career of young Tibetans. Further, it viewed the rising number of illegal liquor shops and availability of cheap liquor as potential sources of communal conflicts.

In 2008, a resolution passed by the LTA banned the sale of liquor and set INR 10,000 (\$200) as a penalty for anyone caught selling liquor and running gambling houses. Two Tibetans

⁴³ An online news search reveals frequent protests by women and some activists in Karnataka against the rising number of liquor shops, a very important source of revenue for the state governments. In 2008, one prominent anti-liquor activist A T Babu was murdered allegedly by the liquor and land mafia in Karnataka. In 2011, the Karnataka government granted license for 3,000 new liquor shops. Due to increasing anti-liquor protests, Karnataka decided not to issue new licenses in 2013. In recent years, there are frequent reports of women protesting in fronts of liquor shops with brooms in their hands in the remote rural areas of Karnataka.

were fined INR 10,000 each, but there were still a few Tibetans who are known for selling liquor and running gambling within the settlement. A 32 year old married Tibetan with two children in Camp 3 is known for running a high stake *majhong* house. It was rumored that he had installed a small video surveillance camera on the front entrance door to alert for any potential raids by the police or community leaders. During the local assembly session, some members even raise the issue of local Tibetan officials and leaders patronizing this place, thereby making it difficult to shut it down.

In the March 2011 session of the local Tibetan assembly, after a heated debate over the continued presence of Tibetans selling liquor and running gambling, another resolution was passed that empowered the settlement officer to take every possible actions to ban alcohol sales and gambling completely in Doeguling as well as ban Tibetans from patronizing the Indian run illegal liquor shops that adjoin the Tibetan villages. As a result, a committee of 17 members was formed and was headed by the settlement officer. On May 17, 2011 the committee convened a meeting of all the local staff under the Tibetan settlement office including the hospitals and Tibetan Cooperative Society. At the meeting, each staff was made to take an oath in the presence of a very high religious leader, Gaden *Shar pa Cho rje*, and *thangka* (religious painting) of the Buddhist wrathful protector deity Palden Lhamo that they will not patronize any illegal place that sells liquor and runs gambling in and around the settlement.

The next day, 17 committee members were divided into groups and visited each village to convene community meetings and advise people to stop selling liquor and running gambling houses, and to stop patronizing these places. If people defy the ban, the committee forewarned that it would resort to “non-violent actions” in the forms of calling out the names of those who sell liquor and run gambling houses in the public and organizing daily public protests in front of

their houses. As a result, four Tibetans (including the one from Camp 3 who runs gambling) came forward and promised to their respective village leaders to stop selling liquor and running gambling houses. I attended one such village meeting in Camp 7 where five members of the local committee and the settlement officer informed the villagers about the bans. At the end of the meeting, the village leader announced that one Dorjee Palden, who used to sell liquor and run gambling from his house, has acknowledged his mistakes and has promised henceforth to stop. He asked Dorjee to come forward and offered him a scarf while everyone clapped and cheered. Dorjee then prostrated three times and offered a scarf to the portrait of the Dalai Lama.

Dorjee is 45 years old and has five young school going children. He and his wife farm and raise livestock. He also drives an old auto as a taxi. As an appreciation for voluntarily giving up illegal activities, Dorjee was granted a free contract to sell tea, water and food inside the stadium during the 2011 Gyalyum Chenmo Soccer Tournament (a major Tibetan exile sporting event where Tibetan soccer teams from all over India and Nepal participate) held in Doeguling. He was also allowed to collect all the empty plastic bottles and cans in the stadium and keep the earnings from reselling. He later started a recycling collection business in the settlement and was interviewed by the VOA Tibetan service in 2012 for his entrepreneurship and environmental service.

The latest LTA ban on alcohol sales and gambling was the talk of the settlement for many days. In Camp 3 market square, at a shack under a big tamarind tree by the road, local youths including young monk administrative officials would gather informally and discuss everything under the sun from local politics to soccer and cricket matches. They call the place the “local gossip house” (*sa gnas jus rtogs lhan khang*) and contrast it with the local Tibetan assembly. I would join this informal gathering whenever time permitted in order to update myself on local

news and rumors. The ban on alcohol sales and gambling would be hotly debated, and most would exchange information on who sells liquor and runs gambling and who visits these places. The general opinion is that it is good that these places are banned. However, I came across a few Tibetans who were critical of the ban; they are mostly people who patronize these places. They express the view that the ban will only hurt the poor Tibetans who make a living from selling liquor and running gambling houses, and that it will ultimately result in Tibetans patronizing the Indian shops because the committee cannot enforce its ban on those shop owners. When I asked one member of the committee about this view that it will harm only the poor Tibetans who make a living from selling liquor, he responds:

This view does not take into account the fact that if these shops are left unchecked, it might lead to more and more people drinking in the Tibetan society because they have easy access to liquor. If selling liquor becomes more open and rampant, this will most likely lead to more social problems of alcoholism and related drunken brawls that would affect the whole community. One fine day the police will conduct a raid in the settlement and arrest Tibetans for either selling liquor illegally or fighting. This will be covered by the local media, which will then tarnish the Tibetan collective image. This could also be misused by some vested interests to create more anti-Tibetan sentiments.

Not surprisingly, after the ban by the local committee, some of the Indian shop owners whose businesses were affected became openly hostile towards the Tibetans. One Indian shop owner at road corner near Camp 6 retaliated by blocking the access to a small strip of land that connects the dirt road between Camp 6 and Camp 8. The small strip of land is owned by the Indian shop owner and the road closure caused considerable inconvenience for the Tibetans who now have to take a much longer route to get into the settlement, particularly school children who walk from Camp 8 to the school near Camp 6. The Tibetans point out that the road has been used

by the public for the past 40 years but they cannot do anything since the Indian shop owner technically owns that small strip of land that connects the two Tibetan villages.⁴⁴

In short, the selling of liquor not only highlights tension between the Tibetan and local Indian community, it also demonstrates how the Tibetans are attempting to maintain the settlement as a separate moral space. The selling of liquor is not only curbed for its obvious social problem of alcoholism but it is also viewed as causing harm to the collective image of the Tibetans. Since the Tibetan settlement office lacks any coercive power, it resorts to an interesting combination of moral and traditional authorities—in the form of taking an oath in front of religious figures—to enforce the resolution of the local assembly. The taking of an oath by all the local Tibetan staff could be also viewed as leading the community by example.

I will now discuss how the protracted stay of Tibetans in India and the economic success of Tibetans are being implicated by some local Indians for political interests. In the process, I intend to highlight the tenuous nature of the Tibetan stay in exile and how ordinary Tibetans interpret their place and future in India.

4.5 2008-2009: A period of Communal Tension

In the latter part of 2008 and early part of 2009 the local Indo-Tibetan relationship became very tense. I collected at least 18 clippings of news reports that appeared in the local dailies (both English and Kannada) that were highly critical of the Tibetans living in Doeguling. All these

⁴⁴ Another Indian who runs a liquor shop near Gaden Monastery as well a jeep service is known to be openly hostile towards Tibetans. His jeep had an accident in which two Tibetan passengers, one elderly Tibetan woman from Camp 8 and one Drepung monk, suffered serious injuries of broken ribs that required hospitalization. But the Indian jeep owner refuses to furnish insurance and license information to the local police, so the two Tibetans have given up on receiving any compensation from accident insurance.

anti-Tibetan reports were based mainly on a seven page petition submitted to the press and the local Indian authorities by a local group calling itself Nagarika Hritheyarakshana Vedike Mundgod Taluk (NHVM) which literally translates as Mundgod Citizen's Interest Protection Group.⁴⁵ I quote extensively from this petition, which although vitriolic and stereotypical, captures not only the resentment from some sections of the local India community but also highlights the long simmering resentment against the Tibetans including preferential treatment by the Indian government, economic competition and alleged illegal activities. The NHVM petition begins as:

On the behalf of people living in the neighboring villages around the Tibetan camp in North Karnataka, Mundgod, we would like to inform that during Nehru's time, as refugees the Tibetans were given land to live temporarily in different parts of India. Even in our Mundgod taluk, they were 5,000 [4,054] acres of forest land to live. The reason why they had come is because the Chinese government kicked them out in 1962-63. The older generations who came then were behaving very well. The new generations with their bad behaviors are causing distress to our people.

They have constructed their camps into a mini-Tibet. Earlier, our neighboring people have given sufficient help and compassion to these foreigners. But, these ungrateful people who benefited from our help are mistreating us. Their earlier behavior [of humility] is no more visible these days. New people are coming here daily. They buy our land and built illegal construction. The question is: Who gives them the permission to build? If we look at the current situation, we feel like we have become refugees ourselves compared to them.

The petition resorts to certain prevalent stereotypical images of the Tibetan society, consistent with what I heard from some local Indian officials that I interviewed. They describe the older Tibetans as "honest, humble and hardworking" people and express the opinion that the younger generation is more arrogant, disrespectful and "spoiled by foreign aid" and "easy money." When probed further for specific "bad behaviors" of the younger generation, they would point out the flashy lifestyle including dress and hair styles and riding motor cycles

⁴⁵ Original petition in Kannada language and translated with the help of Chith P. Kudlu, my graduate colleague, who is a native Kannada speaker.

loudly, at high speed, and in groups. Some say that the Tibetan youths' behaviors are having a negative influence on the Indian youths.

The NVHM protest received extensive coverage in the local dailies and TV channels and was politically exploited. It led to the visit of the local MLA (Member of Legislative Assembly, Karnataka State House) Mr. Ananth Kumar Hedge, a BJP party member, to the Tibetan settlement. He took the local police and Tibetan administration to task for not following the rules of the Indian law, and made strong anti-Tibetan remarks. It was a period when the Tibetans felt extremely vulnerable. Some in the settlement say that if the Tibetans have voting rights, the settlement, comprising 10,000 people, could use their voting block to have a political voice and agency. Fortunately, the MLA is said to have apologized later to the settlement leaders in private for his anti-Tibetan remarks after the BJP's state leaders reprimanded him for interfering in the internal affairs of the Tibetan people and making baseless allegations against them. One local Kannada paper writes:

... Ananth Kumar Hedge, the local MLA, had earlier spoken out against the Tibetans. He has given up now, and is sticking to the Sangha Parivar's opinion. Fifteen days ago, the RSS leaders have called him to the office in Bangalore and asked him why he is making baseless allegations against the Tibetans. Why were you silent five years ago and now highlighting the issue? If you have given them a week's notice before going to the settlement, they would have given you all the information. If you go suddenly, how can they give you all the information? If someone comes to your house, will you be able to give them the information immediately? The RSS leaders asked him these questions. Ananth Kumar promised not to say anything about the Tibetans any more. It was told so because the Tibetans follow Buddha Dharma, which is one of the Hindu Dharma. Some BJP youths who were giving statements against the Tibetans in the town have become silent after this incident. (Kannada Prabha, January 29, 2009)

Although the local MLA and his supporters backed down on their anti-Tibetan speeches and activities, the effect of the NHVM protest lingered for a few months. One article indulged in rumor mongering by carrying reports of an imminent attack on the Tibetan settlement by Rama

Sena⁴⁶ and described the Tibetan settlement as a den of “illegal activities” and full of “Chinese spies.” Many Tibetans are surprised by the accusations of NHVM because they believe that only insiders could know what is really happening inside the Tibetan society.⁴⁷

After the 1994 riot in Dharamsala, the Tibetan leaders have become acutely aware of the dangers of communalism in India. India arguably has one of the most unrestricted media in the world. One underside of the media, particularly local dailies and TV channels, is the sensationalized reporting that borders on communal incitement. Sussane Aranka Duska in her doctoral study, “Harmony Ideology and Dispute Resolution: A Legal Anthropology of Tibetan Diaspora in India” cites the study of a Bangalore-based Alternative Law Forum that referred to Karnataka as a potential “Gujarat of the South”⁴⁸ to underscore how “communal mind-set easily can move from inter-group tensions beneath the surface, to flare ups, to communal riots” (2008: 279).

Tibetan leaders react with grave concern whenever anti-Tibetan sentiments are covered in local dailies and TV channels, which could be easily exploited by some politicians for vote banks. The Tibetan settlement officer and local leaders attempted to diffuse the tension by reaching out to the local Indian leaders who are sympathetic to the Tibetans. The settlement

⁴⁶ Rama Sena is a fringe group that advocate extreme Hindu views that is known for attacks on shops selling Valentine Day cards and gifts, and bars and restaurants where young boys and girls mingle. It has also been accused of acting as mob for hire group by some media groups like Tehelka.

⁴⁷ This adds fuel to the Tibetans’ suspicion that the Shugden group might be behind the NVHM group. Although there is no way of verifying it, this group had earlier invited a Chinese consular official to their monastery in the settlement. Both the Indian central and state intelligence agencies are said to be closely monitoring the group. Some Tibetans report that local Indian leaders visited the break-away Shugden group, and are absolutely sure about the hand of China behind the anti-Tibetan protests. They cite their interaction with Indian intelligence agencies that are said to be tapping phone conversations. Specifically, some Tibetans tell that on average more than 200 phone lines are active between Doeguling and China. Seemingly, Tibetans are hired to translate the phone conversations.

⁴⁸ The Indian state of Gujarat has gained international notoriety for its more recent communal riots. The worst was the 2002 Godhra riots where the BJP led state administration were strongly condemned by the media and civil society for its complicity for not doing enough to protect the Muslim minority during the riots.

office also came out with its own press release clarifying that there are no illegal activities in the Tibetan settlement. One such press release covered by a newspaper states,

The Tibetan administration representative has clarified that people living in the Mundgod Tibetan settlement have been living in peace and harmony with the local people and no opportunities have been given for illegal activities. There is no truth in the reports of drugs sales and Chinese spy infiltration. This is an attempt to create discord and to disrupt the harmony between the Tibetans and the local people of the past 50 years. The Tibetan refugees have been living a peaceful life under the guidance of the Dharma guru Dalai Lama. This press release has told that the Tibetan government and people are infinitely grateful to the Indian government and the Tibetan refugees are living without disrupting the law and order and will do so in the future (Prajavani, January 31, 2009).

From archival research, I came across an earlier resolution passed by a Tibetan settlement committee (headed by the settlement officer, monastic and village leaders) in 1995 after a fight between a group of Indian villagers and one monk official in charge of farming (*zhing 'go*) of Drepung Loseling Monastery.⁴⁹ The resolution, which listed twenty points, strongly emphasized that the Tibetans must avoid any conflict with the local Indians at all cost. In the case of any injustices and discriminations by the local Indians, the matter should be reported directly to the Tibetan village leaders, who in turn will deal with the local Indian leaders. It forbids monks from riding motorcycles, swimming in nearby lakes and ponds, and visiting cinema houses and hotels or restaurants that serve alcohol. It also forbids Tibetan youngster from riding motorcycles at high speed, adding any parts to the bike that make loud noises, and riding three persons on a motorbike. During the public meetings, I observed that the local Tibetan leaders would regularly speak about Tibetans maintaining good moral conduct so that Indians don't have any reason to

⁴⁹ The particular monk official caught several buffaloes belonging to the adjoining Indian village of Nandikatti that destroyed the monastery's standing crops. Several Indian villagers ganged up on him and in the ensuing fight, the monk snatched a sickle from one Indian and injured two Indians seriously. The monk later ran away from the settlement fearing retribution attacks. The monastery finally settled the matter by paying substantial money compensation to the injured Indians.

complain about them. In particular, Tibetan parents are urged to “control” their children by advising them to dress and behave properly when they go to the local Indian market.

During my fieldwork, I learned that the NHVM group is a newly formed organization headed by a few local Indian leaders who have had personal fallouts with the Tibetans. Some of these leaders worked formerly for the Tibetans and some are also members of the local Indo-Tibetan Friendship Society (ITFS).⁵⁰ The Tibetans attributed the hostility of these Indian leaders to the following two factors. First, some of the ITFS leaders felt slighted and disrespected during the inauguration ceremony of Drepung Loseling Monastic Assembly Hall in September 2008 that was attended by the Dalai Lama, the Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh and other official guests.⁵¹ Second, Tibetans allege that some of the NVHM leaders are contractors who became hostile after the Tibetan monasteries hired professional builders from outside to work on multi-million rupee construction projects. For instance, the lucrative construction project of Drepung Loseling Monastic Hall was given to a builder based in Bangalore called Empire Group. NVHM views the giving of construction contracts to outside builders as “injustice” to the local people. The petition says:

Whether to build or farm or do any wage work, they give good salaries. Fittingly, our laborers, they toil for them. These days, they are ignoring the local laborers and inviting the big builders from other states and building huge buildings one after another. This is a big injustice to our labor. ...In the current situation, but for some small numbers of laborers for construction, they are not giving any employment. This is a big injustice to our laborers. People who have been paid well earlier have lost their livelihood... The local people are so distressed with the behavior of these young generations of Tibetans... Earlier, the laborers and the leaders have fought with them on the issue of outside big builders taking up the projects. But, the Tibetans have not heeded the local demands, and they continue to get building companies from outside the state. Our laborers are only

⁵⁰ IFTS is an organization established by the Tibetan and Indian leaders to improve Indo-Tibetan relationship and to generate support for the Tibetan cause among the Indian public.

⁵¹ The settlement officer acknowledged that some of the monastic officials might be at fault for not giving the local Indian leaders proper respect and high status seating arrangement during the inauguration ceremony. The president of IFTS, Kattimani, is said to have complained personally to the Dalai Lama during the 2008 visit about the low treatment of Tibetans towards Indians. Kattimani continues to hold the post of IFTS’s president but Tibetans see him as extremely hostile to the local Tibetans, particularly the monasteries.

employed for small jobs. Therefore, all the laborers and the leaders have gotten together and have taken a stand that the Tibetans should not give contracts and jobs to out of state companies. They have decided to form a union, creating anxiety amongst the Tibetans. Because of this protest by the above organization, all other people including auto-rickshaw drivers, and jeep owners, all vehicle owners, and all kinds of traders are sighing with relief. They are happy that future misfortune will be avoided.

The NVHM's attempts to incite the local Indian community, particularly those Indian construction laborers, did not achieve the desired result. A few days after the NVHM protest, another local Indian group calling itself Construction and Coolie Laborers Association released the following press statement signed by about 150 members.

The press release states,

Presidents and Reporters

Sub: Clarification on the issue published on December 17, 2008

Respected people (*Manyarey*),

We, the undersigned people, have been working as laborers in the Tibetan camp for 20 to 25 years to support our families. It is our basic livelihood. We have not faced any injustice and harassment from the Tibetans. Our relationship with them is very good. On the news published on December 17, NHVM have alleged that the construction laborers are mistreated in the Tibetan camps, and this is far from truth. This kind of statement destroys our relationship with the Tibetans. Here, everyday there are about 2500 construction laborers, 300 bar binders, 400 masons, 200 electricity workers, 50 painters, and 30 brick merchants, 10 steel agents, 8 welders, 25 lorry owners, 30 fruit sellers. All these people have been earning their livelihood here. Such inflammatory statements might make their lives difficult... So far, in our work relationship, we have not been subjected to any kind of harassment. They (Tibetans) are very "peaceful" (Kannada: *somya*) people. We want to make a unanimous appeal to all on this matter.

Mundgod

December 17, 2008

Lest we get the impression that the local Indian community is homogenous and all Indians are hostile towards the Tibetans, I want to point out that NHVM is not a group representative of the local Indian community. The local Indian community has its own social stratification along class, religious and caste lines; there are Hindus, Muslims, Christians, and

Dalits.⁵² Some of the Dalits from the neighboring Indian villages are newly converted Buddhists who are viewed by the Tibetans as very sympathetic to the Tibetan cause. For instance, in February 2011, about 30 members of the local Dalit group Karnataka Dalit Sangharsha Samithi (KDSS) led a rally and participated in a 24 hour hunger strike organized the Regional Tibetan Youth Congress in the settlement. Furthermore, many jeep drivers, local traders, and local workers express to the Tibetans that they don't share the views of the NVHM. In other words, between the Tibetan sympathizers and the more hostile group like NVHM lie the majority of local Indian community, who are either ignorant of or do not care about Tibetans and their cause.

4.6 Monastic Affluence: A Source of Tension

Doeguling's large monastic population and its recent economic affluence through transnational networks of Buddhist centers around the world have deeply impacted the local Indian economy. For instance, during the visit of the Dalai Lama in February 2011, the Tibetan settlement officer instructed that all the houses in the settlement including the monasteries, shops, and hotels should be whitewashed or painted and new prayer flags raised in order to welcome the Dalai Lama to the settlement.⁵³ The monasteries totally depend on the local Indians for carrying out the whitewashing and painting jobs. One *khang tshan* or monastic house (there might be more than 100 in Doeguling) gave INR 160,000 (\$3,200) to a local Indian contractor to

⁵² Dalits refer to the historically discriminated and marginalized low caste groups within India society, and in the Indian Constitution, they are officially designated under the two main categories of schedule castes and tribes and granted certain socio-economic and political rights in the form of reservations in education, jobs, and political representations.

⁵³ Usually, Tibetans whitewash and paint their houses once every year before the Tibetan New Year celebration. After the spring 2008 protest in Tibet and subsequent rise of self-immolations, Tibetans in exile express their solidarity with those inside Tibet by maintaining a low-key New Year celebration. Houses were not whitewashed for three years running as a symbolic gesture of solidarity and mourning for the suffering of Tibetans inside Tibet.

paint its three storied residence building. To save labor costs, the Indian contractor put his old parents and family members on the easier jobs of painting the windows and iron railings while the younger members painted the walls and roofs. Just before the visit, one could see the monasteries flooded with Indian workers including high school students who were all employed in the whitewashing and painting jobs. On a daily basis, one could see a few hundred Indian laborers working for monasteries on construction projects. Some Tibetans claim on average there are more than 2,000 Indians working daily in the different construction projects mainly in the monasteries.

Despite the obvious economic benefits to the local economy, the close proximity of the huge monastic population with both the lay Tibetan and local Indian communities and its recent affluence is becoming a source of tension. The NHVM is also highly critical of the Tibetan monks:

The nine villages are lay people. The two lama camps are for monks whose real job is to do religious practice. They are lovers of good food. They are beef lovers. Sleeping, eating, and worshipping (Kannada: *puje*) are their only vocations. To sit, eat and worship, they get sufficient money and other commodities from foreign sources. Amongst these Buddhist monks, fifty percent of them are found roaming in Indian cities and it is difficult to recognize them because they wear colorful clothes and ornaments and have fun in the cities. Nobody can identify them. They are living off foreign aid. It did not cost their fathers anything. They have bad habits and behaviors, they are not afraid of anybody and they don't care about anybody.

The above view of Tibetan monks is shared by several Indian officials and leaders. One Indian official in the Tashildar's office whom I interviewed said, "Young monks these days are always roaming around and indulging in behavior unbecoming of monks." An Indian bank manager, whom I interviewed about Tibetans taking short term loans for sweater business, lectured me on the behavior of monks. He told me to visit Mundgod town in the evening and swore that I would find monks drinking and going with girls. Such reports have come in the local newspaper,

including allegations of monks drinking and having improper behavior with girls. These criticisms are taken seriously by the Tibetan leaders, and the monastic officials have come out with disciplinary guidelines, like the 1995 resolution I mentioned earlier. In response to my questions about the highly critical news report of monks, one monk official responded,

There might be some monks, particularly, the monks from the other group (Shugden group) who are doing it deliberately to create a bad image of Tibetan monks. The monastic population is more than the lay population, and on Mondays they get a day off. Many visit the local town and Hubli. There is a category of monks who are part of administration who have to travel a lot on monastic business. These monk officials have to look after every need of the monks including food and lodging. The Lama cooperatives also operate farms, workshops, gas agency, canteens, shops, and these monastic officials are frequently seen on their bikes or monastery cars in Mundgod and Hubli on official monastic business.

As an aside, I asked the same monk official about some local Indians complaining about Tibetan meat eating habits, particularly monks eating beef. He said,

That is true. I told the local MLA about how about 80 percent of Tibetans have quit eating meat after His Holiness advised to eat less meat. This is helpful to mention to the Hindus who have opinions about Tibetan beef eating habits. In foreign countries, there are no restrictions on cow slaughter or beef eating. In countries like Europe and America, all the meats are openly displayed in the shops. These meats come in all shapes, forms and packages, and nobody complains about such displays of meat. As the Tibetan saying goes, if one drinks the water of the land, one must follow the law of the land (*yul chu thung na yul khrims khyer*). So, we have to respect the laws and customs of the country. Hindus regard cows as sacred, and we have to respect that because we are living here as guests on their land. People listened to His Holiness's teaching, and stopped serving meat in the monastic kitchens, and many individuals have also given up meat. We are Buddhists and not supposed to cause harm to others. ... I tell them 80 percent of Tibetans have given up meat.

When I asked the monk official if 80 percent of the Tibetans have really given up meat, he laughs and said, "No, that is not true. But sometimes you have to exaggerate to make your point." In Doeguling, Tibetans generally take care not to openly buy or sell beef, and they depend mostly on the local Muslim butchers or traders who would come to sell beef in their

autos and sometime rent a small space from a Tibetan family to set up a small stall. Most Tibetans agree that they have to be sensitive to local cultural and religious beliefs. The majority of the monasteries in the settlement do not serve meat in their common kitchens. Ironically, this has led to increased patronage of restaurants and hotels by the monks who eat meat. On Mondays and Tibetan national holidays, one is likely to find some Indian restaurant that serve non-vegetarian dishes packed with monks.

4.7 Economic competition: Indian auto drivers versus Tibetan taxi drivers

In 2005, in Bylakuppe settlement a Tibetan monk was beaten badly by around 20 Indians over a minor altercation with an Indian auto driver, which led to communal disturbance and boycott of Indian autos and shops by the Tibetans for about a month (Duska 2008:291). An uneasy truce was achieved after a meeting between the community leaders from both the Tibetan and Indian sides where all parties stressed peaceful and harmonious relationship between the two communities. In 2010, Indian auto drivers threw stones at Sera Monastery, beat up monks from Sera, and stopped Tibetans going in private vehicles.⁵⁴ The Indian auto drivers alleged that the Tibetans are boycotting Indian autos. In response, many Tibetans did boycott the Indian autos for about a month; monks from Sera monastery either walked or rode bicycles to travel within the

⁵⁴ Tibetans in Bylakuppe settlement have long complained about the high handedness of Indian auto drivers including random overcharging and beating up Tibetan passengers. Some Tibetans even express suspicion that the Indian auto drivers attack on Sera Monastery might be instigated by anti-Tibetan elements including the followers of Shugden, a controversial deity in Tibetan Buddhism. The Dalai Lama's active discouragement of the practice of propitiating Shugden due to its anti-Buddhist nature and strong overtones of religious sectarianism, thus harmful to the Tibetan unity and cause, has led to a breakaway group of Shugden followers, who are seen as anti-Dalai Lama and thus anti-Tibetan establishment.

settlement and to go to nearby Indian towns. The Karnataka government introduced a new bus route between Sera Monastery to Mysore city. A compromise was later reached when the Indian authorities, including the state's Road Transport Office (RTO), intervened and implemented a uniform fare list for the Indian auto drivers plying passengers within the Tibetan settlement. Tibetan leaders in Doeguling view the Bylakuppe incident with great concern because it has a very large monastic population who depends on the local transport of Indian autos and jeeps.

In Doeguling, there is an unwritten understanding that the Tibetan taxi drivers can run routine routes between Drepung monastery and Camp 3 market square while the Indian jeeps and autos run routine routes between Camp 3 market and Mundgod. All groups are free to carry anyone who reserves taxis for travel anywhere in the settlement. The Tibetan taxi drivers solely depends on the Tibetan passengers, mostly monks, who reserve the taxis for both local and long distance travels. However, the increasing number of Tibetan taxi drivers, mostly comprising ex-servicemen, was perceived by some local Indians running autos and jeeps as a threat to their livelihoods. As early as December 2008, NHVM threatened actions against the Tibetan taxi drivers:

Earlier, there were no vehicles in the settlement. Therefore they used to hire local transport. The local owners trusted them and they thought they will live happily with paying installment by carrying Tibetan customers. But these foreigners have bought different kinds of vehicles costing 20 to 30 lakhs for local transport. The Tibetans are not travelling in the local vehicles. These local owners are not able to pay their loans back. It is a shame that we Indians are losing opportunities in our own land. Therefore, owners of auto, jeeps, cars and other vehicles, are thinking of permanently banning the Tibetan taxi drivers. It appears that all the above people are going to get together. The local youths around the camp are waking up. The public can say that these things can be corrected by writing or saying, but as far as Tibetans are concerned it is *dandam dashagunam* (punishment ten times).

During my fieldwork, I came across four incidents that contributed to the increasing tensions between the Tibetans and Indian auto drivers. The first incident happened when a

Tibetan bought a new auto and joined the Tibetan taxi drivers' association. The Indian auto drivers forced the driver to join their auto union despite the fact that other Tibetans are part of the Tibetan taxi drivers' association. The second incident occurred when a Tibetan girl was grazed by an Indian auto in Camp 3 market square and got into a verbal fight with the Indian auto driver, who reportedly abused and threatened her. A Tibetan man who saw the whole incident punched the Indian auto driver from behind knocking him out, and sped away on his motorbike. The Indian auto drivers later went around looking for the Tibetan man but the driver could not recognize him because he was punched from behind. The third incident involved a Tibetan woman who broke her leg in a motor bike accident with an Indian auto. She could not claim any accident insurance because the police did not file any complaint against the driver. The auto driver apparently had neither proper driving license nor insurance. Finally, a Tibetan taxi driver and his friend who went to Mundgod one evening to drink were beaten up by Indian auto drivers as retaliation for the alleged boycott of Indian autos.

The Tibetan village leaders and monastic officials regularly informed the Tibetans to be extra careful about interacting with Indian auto drivers so as to avoid any potential conflict like the recent incident in Bylakuppe. Nevertheless, in October 2011 the Indian auto drivers staged two protests against the Tibetans in response to the alleged boycott of Indian autos. On a Monday, which is the weekly fair day in Mundgod where many Tibetans go there to do their grocery shopping and also the official holiday for the monks, the Indian auto drivers stopped Indian jeeps carrying Tibetan passengers and made all the Tibetan passengers walk to Mundgod. The auto drivers claimed that they are not getting any fare these days because the Tibetans are boycotting Indian autos. The Tibetans pointed out that it is an outright lie because one could see Indian autos running in the settlement every day.

A few days later, the Indian auto drivers stage a protest march in Mundgod town and submitted a petition to the Tashildar's Office. Later in the day, they approached the Tibetan settlement officer asking him to put his seal on an auto fare list prepared by the Indian auto union. The Tibetan settlement officer refused to put the official seal on the fare list citing that only the Road Transport Office (RTO) have the relevant authority to establish the auto fare list. He told the Indian autos to continue with the present arrangement of sharing passengers in the settlement. During the protests there were rumors that the local police inspector said that he will arrest all the Tibetan taxi drivers. As a result, the Tibetan taxi drivers avoided travel to Mundgod for many days.

In the end, a meeting was held between the auto drivers and Tibetan representatives in the presence of the police and local Indian authorities at the Tashildar's Office. After the misunderstandings about the Tibetan boycott of Indian autos were cleared, all the parties agreed that there is no conflict between the Tibetans and Indians anymore. At the meeting, the Tibetan representative raised the issues of overcharging by the Indian auto drivers and instances of auto drivers who do not have proper license and insurance. The police official assured everyone that those without proper license and insurance would be arrested and further instructed the Indian auto union to produce a list of those on "night duty". The auto driver union promised to have a uniform fare list, and asked the Tibetans to report any incident of misbehavior by Indian auto drivers.

All the three groups, Indian autos, Tibetan taxis, and Indian jeeps are presently running in the settlement. Until recently, no direct economic competition between Indians and Tibetans occurred because Tibetans relied mainly on sweater selling and military service. The tension between the Indian auto drivers and Tibetan taxi drivers arose as a more recent example of direct

economic competition between the two communities, and is associated with ex-servicemen seeking economic opportunities. While the Tibetan settlement office takes the official stance that everyone should be able to earn a living by running taxis in the settlement, the increasing number of Indian auto drivers in is viewed by many Tibetans as potential source of communal conflicts. The message of the Tibetan settlement office to the Indian auto drivers is *mil jul kar baat key khao* (Hindi, meaning ‘sharing and earning commonly’), and that there should be no discrimination against one group or the other. But it remains to be seen if this spirit of sharing will work or not.

The discussion so far on the local Indo-Tibetan relationship demonstrates the tenuous relationship between the two communities. I will now examine how the ordinary Tibetans view the local Indo-Tibetan relationship to understand the complex and complicated nature of India as a Tibetan place.

4.8 Ordinary Tibetans’ Understanding of Indo-Tibetan relationship

Ordinary Tibetans are becoming more aware of the image of Tibetans as “rich” and “spoiled” by preferential treatment and foreign aid. On the image of Tibetans doing much better than the local Indians, one young Tibetan said,

Some Indians are shocked to see that the expensive vehicles that the rich and big Indians travel in are the same vehicles used by the Tibetans as taxis. They are surprised and say that the vehicles that our VIP (Very Important Person) drive are used by the Tibetans to ply passengers. They see such things but they don’t say openly anything about it. The local Indians can clearly see how well Tibetans are doing.

While many ordinary Tibetans attribute their economic success to the leadership of the Dalai Lama and generous support of the Indian government and foreign aid, some argue that Tibetans are hardworking and Indians should understand that. One Tibetan sweater seller said,

We can't blame them. Just imagine, if in our country, a group of outsiders comes to stay and does very well and we remain poor, there is bound to be some resentment. When we interact with local Indians, I think it is important to explain the Tibetan situation. For instance, we are supposed to farm land, but were given only 32 guntas [40 guntas is equal to one acre], and that too reduced to 24 guntas in the case of so-called irrigated land. It is rare to find a family that has more than five acres of land [considered as small and marginal farmers under the Indian government category]. There is no way a family can subsist only on farming. That is why people resort to other forms of income generating activities. That is something that has to be explained to the Indian people. People are going outside the settlement to seek income, but that money is brought back here to the settlement, which in turn benefits the local economy.

When talking about the Indian resentment of Tibetan economic success, some Tibetans use a common proverb which translates as “one does not see the nomad cross the difficult mountain passes but sees him eat delicious food”⁵⁵ in order to make the point that Tibetans work very hard to make a living by selling sweaters on the Indian streets for four months and spend their money in the settlement which benefits the local people as well. They acknowledge that the Indian government has been most generous but blame the Indian system and rampant corruption as the reason why the local Indian people do not receive any welfare benefits. In response to an interview question as to why Indians as citizens of this country are poorer than the Tibetans, a young Tibetan working in the monastery explicitly blames the Indian corruption and said,

For instance, the government provides housing subsidy. If the subsidy is about 40,000 Rupees, by the time an intended beneficiary gets the money in his hand, nothing much is left to build a house because bribes have to be paid at all levels of bureaucracy before the money is finally released. It is the same with the subsidy for water irrigation pumps. In Tibetan society, corruption is almost absent. Therefore, whatever outside aid is given, it is spent on the intended projects and there is real evidence of the benefits reaching the intended beneficiaries.

The reasons why Tibetans are doing much better is also attributed to the efforts of the CTA as well as the positive image of Tibetans as development beneficiaries. They say that

⁵⁵ *A gu 'brog pas la rgyab pa mi mthongs, thud za ba mthongs.*

whatever is given to the Tibetans, there are concrete results to show be in the form of infrastructure and improvements in livelihood. It refers to a positive feedback loop whereby the outside agency sees results and then continues their support. This is supported by the long time involvement of some NGOs. For instance, Christian Children Fund (CCF) adopted Doeguling settlement as its project area in 1981. Although CCF does not work in a project area for more than 10 years, it extended its support for Doeguling for another 10 years and finally phased out its project in 2011. CCF views the Doeguling project as one of its most successful stories. In 2011, a public function was organized by the settlement to express gratitude to CCF for its three decades of support. In the thank you speech, the Secretary of the Tibetan Cooperative Society, a born in the settlement, narrated his own personal life story of being a recipient of CCF's help and expressed gratitude personally and on the behalf of the whole settlement. Another speaker at the function was an Indian Christian priest who does social work in nearby Indian villages. In his speech, he encouraged the Tibetans to take a more active role in helping out their poorer Indian neighbors now that Tibetans are doing economically very well. Unfortunately, his message was lost on the Tibetan public partly because his speech was in English with a heavy accent and more so because most ordinary Tibetans still largely view themselves as deserving clients rather than worthy patrons.

Some Tibetans express the viewpoint that the local Indians need to look beyond the flashy lifestyle of the Tibetans and see how hard they work to earn money. They often cite how some Indian leaders have encouraged the locals to learn from Tibetans, particularly how Tibetan women work shoulder to shoulder with their male counterparts in every economic activity. The favorite example is a Tibetan women carrying heavy loads and hawking on Indian streets to sell sweaters. Furthermore, the Tibetans emphasize the point that they are not snatching jobs or

precious resources from the local Indians but instead bringing money from the outside and spending it here in the settlement. A Tibetan monk who speaks fluent Kannada and interacts closely with the local Indian officials and media on behalf of the Tibetans, said,

I interact a lot with the local Indian community including the media. Most of them would say that we [Tibetans] don't have to worry about anything because we are so well off. I make it a point to explain to them that Tibetans have done well not because people are giving us free money. It is because Tibetans work hard to earn money. I tell them that Tibetans today are doing much better but it is because they have worked so hard. I asked them if they will just give me a few hundred rupees. Just like that, for free. No, nobody gives anything for free. Unless one does some work, nobody gives money for free. They would agree with me. I tell them Tibetans work hard to earn this money. Whatever the Tibetans have, they spend it here. The money they spend here benefits the local economy and in turn the local people. So, if Tibetans have money, the locals benefit as well. I tell them we feel good if the local people do well. I tell them we should feel good if people are doing well and learn from each other's experience. So I tell them nothing good will come out of feeling envious of Tibetan success, but they should look at it as model to do better.

It is true that much anti-Tibetan sentiment in Doeguling is fuelled by vested political and business interests. Many Tibetans acknowledge that they might have more disposable cash income when compared to the local Indians, but argue when it comes to real economic assets that they are much poorer because they cannot own land and business properties due to their legal status as foreigners. One Tibetan woman, a sweater seller who sent three of four children to college, said,

Tibetans might have a few thousand Rupees in their pockets and the local Indians see Tibetans flashing 500 and 1000 Rupee notes when they go to the markets. But when it comes to real economic assets like bank balances, land, properties and businesses, Tibetans have nothing to show. For example, when it comes to spending money on your children's college education, most Tibetan parents are hard pressed, let alone paying lakhs and lakhs of Rupees for professional education like medicine and engineering. Without scholarships from the Indian government and foreign sponsors, I think hardly any Tibetans in Doeguling can afford to send their children to college. And, I think we Tibetans are partly to be blamed for our flashy behavior. In reality, Tibetans have no real economic wealth to show because we are refugees who can't own land and businesses.

As noted earlier, the local Indo-Tibetan interface occur mainly in the economic sphere. During my fieldwork, I hardly noticed any social and cultural interaction at the personal levels, be it inviting each other for cultural festivals, weddings and home visits. This studied aloofness on both the sides is partly contributing to cultural misunderstandings. Another factor is the language barrier. For example, most Tibetans don't speak the local Kannada language. They communicate mostly in Hindi, which is only understood by the urban residents and not by many Indian villagers. Some Indian workers and laborers do understand or speak Tibetan. For the Tibetans, the monks who have arrived later from Tibet speak neither Hindi nor the local Kannada language. For the younger Tibetans who go to schools, they are taught Hindi up to eighth grade. The language barrier becomes a major problem for interacting with the local Indian offices, where the majority of official forms are in Kannada. At two offices, the Tashildar Office and Road Transport Office, with which Tibetans have to interact to get official documents like birth and domicile certificates, land documents, driver's licenses, and vehicle registration licenses, all the forms are in Kannada. It is nearly impossible for a Tibetan to submit a form without resorting to the help of a middleman, usually an Indian agent or sometimes a friend. Tibetans often resort to paying money to the agents to overcome both the language barrier and red tape, which further reinforces the image that they are rich and therefore throw money around to procure simple official documents.

On the other hand, many ordinary Tibetans express feelings of insecurity and vulnerability when dealing with the local Indian authorities and conflate it with their ambiguous legal status in India. Ideally, they prefer to approach the CTA and the local Tibetan administration to access any socio-economic rights and services, thus deepening the dependence

on the CTA and in the process wittingly or unwittingly reinforcing the social and political boundaries between the Tibetans and Indian communities.

I will now turn to the advantages and disadvantages associated with being foreigners in India and juxtaposed with the practices of different citizenship regimes that ordinary Tibetans experience in exile.

4.9 Preferential treatment of Tibetans and the Issue of Indian

Citizenship

The NVHM petition also alleges that local Indians are disadvantaged while the Tibetans receive preferential treatment from the Indian government. It continues:

Electricity companies are supplying them 24/7 power. Concerned people say this is because they pay double the rate. But for the local villagers and the local town, they don't get power for even twelve hours. So the public feel that we ourselves are the refugees and *nirgathi karu* (disadvantaged). They have been given a gas cylinder agency, and they are misusing it. They are using the domestic cylinders for hotels. And over and above that, they are also trying to get another agency and they have given proposal for that... The Tibetans have forwarded a list of requests to the local government officials that include grants for a bus shelter, higher power supply, monthly allowance for old age and disabled people, to get PAP (Protected Area Permit for foreigners to visit the Tibetan settlement) easily, more water supply, bus facilities, to convert forest land into individual RTCs. *The only thing left is to give them citizenship*. This *jati* [caste or ethnic group] is very shrewd. To get any job done, they put forward the Indian Buddhists, who dance according to their tunes. So, we Indians have to think seriously about their bad behaviors as well as the government. Now the locals have woken up... Before this protest gets violent, the concerned authorities should immediately take action. This is the request of the public.

The allegations of Tibetans getting preferential treatment and not following the laws of land are intimately connected with the administrative ambiguity of the Tibetan settlement in India and the legal status of Tibetans. In general, the Indian government defer to the CTA in all the internal administrative matters unless it is of criminal nature. Although the Tibetans are

viewed as “foreigners” and “refugees” in the eyes of the Indian people, except for the right to vote, they enjoy many socio-economic rights as much as Indian citizens.

In Chapter Two, I discussed how the Tibetan national identity in exile can be viewed as a reaction and a form of resistance to colonization by China and the historical contingent nature of the exile’s national identity and Tibet’s status vis-à-vis the modern Chinese state. This contextualization is important for understanding why the idea of citizenship is such an emotionally and politically charged issue for the Tibetan exiles. India is neither signatory to the international conventions on refugees, i.e., 1951 United Nation’s Convention on Refugees and its Protocol in 1967, nor has it a national refugee law. In 1960, to a question on whether Tibetan “refugees are to gradually become Indian citizens”, Nehru stated:

There is no attempt to make them Indian citizens. They may, of course, if they fulfill the qualifications, become Indian citizens, but the main object is to treat them as Tibetans with Tibetan language, Tibetan culture, Tibetan religion etc. In addition, of course, they learn Hindi, and sometimes, maybe, a little English. (TPPRC 2006: 162)

This highlights two important aspects of India’s policy stance on the Tibetans to date: the policy of not exerting pressure on Tibetans to become Indian citizens or threatening them with repatriation, and the policy of minimal interference in the ‘internal matters’ of the Tibetans. In general, the preferential treatment of Tibetans demonstrates one facet of India’s larger policy spectrum on refugees characterized by “the contradictory logic of power and care” (Samaddar 2003:24), and it fits very well with the normative anti-assimilation model of India’s “multicultural democracy” that gives explicit state recognition and protection to religious, linguistic, and cultural diversities (Mahajan 2005).

Unlike many other refugees around the world who sought permanent resettlement in their new home states, the Tibetans very early made a collective decision to remain stateless in India. This valorization of their statelessness has over the years developed into a form of Tibetan

citizenship. Here, it is evident that Tibetans do not fit neatly as a ‘diaspora’ in that the exiles have re-established a functioning government based on Indian soil—although not officially recognized by any nation-states—with its own democratic practices, a Charter, and ‘legitimate’ or popular sovereignty. In short, they have re-territorialized the Tibetan nation and culture in exile through the creation of a “second homeland” in India. The purpose of exile is expressed in this common saying: “Every upright Tibetan including the child born yesterday has the responsibility of the common Tibetan cause on their shoulders.”⁵⁶ For the Tibetan exiles, success in exile is not the ultimate goal of coming into exile. They view their continued presence in exile as a reminder that the purpose of coming into exile remains unfulfilled.

Remaining stateless has become both a symbolic and political act of expressing loyalty to the Tibet struggle. To give a brief historical perspective on the collective decision to remain stateless from the early years of exile, in 1974 the royal government of Bhutan gave an ultimatum to around 4,000 Tibetan refugees to either become Bhutanese citizens or be deported back to Tibet under China (but later to India after the government agreed to accept the Tibetan refugees from Bhutan). The majority of Tibetans in Bhutan decided to remain stateless and was rehabilitated in India in the early 1980s. In the early 1960s, one small Tibetan faction led by a regional Tibetan leader, who had disagreement with the CTA, requested the government for Indian citizenship (Saklani 1984:163). The government of India did not grant them citizenship and it is commonly assumed that the CTA opposed the idea of Tibetans seeking citizenship in India.

⁵⁶ The Tibetan saying is “*bod mi spyi bo gnam bstan gdang skye phyi ba yen la bod spyi ba’i ’gan yod*”. Many of my research informants cite the above quote when describing the reasons why the Tibetans continue to live in exile and some even attribute the quote directly to the Dalai Lama.

Around the same period, although the exact precedence is not clear, the government of India made it mandatory for any Tibetan wishing to apply for Indian citizenship to obtain a No Objection Certificate (NOC) from the CTA, which indicates unofficial or ‘tacit’ recognition of the legitimacy of the CTA. The above executive decree has become an administrative norm, a source of much controversy and ambiguity that will be evident in the following discussions on whether India-born Tibetan exiles have an automatic right to Indian citizenship. In the early 1990s, another group belonging to a particular regional group in a large Tibetan settlement in South India, due to its disagreement with the CTA, applied as ‘a group’ for Indian citizenship but their applications were stalled due to the lack of NOC from the CTA. In short, the CTA has expressed its uneasiness with Tibetan ‘groups’ applying for Indian citizenship. It interpreted the group application as a direct political challenge to the legitimacy of the CTA and in turn the common Tibetan cause. Today, the CTA’s official position is that it does not object to individual Tibetans becoming Indian citizens (CTA 2013). For example, of the seven ministers in the current CTA administration, three have acquired foreign citizenship through naturalization in the USA, Canada, and India.

4.10 Tibetan Citizenship in Exile: From Subject or ‘Serfs’ to Tibetan Citizens

In pre-1950 Tibet, there was neither a singular category of citizenship nor uniform and codified rights across the Tibetan population. While Tibetans under the Tibetan government headed by the Dalai Lama were subjects or ‘serfs’, those outside its direct rule functioned more or less like “stateless societies” (Samuel 1982). The only Tibetan passports were issued in 1947 to a four member Tibetan trade delegation to the USA and UK. In the first half of 20th century,

both the 13th and 14th Dalai Lamas made attempts to modernize Tibet but met stiff resistance from the conservative elements. Paradoxically, China's takeover of Tibet in 1950 became instrumental in forging a deep sense of pan-Tibetan national identity. Only after coming into exile did the Dalai Lama gain freedom to introduce drastic political reforms to democratize Tibetan society. It culminated in the devolving of all political powers by the Dalai Lama in March 2011 to a democratically elected leadership in exile.

The first formalized notion of Tibetan citizenship with its incumbent criteria, rights, and duties was developed in a draft *Constitution of Tibet* of 1963, which was modeled on the multicultural democratic ideals of the Indian Constitution and drafted with the inputs of Indian legal experts (Sangay 2004).⁵⁷ This draft was viewed later as more relevant to a future Tibet. A new constitution drafting committee in 1990 drafted the *Exile Tibetan Charter*, which was formally adopted in 1991 by the Assembly of Tibet People's Deputies. The Charter is regarded by the Tibetan exiles as the supreme laws governing the CTA and the exiles.

In another development crucial to the notion of Tibetan citizenship, under the approval of the CTA an independent group formed the Tibetan People's Freedom Movement (TPFM) in 1972. TPFM visited all the major Tibetan settlements and initiated a practice of voluntary tax payment in order to provide financial support to the CTA and to reaffirm the status of CTA as the legitimate government of Tibetan people. Today, every Tibetan above the age of six is obligated to pay a yearly fixed amount equivalent to one day token fast (Tibetan: *zas cad*) and an additional fixed annual payment for those above 18 years. In 1992, this tax payment or

⁵⁷ In his dissertation thesis, Lobsang Sangay (2004) mentions that the 1963 Constitution of Tibet was based on India's Constitution, while Stephanie Roemer cites John Kenneth Knaus as saying that an American, Ernest Gross, wrote the constitution based on the American model (2008:92).

‘voluntary freedom tax’ was enshrined in the Charter of the Tibetan exiles as the duty of Tibetan exiles and became an important marker of Tibetan citizenship.

Under Article 13(4) of the Tibetan Exile Charter, the payment of voluntary freedom tax is both an obligation and right of Tibetan citizens. It is exercised through Tibetan Exile’s Freedom and Voluntary Tax Handbook (also known as Freedom Handbook or Green Book due to its green cover). Under the Charter, Tibetan citizenship is granted to all Tibetans born within the territory of Tibet and those born in other countries. Any person whose biological mother or father is of Tibetan descent has the right to become a citizen of Tibet. There is also a clause for citizenship to the non-Tibetan spouse of a Tibetan citizen, if legally married for more than three years.

The Charter has adopted and incorporated the Universal Declaration of Human Rights under Articles 9, 10, and 12 as the rights of Tibetan citizens and lists them as equal treatment before the law, religious freedom, freedom to life, liberty and property, freedom of speech and expression, and freedom of movement and association. Article 13 of the Charter states that all Tibetan citizens shall fulfill the following obligations:

- a) Bear true allegiance to Tibet;
- b) Faithfully comply and observe the Charter and the laws enshrined therein;
- c) Endeavor to achieve the common Tibetan cause;
- d) Pay taxes imposed in accordance with the laws; and
- e) Perform such duties as may be imposed by law in the event of a threat to the Tibetan common cause.

The Charter grants Tibetan citizens political rights including the right to vote and run for public office. In the 2011 general elections for the Tibetan Parliament and the Kalon Tripa, the total number of registered voters was, 81,531. In addition to political rights based on this stateless citizenship of “no representation without taxation” (Sangay 2004: 122), the Tibetan

exiles can claim certain social and economic citizenship rights against the CTA including welfare benefits of educational scholarship, health subsidies, and economic relief.

4.11 Legal Status of Tibetans in India: Foreigners or Citizens?

The practice of stateless citizenship by the Tibetan exiles needs to be understood in the larger context of the policies of the host nation-state of India. Tibetans have to register themselves as foreigners under the relevant Foreigner's Registration Acts through the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). A registration certificate (RC) in the form of a booklet is issued, which serves as the legal residence permit in India. Stay in India is to be renewed every six months or every year. In 2012, the government of India decided that for Tibetans who have lived in India for 20 years, the stay will be renewed for 5 years. The Tibetans who wish to travel abroad are issued an identity certificate (IC), a form of travel document, by the Ministry of External Affairs that is valid for ten years with no objection to return to India. RC also serves as proof of legal identity to rent an apartment, open a bank account, and get a driver's license.

The Tibetans in India fall generally into three broad categories based on their access to legal residence permit or RC: Tibetans who arrived between 1959 and 1979 and their children born in India, Tibetans who arrived between 1980 and 2003, and those who came from 2003 onward. For the first group of Tibetans, India issues RC. For the second group, India had not officially granted RC. However, many from this group were children and monks and nuns who went to the Tibetan run schools and monasteries and nunneries in India and were thus able to obtain RC by "claiming" birth in India. Others from this group form the vast majority of undocumented Tibetans in India and are considered the most vulnerable group. In 2003, the government of India through its consulate in Nepal started to screen Tibetans entering India

through Nepal and issued them Special Entry Permits (SEP) under the four categories of education, pilgrimage, refugee and others.

The monitoring and verification of the Tibetan exiles in India varies from place to place. For instance, in Dharamsala, probably due to security reasons and the presence of a large transient population, the local authorities strictly monitor the Tibetan exiles for RCs, arresting and interrogating those without them. In contrast, in Doeguling until the early 2000s the renewal and registration of RCs was very relaxed and the village leaders would submit the documents in groups. Today, individual presence is required for registration, renewal and reporting departure and arrival. This was a response to accusations by NVHM and local media regarding the harboring of many undocumented Tibetans and the local police issuing RCs to many “illegal” Tibetans. The majority of these Tibetans, who are accused of obtaining “fake” RCs in Doeguling, are monks who arrived from Tibet in the late 1980s and later.

Independent studies have reported instances of deportation of a few undocumented Tibetans by the Indian police (Tibet Justice Center 2011). Other studies have commented on the police harassment faced by undocumented Tibetans (Hess 2008:112. McConnell 2012: 988, Tibet Justice Center 2011: 54). After the CTA appealed for amnesty to undocumented Tibetans by requested they be allowed to convert SEPs into RC in the light of deteriorating political situation inside Tibet and the possible persecution for Tibetan returnees, the government of India has instructed the concerned state and local administrations to legalize Tibetans’ presence in India by granting RCs after verifying their antecedents.

I will discuss in more detail how the status of “foreigner” is increasingly viewed by young and educated Tibetans as a hindrance to their socio-economic mobility because that status excludes them from access to higher professional education as well as certain job opportunities

in the formal economy in India. As a result, it has triggered a range of issues from the differences between the legal and administrative interpretations of status of Tibetans in India to the question of whether Tibetans should become Indian citizens. The following section looks at the unfolding of bureaucratic messiness with regard to Indian's citizenship and identification regimes and its ramifications for the status of Tibetans in India.

4.11.1 The Bureaucratic Messiness of Citizenship

In order to understand the application of a legalistic sense of citizen-alien model to the Tibetan exiles, it is important to unpack what I call the bureaucratic messiness of who is considered an Indian citizen and what constitutes the requirements for being an Indian citizen. I will begin by examining the differing interpretations of the status of Tibetans in India from the different branches of the Indian state, the Indian administration, judiciary and autonomous bodies. The discussion will be juxtaposed with the everyday practice at the local administrative level and the ordinary Tibetan experiences of interacting with the different arms of the state bureaucracy.

To give an example of common assumption about the right to Indian citizenship by birth amongst the Tibetan exiles, I interviewed a very high ranking Tibetan leader (who is also a naturalized Indian citizen) about whether Tibetans born in India are eligible for citizenship. She cited the preamble of the Indian Constitution that anyone born in India is an Indian citizen. Her statement turns out to be only partly true because it ignores the fact that the Indian Constitution through Article 11 confers on the Parliament the power to enact laws pertaining to citizenship and there have been a few amendments to the citizenship laws. The first Citizenship Act of 1955 makes provisions for the acquisition and determination of Indian citizenship through birth, descent, registration, naturalization, and incorporation of territory (Tarodi 2011, 8). Under the

1955 Act, anyone born on Indian soil between January 26, 1950 and July 1, 1987 has an automatic right to Indian citizenship. The Amendment to Citizenship Act 2003 restricts the access to Indian citizenship by birth of those whose parents are not Indian citizens and who were born in India after July 1, 1987.

Under the current citizenship laws, many second generation Tibetans born in India are eligible for Indian citizenship. For most Tibetan exiles, there is also the provision of applying through naturalization if they have resided in India for 12 continuous years. In practice, the acquiring of Indian citizenship is much more problematic. Tibetan exiles have to maneuver and overcome the bureaucratic messiness and arbitrariness to the point where many Tibetans think it is impossible to obtain. To illustrate this bureaucratic ambiguity and arbitrariness, I first turn to an Indian high court case, probably the first ever case of a Tibetan taking legal recourse to claim Indian citizenship.

On December 22, 2010, in *Namgyal Dolkar Lhagari Vs Ministry of External Affairs*, the Delhi high court ruled that Namgyal Dolkar is entitled to an Indian passport as she is an Indian citizen by birthright under the 1955 Citizenship Act. The Tibetan girl filed a case against the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) claiming that her right to an Indian passport on the ground that she is an Indian citizen by birth was rejected by the latter. In 2013, a similar ruling was passed by the high court in Bangalore when another Tibetan filed a case against the MEA. In both the court cases, the MEA argued that, because they are Tibetan nationals officially registered as ‘foreigners’, they cannot claim ‘automatic right’ to Indian citizenship or an Indian passport. In response to the MEA’s argument that the Tibetans have RC and IC, the lawyers for the Tibetans responded that they are willing to surrender their RC and IC.

Both court rulings were based strictly on the legal interpretation of the citizenship laws and instructed the MEA to grant Indian passports to the two Tibetans. In the wake of the court cases, most media reports oversimplified the high court rulings to whether Tibetans are eligible for Indian citizenship while ignoring the political and administrative realities associated with acquiring Indian citizenship for Tibetans. In its argument, the MEA is not denying the right of Tibetans to Indian citizenship, but emphasizing the administrative norms and procedures to acquiring of citizenship and a passport. In response to the high court case, on February 23, 2012 the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) came out with an official circular titled Document No. 26027 which states,

[T]he children born to a Tibetan Refugee in India will not be treated as Indian citizen automatically based on their birth in India before 01.07.1987 under section 3(1)(a) of the Citizenship Act, 1955. All such persons will have to submit an application individually under section 9(2) of the Citizenship Act, 1955 MHA and thereafter the nationality status of all such children born to Tibetan Refugees in India, will be determined by MHA as per prescribed procedure available under the Citizenship Rules, 2009. All such children, as and when their nationality status as an Indian is decided by this ministry, will have to surrender their Tibetan Refugee Certificate and identity Card before accepting Indian citizenship. (Tibetan Political Review 2013)

So, the ‘proper channel’ according to the Indian government is to first apply for Indian citizenship to the above concerned ministry by submitting a NOC from the CTA, which will then be treated on a case by case basis. The RC and IC must be surrendered before accepting Indian citizenship. In practice, every Tibetan wishing to obtain either an Indian passport or citizenship has to first obtain an NOC from the CTA, and then approach two different ministries: first, the MHA which is vested with the authority to register foreigners as well as issue Indian citizenship and naturalization certificates, and second, the MEA which has the authority to issue an Indian passport and IC. Further, the above two high court cases are interesting in that both the Tibetans applied for an Indian passport and not ‘Indian citizenship’, although they based their claim on the

ground of Indian citizenship by birthright. This also suggests how different meanings might be ascribed by some Tibetan exiles to applying for Indian passport versus Indian citizenship. One research informant named Pema, a young businessman born in India who later immigrated to the US, had obtained an Indian passport in 1993. He said many of his friends also obtained Indian passports around the same time because it was so easy. One had to submit a birth certificate, driver's license, proof of address, and landline telephone records, documents which most Tibetans born in India possess. When I asked why he applied for the passport, he said it was easily available and it made international travel much less complicated than travelling on IC. He did not get to use the passport for travel and it expired in 2003. However, a friend of his did travel on an Indian passport and later sought political asylum in the US. He further mentioned that some Tibetans who had obtained Indian passports around the same time later received an official notice from the regional passport office asking them to either prove their Indian citizenship or return the passport.

The motivations behind applying for Indian citizenship are varied and some Tibetan exiles view citizenship as different from an Indian passport. For instance, 53 people applied for NOC from the CTA in order to apply for Indian citizenship since the current Tibetan administration took office in August 2011. Of the 53 applicants, the Department of Security, which has now been delegated the task of issuing NOC, has maintained records of 41 applicants who applied in 2013 and 2104. The majority of these applicants are young exile-born Tibetans who cited further studies and employment opportunities as reasons for applying for Indian citizenship. There were seven who specifically cited passport and ease of travel as the main reason for applying for Indian citizenship.

Until recently, many Tibetans assumed that it was impossible to acquire Indian citizenship through any legal or administrative means. For instance, Pema viewed Indian passport differently from Indian citizenship and said that it is impossible to obtain Indian citizenship without the NOC from the CTA. He narrated how a Tibetan business colleague, who had extensive political connections in the Indian bureaucracy, applied for Indian citizenship in the late 1990s but the contacts in the Indian bureaucracy said they could not do anything without the NOC certificate. The established administrative norm in India requires every Tibetan born in India on reaching the age of 16 to register for RC under the Foreigner's Registration Act. The government of India interprets Tibetans as 'foreigners' (not as stateless but Tibetan nationals, another ambiguous category) and thus cannot enjoy an automatic right to Indian citizenship by birth under the 1955 Citizenship Act. It remains to be seen whether the two high court cases will set any legal precedent for the Tibetans to obtain Indian citizenship and passports.

In another interesting case of bureaucratic messiness, on February 12, 2013, the Indian Election Commission instructed all the state governments to include Tibetans born in India in the electoral list, thus essentially treating them as citizens by giving them one political right that is exclusive to Indian citizens. During the recent elections in 2013 and 2014, this created more confusion in the Tibetan exile society. For example, in Doeguling with a population of around 10,000 people, only 15 went to register to vote and all of them were denied registration by the Tashildar's Office on the ground that they possess RCs, thus they are foreigners and not Indian citizens.

In Doeguling, I found only one Tibetan who followed the "proper channel" to obtain Indian citizenship. Tenzin is a 32 year old born in Doeguling. In 2009, after graduating from a five-year dental science course in Mysore, he went to register with the Karnataka State Dental

Council as required by law in order to get a license to practice dentistry. In the registration form he wrote “Tibetan” as his “nationality.” He was refused registration since only Indian citizens can be registered under the Dentist Act of 1948. Despite his repeated pleas that he is a legal resident of India and that he did all his education in India, the archaic law stood in his way. The only option for him to legally practice dentistry was to become an Indian citizen. The Indian official further told him that if he had just written “Indian” or “Buddhist” as his nationality, no proof of Indian citizenship would have been asked for.

When I asked Tenzin how other Tibetan dentists are able to practice in India, he said they have learned from his experience and are definitely not writing Tibetan as their nationality on the registration form. He said, “I expressed my patriotism but broke my leg in the process”, while describing his experience of the long, arduous process of dealing with bureaucratic messiness so that he could practice his profession. Although he is eligible for Indian citizenship under the 1955 Citizenship Act, he had to follow the “proper channel” which meant getting NOC from the CTA and then applying to the MHA through the layers of bureaucratic process.

The Tibetan settlement officer helped him in not only getting the NOC from the CTA but recommended his Indian citizenship application to the office of the District Commissioner (DC) which falls under MHA. The DC office initially returned his application saying that there is no administrative precedence for processing the claims of Indian citizenship by a Tibetan national. Tenzin then had to approach the State’s Home Secretariat in Bangalore, who then instructed the DC office to process his application. The process took him almost two and a half years and numerous visits to the DC office and local Indian offices on one pretext or another for more supporting documents. He recollected his interaction with the local bureaucracy as,

Many Indian officials asked me if I am applying for Indian citizenship to get a passport. They think that Tibetans apply for an Indian passport so that they can immigrate. I told

them that it is a matter of my livelihood and that without this (citizenship) I cannot legally practice my profession. They find it very hard to believe that I am doing it so as to be able to practice my profession. But, the DC turned out to be a very nice person, who gave me his full “cooperation”. When he finally administered the oath in his office, he congratulated me and said, “Be a good dentist!”

As of June 2014, Tenzin is yet to receive his Indian citizenship. He received another letter from India’s Ministry of Home Affairs stating that he needs to submit yet another official form. He has given up hope of obtaining Indian citizenship, and is now contemplating applying for IC like the majority of the stateless Tibetans in India. Tenzin’s experience with the local administrative system is not much different from the experiences of other ordinary Tibetans. Of the 41 Tibetans who applied for Indian citizenship through the proper administrative channel, a staff of Department of Security who contacted them informed me that most of them had given up hope of pursuing the matter further because of the tremendous bureaucratic hurdles.

On March 25, 2013, the Indian Nursing Council, an autonomous body under the Indian government, issued a circular to all the universities and State Nursing Councils that foreign nationals including Tibetan refugees cannot be registered to practice nursing. The circular cited the Nursing Act of 1947 which allows registration of only Indian citizens. The CTA appealed to the Indian government through the MEA and Ministry of Health saying the Tibetan nurses should be allowed to practice since they are born and educated in India. In February 2014, the Nursing Council reversed its previous stance by citing the Indian citizenship laws and stated that it will approve the registration of the Tibetans who can prove their birth in India.

In addition to restrictions posed by the above archaic laws, educated Tibetans are finding that many attractive jobs in the private sectors including multinational companies and airline industries require Indian citizenship or an Indian passport. Those who want to start and operate businesses on their own run into difficulties due to their lack of Indian citizenship. In some

instances, Tibetan businessman buy land and property in the name of an Indian national, which is not only illegal but also risky since it is based on trust.

Other studies have commented on the bureaucratic messiness and arbitrariness that ordinary Tibetans have to undergo when interacting with the local Indian bureaucracy for registration of RC, its renewal, and other verification purposes (McConnell 2012; Hess 2009). Many ordinary Tibetans conflate the general ambiguity of their status in India with their personal experiences of the local bureaucratic messiness and arbitrariness leading to a general sense of vulnerability and anxiety. This feeds into the popular rhetoric that the Tibetan exiles are “guests” in India, as one Tibetan writes,

Currently, exiled Tibetans in India are considered “foreigners”, lacking even the protection of being officially designated as “refugees”. This raises the question of how the Tibetan people and their exiled government plan to protect themselves if political circumstances cause them to remain in India for another generation or more. India has not ratified the refugee convention, and has chosen not to extend full civil rights to stateless individuals living on its soil. As “foreigners” they are “guests”, and guests can always be asked to leave. (Youten 2013)

Although the above writer does not explain what he means by “civil rights”, his views illustrate the growing sense of frustration amongst the younger Tibetan exiles stemming from their legal status in India. Some who claim Indian citizenship are challenging the idea of remaining stateless which excludes them from getting access to certain economic rights that are given only to Indian citizens. Similar attitudes and complex motivations towards citizenship and what material benefits it entails have been found amongst the Tibetans living in Nepal and the US (Hess 2009; Frechette 2006).

The legal status of Tibetans in India and the issue of whether they should become Indian citizens also has ramifications for those Tibetan exiles from India who have either migrated or plan to migrate to seek political asylum in the West. Countries including the US, Canada,

Switzerland, and Belgium are interested in the legal status of Tibetans in India because some of them are seeking political asylum. Tibetans from India claim political asylum citing statelessness and the lack of political rights in India. Studies carried on the status of Tibetans in India commonly acknowledge the generous support the government of India has provided to the rehabilitation of Tibetans, but on the legal status and protection of certain political rights, it remains inconclusive due to the bureaucratic messiness and arbitrariness even in instances of clearly defined legal rights under the Citizenship Act 1955 (Tibet Justice Center 2011). In the case of the US, the standard to determine whether a Tibetan from India meets the claim of political asylum is the “permanent settlement bar” in India (Kaufman 2011:510). Meanwhile Canada treats Tibetans from India as refugees and uses CTA’s Green Book to determine whether someone is a bonafide Tibetan refugee (McConnell 2012:770).

In the case of European nations like Belgium and Switzerland, India is treated as the first country of refuge. In a recent rejection of the asylum claims of 40 Tibetans, the Belgium authorities cited ten points for its rejection, two of which were the role of the government of India and its treatment of Tibetans in India (Petition to CTA by Tibetans living in Belgium, February 2011 published in *Tibet Times*). Citing a report of a Belgian-Swiss delegation’s visit to India and Nepal, it mentioned the Tibetan leaders as saying that India treats Tibetans living in India very well. On the ground that India is regarded as the first country of refuge, Belgium cannot grant asylum to the Tibetans from India. This led to rumors among the Tibetan community in Belgium alleging the role of the CTA in the rejection of the asylum claims (*Tibet Times, February 4, 2014*), which prompted the CTA to clarify to the Belgian Tibetan community that it does not have any say in the decisions made by Belgium immigration authorities.

4.11.2 Indian Citizenship for Tibetans: Multiple Voices and Exile Agency

In the preceding section, I presented an account of how the citizenship and identification regimes in India operate at different levels of the state and the everyday practices of the Tibetan exiles. It illustrates how Tibetan exiles assume simultaneously three distinct political identities: that of Tibetan citizens in the eyes of the CTA, foreigners in the eyes of the Indian state, and refugees in the eyes of international community. Now, I will turn to the discussion of whether Tibetans in India should become Indian citizens and examine the multiple voices on the issue. For the sake of brevity, these multiple voices are categorized broadly into three groups: remaining stateless, flexible approach, and dual citizenship.

Remaining stateless

A section of Tibetans support the status quo policy of remaining stateless and oppose seeking Indian citizenship on the ground that doing so will “split” the exile community, which in turn will weaken the moral and political support for the common Tibetan cause both within the Tibetan society and among the international community. They also argue that it will send a wrong message to fellow Tibetans inside Tibet, who view the CTA and the Tibetan exiles as their representatives and voice to the outside world. In a Voice of America (VOA) Tibetan language TV discussion on the issue of whether Tibetans should become Indian citizens, Tenzin Tsundue, a prominent Tibetan activist and poet, says:

The real issue is whether a trend will begin whereby a majority of Tibetans, particularly in India, will take up Indian citizenship. If that happens, it will create a large challenge. In particular, I see a scenario where there will be a division within the society. If all those born between 1950 and 1987 decided to take up Indian citizenship, then it will not be an issue of a few Tibetans taking up Indian citizenship. This will create a split in the society between those who are eligible for Indian citizenship and those who are not, who will have to remain as refugees. This is one major challenge if a trend is started that will lead to a large number taking up Indian citizenship. (VOA 2013)

In the Tibetan exile politics, unity is emphasized and perceived as crucial to the Tibetan common cause. To illustrate how unity is valorized in the exile politics, the current Sikyong (Prime Minister) ran his election campaign on the three key agendas of unity, innovation, and self-reliance. During the campaign, he also highlighted the fact that he travels on IC (travel document for stateless Tibetan in India) and emphasized his statelessness as a sign of commitment to the Tibetan cause. In the VOA discussion forum, of the four callers, three were not only very critical of Tibetans becoming Indian citizens, they criticized the CTA's policy of sending Tibetans to the US, Canada and abroad. One caller even questioned the motive of the program and said:

This is a question to VOA Kunlen program. I would like to know the reason behind showing of Lhagyari Namgyal Dolkar's interview [which the caller understood as an argument that it is fine for Tibetans to become Indian citizens]. I would like to comment here that I am saddened by the taking up of Indian citizenship by the Tibetans because we have a country of our own and instead of fighting to regain our country, people are becoming citizens of other countries. If Tibetan exiles start to take up Indian citizenship, I fear what would happen to our exile government. So, I would like to know the reason why this program is advertising this matter. (VOA 2013)

The VOA moderator had to clarify that the program does not take any stance on whether Tibetans should become Indian citizens. Another caller from a Tibetan settlement in South India made a curt remark,

I think sending people to the US, Canada, and now taking Indian citizenship is not right at all. We all should stay under the exile Tibetan administration. There cannot be two heads on one neck.

In short, those who oppose Indian citizenship perceive that the act of taking up citizenship on a large scale would threaten the very legitimacy of the exile struggle.

Flexible approach towards Indian citizenship

A second viewpoint that is most congruent with the official policy of the CTA takes a more pragmatic and flexible approach towards becoming Indian citizens. The argument is that Indian citizenship is necessary in certain cases so that young Tibetan professionals and businessmen can participate in a range of educational, professional and business opportunities which can directly benefit the Tibetan exile society. To illustrate this point, Tashi Wangdu, CEO of Federation of Tibetan Cooperatives in India explains,

Since 1980s, an unknown number of Tibetans have taken up Indian citizenship. Likewise, Tibetans living abroad have taken up citizenship in their respective countries. They are doing substantial work for the Tibetan cause and paying Green Book dues (a marker of Tibetan citizenship), an important source of revenue for the CTA. Although there might be a few Tibetans who take up citizenship for personal benefits, it would not create much of a problem on the whole. However, if there is a large number taking up citizenship, there are political implications, since our government is an exile government. Further, I don't think such large scale taking up of Indian citizenship will happen since only about 30 percent of the Tibetans living in India are eligible for citizenship. That is the situation. (VOA Tibetan 2013)

The concept of 'flexible citizenship' (Ong 1999) could be extended beyond the individual to the collective, here the CTA, which is practicing a kind of flexible citizenship at the state level. On the one hand, the CTA has actively encouraged the immigration of Tibetans to the US, Canada, and Australia, and view these as "cultural" or "immigrant ambassadors" (Hess 2009) who can use the economic and political clout of the West as support for the Tibetan cause. To maintain links with the Tibetan diaspora, the CTA initiated two projects: Tibet Corps and Sister Cities Project. The first project is already up and running and it provides opportunities for Tibetan professionals living abroad to do voluntary service in CTA-run institutions. The second project, in the planning stage, envisions building direct connections between Tibetan

communities abroad and Tibetan settlements in India and Nepal by funding projects in the Tibetan settlements and running short-term cultural exchange programs.

Dual citizenship

Some Tibetans argue that since the Exile Charter allows dual citizenship and the Tibetans who become citizens in the West are actively contributing to the Tibetan cause, there is no point in remaining stateless. This viewpoint is also shared and voiced by some outside commentators and scholars who argue that the Tibetans could do more for the Tibetan cause if they enjoyed political freedom and legal protection from the host nation-states they live in (Moyniham 2013; Phayul 2013). To avoid being excluded from certain political and economic rights due to the general ambiguous nature of the Tibetans exiles in India and Nepal, they argue that remaining stateless is just symbolic. Although very persuasive, this viewpoint ignores the political and administrative realities of whether Tibetans living in India can obtain Indian citizen either through legal or administrative channels. Those who support Tibetans becoming Indian citizens also allege that the CTA's policy is to discourage the practice of granting NOC. In 2013, the CTA had to clarify that there is no change in the policy and that it continues to give NOC to individual Tibetans. The CTA says it has given NOC to 15 Tibetans over the past two years (Tibet Times and Interviews).

From the ongoing debate on Indian citizenship, it is clear that the collective decision to remain stateless is being challenged. It also demonstrates how Tibetans are expressing their agency in negotiating the citizenship and identification regimes of different nation-states vis-à-vis the CTA. The Tibetan exiles are increasingly becoming aware of their right to Indian citizenship, yet at present the majority are not actively pursuing it. Those who do so tend to be

young and highly educated and are motivated by individual career aspirations. To the contrary, many Tibetans who are involved in the informal economy through seasonal sweater selling and petty trading do not see any material and political benefits from acquiring Indian citizenship. There is still a strong political and symbolic meanings attached to the status of remaining stateless and consequent social stigma associated with becoming an Indian citizen.

At a first glance, there seems to be inherent contradictions in that, while the Tibetans chose to remain stateless in India, the CTA supported the resettlement of Tibetans to the US and their becoming US citizens. However, if the Tibetan exile practice of citizenship is situated in the context of transnational social realities, it could be argued that the exiles are engaging in a form of transnational articulation of “flexible citizenship” (Ong 1999) to access precious political and economic resources in the West while preserving the legitimacy of the Tibetan government in exile and maintaining the exile society in India as the active site of cultural and national identity maintenance. In fact, in her study of citizenship and belonging among the Tibetan immigrants in the US, an anthropologist argues that “the Tibetans see the adoption of US citizenship as a means to empower themselves as political actors for their lost homeland in a transnational sphere. *In short, by becoming US citizens they become political agents for their own state*” (Hess 2009:9, emphasis original).

4.12 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have examined how despite the prevalent official discourse of Indo-Tibetan friendship and harmony, in everyday contexts the Tibetans share a fraught, ambivalent relationship that cannot be explained merely in terms of economic trade-offs and benefits. On the Tibetan side, the valorization of their refugee status and national identity and maintenance of the

Tibetan settlement as a separate space has led to a reinforcing of social and ethnic boundaries between the Tibetans and local communities. This is further reinforced by other inter-related factors of cultural notions that engender social relationship of sharing food and drinks, endogamous marriage practice, and language barriers.

Towards the end of my fieldwork, it was relatively calm and no untoward incident happened to disturb the uneasy and ambivalent relationship between the two communities. This gave time for Tibetans reflect upon and interpret the local anti-Tibetan sentiments. Some say that it is a good reminder to the Tibetans about their reality of their stay in India, that is, to work harder for the Tibetan cause so that they can go to a free country of their own. Some younger Tibetans express frustration with their status as “foreigners” and how it hinders their socio-economic mobility. There are others who argue that there is no future for Tibetans in India, and worry about the fate of Tibetans when the Dalai Lama is no more and India and China achieve political rapprochement.

The reason why I discussed the NVHM petition in length is that many of the issues raised about the protracted stay of Tibetans in India and their economic success are leading to anxiety and a sense of vulnerability among the ordinary Tibetans who conflate their experience of dealing with local anti-Tibetan sentiments with their ambiguous legal status in India. It is also related to the idea of Tibetan settlement as a Tibetan place, but one that is a problematic space because of the tenuous nature of their stay in India.

While the Tibetan leaders stress that the Tibetans should never forget the generosity of the Indian government and maintain harmonious relationship with the local Indians, ordinary Tibetans, particularly the younger generation, see injustice and discrimination in the actions of the local Indian leaders and bureaucracy. The dynamics of the local Indo-Tibetan relationship is

also crucial for understanding the motivations among the younger Tibetans to leave the settlement and see the West as an option and alternative.

This is further highlighted in the ongoing debate on whether Tibetans should take up Indian citizenship. It demonstrates how the Tibetan exiles are expressing their agency in negotiating the citizenship and identification regimes of different nation-states vis-à-vis the CTA. It remains to be seen whether the new awareness of the legal right of Tibetan exiles to Indian citizenship generated by the two high court cases will lead to a trend of large number of Tibetans becoming Indian citizens, although this does not seem plausible if the current challenge of India's bureaucratic messiness and arbitrariness remain in place. The protracted stay in exile and the increasing migration to the West are all contributing to the challenges of remaining stateless, viewed by the CTA and many exiles as crucial to sustaining the struggle for the common Tibetan cause and the dream of imagined Tibetan nationhood.

The idea of a 'Tibetan citizen' under the Exile Charter, if taken as a form of stateless citizenship, is neither a form of post-national citizenship nor a territorial citizenship, but a claim towards a future citizenship that is contingent on specific historical and geopolitical factors. In discussing how the legalistic conception of citizenship runs into bureaucratic messiness and arbitrariness due to differing interpretations of the status of Tibetans in India, I have also presented the broad political and economic conditions that shape the different motivations for remaining stateless or taking up Indian citizenship. In the light of above lived reality of settlements, I will examine in the next chapter the macro social and political questions of how increasing outmigration from the settlements to abroad is viewed as a threat to the viability of settlements and what policies and measures are taken by the CTA to mitigate the more immediate challenges arising from the increasing outmigration from the settlements. I will then

examine some of the inter-generational difference toward going abroad, and the challenges faced by the CTA in ensuring the continued viability of these settlements.

Chapter Five: Tension between Settlement and Mobility

Early into my fieldwork in Doeguling, I first met Penpa, 60 year-old organic farmer and sweater seller from Camp 4, while we were both waiting to see the settlement officer. We ended up talking about the purpose of our visits to the settlement office, and he asked me where I live. When I said, “Ari” (colloquial for USA), his eyes lit up and said in jest, “Oh really! So you have attained enlightenment (*sangs rgyas tshar ’dug ba*).” I was a bit taken aback by his humor and asked what he meant by it. He gave me a surprised look and said, “Don’t you know everyone wants to go abroad (*phyi rgyal*) these days? It has become the ultimate goal in one’s life.” Despite the irreverent nature of his comment, it nonetheless encapsulates the widespread notion in the Tibetan exile society today that everyone wants to go abroad. It is very common to hear people use the term *heb* or *heb langs* (literally arising of greed) to describe what is afflicting particularly the younger generation of Tibetan exiles to go Westward. One anthropologist applies the term “occidental longing” to describe this strong desire to move to the West among the Tibetan exiles (Hess 2009:134).

In later interviews with him, I learned that Penpa, who has nine children, was selected in the lottery for the US Tibetan Resettlement Project under the “poor category.” He decided not to go to the US because his ailing mother made him promise that he would never leave her and go into what she called “second exile.” His mother was strongly against the idea of going to a foreign country and Penpa used the Tibetan term *mi yul sa mtha’* (distant or alien place) to refer to the West, implying a place without religion.⁵⁸ A former CTA official who served in the Tibetan settlements in Karnataka for over 25 years also recalled that when the CTA first announced the resettlement of 1,000 Tibetan exiles from India and Nepal to the US, many older Tibetans were very critical of the idea because in their opinion the CTA had given up hope of returning to Tibet. They further expressed fear that going to the West would lead to the loss of Tibetan culture and identity primarily because they saw it as a place without religion, meaning Buddhism.

In Doeguling, I came across only three other Tibetans who initially moved abroad but later returned to India. One is 58 year-old Sonam Paljor from Camp 1 who has served in the community for more than 25 years. He went to the US in 1993 as part of the resettlement project and returned to Doeguling after staying for only 22 months. He came for a vacation and stayed back because his elderly mother, now 87 years old, asked him. Among his three children, two daughters are married and settled in Canada and England while his son lives with him and goes for seasonal sweater selling. When I interviewed Sonam, he was preparing to invest in a water pump so that he could convert his landholdings into horticulture.

⁵⁸ The Tibetan term *sa mtha’* refers generally to a place or region that is remote, border, and faraway region. In the religious and cultural contexts, it can have the connotation of a region that has not been touched by the reach of religion, synonymous with Buddhism for many older Tibetans.

Another US returnee is 55 year-old Tsering from Camp 6, who stayed in the US for two years and then returned to Doeguling because she had to take care of her elderly father, who is now 84 years old. She has a very good job in an Indian bank in the settlement and had taken leave of absence for two years to go to the US. Her husband and four children are all settled in the US. Her 20 year-old grandson is a monk in the settlement. I also came across a 72 year-old Tibetan retiree who returned from Switzerland and now lives with his nephew in Doeguling in Camp 3. But stories of such return are very rare in exile. Many Tibetans say that the settlement is an ideal place for elderly Tibetans to retire because they can live in an environment where they can devote their life fully towards religious practice. However, it is too early to say that any substantial return migration will take place in the future.

When I asked Penpa if he has any regrets about giving up the opportunity to move to the US, he says that he has none. Instead, he explains that he would have regrets if he had disobeyed his mother and takes pride in the fact that he has performed his filial duty. I further asked him if his wife and children said anything about his decision not to go to the US. He says that his children were too young then but his wife fully supported his decision. Of his nine children, five sons and four daughters, only one 30 year old daughter is married out of the household and does petty business in Manali in northern India. One son is in the army, and two sons in their late 20s work for the CTA. A 33 year old daughter, who is physically disabled, lives and works in a Tibetan home for disabled children near the settlement of Bylakuppe. Three of his younger children are in school, one of whom is pursuing a nursing degree at a college in Mysore. Finally, a 22 year old son is a defrocked monk who stays home to help the family in farming and sweater selling.

Although he sacrificed the opportunity of moving to the US, Penpa is not against the idea of people going abroad. Like many other Tibetans in Doeguling who do not have any family members abroad, Penpa expresses the opinion that it would be very beneficial if the CTA would help in sending at least one member from each household in the settlement because it will greatly improve the economic condition of individual families as well as reducing dependency on the exile government and the charity of others. In his opinion, “It would be very beneficial if the Tibetan government sends one person from each family so that it would uplift the economic situation of Tibetan families but not destroy the foundation of society.”

The purpose of this chapter is to show how permanent migration to the West (mainly to North America and Europe) has heightened anxiety about identity issues and the tensions between the collective desire to maintain the settlements as sites of identity maintenance and the individual desires to achieve upward socio-economic mobility through migration. The tension is highlighted by the common exile discourse that only older people and young children live in the settlements, the official exile discourse expressing concern over population decline due to fertility decline and outmigration. These concerns manifest in the closure of some primary schools due to a lack of new students, monasteries facing the problem of getting new monk recruits, and ultimately worries about the future direction of the collective Tibetan struggle. To understand these tensions, I address the following inter-related issues in this chapter. I begin by examining the macro-level social and political discourses on how increasing migration to the West is viewed as a threat to the viability of Tibetan settlements. I then address some of the key policy initiatives of the CTA to make the settlements more viable. Finally, I examine the individual and household decision making processes regarding migration and what social networks individuals and households draw upon to assist with their desire to migrate.

5.1 Exile Discourses on Revitalizing Tibetan Settlements

To illustrate the importance of Tibetan settlements in the official exile discourse, I start with a quote on the homepage of official website of the CTA's Department of Home, which is responsible for overseeing the welfare and socio-economic development policies of all the Tibetan settlements in India:

We are a drop in the ocean of India's billion-plus population, yet we have been able to retain our identity and maintain our culture against all odds. Although we Tibetans are no more than 140,000 in India, Nepal and Bhutan, we have adapted to new circumstances of the host nation. We keep alive a culture that to this day is under intense pressure in Tibet, and in danger of suppression, in a land our young generation have not seen. What is it that keeps us going, as guests in a poor country where we must fend for ourselves, and be the guardians of a culture that could die unless we maintain it? *The secrets (sic) of our successful adaptation is the settlements.*(Official website of Department of Home, emphasis added)⁵⁹

Indeed, the rehabilitation of Tibetan refugees in India is considered as one of the better news stories by both the exile leaders and outside commentators. Studies have documented how the Tibetans have maintained a cohesive community in exile and adapted successfully without any adverse psychological and socio-economic problems typically faced by other refugee communities (Goldstein 1975; Palakshappa 1979; Subba 1990; De Voe 1983; von Fürer-Hammendorf 1990). The CTA view the Tibetan settlements as important sites of cultural continuity and identity maintenance; places where the younger generations born in India, who have never seen or experienced life in Tibet, are enculturated with a strong sense of Tibetan identity in the separate Tibetan schools and home settings. The younger generations are popularly referred to as “the seeds of future Tibet” (*ma 'ongs bod kyi son rtsa*).

⁵⁹ <http://www.centraltibetanreliefcommittee.org/others/exile-life.html>. Accessed February 13, 2015

In light of a protracted stay in exile, the changing socio-economic and demographic dynamics of the exile society is leading to increasing outmigration among the younger generation of Tibetans born in exile. The high mobility of the younger generation both within India and abroad has become a matter of grave concern for the CTA and is viewed as detrimental to the viability of the Tibetan settlements in India. This has led to a dominant discourse in exile, *gzhis chags sra rtan* (literally, “making the settlements firm”) which is more commonly referred to as “revitalizing the settlements.”

In December 2011, I interviewed the former Kalon Tripa Samdhong Rinpoche, who headed the CTA for two terms from 2001 to 2011. On the general state of the Tibetan settlements in India, he says:

Sometime I say that we leaped in one step from a seventh century civilization into a twentieth century civilization. We faced an environment with totally different language, climate, customs, and traditions. It was not a gradual process of change. Those who were below 20 years of age and those born here in exile received modern education through which although Tibetan language was taught, the education was done in a modern Indian education system. Therefore, around the time the settlements were first established, the basic mindset of the society also was changing including the political aspect. The settlements were established under complex and complicated circumstances. Even today, a ‘*sense of settlement*’ has not happened. It is not only that the long term goal is to return. Unlike the Israelis who planned to stay forever, we do not. [emphasis added, Rinpoche uses the exact English term in the quotes]

Rinpoche notes that despite over five decades in exile, the Tibetan exiles have not achieved a “sense of settlement” not only because the final goal is eventual return to Tibet but because of the challenges of living in exile and the increasing desire among the younger generation to go abroad. The comparison of the Tibetan settlements to the Jewish resettlement in Israel, which occurred around the same time in the middle of the last century, is not surprising. In fact, the Dalai Lama often encourages the Tibetan exiles to learn from the experience of Jewish

people, viewed as an exemplary model of success in maintaining a distinct identity despite over two millennia of persecution and dispersal.

In August 2010, the First Tibetan National General Meeting was convened in Bylakuppe (the oldest and largest Tibetan settlement in India). In the six-day meeting, 335 Tibetan delegates living in 20 different countries deliberated on a range of issues faced by the Tibetan exile society. The delegates consisted of members of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, members of the CTA cabinet, representatives from the religious communities, local Tibetan assemblies, Tibetan NGOs, schools, Tibetan doctors, scholars and social activists. Divided into eight sub-committees, they engaged in brainstorming session to generate recommendations on the issues of Tibet's political affairs, promotion of democracy, religion, culture, revitalizing settlements, education, health, economy, and welfare of Tibetans living in scattered communities. The meeting was viewed as an important democratic exercise in deliberating on key issues facing the Tibetan struggle and coming up with new ideas for sustaining the Tibetan collective cause.

On the final day of the meeting the Dalai Lama, who was conducting a religious teaching at Sera Monastery in Bylakuppe, addressed the delegates. He emphasized the issue of revitalizing the Tibetan settlements and urged the delegates to study and learn from both the positive and negative aspects of the exile experience over the past five decades. He informed the delegates that the very fact they are holding this meeting in one of the first established settlements in India is proof of how the Tibetan exiles have successfully recreated a thriving community in the hot and humid plains of South India against all odds. He further shared his personal vision of Tibetan settlements as vibrant and modern Tibetan communities, covered in lush green landscapes, with young children living with their parents and receiving both traditional and modern education. He lamented how the mechanical workshops in the Tibetan

settlements, which he always loved to visit and encourage people to adopt modernized farming and small scale industries, have today become rest places for nesting pigeons and retired tractors.

I provide here an excerpt of the speech that I translated,

The reason why we have the settlements and such vast amounts of land is due solely to the kindness of India. Now, it is essential that we put renewed efforts in the spheres of agriculture, economy, and industry in the settlements. We cannot afford to be complacent and rely on the routine business. Instead we should actively work to come up with new ideas and ways on how to improve the settlements. Take Israel as an example, they have achieved tremendous development on a landscape that is essentially a desert. We are the same human beings, if we apply our mind and effort, we can achieve anything. Today, we have lots of [financial] supporters. If the Tibetans can come up with well thought out plans and projects, there will be definitely financial support from our supporters. Thus, [the improvement] of the settlements is one of the top priorities.

In Doeguling, I would come across many informants who readily cite the Dalai Lama's vision of India as a cherished second homeland and the settlements as the primary sites of preserving Tibetan identity and culture. Several informants also referred to the Dalai Lama's talk about reviving the economy of the settlements by learning from the Israelis who have turned deserts into lush green landscapes. To provide the closest example of exile's attempt to learn from the Israeli experiment, there is a project that was initiated in 1998 by the CTA's Department of Home in collaboration with an Israel-based organization. As part of this project, the CTA has been sending a group of 25 to 30 youths to Israel every year for 11 months. The CTA refers to the participants as "agricultural trainees" who are expected to introduce new ideas and methods to revive farming in the Tibetan settlements. Interviews with several former participants in this project indicate that they receive only a very short training (less than a month) at an agricultural research institute in Israel, and that they work mainly as contracted agricultural labor. Most of them essentially view this project as a lucrative employment opportunity.

At the same August 2010 national meeting, the then Kalon Tripa Samdhong Rinpoche presented the overall state of exile society and sketched out six main challenges or threats that confront the future of the collective Tibetan struggle: population decline, quality of education, a general sense of dependency and complacency (*gzhan brten dang sgyid lug gyi bsam blo*), greed (*'dod rnams*), moral decline (*bzang spyod nyams chag*), and lack of political awareness and vision. All these challenges are framed as intimately linked to the continued viability of the settlements as well as the common cause.

In the following discussion, I will focus more on the three challenges of population decline, moral decline, and greed in order to examine how increasing outmigration is viewed as posing a threat to the maintenance of a cohesive Tibetan community in exile. I begin by providing a translated excerpt from Rinpoche's address:

In exile, the total fertility rate in 1987-89 period was 4.9, which dropped down to 1.22 in 1998. According to the second official census in 2009, it had further dropped down to 1.18. If this situation continues, in the next fifty years, the Tibetan exile population is going to decrease by 40 to 45 percent. Today, the primary section of many Tibetan schools have been closed [due to lack of new students]. Gradually, more Tibetan schools will be closed. Until recently, the Tibetan schools and monasteries in exile received a considerable number of students from Tibet. Beginning in 2008, the number of new arrivals from Tibet has fallen drastically. It is difficult to predict the future. Except for India, in the rest of countries where Tibetans reside, they have no option but to take up citizenship of the respective countries.

In the near future, if all the Tibetans were to go abroad and become citizens of other countries...it is very clear that the current state of the Tibetan collective struggle and the exile administration will not remain the same. (Translated from the speech by Samdhong Rinpoche at August 2010 Tibetan National Meeting in Bylakuppe)

The official discourse of pro-natalism in response to the ongoing allegation of 'cultural genocide' inside Tibet has a very long history, something well documented by other scholars (Childs and Barkin 2006, Goldstein 1975). In more recent years, there is heightened anxiety due to rapid fertility decline and increasing outmigration to the West. As Rinpoche notes, the more

immediate impacts of rapid fertility decline are manifested in the closing of primary sections of exile schools, lack of monastic recruits in the exile monasteries and depopulation of smaller Tibetan settlements. For instance, the strength of Tibetan boarding schools in northern India has consistently declined over the recent years,⁶⁰ and the percentage of non-Tibetans (which includes both local Indians and students who are citizens of India, Nepal, and Bhutan and hail from the highlands of those countries) have increased way above the official ceiling of 10 percent. In some of these residential schools (Central Tibetan Schools financially supported by the Indian government), there is the concern that non-Tibetans are now becoming the majority. Until 2003, most of the exile schools did not admit students from the Himalayan region, but now they are happily admitted to maintain the student number in the schools. During the 50th anniversary of one residential school, CST Dalhousie in 2013, I came across many alumni of the school and CTA officials who express grave concern about the declining number of Tibetan exile students and the increasing number of non-Tibetans in their former school. There is a general consensus that the CTA should either close or merge the four residential schools and focus more on the quality of education.

In 2010 the CTA, in order to stem the declining number of students in the Tibetan settlement schools, instructed all the settlement officers not to issue official recommendation letters and school transfer certificates for parents who wish to send their children to boarding schools outside the settlement. The settlement offices now issue school leaving certificates

⁶⁰ Most of the boarding schools run by non-CTA Tibetan institutions like Tibetan Children's Village and Tibetan Homes Foundation have expanded rapidly in the last two decades to accommodate the growing number of children coming from Tibet. Until recently, it is estimated that, on the average, around 2,500 come to India every year from Tibet, out of which the majority are children sent by parents to join the Tibetan schools and monasteries in exile. After 2008, due to stricter regulations by the Chinese state and increased pressure on the Nepalese government by China, there has been a drastic fall in the number of children coming from Tibet. On January 15, 2015, the Tibetan language newspaper *Tibet Times* reported that new arrivals from Tibet numbered only 150 in 2013 and 120 in 2104.

mainly for those children belonging to the “poor category” who get free admission into Tibetan boarding schools.

In Doeguling, the effect of rapid fertility decline is manifested in the decreasing number of children in the village pre-primary schools and crèches. During fieldwork, I observed the Tibetan staff fudging and padding up the numbers of children in the pre-primary schools and crèches during the official inspection tours by the Indian state authorities. This was done in order to show that these schools have the required number of children to receive the yearly grants from the Indian state welfare boards.

In the case of Tibetan monasteries in exile, it is common knowledge that the Buddhist population from Himalayan regions in India, Nepal and Bhutan have come to constitute the majority of the new monk recruits. For instance, based on a demographic survey of the monastic population, around 33 percent of the total monastic population is from the Himalayan region; they are disproportionately concentrated in the younger age groups.

I also observed several instances of pro-natal gestures at official events. On October 7, 2011, commemorated as the founding day of Tibetan Youth Congress, the regional youth chapter of Doeguling organized an event where three women who have given birth to more than 10 children were felicitated by offering each a scarf, a memento, and a certificate of appreciation. I was told that this felicitation has become a regular annual feature and one local youth leader says “It is intended to raise awareness of population decline both inside Tibet and exile society and to offer moral encouragement for Tibetans to reproduce more for the common cause.” In February 2011, during a visit by Samdhong Rinpoche to Doeguling, he met with the school students and he was asked by one student on how the issue of population decline could be addressed.

Rinpoche' response of "I don't have an answer. But, I think it is in the hands of younger generations like you who need to reproduce more", drew embarrassed laughter from the students.

The issue of perceived population decline and its effects on the exile struggle and viability of settlements was frequently raised during the 2011 election campaign for the post of Kalon Tripa. One candidate promised that if elected, he would provide educational scholarship to families who have three children or more. At the 2010 Tibetan national meeting, one of the recommendations was that the CTA should adopt a pro-natal policy by providing educational and health benefits to families who have more than three children. In 2012, at another special meeting, a similar resolution was passed which states:

Because the collective Tibetan struggle will face both short and long term difficulties due to small population, it is necessary to create conditions for reproducing more, and the exile administration must provide special care and assistance to those who have three children and more.⁶¹

On June 26, 2014 the CTA made an official policy announcement that it would provide educational and health benefits to families who have more than three children which include full scholarship for the third child onward, full medical benefits and assistance during pregnancy and childbirth, and special leave and pay for CTA staff during pregnancy and childbirth. The CTA has instructed all the Tibetan settlements to submit lists of families who have more than three children.

At the official and collective level, the exiles ideally would like to see a reverse in the fertility decline. However, it is very unlikely to occur because educational and economic imperatives, the two vital factors contributing to fertility decline, remain the most important

⁶¹The original resolution from a 2012 special meeting on population decline is in Tibetan and states: *Bod mi rigs kyi 'thab rtsod la 'phral phugs gang thad nas mi 'bor nyung ba'i dka' ngal dngos yod la brten. Phru gu mang po skyed gso byed dgos ba dang phru gu gsum pa yan yod rnams la gzhung ngos nas dmigs bsal lta skyong dgos.*

concerns for the parents in the exile society. Many of my informants have fully internalized the family ideal of two children, something promoted consistently and widely by the Indian government through its family planning projects over many decades. It is very common to find young Tibetan parents comment that feeding and clothing children is easy, but to provide a better life for their children education is the most important concern. The prevalent discourse among the ordinary Tibetans with regard to both lay and monastic population is that “quality not quantity is important.” In a household interview with Palden, a 40 year-old sweater seller and ex-army, I found that he and his 35 year-old wife have two children, a 13 year-old son and 10 year-old daughter. They sent their son to a boarding school run by TCV in 2009 and are planning to send the daughter to the same school as well, but face difficulties in securing a school leaving certificate from the settlement office. Palden says that he and his wife stopped at two children because,

If you have too many children, it will result in economic burden. Having two children is ideal because we will be able to provide them better care and support. If you have too many children, then supporting them in their education would be difficult and I felt that it (having too many children) will lead to a difficult life. That is the thinking, two is good enough and education is the key to a successful life. I hope to give my children the best education so that they can be successful. That is why we stopped at two children.

For the majority of the younger generation exiles, the pursuit of higher education and meaningful jobs outside the Tibetan settlements is linked to a late age of marriage, postponement of marriage, and an ideal family size of two children. It has led to remarkable changes in the societal attitude toward marriage. For instance, the continued traditional practice of arranged marriage in the early years of exile has now given over to love marriage (*kha thug nas*, literally, through “meeting of mouths”) which has become the most common and dominant form of marriage practice today. In the early years of refugee experience, it was still common for the

Tibetan parents to marry off their children, especially daughters, at an early age. Today, the common response to the ideal age at marriage is when one is independent enough or “when one is able to stand on one’s own feet” (*so sos rkang pa’i gang la lang thub ba byed nas*). In short, the remarkable success in delivering universal schooling in exile is ironically the key contributing factor to the rapid fertility decline.

5.2 Going Abroad and its Discontents

In addition to the rapid fertility decline, another demographic challenge faced by the exile society is the increasing outmigration of young able bodied people from the settlements. Outmigration within India has been long a feature of the exile society in the form of seasonal migration for sweater selling, pursuit of higher education, and jobs in Indian cities. However, permanent migration abroad, particularly to North America and Europe, is a recent phenomenon that took off after the US Immigration Act of 1990 that granted 1,000 immigrant visas to the Tibetan exiles in India and Nepal. The US resettlement project has been criticized by some sections of the exile population for giving disproportionate quotas to Tibetans with long years of community service and causing a ‘brain drain’ in the exile society through the loss of many experienced administrative staff, educators, health workers, and other professionals (Tibetan Review 1995). Some even blame the US resettlement for destabilizing the very foundation of the exile society in India because they think that the CTA has given up hope of ever returning to Tibet. One former high-ranking CTA official and current Tibet parliamentarian who has two of four children settled abroad in the US, said,

If we are not ‘refugees’ anymore, then the Tibet issue will disappear. It will disappear because the Tibetans, who are now citizens of other countries, cannot oppose the Chinese occupation... For instance, the Central Tibetan Administration can’t exist as a distinct

institution. If tomorrow everyone becomes citizens of other countries, how can we run the Tibetan government in exile? However, for those highly qualified people within the Tibetan society, the option of Indian citizenship should be there, otherwise, they would not be able to pursue their profession and career.

If we recall the discussion in the previous chapter on the collective decision to remain stateless in India and the debate on whether Tibetans in India should become Indian citizens, there are Tibetans who oppose the CTA's policy of resettlement of Tibetan abroad in the US and Canada. Their argument is that this will lead to a split in the exile community and destabilize the legitimacy and foundation of exile society and struggle. The CTA takes a more pragmatic approach in that it would alleviate the economic hardship of the exile society as well as see Tibetans take advantage of political and economic resources in the West to further the Tibetan cause.

After the 1992 US resettlement project, there were two other resettlement projects to foreign countries that the CTA officially supported. The first is the ongoing resettlement of former political prisoners and their families to Australia when the Australian government agreed to take a few hundred under its humanitarian resettlement program starting in the early 2000s. The second is the more recent resettlement of 1,000 Tibetans (which includes all the eligible family members unlike the US resettlement project which included only individual participants) to Canada that materialized in 2009 after a formal appeal by the Dalai Lama to the Canadian Prime Minister in 2007.⁶² The CTA made the decision to allow this emigration only to Tibetans

⁶² The actual immigration process started in early 2014. Although the Canadian government agreed to take 1,000 Tibetans from India, the same number as under the US Tibetan Resettlement Project, the key difference is that the latter granted immigrant visas to individual Tibetans who then served as anchor visas for family reunion. The Canadian resettlement project includes all the family members, which in practice means only 1,000 Tibetans unlike the US which resulted in a greater number of Tibetans immigrating as part of family reunion.

from four Tibetan agricultural settlements in the remote north-eastern state of Arunachal Pradesh, regarded as the poorest settlements in India.

Another resettlement project to the USA that the CTA officially supported would have allowed former members of the disbanded rebel group, Lo Druitsug (funded by the CIA in the 1970s and based in Mustang, Nepal) to immigrate to the US. However, the project got shelved primarily due to the lack of cooperation from the Nepalese government in providing the necessary travel document for the Tibetans. On May 20, 2013, the CTA announced on its official website that an ongoing immigration reform bill in the US Congress has a Tibet-related amendment clause, which if passed, would allow for around 5,000 immigrant visas to Tibetan exiles from India and Nepal. The CTA's news release says, "The new Tibetan immigration provision, if and when enacted, will help the Central Tibetan Administration's efforts to find meaningful livelihoods and support the wellbeing of displaced Tibetans who have fled Tibet into exile." This has raised high hope among many Tibetans in the settlements that the CTA would select poor families and those families that do not have any members abroad.

At the same time, the CTA is aware of both positive and negative aspects of increasing outmigration. One the negative aspects is framed as "moral decline" due to many Tibetans resorting to illegal and unethical means to facilitate their travel abroad and the associated negative impacts on families as well as on the collective image of Tibetans. For example, Samdhong Rinpoche notes "moral decline" as one of the main threats to the exile society in his address at the 2010 national meeting. Here is another excerpt from it:

Due to the increasing desire to go abroad, many Tibetans from India, Nepal and Bhutan are forsaking their 'distinct Tibetan morality' (*bod mi' mthun min gyi gzang spyod*). They go abroad illegally by resorting to lying, deceit, bribery, and cheating. Some Tibetans even charge fellow Tibetans exorbitant money for making fraudulent visa documents. Some unfortunate Tibetans end up unable to repay the huge debt they incur. Some have ended up in jail, some became mad and even committed suicide leaving their family

members in huge debt and distress. These behaviors have also caused immense harm to the Tibetan collective image. In recent years, foreign embassies, immigration officials at international airports and border posts have come to view Tibetan exiles with increasing suspicion. This has made it even more difficult for Tibetan officials who travel for educational, religious, cultural, and official purposes to secure visas. Some of them have to face embarrassing questioning and mistreatment from the consulate officials. (Rinpoche 2010: 7)

The CTA, on its part, ideally would like to see the migration of Tibetans abroad through planned resettlement projects in larger groups so that Tibetans don't get assimilated into the host societies. The very fact that the CTA actively supported resettlement of Tibetans to the US, Canada, and Australia in recent decades is based on the justification that it not only alleviates the general economic hardship faced by the exiles living in India but provides opportunities of political and economic capital for furthering the Tibetan cause in international spheres. Further, the CTA has actively supported and encouraged individual Tibetans who migrate abroad through legal means for education, cultural, religious, employment, and economic purposes. However, the CTA is acutely aware of certain negative impacts of going abroad, and Samdhong Rinpoche further notes in his address that the strong desire to go abroad has shaken the 'social stability' of exile society through the neglect of available economic opportunities to make a meaningful life in exile (Rinpoche 2010: 7).

The exile leaders, including the Dalai Lama, frequently take recourse in moral advice to stem the perceived moral decline in exile society. For instance, in a response to an interview by two German academics, the Dalai Lama, while acknowledging both the negative and positive aspects of Tibetans going abroad, said,

I was told that some Tibetans are very eager to go to America by cheating. I heard some Tibetans in Nepal, not monks but lay laypersons, go to the American Embassy putting on a monk's robe. But then for a short break they will go outside and smoke—that is very sad. (Bernstoff and Von Welck 2004:113)

In his meetings with Tibetans both abroad and in exile, the Dalai Lama constantly offers moral advice to Tibetans to uphold their positive collective image. He would invariably begin by narrating stories about how in the past many foreigners, including even some Chinese visitors, tell him that they found Tibetans as “honest, friendly and hardworking” people. He then expresses sadness at hearing increasing reports that Tibetans are resorting to lies, cheating, fighting, and smuggling. To emphasize his message, the Dalai Lama frequently mentions that he has apologized to the US embassy officials in New Delhi after he was informed of increasing fraudulent visa cases by Tibetans in India and Nepal. Corroborating evidence is found in leaked documents on Wikileaks’ website that demonstrate how the US consulates in India are clearly aware about the prevalence of fraudulent documents to secure visas and human trafficking among the Tibetans in India and Nepal.⁶³

This moral discourse on the negative impacts of going abroad is widely cited in the popular discourse. In the community meetings, the settlement officer and local leaders would regularly inform the public about risks associated with paying money to secure a visa abroad. One local leader even says “These days some Tibetans will do anything, lie, cheat and even sell one’s parents to go abroad.” I would hear people express the opinion that parents and families are put in debt because of their children going abroad. I came across one family during my household survey where the son-in-law had taken INR 700,000 (\$14,000) to go abroad three years ago. Since then, nothing has been heard of him. The father-in-law acted very strangely

⁶³ The human trafficking in Tibetan exile society is common knowledge and many of my informants reported how they sent their family members through Tibetan agents by paying money. The Wikileaks’ website carries official correspondences and reports from US consulates in India that reveals the increasing cases of human trafficking among the Tibetan applicants for visas to the US and also notes the involvement of Tibetans who claim affiliation with the CTA in making fraudulent visa documents and abetting in the overstay of individual Tibetans in the US. For instance, an online search on the Wikileaks’ website gave two results on Tibetans involvement in fraudulent visa document. For more details, see https://wikileaks.org/plusd/09CHENNAI157_a.html, accessed February 18, 2015.

during the survey, he would sit and answer the survey questions, then suddenly murmur something and get up and leave. He would then come back and sit to answer questions as if nothing has happened. He told me that he is suffering acute stress (*rlung*), high blood pressure and heart problems. He blames the son-in-law for his health problems by putting the family into indebtedness.⁶⁴ I came across another case of a young family where the father left for Europe in 2010 after paying for a visa. He is yet to receive political asylum, and the family has taken loans to facilitate his travel. The couple has three young children; the wife works for another Tibetan to sell sweaters in winter. The children are taken care of by their grandmother (wife's mother) who complains that one of the daughter's sponsorships was cut off after it was known that the husband is abroad. The grandmother expresses how the family is suffering because of the debt.

Several people, including local leaders, frequently mentioned that in the early 2000s many Tibetans took loans from the Indian banks for sweater selling but then used the money to buy visa to go abroad. In Doeguling, there are three Indian banks which have been providing short term loans for Tibetans to finance sweater selling business. In addition, many Tibetans also receive credit from the manufacturers (referred to as Lalas, colloquial Hindi for business owners) in Ludhiana (northern India). It is common to hear from the Tibetans that the Lalas fully trust the older generations and give credit freely to them. But when it comes to the younger generation, the Lalas are said to be reluctant to provide credit without proper recommendation due to increasing cases of fraud and defaults.

In January 2011, I interviewed an Indian bank manager and a staff from another bank in Doeguling. The bank manager at State Bank of Mysore (SBM) became a little agitated when

⁶⁴ On the other hand, I heard contradicting views from the villagers. While some say that he has gone "mental", others say he is feigning illness to receive some help from the CTA. The man did tell me that he has approached the settlement office for help but is disappointed that nothing came of it.

responding to my interview question about cases of Tibetans defaulting on bank loans. He gave me a long lecture on the moral decline of Tibetan “refugees”, especially the younger generation. After the interview, I returned to the settlement office to check on the list of defaulters that SBM have forwarded to the Tibetan settlement. I was shown a list of 380 Tibetans who have accessed bank loans from SBM, out of which there were 152 cases where the Tibetans have defaulted. I discovered that most of the defaults on loans were sanctioned between 2001 and 2005. The bank manager showed me four families that have taken advantage of a one-time loan resettlement plan, and there were several cases of genuine business losses by people who were helped by a Tibetan monk to repay to the loans. The bank manager noted one case of a Tibetan woman on whom the village leader allegedly did not disclose information about her whereabouts. I found out that the majority of the defaulters gave fake addresses and fake names of surety, and some of them were newcomer Tibetans who are not official residents of the settlement. One settlement staff identified several people from his village who have moved abroad or to Nepal.

The Tibetan informants lay the blame partly on the bank for not vetting the loan applicants properly as well as indiscriminately increasing the bank loan amounts in competition with two other Indian banks because the repayment rate of bank loans by Tibetans was much higher than their Indian counterparts. Another Indian bank, Syndicate Bank, established in 1972 in the settlement and with the longest period of servicing loans to the Tibetans, has a much better repayment rate, and reported less than 12 cases of default on loans. This bank has a Tibetan staff who is a resident of Doeguling and liaises with the settlement office in verifying the backgrounds of the Tibetan loan applicants.

The common knowledge is that the SBM’s generous and relaxed procedure for loans were taken advantage of by some Tibetans to facilitate their move abroad, and it is unlikely that

SBM will be able to recover these loans. Nevertheless, the bank manager said he is contemplating writing to the Indian central authorities to persecute some of the defaulters who are settled abroad. The manager also complained about how the Tibetan officials and local leaders are not cooperating in verifying the whereabouts of the loan defaulters, and threatens to write to the Dalai Lama to complain about how his people are not cooperating and abusing the hospitality of the Indian government and its people.⁶⁵

The above incidents were frequently cited by the local leaders to educate Tibetans using concrete examples of moral decline in the community. It also demonstrates that Tibetans are increasingly becoming very much part of organized human trafficking. In Doeguling, it is common knowledge that a majority of people from the settlement who went to Europe were helped by a former Tibetan parliamentarian from the settlement who is now settled abroad. Some residents of Doeguling express the opinion that he charged a very reasonable price to people from the settlement. While the CTA views this illegal practice as an example of moral decline and a threat to the exile society, it will continue as long as there are Tibetans who are willing to take risks to fulfill their desire to go abroad. Particularly, for many Tibetans who lack social capital and professional skills to facilitate their migration legally, paying money through middlemen to migrate through illegal means is the only way they can achieve their desire to emigrate.

⁶⁵ I had a very unpleasant experience during the interview with the bank manager when he lectured me on how Tibetans are abusing the courtesy and kindness of the Indian government and its people by not repaying the bank loans. He addressed me by saying, “You Tibetans are taking advantages of the kindness of the Indian government and the good impression Indian people have of the Dalai Lama and older Tibetans. If this continues, it will hurt the good name of the Tibetans.” I had to explain to him that I fully understand his concerns but that I came to interview him as a researcher who is interested in the increased incidence of bank loan default among the Tibetans. The SBM manager also gave me a long lecture on how the younger generation of Tibetans, including monks and girls, are dishonest, of loose moral character, and can be seen frequenting bars in Mundgod and the nearby town of Hubli.

In short, exile leaders take recourse of moral discourse to deal with the threats of increasing migration abroad to the individuals and families but to the collective image of Tibetans. In Doeguling, it was common for the settlement officer and the local community leaders to cite the speeches of the Dalai Lama and also mention specific incidents of problems faced by individual from resorting to illegal means to facilitate their travel abroad. Thus far, I have laid out how the exile leaders view the impact of increasing migration to the West and how it is framed as a threat to the viability of Tibetan settlements. I will now turn to the discussion of attitudes toward going abroad among the ordinary Tibetans.

5.3 Generational Attitudes toward Going Abroad

On the whole, there is a certain inter-generational difference in attitudes towards going abroad. The older Tibetans are understandably more reserved towards the idea of going abroad and some even strongly oppose the idea. They view it as detrimental to the goal of returning to Tibet, which is articulated in the exile discourse that India is just a temporary abode. Many still harbor a hope of going back to either a free Tibet or a Tibet where the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan people enjoy a certain degree of freedom. At the same time, there is growing realization that the likelihood of returning to a free Tibet is not a realistic scenario that could occur in their lifetime.

In an interesting conversation on immigration to the West with two elderly women during the household survey, 62 year-old Jama whose daughter is in Belgium but has yet to receive political asylum, expresses strong negative views on going abroad. She says:

People go to die in the West. Going abroad breaks up families. I think that people can make enough money in the settlement. Look at people driving taxis to make a living in the settlement. One brother of our neighbor [who was adopted by a foreign couple when very young] came once to visit his old parents, and lamented how dirty his parents and

the settlement were. He never visited after that. My own daughter calls me and complains about not finding a job. I say to her, “*rkyag pa za ga phyin pas*” [literally, “you went to eat shit”, implying, “Why did you go in the first place?”]

Later, I learned that one of her sons went to the US in 1993 as part of the US resettlement project and passed away in 2000 due to TB and chronic hepatitis. So, her negative view on going abroad has to be taken in the context of the fact that, for older Tibetans, it is culturally very important to have one’s family members around at the time of death to perform all the proper religious rites for a smooth passage into the next life. Her friend, another elderly woman, expressed similar views about life in the West as a place where it is difficult to practice religion and where there is no strong sense of community. She further cites what she heard about the West during a religious teaching in the village, “A Geshe from Drepung said that there is nothing to envy about life in the West. He said that even family members don’t have time for each other.”

I interviewed Sithar, a 56 year-old woman who farms and raises cows. She has received some schooling and worked as a nursery ayah for 17 years. Her husband is a former member of the disbanded Tibetan guerilla based at Mustang, Nepal, and an ex-army. Her elder son passed away in 2002 at the age of 20 due to cancer, and her younger son was made a monk at a young age but later defrocked and now lives with Sithar and her husband. He is married and has a one year old son.

Sithar’s uncle went to the US under the resettlement project in 1993 and all but one of his immediate family members later moved US as part of the family reunion. The only exception was his brother, the second husband in their polyandrous marriage. I found four such cases in Doeguling where the second husband in the polyandrous marriage was separated from his family because of not being legally recognized as a member of the family in the US immigration

system. I quote in length from the interview with Sithar because it encapsulates the widespread attitude among older Tibetans in Doeguling towards going abroad. She says:

Ideally, if the whole family can go, it is good. Otherwise, there are many instances where either the husband or the wife is able to go abroad, but the rest of the family is stuck here. For such families, I don't see any benefits coming from going abroad. The West (*phyi rgyal*) has been very kind to us and provided us lots of aid (*rogs ram*). However, I feel that in the West, religion is not very strong.

I have strong opinions due to my own personal experience. One of my uncles could not move to the US with his family because it is a polyandrous marriage (*za gsum*). When he passed away here in the village, my other uncle came to India after many years. He came only once for vacation in 1995 during the Kalachakra teaching here in the settlement. His brother died in 2005, my husband and I took care of him during his brief illness before his death. I did not phone them until the very end because I did not know my uncle would pass away. When I called my younger uncle in the US about his brother's death, he had already left for India to see his elder brother. He died all of sudden, he used to drink and his liver was damaged. He died in the night at the DTR hospital (in the settlement). I called my uncle in the US right away to tell him not to come because his brother has passed away. It was daytime in the US, and his children told me that he has just left on his flight. They called back a few times and told me not to cremate the body until my uncle comes. So I took the necessary arrangements to keep the body.

Then, my uncle arrived here. On the fourth day of mourning we performed the necessary rites and cremated the body. My uncle did not show any interest in the religious rites during death. It was his own brother who had passed away but he did not know the religious rituals that needed to be performed. For instance, when I told my uncle about offering the *gsur*,⁶⁶ he did not show any interest in doing it himself. He told me to go ahead and do it if I want to. As I observed, he was not reciting *mani*, leave alone reciting other prayers for his brother. I don't know if all the Tibetans in the West have become like him. So, I think going abroad might lead to a better life, but when it comes to Tibetan customs (*goms gshis*) and traditions (*lugs srol*), I don't know if it is a place to go. I don't think highly of going abroad in that sense.

Then, there are some parents who have all their children abroad. In the case of GT's mother, there is an older sister who lives with her and takes care of her. Even if she is not around, his mother can dress, walk around and take care of herself. In such cases, if you have children abroad who send remittances, then the old parents can lead a comfortable life here in the settlement. But there are families who have children abroad but the old parents are still working hard to make a living. There is one family in Camp 4, the son went abroad by marrying a Tibetan girl from Camp 1 who is settled abroad. He has left his old father in the care of a relative. His father is bed ridden, and needs help to move his body and to clean his excreta and urine. In such cases, I don't see any good thing coming out of going abroad.

⁶⁶ A Tibetan custom of offering burnt roasted flour for the dead person, whose consciousness is believed to remain around in the intermediate realm between death and rebirth.

Sithar strongly believes that people should remain in the settlement and follow the advice of the Dalai Lama and Tibetan government in exile. She mentions that none of her family members have applied for travel documents, something the majority of the Tibetans do and see as the first step in migrating abroad. Her husband, being a former member of Lo Driksug, submitted his name for the US resettlement plan, which later got shelved. Sithar says that she would go abroad only if the whole family can go. For Sithar and many older Tibetans, the settlement has become a place where there is a strong sense of Tibetanness, manifested in the material and spiritual aspects of Tibetan Buddhism.

To provide another example, I interviewed Ama Tsamchoe, a 79 year-old childless woman who was born in a village in Phari, Central Tibet. She fled Tibet with her husband in 1959, arrived first in Bhutan, and from there was sent to the transit camp in Missamari. She went with other Tibetans to work on road construction in Shimla before finally settling down in Doeguling in 1967 and farming for most of her life. Here is what she says about losing her homeland and living in India:

On the one hand, it is my misfortune that I had to leave everything behind including my home, parents, and country. On the other hand, I think I am very fortunate that I am here (in India) where I can see and hear the Buddha (meaning the Dalai Lama).⁶⁷ It is pity that people inside Tibet can neither see nor hear the Buddha. In that sense, I feel I am very lucky. I don't think I will ever see Tibet again. I am waiting for my death. It would be great to see and hear from the Buddha one last time before I die.

I conducted the interview in November 2010, and like many other older Tibetans, Ama Tsamchoe was expectantly waiting to have another special blessing from the Dalai Lama who

⁶⁷ In addition to the common belief among the Tibetans that the Dalai Lama is a reincarnation of Chenrezig, it is common to hear many Tibetans to refer to the Dalai Lama as a Buddha in human form.

visited the settlement in February 2011. The Dalai Lama, whenever he visit the Tibetan settlements these days, makes it a point to meet and give a special audience to the elderly Tibetans, normally those above the age of 70. After the special audience during the visit, I heard many older Tibetans express that they feel so blessed that they can die happily now. Some say that their only goal now is to prepare for the next life, and pray that they will be born as a human, ideally a Tibetan, in a place where religion (meaning Buddhism) is practiced. During these special audiences, some elderly Tibetans offer their precious possessions like jewelry to the Dalai Lama as a form of *bsngo rten*, a traditional Tibetan practice of offering money and personal valuables on the behalf of a dead person to high lamas as a dedication towards accumulating merits for better rebirth.

In short, for many of the older generations, the loss of their homeland is personal and real but protracted stay in exile has led to a sense of settlement. Today, the overwhelming majority of people who farm and raise livestock are older Tibetans. They take pride in their role in successfully laying out the foundation of the Tibetan settlements, by remaining in the settlements, and by raising the next generation of Tibetans. In the official discourses and public rituals, the Dalai Lama and CTA leaders often pay tribute to the tremendous contribution of the older generation in establishing the settlements through their physical hard work and unwavering faith in the CTA and its leadership. The older generation now looks to the younger generations of Tibetans born and raised in India to continue the struggle for a common Tibetan cause, and see the recent election of an exile-born Tibetan to the post of Kalon Tripa with high hopes. I will now turn to the general attitude of younger generations towards going abroad by examining their career choices and paths.

It is very common to hear young parents who move abroad readily claim that they are moving for the sake of their children's future. However, there is also a prevalent discourse in the exile society that going abroad is having negative impacts on families, especially children. I quote in length from my interview with Tashi Wangdu, former CTA official and now the CEO of FTCI (Federation of Tibetan Cooperatives in India), who is also actively involved with arranging tutorials for high school students from the Tibetan settlements in South India to sit for competitive Indian national tests. The following quote aptly sums up the prevalent exile opinion on some of the negative impacts of outmigration of parents for children's education:

One concern is about the way parents raise their children, give affection and care (*byam skyongs byed stangs*). Many children these days do not know the value of money and hard work... In the past, most parents, whether educated or not, would drill into their children that they should study hard and serve the Tibetan community by working for the Tibetan government. These days, it is very rare to find such parents. Leave alone advising their children to work for the Tibetan government, some parents do not even ensure that their children get proper education. They are more concerned with their greed (*'dod rgnams*) to go abroad. These days, for the majority of people who migrate through family reunion, their children just pass some three or more years just in the process of preparing for immigration, and thus neglect their education. They think day and night about going abroad, and children show no interest in education saying this education has no relevance. That is how people pass their time preparing to migrate.

Further, once parents start planning to go abroad, and tell their children that it is best to go abroad, they think that what education they get in India would be of no value in the West. There is this strong mindset that this education here would be useless if one goes to the West tomorrow...

People planning to immigrate know about what jobs their friends and relatives are doing. Most work as wait staff in restaurants or baby sitters or security guards. They think that education they obtain here is of no use there and question the use of studying hard in the school here. And this leads to a mindset where children just ensure that they pass the class and don't pay serious attention to their studies. This is something I have noticed among young people in recent times and it has become like a "trend."

Secondly, it has to do with how education is provided and the role of the parents in children's education, something we talked about earlier. One way children's education suffers and their careers are affected is through the lack of parents' supervision and guidance due to being away from home. Some parents are abroad. There are others who spend whole year away from the home engaging in petty trading. And, there are the majority of the parents who go away for home for a few months for winter seasonal trading. Their children are the most spoiled and most affected. It is not only the general educational performance that is affected, other problems of drug and substance abuse are

more prevalent among these children (whose parents are away from home more frequently). Many parents express some feeling of guilt for not being able to spend too much time with their children and they say they have no choice because of livelihood. Some parents leave their children with elderly relatives at home, and some leave their children in the charge of the eldest child who has to look after the younger siblings. Yet all the children are school going children. What parents normally do is leave a generous amount of money in their children's hands. Because they are children, they don't normally think about saving money. They have money to spend and they spend on eating hotel food but they still have lots of money left in their hands. There might be a few children who buy something useful. And, usually what happens is they will end up with some bad company who will gradually teach them bad habits.

That is how children are spoiled and I think this is a common problem among such children. Further, these children do face some sort of "mental stress" due to their sense of not having parents around them. And, also because parents are not around, there is no one to supervise and discipline the children (*lcung mkhan med red*) about what to do and what not to do, whether the children are eating at proper times, when to go to bed. Because there is no one around to supervise, children have all the "freedom". When all the above factors are "clubbed" together, it leads to incidents of taking drugs in schools, cutting classes, and truancy. The education of these children suffers mainly due to parents not being around. This is one I thing I observed.

I quote in length from this interview because it captures the opinion shared by some section of the exile society (including teachers) about the impacts of internal and external migration on children's education. In my interactions with high school students through interviews and two workshops during which I asked them to answer a very brief questionnaire, the majority expressed the view that if they go abroad, it would be for higher studies through CTA scholarships. In response to a question on where they imagine they would be living 10 years from now, among those who responded "abroad" all have siblings or close relatives living abroad. One particular student whose sister is in the US chose nursing as a career because her sister promised that she would "pull" her abroad and advised her to choose nursing as a topic of study. I only came across a few who said they would like to serve in the Tibetan community as teachers. One wants to go to the Tibetan Institute of Higher Studies in Varanasi to become a Tibetan teacher while another wants to be a Tibetan dance and music teacher. This suggest a

societal change in the attitude towards career choices. While the schools are seen as important sites of identity maintenance, the stress on modern education means that the young Tibetans are increasingly expanding their horizons and career options beyond the CTA and India. Ironically, the huge emphasis on education has contributed to the migration desire as well as career paths since the CTA can only retain through employment a portion of graduating students every year.

In an interview with Jamyang Dorjee, the head of South Zone career counseling in the CTA's Department of Education, he agrees that there is still some pressure from parents and elder siblings to choose certain professions, but that on the whole students are more driven by their own interests and ambitions. He said that although the CTA would like to see Tibetans work in the Tibetan community, there is no pressure at all to force them or influence them in choosing any particular educational or vocational degrees. Jamyang narrates his own experience to stress the change in career choice among Tibetan youngsters:

From my own experience, I just had the broad goal of becoming a teacher but I did not have any ideas of what subjects I would like to teach. I guess the problem generally could be traced back to the 1980s and 1990s when there were too many BAs and BComs, high rate of unemployment and no particular career goals. Students, like me, just joined arts stream and got a BA or BCom with no particular goal. So there were lots of BAs and BComs, not enough jobs, and it resulted in too many graduates with similar degrees. The problem was not that you could not find a job with a BA or BCom degree, the real problem was that they did not have any specific goals. One could pursue a career with a BA or BCom degree but people did not have specific goals and I think it created a big problem in our society.

The reason why people choose BA or BCom degree is not that they are not bright or capable students, but that they did not have specific career goals. They were not well informed when they were choosing academic lines after tenth or twelfth grades. They were no serious attention paid, and this is because there was no guidance in the first place. That is what I think happened.

In September 2011 I interviewed a CTA staff who visited Doeguling to review a health related project. He has served in the CTA for over 10 years and is in the process of immigrating

to the US on a fiancé visa. He concurs with the statements above, but has a more optimistic perspective linked to migration. He said,

During our time, every year there were many graduates coming out of colleges and most had general degrees in BA or BCom. If there were BSc graduates, it was regarded a little better since there were needs for them. For instance, you need teachers in science and mathematics, it was difficult to find them. At that time, the general notion of high unemployment in exile society was a bit problematic. There was this grave concern because not enough employment could be found. For instance, when I sat for the CTA public service entrance test in 1995, for the post of 15 seats, there were over 200 applications. In a way, this US resettlement project has had an influence in that it served as a safety valve through the brain drain of many educated Tibetans. Furthermore, many Tibetan youths, including those uneducated and unemployed, now look to the West and thus relieve pressure on the CTA.

The CTA started its first career guidance and counseling in Tibetan schools in 1998 to tackle the problem of producing too many graduates with general degrees, or what one Tibetan calls “babus” (colloquial Hindi for bureaucrats). There was also a lack of Tibetan professionals in diverse fields like medicine, engineering, law and business. The overarching goal of CTA’s career guidance and counseling is to ensure that students choose higher academic studies based on one’s interests and aptitudes. For instance, the two career counsellors at the South Zone Career Counseling based in Doeguling visit all the Tibetan schools in South India regularly to interact with high school students in the class and hold personal meetings. Their objective is to create awareness about different academic careers and goals as well as to help them secure admission in Indian colleges and institutes.

A widespread opinion among my informants is that a huge change in individual career choices among the Tibetan youngsters has occurred. In the early years most Tibetan youths looked to the CTA and community service for their job aspirations, which was also strongly influenced by parents and elders encouraging them to study hard and work for the Tibetan community. Today, the vast majority are driven by individual career choices and motivations.

However, these individual career choices are also said to be influenced by what is referred to as “herd mentality”, that is, most career choices are based on following others who have made it abroad through educational skills. It is common to hear that most students, including boys, are choosing nursing, something that was viewed until recently as a gendered occupation. Jamyang, the career counselor, says,

At present, I observe that many are going into nursing. Based on our queries, there are many factors involved. The nursing trend picked up sometime around 2006 and 2007. We don’t have exact figures on that. When girl students are completing their 12th grade education, we meet them and discuss different career goals. For instance, they might say they want to pursue commerce or BBA (Bachelor of Business Administration). When we met them later after they have joined colleges and ask them what they are studying, they say they are studying nursing. This is a major issue, it is not that they are not well informed. At present, it looks like they are too well informed. When we enquired about it with students, most of them have goals of going abroad. Second factor is the concern about one’s own livelihood because they say it is easy to find jobs. This is the reality today and you can’t deny that either. Thirdly, because many people have followed that path, it is seen as a safe option.

In response to a leading question from me about the prevalent idea that the exile Tibetan society has the problem of “herd mentality” and Tibetan are “good followers”, Jamyang agrees and explains

Yes, that is true. In our society, it seems like we have become good at following others who have done well. That’s why the above three factors are at play. So, in our interaction in the schools, although we don’t say it directly, we do tell them that there are too many graduates who studied nursing in our exile community. For instance, I joke that in a future Tibet half of the women would be employed as nurses. I ask the question, where will they find jobs then? So I inform that we have to think carefully. But I never tell them that they should not pursue nursing. We don’t say it now, and there is no way we can say that in future too.

In short, the Tibetan exile leaders have put very strong emphasis on education from the very early years and, today, all children receive free education for twelve years. In addition, the CTA and several non-CTA institutions provide a range of scholarships for those who want to pursue higher studies. Ironically, the success in education is also one of the main contributing factors to the outmigration of young Tibetans from the settlements, first to pursue higher studies in Indian colleges, later for job opportunities within India and abroad. I will now look at how this is impacting the viability of settlements.

5.4 Depopulating the Settlements and the Demise of Farming

In response to my interview question on the continued viability of Tibetan settlements in India, Samdhong Rinpoche acknowledges that his administration has not achieved much success in revitalizing the settlements. He explained,

Generations of Tibetans born in India do not have a “mindset” that they will live forever in India. They think that they will return when the day comes. At present, if we don’t get to return, in the “mindset” of the younger generations there is the desire (*heb*) to go to the West. Therefore, “settlement” is only in its namesake, “emotionally” “mentally” there is no sense of “settle(ment)”. However, over the past 52 years, I think the reason why there is a Tibetan community is because of the settlements. In the future too, I think that the settlements should continue to remain. In the ten years of my administration, we tried our best to ensure the continuity of the settlements but there is only so much you can do. Looking at present development, I think this situation will remain more or less the same for about 20 or 30 years. In particular, the bigger settlements will continue to be viable and the “influence” of bigger monasteries in the field of education and socio-economic development is huge in maintaining the viability of the settlements in many ways. That is my opinion.

During Samdhong Rinpoche’s ten year tenure as the Kalon Tripa (2001 to 2011), the CTA focused its efforts of revitalizing the Tibetan settlements through the following three main projects. First, the CTA helped create the Federation of Tibetan Cooperatives in India (FTCI) in 2006, a conglomeration of cooperatives in 15 settlements to strengthen their role and service in

economic development through farming and business ventures. In addition to providing training and financial resources to the FTCI, the CTA handed over its two most profitable business undertakings when it privatized all its business ventures. Second, the CTA devoted major effort and resources to revive the farming sector through integrated development projects of soil and water conservation, and by introducing organic farming. These projects were funded largely through foreign development agencies and inter-governmental assistance. Finally, the CTA increased its efforts at employment generation for youths by strengthening small skills training for unemployed youths and school dropouts and by providing startup loans for those wishing to form small businesses in the Tibetan settlements.

All the five Tibetan settlements in South India, with an estimated population of around 35,000 and constitute the largest concentration of Tibetans in exile, were intended as farming settlements. However, the small original allocation of one acre per adult and half an acre per child and subsequent population growth meant that farming alone could not be the mainstay of economic livelihood. The majority of the farmers would be categorized as either “small or marginal farmers” under the Indian government’s classification because of their small landholding size. Today, the percentage of people who depend solely on farming is very small, around 327 of 934 households.

Among those who farm, there are four broad categories of farmers. The majority of them belong to the first category for whom farming is only for “side-income” (thus not an important source of economic livelihood) or because of the settlement regulation that no land should be left fallow. The second group is comprised mainly of older Tibetans, some over 70 years old, who also raise livestock. The reason they give for continuing to farm is that they don’t know any

other profession and farming is beneficial if one is raising livestock as well. Most of them find the idea of retirement absurd and claim they will continue to farm until they die.

The third category is what I call big or progressive farmers who plant 20 to 30 acres by leasing land from other Tibetans, albeit there are less than 30 households in this category. These farmers have access to substantial capital and the ability to move around and organize labor and other related resources. They are fully depended on Indian labor. For them, farming is a business involving calculated risks. They do not have much concern about the long term land management nor the quality of produce but are more interested in “returns” on their “investment” through the ability to hire labor and to cultivate certain optimum amounts of land.

Finally, there are the organic farmers who have gained environmental awareness about farming. They know from firsthand experience how soils regenerate and other environmental aspects of farming.⁶⁸ At present, “the full subsidy of three year crop premium and provision of organic manures” is sustaining organic farming. However, it is hard to say that these farmers have fully adopted the ideas of innovation and self-reliance because most of them are in the higher age bracket. Once this generation is gone, it is hard to see who will continue farming. As one organic farmer said, “farmers are sterile” (*zhing pa rab bcad red*) to make the point that the younger generation will not take up farming. The FTCI’s CEO, Tashi Wangdu, is more critical of the CTA’s organic farming project and said,

⁶⁸ CTA under Samdhong Rinpoche introduced organic farming in the Tibetan settlements in 2005 and by 2010, two villages (Camp 4 and 8) in Doeguling have fully converted to organic farming. The farmers in the two villages received price subsidies (in the form of price premiums to cover the loss between conventional farming and organic farming) for three years, in addition to agricultural extension services, free manures and composts, organic weedicides and insecticides. One common positive outcome of organic farming that many farmers reported is that soils have become “softer” after three years of organic farming, something supported by the tractor drivers who reported their experience of plowing fields in the two organic villages as back-breaking due to less hardy fields. Another positive outcome is the rise of underground water table after the CTA ordered a moratorium on digging of underground water for irrigation and introduction of rain water harvesting projects across the settlement.

If the justifications for going organic are based only on two main factors of environment and health, I see very little chance of organic farming achieving success. One crucial factor is that people should be able to make economic gains. One reason why Bylakuppe is one of the largest farming settlements is that it has the highest corn yield at present. We have no choice but to follow cash crop production. You could have self-consumption in the case of organic farming, but to see large scale self-consumption as envisioned in Samdhong Rinpoche's policy is difficult to drive into people's minds even if we educate them 24/7. It is not only for subsistence needs, but you need to think about children's education and other needs.

In the final analysis, people will make economic calculations based on whether an investment of 10 Rupees will return 20 rupees or not...The current organic farming projects are fully dependent on CTA's subsidies. Unless farmers can make their own choices based on market prices, it will be very difficult to sustain. For instance, the farmers in Kollegal (first Tibetan settlement to adopt organic farming) received subsidies for three years, and once the subsidies was phased out, 99 % of them said they are not going to continue organic farming. These are some real problems that need to be clearly addressed. We also face the same problem with marketing, the responsibility of which has been given to the FTCI. When we look at the markets, many businesses ask us how much we can supply. They are looking in terms of tons of agricultural produce, while we can supply a few hundred kilograms of cereals and pulses and few hundred liters of groundnut oils.

Although the CTA has invested a lot in reviving the farming settlements through two projects of soil and water conservation projects and organic farming, there is a growing realization that farming does not have the potential to revitalize the settlement. Furthermore, the CTA has mandated that no land should be left fallow in the settlements, and many Tibetans have resorted to planting fruit and timber trees to circumvent the CTA's order. In Doeguling, there might be less than 30 households who are dependent solely on farming. One Tibetan sweater seller, whose father still farms, said,

It is my parents' hobby. We don't make any profits. It is great if it breaks even. I let my them farm because it keeps them occupied. They also feel very strongly about following the advice of the CTA and the Dalai Lama.

One elderly couple whose only son is married and working in Dharamsala farm and raise three cows. They say that they will farm until they no longer can.

In the case of Tibetan settlements, there are several other factors that contribute to the decline of farming. Sweater selling provides an important alternative to farming, so in the following section I will discuss how sweater selling is shaping the economic viability of the settlements.

5.5 Sweater Selling and Economic Diversification

From very early on, Tibetans took up the seasonal sweater business and other petty trading to supplement their income from agricultural activities. Today, seasonal sweater business is one of the most lucrative and important sources of income for the majority of the Tibetan settlers in South India. For instance, in Doeguling, 419 of the 934 households reported engaging in sweater selling, and the survey data revealed more than 30 cities where they go to sell sweaters.

Although sweater selling has become an important livelihood for many Tibetans who do not have family members abroad, it is also viewed by the CTA as having certain negative impacts with respect to developing alternative economic opportunities in the settlements. Because it is only for four months and so lucrative that one can live on the income for the remaining eight months, people do not show too much interest in farming and other income generating activities. Furthermore, as discussed above, it might be having some negative influence on children's education in cases where both the parents are absent for a few months and leave the children on their own or with elderly relatives. On the negative impacts of seasonal sweater selling on other economic activities in the settlements, Tashi Wangdu, a former CTA official and the CEO of Federation of Tibetan Cooperatives in India (FTCI) said,

There are some demerits as well. For instance, for those engaged in sweater selling for three or four months, only about 20 to 30 percent engage in farming as well. Most people

just stay in the settlement because sweater selling appears to be incompatible with engaging in more ‘permanent’ or year round economic activities in the settlement. It allows for more temporary activities. It is somewhat similar to the *yartsa gunbu*⁶⁹ collection in Tibet. It is not a large scale permanent activity, but lucrative enough to live quite comfortably and just roam about for the rest of the year. In general, we should recognize the huge economic benefits of sweater selling and that we cannot find a better alternative. However, we should think about creating some opportunities, mainly employment during the off-season period of about eight months. I don’t know whether it will work or not, but it is crucial for making the settlements viable. Without such opportunities, it will increase the push towards outmigration.

His statement illustrates the impression that the sweater business, although economically important, may be impeding more long-term and sustainable means of ensuring the viability of the settlements. In the late 1980s, the CTA began to realize the impacts of socio-economic and demographic transitions occurring within the exile society. Following the Indian economic model of five-year plans, in 1988 the CTA established a new office, Office of the Planning Council (later renamed the Planning Commission) to design Integrated Development Plans (IDP) to coordinate all the planning and development projects of the CTA. The bulk of funding for coming up with the IDP was provided by the Ford Foundation, NORAD, and other donors. The Planning Council also conducted the first demographic census of Tibetan exiles in 1998, which revealed certain vital demographic trends that were crucial for understanding the overall development needs of the exile society. In addition to both low fertility and low mortality, the survey found high literacy and high unemployment rates, high mobility and a serious lack of economic diversification.

⁶⁹ Yartsa gunbu (literally summer grass, winter worm or *ophiocordyceps sinensis*) is an insect-fungus complex that is endemic to the Tibetan Plateau region and is highly prized in Chinese medicine and that fetches a price similar to silver in its weight. In Tibet and neighboring Himalayan regions where it is found, the huge demand and high price has resulted in sudden income. Although most studies have focused on the environmental aspects of the harvesting, a recent study detailed indigenous management strategies and socio-economic impacts of yartsa gunbu (Childs and Choedup 2014).

Plans to diversify economic development were already started in 1988 when a private US foundation provided an interest free loan of one million US dollars to set up a revolving loan fund to assist in the development of private enterprises in Tibetan exile communities in India and Nepal. The CTA's Planning Commission was delegated the task of implementing this project, which was eventually wrapped up in the late 1990s due to a lack of interest for small-scale business activities. The then secretary of the Planning Commission cited sweater selling as the main hindrance to Tibetans adopting alternative economic activities. His comments on how the sweater selling is further exacerbating moral and health problems in the Tibetan exile society drew sharp criticism and protests from some Tibetan sweater sellers.

In 1995 another diversification attempt was launched with a revolving loan fund project created to encourage diversification of livelihood strategies through the provisioning of very low interest loans for small scale business activities. In 1997, the Planning Commission initiated another project called Promotional Agency for Development of Micro-Enterprises (PADME) to address the problem of unemployment and introduce diversification of livelihood strategies. It had two key components: imparting skills training to unemployed youths and providing low interest loans to start up small businesses. One former settlement officer involved in development projects in South India said,

If it is implemented properly, "self-help groups" work really well. However, "self-help groups" would never work in Tibetan society. It is not only because of the small amount of working capital, the Tibetans do not like to do small income generating activities (*las ka chung tsag rigs*).

In 2003, the PADME project, as part of administrative reform, was expanded further and transferred to the Department of Home where it was officially renamed as Youth Empowerment Support (YES) program. It now runs an Institute of Small Trade Learning (ISTL) near Bangalore

where every year around 100 unemployed Tibetan youths are given fully subsidized training in hairdressing, tailoring, medical transcription, computing technology, food production and carpentry. It also networks with other institutes to find placement and further training for interested Tibetan youths. The YES program is specifically targeted at unemployed youths and school dropouts to make them “productive, independent, and self-employed in various trades and skills” (CTA 2009).

Through my survey and interviews, hairdressing, beautician course, chef training and hotel management are viewed as the most attractive options by the youths in Doeguling because of their high job demand and relatively good salaries. Typically, someone who completed vocational training would earn a starting salary of about INR 8,000 (\$160) per month in an Indian city (which is just enough to meet basic needs considering the fact most Tibetans have to rent a place). Some hairdressers and beauticians can earn as high as INR 20,000 (\$400) per month after they complete an apprenticeship and gain experience.

In addition to addressing unemployment, the CTA hopes that these trainees will start self-owned business in the settlements for which it provides low interest loans. In Doeguling, there are two beauty parlors and one barber shop run by Tibetans. Two of them are run by former YES trainees. I would patronize the barber shop run by the former YES trainee, Soepa. Towards the end of my fieldwork he was willing to sell his shop to a former YES trainee at a very reasonable price and throw in his equipment for free. He contacted two such trainees and also spread word around the sale of his shop, but no one showed any interest. In the end, he sold his shop and equipment to an India barber. Although he is happy that he got a much better price, he said he hoped to see a Tibetan take over his business. Another girl who ran the beauty parlor closed her business during my fieldwork because she got married to a Tibetan who works in Nepal.

Soepa said that his clients are exclusively Tibetan, and that his business was okay although he feels that the majority of the Tibetans prefer to go to Indian barbers in Mundgod and other cities. He occasionally acts as mentor to other YES trainees, and his barber shop used to be one of the stops on official visits by foreign donors. In my frequent interactions with him, he told me that working in the settlement means a lack of exposure and no future for career growth. . He told me that he wants to move to Bangalore to gain more skills in order to enter the high end business of hair styling.

Although the CTA offered free skills training and low interest capital loans to generate self-employment and small scale businesses, it has not made any significant impact on revitalizing the settlements because the recipients of these programs are young, mobile, and undecided about career options. For instance, there were only 40 people from Doeguling undergoing vocational training in my 2010 survey; 16 in Bangalore and the rest in either private or Tibetan institutes like TCV vocational institute and traditional Tibetan metal and arts. My interviews with some of the former trainees suggest they joined the training because of pressure from their parents. They complain about the short duration of training (18 months at the most) especially for tailoring and carpentry, and the need for more experience and apprenticeships which pay enough to meet basic needs. Many of them are now helping their parents in sweater selling or looking for jobs unrelated to their training.

The CTA cites dependency syndrome and lack of interest in doing hard work coupled with the strong desire to go abroad as the main reasons why Tibetans are not making use of available employment and economic opportunities. Further, there is the discourse that most youths who have received some form of basic education show a total lack of interests in manual

jobs and skills that are regarded as low status. One official experienced in exile development projects said,

In the US people talk about ‘dignity of labor.’ So, an educated Tibetan, a former office worker in India, will take up a dish washing job there because it is in another’s society. But when you are in one’s own society, there are many things to consider. Social status of jobs becomes an important factor. For many newcomers from Tibet, they would take up selling food on the roadsides and running restaurants, but back in Tibet, most of these works are done by Chinese migrants.

The above statement suggests that there are social factors at play that help explain why unemployed Tibetan youths are reluctant to take up manual jobs and certain vocations that they could pursue in the settlements. For many of these unemployed youths, the available economic opportunities are viewed as unattractive. Although the CTA frame the lack of interest in taking up small scale business and manual jobs as a consequence of “dependency syndrome” and “indolence” among the younger generation, Samdhong Rinpoche says that the desire to go abroad is leading to the neglect of available economic opportunities. This is partly true but ignores the larger social and cultural context in which the Tibetan youths are embedded. For many of them, taking up manual jobs is seen as below their status. Instead, the younger generation prefers to participate in the urban service industries.

In an interview with one Indian official who has worked closely with the Tibetans, he made an interesting observation, that he could not understand why Tibetans come to Indian businesses for everything. He said, “Why can’t Tibetans have their own tailors, butchers, cobblers, barbers and vegetable sellers?” Some Indians interpret this as evidence that the Tibetan youths are spoiled by foreign aid and “easy money”, a reflection of the anti-Tibetan sentiments presented in the previous chapter on the local Indo-Tibetan relationship.

To give some examples of the lack of participation by Tibetan youths in certain vocations and employment opportunities, in the 1990s one UK based NGO, Appropriate Technology for Tibetans (APTT), initiated sustainable livelihood and income generating projects in the Tibetan settlements. The NGO introduced smokeless stoves and low-cost toilets which were very successful in Doeguling. Another project that they helped found was the Tibetan Building Center that makes cement blocks used mainly in fencing, building sheds and toilets, and for certain building parts. Today, it is one of the profit making enterprises of the cooperative society in Doeguling. This building center provides employment for about 30 people. However, only four regular staff, including the manager, the accountant, the cashier, and one watchman are Tibetan. The rest of the workers are Indian.

Similarly, a 32 year-old Tibetan is an entrepreneur who operates an export business in Tibetan style apparels and accessories from his home. He employs 14 Indian tailors. When I asked him why he does not have any Tibetans, he laughed and said, “Can you find me one?” A monastery in Doeguling also operates an export garment business where, except for the tailor master, all the employees are local Indian women. When I asked Tibetans about these employment opportunities, their first reaction suggests either I have asked a stupid question or they have not heard me right—a strong indication that even considering such a job is unfathomable. For the unemployed youths, these jobs are not only unattractive but also associated with lower social status. This is because most have received a certain level of schooling and internalized a societal attitude that views these jobs as beneath their status.

One informant linked the lack of interest in manual and low-paying jobs in the settlements with processes of enculturation. Tsetan, a 38 year-old college graduate, is an accountant by profession, but he also farms and owns a brand new car which he plies as a taxi.

His wife is a teacher in the settlement school. They have two daughters. Tsetan worked for five years in the export business for a monastery in the settlement. He later went to Israel as an ‘agricultural trainee’ for one year. He now manages the accounts of a big monastery in the settlement. When I ask him why Tibetan youths would not work in the settlement despite plenty of jobs available, he said,

There is no straight answer. The problem lies with the way today’s children are brought up. Even though the parents are working their butts off in the field and selling sweaters on the Indian streets, the children are blissfully ignorant of these realities. The blame is partly on the parents for wrong-headed affection (*snying rje go log*) of their children. Because they have seen so much hardship in life, they want the best for their children. But they don’t know how to instill in their children an appreciation for hard work. Look at people my age. We have helped our parents in farm work, herded cattle, collected firewood and everything. How many children today would do that? Parents these days give lots of money, nice food and clothing to their children, but they have neglected to instill in them true values of hard work and education. Parents just send their children to school and hope that they will get a good job. So what happens when the children do not do well in their studies and can’t go for higher education? They will want a good life and a good job, which they can’t get. Jobs that are available are much below their liking.

Tsetan further tells me that his daughters are very good in studies and he has high hopes for them. However, he says he regularly takes them along to the fields when they are home to show them there is nothing to be ashamed of by doing hard manual work. He acknowledges that to attract young people to work and live in the settlement is a huge challenge with no easy answer.

5.6 Chapter Summary

In September 2011, VOA Tibetan language service aired a TV discussion forum on revitalizing the settlements. Of the two guest speakers, one was the secretary of the CTA’s home department and the other a former CTA official now settled in the US. The program listed the different official projects including reviving agriculture, vocational training, and strengthening cooperative societies. When the former CTA official made some critical remarks about the role

of cooperative societies, the other speaker became defensive ending the program on an awkward note. The next day, I met the usual group of young monk and lay staff who gather under the tamarind tree in the Camp 3 market square. One of them started asking me questions about whether I watched the Kunlen program on settlements last night, which started a debate on the topic. In the end, one of them summed up the discussion and said, “if we can figure out how to attract a Tibetan youth with only 12th grade education to live in the settlement, the problem of revitalizing the settlements will be finally solved.”

Towards the end of my fieldwork, the CTA under the new leadership of Sikyong Lobsang Sangay adopted “unity, self-reliance, and innovation” as the three guiding principles of the new administration in contrast to the former guiding principles “truth, non-violence and sustainability” under the previous administration of Samdhong Rinpoche. So far, the CTA has not announced any new projects aimed at revitalizing the settlements. Under the current administration, there is talk of giving FTCI the main responsibility of the settlements. In an interview in June 2011, the FTCI’s CEO Tashi Wangdu says developing Tibetan entrepreneurs in the settlements is their top priority: He says:

What we need is a “small scale entrepreneur” development model through which self-employed skills like mechanics, electricians and others could be encouraged through monetary support as well as social recognition. These supports should be not across the board but tailored to specific needs.

The focus also should be on finding appropriate employment opportunities for the educated youths so that they could contribute towards the viability of the settlements. Not only employment opportunities, but also creating facilities like libraries and recreational activities for after work. For someone working in cities like Bangalore they need a salary of 10,000 Rupees per month compared to 5,000 Rupees in the settlements. However, in Bangalore you would be hard pressed to save 3 or 4 thousand, but in the settlements you can save most of the salary since it is less expensive to live. But young people prefer to work in the cities because they have certain facilities and entertainment. I think it is natural for them to find cities more attractive. But if we can create some of the recreational facilities in the settlements, we will be able to attract young people to work in the settlements.

In the middle of my fieldwork, the settlement officer convened a three day focus group discussion on revitalizing the settlement and informed the local leaders to come up with specific plans and projects. He explained that the CTA has instructed the settlements in response to a preliminary study by a US-based NGO Techno Serve on “revitalizing Tibetan settlements”. The study was funded by USAID in order to determine how best to allocate the 2.5 million dollars allocated by the US government for humanitarian aid to the Tibetan exiles. The Tibetan exiles had high expectations that this grant would provide much needed funding to bring about infrastructural development and the establishment of small scale industries like rural call centers or Business Processing Operations (BPO) and eco-tourism projects. To that end, the CTA even announced that rural call centers would be created so that youngsters could remain in the settlements. However, they later found out that the project did not help with infrastructural development and employment generation activities in the settlements. The project was finally implemented through the same NGO, Techno Serve, but it funded mostly entrepreneurial and business skills development that were not necessarily focused on revitalizing the Tibetan settlements. CTA officials lobbied hard to get the grant made directly either to CTA or FTCI, but had no success. Some CTA officials were flabbergasted that more than half of the grant was spent on consulting and technical fees for Techno Serve.

So far, I have laid out the large socio-economic and political contexts in which the exile discourse, policies, and economic practices relate to the sustainability and threats to the continuity of Tibetan settlements in relation to increasing population mobility. In the following chapter I will examine how individuals and households are negotiating their desires to achieve upward mobility through migration in a context of universal education, changing economic strategies, and policies aimed at revitalizing settlements. Meanwhile, there is the constant ideological issue

influencing the migration decision-making process, namely, the strong sentiment that the settlements are vital for the future of a viable and unique Tibetan culture and society.

Chapter Six: Households, Individuals and Migration

In the preceding chapter, I have laid out the broader political economic contexts within which migration decision making takes place by examining the macro-level social and political questions of tension between settlement and mobility in the exile society. In this chapter, I draw more closely on micro-level ethnographic observations at the individual and household levels to elucidate how the migration process looks from the ground up. The purpose of this chapter is to provide an empirical perspective that illuminates certain processes that take place in migration decision making at the household and individual levels. I will begin this chapter by presenting eight case studies of households to highlight the range of diversity in economic conditions, family composition, and migration. These case studies are presented to capture the different migration streams from the perspective of households that have different resources and opportunities available to facilitate migration from the settlements.

6.1 Household Case Studies

6.1.1. Household # 1: Empty Nesters

Aku Gonpo is 85 years old and his wife, Jama, is 73 years old. Aku is originally from a semi-pastoralist region of Amdo in northeast Tibet. He first left his natal village for Lhasa as a monk in 1957. He defrocked later and worked as a porter for wealthy Tibetan traders in Shigatse and Gyantse for a while before joining the Chusi Gangdruk (the Tibetan rebel group). During one of the skirmishes with the Chinese forces, Aku was shot in one knee and was somehow able to escape into Sikkim in April 1959, where he received medical treatment for over a year. He then went to join the Tibetan guerilla group based in Mustang, Nepal but left soon after. He ended up working on one of the road construction projects in Simla where he met his wife, Jama, who had fled with her parents and family from Toe region in 1959. They later moved to the settlement in 1967, and have mainly engaged in farming and raising livestock. Aku also learned masonry while Jama learned carpet weaving to supplement their incomes from farming and animal husbandry. They have raised six children. Only their eldest 50 year-old daughter is married. She lives with her husband and three children in Dharamsala.

When I first visited the settlement in December 2009 for my preliminary research, their 39 year-old son, Tenzin, was living with them and working in the settlement office. When I returned to conduct fieldwork in October 2010, he had left for the US three months ago. They have now three unmarried children (two sons and one daughter) in the US. Another son is a monk at a monastery in another Tibetan Settlement in South India, and a daughter is a nun in at the nunnery in Doeguling. When I asked Aku Gonpo the reason for sending three of his children as monks and a nun, he was very upfront and said, “You know there were too many mouths to

feed. Making them monks was the best thing to do (*yag shos red*).” None of his children have completed more than 12th grade education.

To my queries about how his children went abroad, he told me that his 42 year-old son Legdup was then a senior monk at a monastery who went abroad a few times as part of the official monastic tours, mainly for fundraising. During these tours, groups of monks would perform sacred rituals like building sand mandalas and performing religious dances (*'cham*). After a few such tours, Legdup decided to stay back in the US and applied for political asylum. He later defrocked, and helped in arranging an invite for his sister who was an ex-army. Neighbors say that she applied for a visa posing as a “fake nun”.⁷⁰ In 2011, Tenzin moved to the US after his sister and brother arranged all the paperwork for immigration. Aku Gonpo wanted Tenzin to marry and settle down in the settlement but Tenzin had other ideas. He said, “Children of today are so hot-headed and they don’t listen to us anymore. They see us as old brains who don’t know anything about the modern world.”

In 2009, a new house was built opposite the old tiled roof house through remittances from Aku Gonpo’s children in the US. He says that it was his children who insisted on building the new house. Now, Aku Gonpo complains about the additional chores of maintaining the new house, “We are only two old people who live here. We were just happy with our old house. Now, we have to take care of the new house as well. You know there are so many community obligations in the village like attending meetings, prayers and *mnyam las* (communal labor). Sweeping the houses alone is a task. Every morning, I would do the morning rituals at the altar

⁷⁰ In one of the leaked documents of the US Embassy in India on Wikileaks’ website, a July 29, 2008 official memo of the US Mission in India on fake applicants for religious visas reported Tibetans as one of main groups, and more than 67% of Tibetan applicants for religious visas were rejected in 2008 alone. For more details see https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08MUMAI367_a.html. Accessed February 18, 2015.

and clean the courtyard while my wife cleans the rest of the house. Most of the time she is busy with one community obligation or another like attending meetings, prayers and other tasks.”

Right now Aku Gonpo and his wife are very healthy and able to take care of themselves. In fact, Jama is very active in the community religious activities, while Gonpo prefers to stay home to take care of the houses. I would occasionally see him walk two miles to visit the Tibetan medicine clinic. Nevertheless, they are getting quite old and will one day need assistance. Their nun daughter lives in a nunnery in the settlement and frequently visits them. She is the child who is most likely to take care of them when they need it.

During the interview I learned that Aku Gonpo came from a place in Tibet that I visited in the summer of 2002. He was very impressed when he learned that I took my late father to visit his natal village. When I asked him if he had visited Tibet since leaving, he said,

There are times when I feel like visiting my natal village in Tibet but my parents passed away a long time back. I don't think there are many elder relatives left now. The relatives I might have are all born after I left and they would not know me. So, what is the point of my going to Tibet? I have lived in this village my whole life and the village people will be here for me till the end. I even tell my children that for me, this village is everything and they [the village people] will take care of me in times of need and difficulty. The village people will be here for me when I die. But my children won't be around to take care of me when I die.

Although I do hope that I will be able to return to Tibet one day when the Dalai Lama returns, I don't think I will see Tibet again in my lifetime since I am very old. I am 85 years old now. So, for me this is now my home and everything.

In the case of this household, the move abroad of several siblings was initiated by the monk son who first traveled internationally as part of his monastic training. By staying in the US, he created a social connection abroad for his siblings, two of whom are now in there as well. For the parents, like many older Tibetans, the settlement is their cherished home, a place where they have lived most of their lives, raised family, developed deep social relationships with neighbors, and forged spiritual and religious connections to their root lamas and monasteries in the

settlement. This household also represents an increasing reality where the elderly parents live in India while all the children are scattered around India and the rest of the world.

6.1.2 Household # 2: Potential Empty Nesters

Ngawang is 65 years old and his wife, Lhamo, is 54 years old. Both have received some schooling. Ngawang worked for the CTA for nine years. In 1997 the couple opened a stationery shop in the settlement, the family's main livelihood. They have eight children: five sons and three daughters. The family reported receiving considerable welfare benefits through the settlement office in the form of child sponsorships and housing renovation assistance. They received these welfare benefits like many other households who have a large number of children. They renovated and expanded their house twice, first in 1997 through the CTA subsidy for poor families with many children, and later on their own in 2004.

Their eldest son is 30 years old and a former artist trained at the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts (TIPA). Being a senior artist at TIPA, he went on several official foreign tours including USA and a few European countries. This enabled him to secure entry into the US easily in 2007 and decided to stay back and apply for political asylum in the US. A 28 year-old son is a monk in a monastery in a nearby Tibetan settlement. Their 26 year old daughter is a nurse in an Indian hospital in Delhi. Their 22 year-old daughter is college educated and went to France in August 2010 after her parents arranged the money to pay for the visa. A 24 year-old son joined the army in 2002 after he dropped out of high school. Another 20 year-old son is a trainee at a private Tibetan performing arts institute in Dharamsala. A 17 year-old daughter attends a boarding school in Chennai where a NGO runs a hostel for Tibetan children from poor

families. Only their youngest child, a 15 year-old son, lives in the settlement but he stays at the TCV hostel and only visits home during the weekends and school holidays.

Of their eight children, none is married. Two daughters have completed college education, one with a nursing degree and the other in accounting. With regard to the daughter who went to France, during the household survey I was told that a relative invited her. However, during my later interview, Lhamo told me she sent her daughter to Europe by paying money to a Tibetan agent in New Delhi who helped in getting the visa. To my question how they decided to send her to France, she said,

The youths of today don't have endurance for hard work (*sdug rus*) like our generation. Since she is a girl and college educated, we thought it is best if we send her abroad. We were able to raise the money needed to pay for her visa. Now, it is up to her to make her life abroad. We parents have done all we could.

During the interview, I learned that the daughter is in the process of seeking political asylum in France and is yet to send remittances. When I asked Lhamo about how they decide what is best for their children she replied, "Ideally we would like all our children to complete their education and be of service to the Tibetan community. But just as not all the fingers on a hand are same, some children are good and some are not so good in studies." Lhamo said they made one son monk because they have many children and that it was common practice back then to send a son to the monastery. When I asked her why her daughters have done better than her sons in education, Lhamo, like many other Tibetan parents, expressed the opinion that school children in the settlement, especially boys, are easily influenced and spoiled by older children. It is therefore preferable to send them to boarding schools where parents believe their children receive better education and supervision. For instance, their youngest son goes to the settlement school but stays at the TCV hostel because Lhamo believes that he receives better supervision

and hence has less chance of getting spoiled. She further explains that, since she has to manage the shop while her husband is always busing with community service, it is best for their son to stay at the hostel.

In the case of this household, migration abroad started with the eldest son who first visited the US as part of TIPA's official cultural tour, which provided him the necessary social connections to secure entry into the US. He in turn, through remittances, facilitated the migration of his sister to France. The daughter who is working as a nurse in Delhi is the next member of the household most likely to emigrate because she already has social connections abroad as well as a professional skill (nursing degree) that would make it easier for her to migrate.

This household is one of the more successful families in the settlement. Despite having many children, they were able to choose different educational and career paths which were facilitated by the CTA's role in providing welfare and supporting cultural institutions like monasteries and performing arts. The military and foreign sponsorships also played a significant role in the children's quest for upward mobility. The household exemplifies the effect of transnational migration on an exile family's structure, social network, geographical dispersion, and economic prospects.

6.1.3 Household #3: Emigrating Family

Dolma is 48 years old and was born in Ladakh, northwestern India, when her parents were working on road construction. She moved to Doeguling with her parents in 1967. After completing schooling up to the ninth grade from the settlement school, Dolma joined the army with a group of girls from Doeguling. She stayed in the army for eight years, where she met her husband, 46 year-old Karma from a Tibetan settlement in Sikkim. Both of them left the army

after they got married; Dolma secured a job in the cooperative society where she has been working for the past 20 years. In response to why she joined the army, she said,

Back then, it was very rare for people to go to college for further education because parents could not afford the college expenses. Many girls my age after completing schooling in the settlement, some of who were quite good in studies, joined the army. Back then, for both boys and girls who finish high school, army and sweater selling were the main options. Only those who very good in studies and had financial support or scholarships would go for college education.

In fact, several of my informants recall how the army was a very attractive opportunity for those families who did not have the capital needed for sweater selling. For instance, 350 people in the 2010 household survey reported going as sweater help, and these are mostly people who have dropped out of school and do not have capital to finance their own sweater business. Many sweater sellers also mentioned starting out as help for other Tibetan families and relatives, and later starting on their own once they were able to gain experience and raise capital to finance one's own business.

Dolma's husband Karma started to sell sweaters after they were able to raise the capital from their army savings. In 2002, Karma went to Israel for 11 months of agricultural training cum contract labor, and he was able to save around INR 100,000 (\$2,000). In 2003, Karma sold his sweater shops and paid INR 400,000 (\$8,000) to a Tibetan agent who secured him a visa to Belgium on documents that claim Karma as a Tibetan artist having a handicraft business. In my 2010 household survey, 49 people were reported as currently living in Belgium, and none of them had so far received legal documents that could facilitate family reunion. Dolma, in response to my question if anyone from Doeguling have received paperwork that allowed family reunion said,

To my knowledge, there has not been anyone from this settlement who got their paperwork approved. I don't know about people from other settlements. If you get five

years' paper, then one can come to India for vacation. That is what I heard. I also heard that those who have birth certificates can get some documents to travel. Someone from our camp, AS's daughter, is in Belgium, and her son in Delhi went to different offices to get documents and has forwarded them [to Belgium]. I don't know if they have received any replies from that side [Belgium]. The daughter has asked them to send the documents immediately saying that she wants to come home for vacation. My husband asked me earlier if I could get a birth certificate for him. I told him that it is very difficult to get a birth certificate these days. So he said forget it. He could not get a birth certificate from Sikkim, but his brother did send him some other documents. I don't know about his case at the moment. He has received a one year stay. He says that he heard that one could apply to invite family members on that document.⁷¹

When I interviewed Dolma in August 2011, almost nine years had passed since her husband left for Belgium. She has raised all the children on her own although Karma helped by sending remittances through a small shop that he sells Tibetan artifacts in Belgium. Dolma and Karma have four children, three daughters and one son. Dolma explained the main reason why her husband went to Belgium is to give a better life to their children. Like most Tibetan parents, Dolma wishes all her children to receive the best education and ideally get white collar jobs. However, not all children are able to achieve the upward social mobility their parents desire. For instance, Dolma's eldest 19 year-old daughter dropped out of high school to join a Tibetan performing arts institute, from which she dropped out as well after a few months. She finally completed a short term beautician course from the CTA's YES program in Bangalore, and now works part times as a beautician in Bangalore. In winter, she goes to help one of her uncles in his sweater business. The other two daughters, 17 and other 15 years old, are going to school, the former in a boarding school of SOS TCV school and the latter lives in one of the hostels in the settlement. The youngest is a 10 year-old son who goes to an Indian boarding school in Chennai, which admits Tibetans from families with many children.

⁷¹ I later learned from a relative of Dolma that she and her four children moved to Belgium in late 2013 as part of family reunion.

Because she is alone and has an office job, Dolma explained that sending her children to boarding schools means that they receive better education, supervision, and thus have less chance of getting spoiled. She said,

If they stay home, they don't study hard, watch too much TV, and laze around. Further, I see little improvement in their education. My youngest son, whom I sent to the Indian boarding school in Chennai, if he had stayed home he would have run around with the other boys from the camp and got spoiled. That is why he was intentionally sent to an Indian school. Although it is an Indian school, he can speak Tibetan language and recite Tibetan prayers as well because they have a Tibetan couple who act as their warden at the school.

Although Dolma keeps in regular contact with her husband through phone calls, she expressed that long years of family separation is very hard on her and the children. At the same time, she acknowledges that there is nothing much she can do and takes solace in the fact that it is all for the sake of the future of their children, some of who are not too keen on going abroad. Dolma said,

The younger ones are excited about going abroad. The older ones are not that excited. The older one (17 year-old daughter) at Pema Tsal Hostel says she does not want to go. She is very good in studies. She says she wants to live and work here and that she does not want to go abroad. However, if the family leaves, she has no choice but to go with the family.

Dolma's sister and brother also went abroad one year after her husband went to Belgium. Her sister is in Belgium and has yet to receive political asylum while her brother went with several other Tibetans first to Hungary where the police caught them, and then elsewhere after escaping custody. Dolma's brother finally ended up in Switzerland, while some other Tibetans in their group ended up in Austria. With regard to her brother and sister who went abroad, Dolma said,

It was their own decision. My mother told them not to go because my elder brother who went as part of the [resettlement of] 1,000 Tibetans passed away in the USA. He was

not married. That is why my parents don't wish their children to go abroad. It is left up to the children whether they listen to their parents or not.

In the case of households like Dolma's family, the migration pattern is different in that it is one of the parents who migrate. This has a larger impact in terms of family separation and effects on children's education, but can result in the intended result of allowing permanent migration of the whole family through family reunion.

6.1.4 Household # 4: Transnational family

Lhakpa is 67 year-old and his wife Donkar is 65 year-old. Both came from semi-pastoralist families in the Gyantse region of Tibet. Donkar received no schooling while Lhakpa received about five years of basic education in Tibetan language in the nearby town of Nyenying in Gyantse when his parents sent him at the age of ten to study and live in the house of the Tibetan teacher. Lhakpa said he received education because he was the eldest son of a respected household (labeled as belonging to the feudal lords by the Chinese communists) and therefore was expected to take the future responsibility of the household. During the interview, Lhakpa was not sure if it is appropriate to talk about how some Tibetans also caused hardship to other Tibetans. I told him that it is absolutely fine to talk about what happened back then and shared what I have heard from several people about these fake Khampas causing hardship to Tibetans in some parts of Central Tibet. Since Lhakpa was around 15 when he fled Tibet in 1960 as well as received some formal education, he remembers vividly how his family suffered from both the Tibetan brigands and the Chinese communists. He recalled life in Tibet before escaping to Bhutan,

The second time I went to study in Nyenying I stayed there for about two years. Around that, there was a turmoil (*zing 'khrug*) brewing up in our region and I had to return home. It all began with the incidents of fake Khampas causing hardship to people in our region.

My father was brutally assaulted. They looted, raped women, and committed other atrocities. I was not at home when it happened. I was told about these incidents after I returned from Nyenyang. I don't remember exactly the year (*lo khams*). It might have been between 1958 and 1959. Then, more Chinese forces started to appear in our region. The Chinese announced a slogan, *ngo rgol gsum dang chag yang gsum* (three antis and three concessions). Our family was included in the category of what is called *mnga' bdag gsum* (three feudal lords) and labeled as representatives of the three feudal lords, who are regarded as the main enemy. As part of this campaign, our family underwent two 'struggle sessions' (*'thab dzing*).⁷² The people who beat us were our own people because the Chinese taught and forced them to do so. They told the common Tibetans that people like us were *log spyod pa* (reactionaries) who exploited the poor people by making them work and benefiting from their toil. That is how they (the Chinese) instigated people. As part of the concession, the goods were distributed to them saying that it is their wealth. All the household heads (the fathers of the labeled households) were imprisoned at Dragthon...I think they were kept there for a few months. Later, the Chinese caught my paternal uncle and put him in prison as well. During a period of a few months, they underwent probably three or four struggle sessions. I remember going there a few times to visit my father and uncle and taking food for them.

Later, Lhakpa's father was taken away to a prison in Gyantse while his paternal uncle was released. In late 1960, Lhakpa escaped to Bhutan with his uncle, grandmother, and stepmother. Lhakpa's two younger siblings were left behind with relatives. Lhakpa received training as a carpenter under a Tibetan master on a big construction project of the Bhutanese government in the late 1960s. He married Donkar when the elders arranged their marriage. Lhakpa recalled his early years in Bhutan,

The ordinary Bhutanese have a very high opinion of Tibetans. They regard Tibetans of pure birth or 'clean flesh and bone' (*sha rus gtsang ma*) and good nature. They have a local saying which goes something like, "However ugly a person from Tibet, the person is of pure birth. However beautiful a person from *Gya* (lowland), the person is of impure birth." When we were young bachelors, I remember many Bhutanese fathers say, "Come and be my son-in-law." The Bhutanese people treated us very well back then.

After working (on the Bhutanese government project) for about two or three years, the main political turmoil started sometime in 1974. Everything suddenly changed, many high Tibetan officials including Kungo Lhading were imprisoned...There was lots of political intrigue going on at that time. We can't tell for sure what the truth is, there

⁷² Lhakpa vividly recalled the struggle session where those who were labeled as belonging to the bad class were made either to kneel or bend down while people berate and beat them. He further recalled how people just collapsed without control because they are kept in the bent position for long time.

was this person named Samdo Lo Nyendrak of *shog khag bcu gsum*. It is alleged that they instigated and spread rumors that *lha sres* Gyalo Dhondup (the Dalai Lama's elder brother) and Ashi Yangkyi (a Tibetan aristocrat and mistress of the former Bhutanese king) were conspiring to overthrow the Bhutanese government. These were printed in the Bhutanese national daily Drug Kunsel. In 1974, it was mentioned in the Kunsel newspaper that Gyalo Dhondup and the Tibetan lady were conspiring to overthrow the Bhutanese government. ...Gyalo Dhondup responded to the newspaper allegations from Delhi saying that it is all baseless. No response to that reply came out in that newspaper. ...Everything that was happening in Bhutan was being reported in the newspaper (in India). They (Bhutanese) were suspicious of everyone. They accused the taxi drivers of passing information to the outside. All the taxi drivers were caught and deported... Then, we, the carpenters, were detained as well. We were locked up for six days. My family underwent lots of difficulties. My wife was in bed after having just given birth to our first child.

Beginning in 1974, the Bhutanese government started to put pressure on the Tibetans to either become Bhutanese citizens or be deported. In the end, the Tibetans who decided not to become Bhutanese citizens were eventually sent to India but it took several years before they could be formally settled. Lhakpa recounted,

From 1974 to 1981, we protested that we will not farm. We convened meetings and asked to be sent to India. We made frequent requests to be sent to India but it was not easy for the Tibetan government to just accept us. First, land had to be found, and permission from the Indian government sought. Because of this, we ended up staying (in Bhutan) until 1981. In 1981, we came down here (Doeguling). Bhutan's government said we (Tibetan exiles) should become Bhutanese citizens and that once we regain independence, we can always go back. They said it is not good for a small country like Bhutan to have so many different nationalities (*mi rigs*). That was what they said. But, we said we are political refugees and that we did not leave Tibet because we were starving nor did we commit any crime. We came into exile because we did not agree to the political situation under the Chinese. So we said we cannot accept Bhutanese citizenship and change our customs. That was our stance.

A group of around 540 Tibetans from Bhutan arrived in Doeguling in 1981 and it took two more years before they were able to build new houses to resettle in the newly established Camp 9. Lhakpa said,

For the first two or so years, heat was a major problem. We arrived here in 1981 and His Holiness the Dalai Lama visited Doeguling in 1982. At Drepung, His Holiness asked all

the newcomers (*gsar 'byor*) from Bhutan to come forward and gave us a special audience. His Holiness addressed us while standing on the steps of Drepung Lachi monastery, and asked us if we are suffering from the heat of the plains. He said he did not have anything to offer us except to say that he appreciates our determination and resolve for the Tibetan political cause. He then asked us in jest if we regret coming from a pleasant place to such a bad place. His Holiness then advised us not to lose heart and that we will get used to the new place. Back then, even if we took baths twice a day, we still sweat all over. Now, it is not a problem at all. So one can get used to it.

Lhakpa's work as a carpenter kept him busy all year round and also secured him social connections that enable him to go for sweater selling. He was asked by one Tibetan family for whom he carried out carpentry work if he wanted to work as a sweater helper, which he readily agreed. After working as a sweater helper for two years and gaining experience, Lhakpa started his own sweater business by partnering with one of his relatives from another settlement in South India.

Lhakpa's wife Donkar gave birth to eight children but only three survived. Four of them died in infancy and one daughter died at the age of four. Their first child, 40 year-old son Tenzin, and their 32 year-old daughter Bhuti were born in Bhutan while their 27 year-old son Choyang was born in Doeguling. Donkar said that she had never heard of family planning back in Bhutan and that she first learned about family planning after arriving in Doeguling. She said many people her age opposed it saying that it went against the Buddhist practice because it is a sinful act (*sdig pa*). Donkar recalled her experience with the Indian family planning workers in Doeguling as,

Because I had given birth to many children, many people advised me saying that having too many children is not good and that it was not healthy for my body (*gzugs po 'phro rblag 'gro gyi red*)...The women health workers from the government hospital at Mundgod would visit regularly and advise us against having too many children. But I did not agree and said I want at least four children. I had eight children but only three survived.

Lhakpa and Donkar farmed only for a few years, and gave up farming because their field was too far away and they did not have enough labor. When Lhakpa is not selling sweaters, he keeps himself busy with carpentry work. He said there is never ending demand, mostly from monasteries. Lhakpa also runs a small workshop with three other carpenters in the backyard of his house, and makes small cabinets and tables on demand for Tibetan customers. When I asked about young people showing interest in traditional carpentry, Lhakpa said,

We sent all our children to schools. So far, no young people have shown interest in learning carpentry. There are three older Tibetans who have done apprenticeships with me. One of them is the village leader. Four of us have worked together as partners for many years now.

We cannot take very big projects because we have to go for sweater business in winter. ...I am getting old, I would like to pass on my skills to younger people who are interested. But I am finding it very difficult to find youngsters who are committed to learning traditional carpentry. Any youngster interested needs to have some perseverance (*sdug rus*) at work. It is really difficult to find committed youngsters to learn carpentry.

Like many other older Tibetans, Lhakpa and Donkar also express concern about the future viability of Doeguling settlement. Their two sons who have completed college education went abroad to US, and only their unmarried 30 year-old daughter, who dropped out of school after the night grade and since then helps the family in sweater selling, lives in the settlement. They have thought about renovating their old tiled-roofed house but they are undecided. As Lhakpa said,

Sometime I wish to build or renovate our old house. But when I think about how my children would not live here, it makes no sense to build a new house. So, we are in a dilemma now. I had high hopes that my elder son Tenzin, who used work for the Tibetan government in Dharamsala, would stay in India. That was my wish; I wanted him to serve the Tibetan government as long as he could. My younger son is not that good in Tibetan language. He worked at a call center in Bangalore for one year. After that, he worked at a call center in Delhi for about seven months. When my elder son Tenzin came from the US for a vacation, we all went for pilgrimage to Nepal. After that, he went to work for a pharmaceutical firm in Mysore. I wanted at least one child to work for the Tibetan government. But Tenzin's wife went first to the US and she did not wish him to stay in India.

Speaking more specifically about whether they will need someone to take care of them in old age and continue the household in the settlement, Lhakpa said,

I don't know if our children will follow the way we wish them to take. Since my two sons have left abroad, I wish for a 'docile' son-in-law (*mag pa kha blo 'gro bo*) for my daughter and for them to stay in the settlement. But, I don't know what my daughter thinks and plans to do with her future life. If my daughter stays in the settlement, my two sons can help her so that this is the main home (*gzhi*) where they can visit and get together. That is my wish. I don't how it will turn out.⁷³

Their eldest son, Tenzin, is a college graduate and served in the CTA for over 10 years before moving to the US in 2006 to join his wife, who first went to the US as a nurse and got permanent residence there. Tenzin has a three-year old son, whom he left with his parents in Doeguling for over a year. In July 2011, Tenzin's brother Choyang migrated to the US after Tenzin and his wife arranged Choyang's marriage to a cousin of Tenzin's wife. Choyang took Tenzin's son back with him to the US.

In the case of this household, migration abroad began as part of professional capital in the form of nursing skills of the daughter-in-law, which in turn created the social network to pull more members of the family abroad. The household also epitomizes the inter-generational difference in attitudes toward going abroad and the general transition occurring within the exile society. Despite the strong desire on the part of the parents for their children to live in India and serve the Tibetan community, the children are set on different career paths and futures. The parents are by and large resigned to the fact that they can't force their children whom to marry and where to live.

⁷³ I later learned from a friend of Lhakpa's son that Tenzin has arranged the marriage of his sister Bhuti to a Tibetan in the US and she moved to join her new husband in 2014.

6.1.5 Household # 5: Large Household with two Emigrant Monk Sons

Urgyen is 58 year old and his wife Dolkar is 56 year-old. Urgyen is originally from a farming household and Dolkar from a semi-pastoralist family. They were very small when they fled with their parents from Central Tibet into Bhutan. They grew up in one of the Tibetan settlements in Bhutan, where they later met and married. In 1981, they moved to Doeguling settlement after the Bhutanese government gave the Tibetans ultimatum either to become Bhutanese citizens or be deported. After settling down in Camp 9 in Doeguling, they engaged mainly in farming and they used to lease additional lands from others. They stopped farming in 2005 because it was not profitable due to a shortage of labor since all the younger children were going to school. They have also been doing sweater business in Mumbai in the winter. Urgyen first went as a sweater helper for relatives, who handed over their shops to him after they stopped selling due to old age. Urgyen, his wife, and their eldest son go to sell sweaters in Mumbai every winter. The bulk of information on this household is based on the household survey and interview with their 29 year-old daughter, Yangchen, who works in one of the settlement offices.

Urgyen and Dolkar have nine children. The eldest child, 32 year-old Nyima, was born in Bhutan, and the rest of children were born in Doeguling. Nyima dropped out of school in the ninth grade to help his parents in sweater selling. He is married and lives with his wife who works in Delhi, and they have a two year old son. Nyima comes to help his parents every winter in sweater selling. The second child, 29 year-old Yangchen, is a college graduate and now works in the settlement. She did all her schooling and completed a degree in accountancy from a college in Dharwar (because it is very nearby and less expensive). She did not receive any scholarship for college since she did not secure high grades, and her parents paid for all the college education. Yangchen is the first one in the family to receive college education, and she

also did a diploma course in computer studies. Yangchen worked for one year in Bangalore at an Indian firm as an assistant accountant and she said, “After about six months, I had to return home since there was no adult to take care of the family when my parents left for sweater business. They called me home.”

She did not regret leaving the job because it paid only INR 6,000 (\$120) per month and it was not enough to make ends meet. Further, she stayed with her relatives, who were doing sweater business in Bangalore to save on rent. Yangchen moved back to the settlement in 2007 and has since been working in the settlement office. Three of the youngest children (two daughters and a son) are home and go to the settlement school, and Yangchen looks after them when her parents are away selling sweater. Because the family has many children and because of Yangchen’s community service, four of the children are currently receiving monthly sponsorships including one each through the settlement office and three from NGOs including SOS, Sakya Monastery, and Thinley Djinpa.

Two of Yangchen’s brothers, 26 year-old Jamphel and 24 year-old Tharchin, were made monks at young ages, one at a monastery in nearby Tibetan settlement of Hunsur and the other at the monastery in Doeguling. One of the sons was made a monk because his paternal uncle was a monk at one monastery while the younger one became a monk on his own. As Yangchen said, “He insisted on becoming a monk when he was young, and he found a monk teacher by himself. We did not know the teacher at all then because he is a Sarjorwa (newcomer Tibetan).”

Both monks later went to the US in 2008 by paying around INR 900,000 (\$18,000) ⁷⁴ each. Yangchen said the amount was much below the going market rate for a US visa because

⁷⁴ Based on information provided by informants, the going rate for buying a visa to Canada and USA was above INR 2,000,000 (\$40,000) during the time of fieldwork. Many express it is extremely difficult to find Tibetan agents who could procure a visa to Canada and USA even if one is willing to pay such high amounts.

her brothers were genuine monks and were able to get hold of documents that claimed that they were going as part of official monastic group to a Buddhist center. The elder monk brother later defrocked and is in the process of inviting his girlfriend whom he met when he was a monk in that Tibetan settlement. The family is not sure if the other son has defrocked but they suspect that he has. Although both the monk sons went on their own and were able to arrange the necessary visa paperwork through their monastic background and social connections, the family contributed some of the money needed to pay for the visa. Yangchen said,

It cost about 900,000 Indian Rupees each. Our family gave them some of the money. The elder one, while he was a monk at Gyumed, knew many people who helped him out. For the younger monk, since he was still a monk, so our family arranged all the money.

Two of Yangchen's brothers, one 19 year-old and the other 18 year-old, are pursuing college education. Both of them receive some form of scholarship from the CTA's Department of Education for their college education, which covered most of the college expenses. The former is studying BSc in nursing and the latter is pursuing a BCom degree like Yangchen.

When I asked the reason why her brother, a male, is studying nursing, Yangchen said,

He initially wanted to study dental science. We checked around and Jamyang (the career counselor) said the colleges are asking for a huge amount of fees. There was no way we could afford it, it was five to INR 600,000 of fees for a year...Because if it is BSc nursing, you don't have to work necessarily in a hospital and you can take teaching jobs. He said he wanted to take up a teaching career in future. ...My brother got through the Indian government "quota" system. Therefore, the fees are much cheaper.

For this household, the migration abroad began in 2008 with the two monk sons using their monastic background and social connections to go abroad. However, unlike others with better monastic training and connections, they had to pay money to go abroad since they were not part of any official monastic tours and businesses. It is too early to tell how this social connection abroad will perpetuate further migration abroad for the family. When I asked

Yangchen if her two monk brothers have visited home or send remittances, she said, “No, they have not come home yet. They do send some remittances but it is not much since they have just recently received political asylum. The elder one has got a girlfriend and he is going to invite her first.”

For this household, the main source of income is winter sweater selling, and having two members abroad means that they may in the future contribute significantly to the family’s income and have the potential of inviting siblings to join them abroad.

6.1.6 Household # 6: Young Non-emigrant Family

Dorjee is 49 years old and his wife, Phentok, is 42 years old. Both were born in India. They married in 1991 and it was an arranged marriage through a family friend. Dorjee moved in from another settlement and the two started a separate household in Doeguling. He is ex-army who joined the army at the age of 18 and served there for 25 years. Pasang is a high school dropout who worked for a family friend as a sweater seller before the couple started selling sweater on their own in 1997. They have four children, two daughters and two sons. All four children completed their schooling from the settlement school. They sent their two elder daughters to colleges for three years. Since the two daughters did not secure high grades in their 12th grade, they did not receive any CTA scholarship. However, two distant relatives in Canada supported most of the girls’ college education. After completing college, one daughter joined two-year teacher’s training program run by the CTA’s education department and is now waiting to work in a CTA school. Meanwhile, the other daughter applied for jobs in Dharamsala but was unsuccessful. She is now doing a Master’s degree because she was able to secure a scholarship from the CTA. One son has completed chef training from the TCV run vocational institute and is

now working in a restaurant in Bangalore where he earns INR 8,000 (\$160) per month and free lodging. The salary is just about enough to meet his own needs but is not contributing anything to the family's income.

In 2011, Dorjee bought a new taxi which was supported by another relative who lives in the US. He now drives a taxi when he is not selling sweaters. Dorjee says that he does not expect his children to contribute to the family income any time soon and is at the moment worried about them landing secure jobs. He says that he is lucky that his distant relatives living abroad are supporting him, and wishes they will help find a husband for at least of his daughters, but he is not very optimistic. He said,

It would be really great if I could send at least one of my children abroad. But there is no way I could afford to pay such a huge amount of money to send one. My relatives abroad have been of great help in my daughters' college education. One of them gave the full payment on my new taxi [costing about INR 300,000 or \$6,000]. In a recent conversation with one of my relatives, I mentioned in passing about how it would be helpful to find a husband for either of my daughters so that they could go abroad. He said he can't be of much help in that matter since there are not many Tibetan families in the place where he lives. It was a bit awkward, so I did not pursue the matter further.

Of his four children Dorjee is most worried about the youngest son, 20 year-old Tenzin, who dropped out of vocational training at the same TCV institute where his elder brother successfully completed the 18-month chef training course. Like their sisters, both sons did not secure high enough grades to receive CTA scholarships. However, the parents decided that they could neither afford to send their sons to college on their own nor ask the relatives to support their college education. So the next option was to send them to vocational training. Tenzin took vocational training in computer networking which requires mathematics classes, which he found too tough. After he dropped out of the vocational training, Tenzin went to Dharamsala to look for jobs. He stayed with a relative who works in Dharamsala and who helped him look for a job. He

applied for the position of office clerk at the Tibetan Medical Institute in Dharamsala but was unsuccessful. There were 80 applicants for the two job vacancies.

Tenzin has expressed interest in joining the army which Dorjee, himself ex-army, fully supports. But, Tenzin's mother is against the idea because she thinks army life is too dangerous and worries about the risk of her son coming under bad influence. The decision is not helped by the tragic death of their neighbor's 20 year-old son who died in the army due to a drug overdose. Tenzin is still unemployed, and undecided what to do next. He might end up helping his parents in sweater selling and eventually take over taxi driving from his father.

This is an example of a household that does not fit the CTA's category of a poor family because the parents do not have too many children and both the parents are young and able-bodied. Although the family has relatives abroad who help them through remittances, it is unlikely that this social connection is strong enough to result in the migration of any family members in the near future. The parents would ideally like to see their children work for the CTA in Dharamsala because they view it not only as public service but also an important opportunity towards accruing necessary social connections that could potentially facilitate a move abroad. Despite their inability to migrate internationally to this point, the family does epitomize the scattering effect of internal migration as the children, who all grew up in the settlement, now live in different parts of India. Each has migrated out of the settlement in search of education and employment. Only the youngest son is likely to return but only as a least preferred option if he is unable to join the army.

6.1.7 Household # 7: A ten-member poor household

Yeshe is 46 years old, the only child of his 67 year-old father and 83 year-old mother. Yeshe's parents were nomads in Tibet who have engaged in farming and raising livestock since settling in Doeguling. Yeshe's 37 year-old wife is from another village in the settlement and has received nine years of schooling. Theirs was an arranged marriage through their parents who are from the same nomadic region in Tibet. Yeshe and his wife have six children, three sons and three daughters. The eldest child is 18 and the youngest is one year old. All the children go to school in the settlement with the exception of their 13 year-old daughter who is in a TCV boarding school. Four of his children at home receive sponsorships, contributing immensely to the family's income. In addition, Yeshe's mother receives a monthly stipend for the elderly from the settlement office. In 2008, one monastery-run NGO built a modest house for the large family.

Yeshe himself has completed only three years of schooling and he had joined the army where he served for eight years. In 1997, he had to desert the army after his wife and their infant child got hurt in a motor accident. He and his wife sold sweaters for a few years but stopped after they lost all their money due to burglary. They currently farm and raise two cows and two calves. Yeshe also does odd jobs here and there whenever his neighbors ask. About his family condition, he said,

It is not that I did not work hard to make a living. We used to sell sweaters in Jamkuti. I don't know what to say, it might all have to do with what is "written on my forehead" (*bsod bde pad kog*).⁷⁵ We never had a good year of business. The final mishap happened when all our savings were stolen during the sweater selling in 2003. Since then, I had to give up sweater selling because there is no way I could raise the capital again. I am now most worried about the bank loans. I fear what actions the bank might take. People from the bank visited my house a few times and left after finding nothing to reclaim. We don't have land or any assets that the bank could reclaim. The bank officials advised me to

⁷⁵ Yeshe uses the colloquial Tibetan for fortune, which also is the Tibetan concept of *las* (destiny, often glossed as karma) to describe why he is poor and misfortunes happened.

make a one-time repayment to take advantage of bank's policy to resolve the debt. But, I am not in a position to repay anything.

Like many other sweater sellers, Yeshi and his wife took loans from the State Bank of Mysore (SBM) to finance their sweater selling. During the interview, Yeshi showed me an official notice from the bank and asked me to read and explain it to him. In 2003, they had taken loans of INR 80,000 (\$1,600) each of their names. Meanwhile, the loan in his wife's name has gone up to around INR 276,000 (\$5,520) and Yeshi's loan has gone up to above INR 300,000 (\$6,000) due to the accrued interests and penalty charges. The bank sends them regular official notices, and the bank officials have visited the household a few times as well. They have advised Yeshi to make use of one-time resettlement plan so as to stop the penalties and interest charges. Yeshi says he does not have the means to repay any part of the loans and further expresses confusion about how the loans have accrued so much interest.

Yeshi's biggest worry is about what actions the bank might take, and he fears that he and his wife will be arrested by the police. He further expresses deep appreciation of all the support his family has received from the CTA, a monastery, and foreign donors. He also mentions that he has approached the settlement office and other organizations a few times for help to clear the bank loan, but he has not been successful in getting any help.

Yeshi's eldest child, an 18 year-old son, is in the eighth grade and is poor in studies. He also suffered from TB a few years ago. During the interview, Yeshi told me that he is thinking of sending him to the army but he is worried that his son might fail the medical test for recruitment. I later learned that his son has passed the army recruitment test after one sympathetic Tibetan staff conveniently swapped a normal chest X-ray report in his son's medical record.

Yeshe's family illustrates a case of a poor household that receives support from numerous sources. Although the process of out-migration from the settlement has commenced through one child attending a boarding school and another joining the military, it is unlikely that the family can accrue the financial resources or social connections to facilitate international migration. Nevertheless, like Dorjee's case, the family is likely to become scattered across India through internal migration as Yeshe's children grow up and seek educational and employment opportunities that are not available in the settlement.

6.1.8 Household # 8: Single parent poor family

Sonam is a 40 year-old single mother who has six children from two marriages. Her first husband, a monastery cook, passed away four years ago. She has just separated from her second husband. She has four daughters and two sons. Except for the oldest, a 19 year-old daughter who is attending a college supported by a scholarship from SOS-TCV, all five children live with their mother. Her youngest child is one year old and the other four are attending schools in the settlement.

In 2006, their house was renovated with the help of a subsidy provided for poor families through the settlement office. Other than that, Sonam was very hesitant about divulging information about sponsorships and aid she was receiving. For the household survey, she acknowledged receiving three sponsorships, one from the CTA directly through the settlement and two from NGOs, one operated by Sakya Monastery and another by a Tibetan Rinpoche based abroad.

When I rechecked later with the village leader and the settlement office about the household's information, I found that Sonam is actually receiving at least six different child

sponsorships. Both the village leader and the staff pointed out that the family has received tremendous help from the administration, and do not have a high opinion of her. The village leader was particularly critical of her for neglecting her children's education. Her 12 year-old son is known for truancy, he cuts school regularly. The village leader learned that the son has family problems and suspected that he and his sisters were abused by their stepfather, the probable cause of Lhamo's separation from her last husband who is the father of her youngest child only. The village leader and settlement office have suggested a few times to Lhamo to get her children admitted into boarding schools. Unlike other Tibetan parents who tried hard to get their children admitted into boarding schools, they believe that Lhamo is against the idea for the primary reason that it would mean her losing control over monthly stipends because the sponsorship would go directly to the child at the school rather than to her.

In the case of the last two households, they are officially recognized under the CTA's category of "poor" and "destitute" families and receive considerable welfare benefits. The prospect of upward mobility for these families are through their children who receive preferential treatment in the forms of free boarding schools and future scholarships for college education. It also means that the migration stream for these households start very early through going to boarding schools sponsored by the CTA and foreign sponsorship.

The eight case studies are presented to create a snapshot of a range of households with different resources and strategies available to achieve upward economic mobility through migration. In the next section I will discuss how individuals and households are resorting to different social networks and connections to facilitate migration.

6.2 Individual Migration Stories

I documented several cases of actual migration events that took place during my fieldwork. After conducting my household survey during the first three months of fieldwork from October to December of 2010, I would recheck the survey information later with the village leaders, the settlement office staff, and individuals whom I interviewed. Doing so revealed several cases of people who had migrated abroad during the intervening period, most of them either through family reunion or marriages. I also came across several cases where people went abroad after paying money. However, due to the legally ambiguous nature of these cases it was difficult for household members to share specific information about how and why they migrated. I would usually learn about these cases through happenstance and village gossip. To illustrate the fears about divulging information about actual migration processes, during a household survey interview with a Tibetan mother in her house's front verandah her daughter suddenly came out while the informant was responding honestly to my questions about her son's plan to move abroad through a "marriage of convenience." The daughter gave a freezing look at her mother and expressed concern to me that divulging such information might jeopardize her brother's immigration prospect. I had to assure her I would not divulge any personal details in my research that could personally identify her brother or the girl abroad. Another incident happened with a husband, whose wife is in Belgium. He and their seven year-old daughter are awaiting immigration. As the village's section leader was taking me around the village, the husband left on his bike to avoid the household survey. Later, after I came to know him, he expressed worries about sharing any information about how and when his wife went to Belgium. I had to assure him that no harm would come to him and his family from my research.

In general, most of my informants would readily share gossip about how other people went abroad, how much money they paid, who helped them, and more. But, when it came to one's own family members or friends, the information provided was often vague and general. With regard to migration abroad, I obtained from the settlement office a list showing that during the one year period from August 3 2010 to August 11 2011, 369 Tibetans from Doeguling officially travelled abroad.⁷⁶ Of this, 78 people were lay Tibetans who were migrating abroad permanently as part of family reunion or legal marriage. All of them went to the US, Canada, and Europe. The remaining 289 are monks and lay staff of different monasteries in Doeguling who traveled to different countries of Europe, the US, Argentina, Japan, Mongolia, Malaysia, Indonesia and Taiwan. The latter category does not necessarily represent permanent migration abroad. Most of the Tibetan monasteries have Buddhist centers around the world; Southeast and East Asia are becoming major parts of this transnational network of Buddhist centers. Many monks travel for short periods to teach at these centers and some end up settling permanently abroad. Others are part of monastic tours to conduct religious rituals and performances and raise funds. As documented in Household Case Study 1, above, some Tibetans exiles though lacking in economic and professional capital to facilitate international migration do possess symbolic capital in the form of religious and cultural social networks to travel abroad, which in turn perpetuates the migration stream in cases when monks decide to settle abroad and pull their siblings and relatives afterward.

⁷⁶ This list enumerates those who officially applied for "exit permits" to leave India. Due to the increasing case of fraudulent travel documents and visas among the Tibetan exile travelers, the Indian authorities have made it mandatory for Tibetan exiles who wish to travel abroad to produce an exit permit which is issued by the local Foreigner's Registration Office after the applicant produces a bona fide certificate issued by the Tibetan settlement office.

I did interview a few Tibetans who were willing to share information about their migration stories. The following cases illustrate how family reunion is an important means for Tibetans to emigrate from the settlements to destinations in the US and Europe. Chotso, a 30 year-old woman, left for Europe in April 2011 after her cousin, an ex-army, arranged all the paperwork for family reunion. Her cousin went to Europe in 2006 after paying money for the visa, and since then received political asylum there. Chotso, a lone child, used to help her parents in sweater business. Most of her cousins are resettled in Canada and Europe, while others are doing petty business in Delhi. Chotso only completed high school, and her cousin was the one who guided her through all the immigration process and even arranged the flight tickets.

One 34 year-old man, Samten, left for the US in late 2011 through a fiancé visa. He already had two brothers in the US and relatives in Switzerland who went there in the 1970s. He had visited his aunt in Switzerland in 2002 but did not stay there. Samten applied for a US tourist visa twice in 2006 and was rejected both times. He said, “I have wasted lots of money and time trying to get all the paper work. I even spent a few months in Delhi.” After the visa rejection, he returned to the settlement where his elderly parents and divorced sister live. He then took a computer class for 18 months which was supported by remittances from his brothers in the US, and then worked for a monastery and in the community for several years. He is liked by the people for his dedication to community service.

During the interview, I learned that he has almost given up on the idea of going abroad and was seriously thinking about doing some business or continuing community service in the settlement. He said,

I am not as excited about going to the US as I was before when I applied for a tourist visa. I have seen how the people here appreciate young people working so hard for the community. I have also learned a lot through this community service. I now feel very strongly about doing something for the settlement.

With regard to his own migration process, he said it is impossible for someone with his limited qualifications (high school education only) to negotiate all the paperwork and bureaucratic procedures to secure visa to the US. One of his brothers has a family in the US and runs a restaurant. This brother was instrumental in finding him a Tibetan woman settled in the US to marry. He is very ambivalent about the marriage. But, he thinks he cannot say anything because his brother has spent so much effort to arrange everything to facilitate his move abroad. Samten says he did not have to do anything except procure the necessary travel documents required from his side and appear for the interview at the US consulate. His brother even arranged the immigration interview schedule online from the US.

Jampa, a 28 year-old college graduate, is successfully self-employed and expanded his business in the settlement during my fieldwork by opening a shop in the newly built shopping center in the Camp 3 market square. His two sisters are living in Canada and a brother is settled in the US. His sisters introduced him to a Tibetan girl in the US. Although he has not met her yet, they have been in constant touch through internet and phone calls. They have decided to marry and he says they have completed all the paperwork. Now he is waiting for the interview call from the US consulate in India to secure his fiancé visa.

Jampa's parents and his 48 year-old unmarried brother are three members of the household who live permanently in the settlement. When I asked him why he opened a new shop if he is planning to emigrate, Jampa says, "My older brother and my father will take care of the business and it will keep them occupied after I leave." Unlike Samten, Jampa is clearly excited about the idea of going abroad and would frequently sit down with me to ask about my

experience of living in the US, which he found to be of not much help to him since I can talk only about living the reclusive life of a graduate student in a US city which has no Tibetans.⁷⁷

Although marriage is a less risky and less costly strategy adopted by many young Tibetans who aspire to go abroad, it requires a very good social network and connections. And, not all attempts at emigrate through marriage are successful. Tsewang, a 67 year-old sweater seller, has seven children. Through his relatives and mutual family friends he was able to find Tsering, a 38 year-old Tibetan living in the US, as a potential match for his 21 year-old daughter. Tsering, an ex-monk originally from Tibet, went to the US in 2005 after his foreign sponsor helped in his immigration proceedings. Tsering visited India in January 2011 and formally met Tsewang's daughter in Delhi. Tsewang was very excited about the match during my interview with him. Later, Tsewang told me that the match did not work because of what he says are issues of incompatibility. Tsering politely refused the match citing age difference. He later married an older Tibetan girl from a Tibetan settlement in Northern India; their match was arranged by the girl's aunt who lives in the same city as Tsering in the US.

The above cases are clear examples of how social connections abroad perpetuate migration stream for some individuals. Although many young Tibetans generally frown upon the idea of an arranged marriage, for some individuals and parents arranged marriage can be a very attractive option because it facilitates international migration. But others who do not have access to such social connections abroad must resort to paying money to facilitate their migration. For them, it involves much higher financial risks and social costs. Many of my informants say that

⁷⁷ Actually, 25 Tibetans came to Louis as part of US Tibetan Resettlement Project in 1993 but all of them left for other US cities soon after.

the US and Canada are seen as the most desired destinations. However, it has become very difficult to migrate to the two countries unless it is part of family reunion or legal marriage.

Another option is to pay money to agents to secure visas to go to European countries. However, a family may not only incur high debts through this route but the chances of success are highly uncertain. For instance, a 62 year-old Tibetan woman said she sent her daughter to Italy in 2005 because she knew a monk who works for a Buddhist center there. She says she paid INR 300,000 (\$6,000) to the Tibetan monk who helped arrange all the paperwork for the visa. She says she did not want to send her daughter to the US because it not only cost huge money but because she did not know anyone who sent people there. One of her sons is now settled in England after his girlfriend went there first to work as a nurse and later invited him as part of family reunion. She thinks it is nearly impossible to migrate abroad legally unless it is part of family reunion or legal marriage.

During fieldwork I became aware of other dubious migration attempts that were widely discussed among the people in Doeguling. In May 2011, a 28 year-old Tibetan resident of Doeguling was arrested by the police for submitting forged documents for his birth certificate. In this case two Indian officials in the local town office were fired from their jobs, and one Indian middleman arrested. The Tibetan youth needed a birth certificate to emigrate to Europe, and despite the advice from the settlement officer not to rush his application by resorting to bribery and fraud, he paid money to an Indian middleman to expedite the process. The arrest by the police jeopardized his move abroad because he cannot leave the settlement until his case is legally resolved.

In another case, a Tibetan girl from Doeguling approached an Indian agent through a Tibetan middleman to secure a visa for a foreign country. She received a visa on her travel

document, but found it to be suspicious. She did not travel, but the Indian agent sent some people to her home to threaten her to pay up. In the end, the girl's relatives negotiated a compromise and gave some portion of what the Indian agents were asking.

In November 2010, the Indian police arrested three Tibetans in Delhi and seized INR 165,000 (\$ 33,000), four passports, and a car in a case of human trafficking after a Tibetan woman complained to the police that she was cheated by the three on the fake promise of sending her to France. The police found that the three Tibetans from Bylakuppe settlement were operating a “well organized racket of human trafficking by luring Tibetans eager to settle abroad.”

Tibetans are often at the center of the trafficking industry, as the following case illustrates. In February 2011, during the seven day visit of the Dalai Lama to Doeguling, the settlement was crowded with many Tibetans visiting from other settlements to attend the teachings. I met Gyurme, a 52 year-old Tibetan, at the organic food restaurant operated by the settlement's organic farming division. When I told him I am a Tibetan graduate student doing fieldwork in the settlement, he was very impressed and shared his own personal story. He has worked as a secretary for a Tibetan monastery in South India for over 15 years during which he travelled abroad many times. His eldest son has completed MBA and is working in the stock exchange, and he claims proudly that his son might be the only Tibetan in India who works in the stock exchange and that he is making a huge salary. Gyurme said his daughter worked in an American bank in Bangalore before moving to Canada to do MBA, and that his youngest son is studying law at a college in India. He said that he is happy to live in India and although he does not live in the settlement anymore.

After Gyurme left, I hung around the restaurant and chatted with some of the staff there. One of the staff asked me if I knew the person. I said I just met him and narrated what he told me. The staff said that Gyurme is one of the Tibetans based in Delhi who sends people abroad to Europe and charges money. The staff said he has two Tibetans from another settlement he hires to recruit people who are interested in going abroad. Although I cannot verify the information, it highlights the fact that ordinary Tibetans use their social networks and connections to gain access to facilitate their migration prospect. For instance, one village leader says that he has left his daughter's travel documents and advance money with a Tibetan agent in Delhi, although he won't name the person. When I asked him if the person won't cheat him of the money, he says "It is *pucca* (Hindi for genuine). I know him very well."

Employment is a third option for moving abroad. Nursing, as I discussed earlier, is one profession that makes it easier for people to migrate to the West. I met a 32 year-old girl in Camp 4 who works as a nurse in Ireland. She had come for the 49th day mourning ritual of her father who passed away due to cancer. She told me that there are 21 Tibetan girls (she is the only one from Doeguling) in Ireland who are all working as nurses. Many of them have invited their husbands and families. Nursing therefore has become an important career option for two obvious reasons: it is easier to find employment in India and it can also facilitate one's migration as a high demand occupation in wealthy countries with aging populations.

Finally, some people who have been unsuccessful at moving abroad have apparently given up on the prospect as the next case illustrates. One day in October 2011, there was a grand opening of a clothing apparel shop in Camp 3 market square. The shop building was brand new and elaborate with the front wall all in glass. It had two wide iron shutters on the front. On one shutter was painted a huge Tibetan flag and on the other shutter a portrait of Bob Marley. The

day after the opening ceremony I visited the shop. The store was mainly targeted toward the younger generations, both Tibetans and Indians, as it sold brand name and fake brand clothing and shoes. An Indian videographer was present; I overheard it is for advertising on the local cable network.

Later that day, I had an interesting discussion with Yangzom, a 32 year-old woman, who works in the settlement office as a temporary staff. She told me that if she is rich like the shop owner, she would not think of going abroad. She has applied three times for a US visa and has now given up hope of going abroad. She says she does not want to pay a huge sum of money to go abroad because it is too risky. She has been married for a year and her husband works in Dharamsala. She is undecided whether she wants to stay in the settlement. Her sister is in the US and married to an American. Her mother has visited the US twice, and her sister helps through remittances but is not in a position to help her with immigration other than sending an invitation letter to apply for a tourist visa.

For the majority of younger generations of Tibetans in Doeguling, migration has become a constant feature in their lives and for the vast majority it begins as soon as they finish schooling in the settlements and leave for higher education and vocational training. For some, migration starts very early one when the parents send their children to boarding schools. In other words, migration has become a rite of passage for the young exiles. However, international migration also comes at huge financial, social and psychological costs to individuals and family members, and not all attempts at migration are successful. For those families who have neither the economic resources nor the social capital to facilitate international migration, the hope of their children going abroad lies mainly on the educational success of their children and perhaps as part

of lottery for another resettlement projects like the 1990 Tibetan US Resettlement and 2012 Canada resettlement project.

6.3 Chapter Summary

Today, Tibetan exiles have becoming very much part of the global flow of migrants and a transnational global economy whereby migration provides a source of cheap labor for developed economies as well as great opportunities for upward economic mobility for the individual migrants and their families. Although high population mobility has long been an important feature of the Tibetan settlements in India, in the early years, outmigration was mostly seasonal and within India for the purpose of education, sweater selling, and jobs. However, the increasing international migration to the West, triggered by the US resettlement project in 1990-1991, has drastically impacted the viability of the Tibetan settlements. Like most rural societies around the world, the settlements are now being transformed into “lifephase spaces” rather than “lifecourse spaces” (Knight 2002:107). Anthropologist John Knight applies the two terms to describe depopulation in rural Japan and notes,

At the end of the twentieth century, rural Japan ceased to be a true *lifecourse* space for most of those born into it. The great majority of natal villagers will leave it, to live most, if not all, all of the rest of lives, outside it. They have become *lifephase* spaces into which people are born and raised but then leave, perhaps to return later in life. (2002:121, emphases in the original)

A similar process has already occurred in the Tibetan settlements. In the Tibetan exile context, the CTA is caught in a bind. On the one hand, it has achieved much success in maintaining a cohesive Tibetan community through the establishment of settlements, schools, and monasteries. At the same time, the very success in the rehabilitation of Tibetan exiles in

terms of livelihood, health, and education, has contributed to fertility decline, high literacy, and high mobility among the youths.

Migration has positive and negative impacts on the Tibetan settlements. On the positive side, remittances contribute not only to the individual families but also to the larger community through the funding of community development projects like basketball courts, community halls, homes for old people, health and education projects. However, migration is posing a serious challenge to the overarching goal of maintaining a cohesive Tibetan community in exile. Specifically, migration is impacting the family structure itself and the related issue of aging and elderly care. More immediate social and psychological costs of migration are prolonged separation of families due to the time lag between an individual emigrating, securing a legal work permit, and earning enough income to initiate family reunion. If the settlements are important places of enculturation, the breaking apart of families threatens their ability to contribute to the maintenance of cultural preservation and perpetuation of identity. Furthermore, many young but unskilled Tibetans end up paying large amounts of money to secure travel documents and visas through illegal means, putting many families into huge debts. These are some of the negative consequences of increased emigration amongst the Tibetan exiles community in India.

In summary, the exile settlements are undergoing a major transition period, and the CTA is becoming deeply aware of both the challenges and opportunities that international migration poses to the exile society. Despite its efforts to revitalize the settlements through development projects aimed at reviving farming, strengthening the economy, and generating employment, many individual Tibetans are voting through their feet and resorting to both legal and illegal means to go abroad.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

In this dissertation research, I have explored broadly the lived experiences of three generations of Tibetans living as stateless people in the Tibetan settlement of Doeguling in South India, and thus moved beyond the heavily romanticized and essentialized images of Tibet and Tibetans in the popular media as well as the academic studies that have largely focused on the deconstruction of the above images and representational practices. More specifically, by focusing on the intersection of economic mobility, international migration, and ethnic identity that transpires in the context of migration decision-making, both at the individual and collective levels, I have situated my dissertation research theoretically and methodologically in the inter-related sub-disciplines of diaspora, transnationalism and migration studies. At a more practical level, I have investigated how a group of people, who continues to valorize their statelessness, critically and actively engage with the powers and policies of host nation-states and international geopolitics to balance their collective desire for cultural continuity with their individual and households' desires for upward socio-economic mobility through migration.

With regard to rethinking and theorizing the Tibetan exiles in the broad diaspora studies, I have argued that the Tibetan exiles constitute a distinct category of political exiles, a much

under-researched and under-theorized sub-category, within diaspora studies. In order to privilege the emic perspective and its distinctive exile politics, I have used the term exile throughout the dissertation to refer to the Tibetans living as stateless in India. I argued that the Tibetan exile case assumes a very distinct category of political exiles in that Tibetans have successfully created a second homeland in India which has come to serve as the center of social and political imagination in both diaspora and back home. In order to demonstrate how the Tibetan exile case sheds empirical insight and new perspectives germane to anthropological understanding of diasporic and transnational migration practices, I started out by historicizing the contemporary expressions of nation-state, homeland, cultural and ethnic identity within the Tibetan exile communities in India and how diasporic or exile politics have led to the notions of two Tibets: one based in the territoriality of Tibet (currently incorporated as part of the modern Chinese state) and the other embodied in the construction of a pan-Tibetan identity and territory-less nationhood nurtured under the charismatic leadership of the Dalai Lama.

Tibetan exiles have a functioning government in exile based on Indian soil—although not officially recognized by India nor any other nation-states in the world—with its own democratic system, a Constitution and ‘legitimate sovereignty’ in the eyes of the majority of the Tibetan exiles. In other words, the Tibetan exiles have reterritorialized the Tibetan nation and culture through the creation of a “second homeland” in India, which serves not only as the *diasporic center* for the Tibetan exiles but as the legitimate government in the eyes of the majority of Tibetan exiles. The very purpose of being in exile is framed as a struggle for the common Tibetan cause, evidenced by the popular saying, “Every upright walking Tibetan including the children born yesterday has the responsibility of the common Tibetan cause on their shoulders.” This characteristic of the Tibetan exiles’ case challenges a common conceptualization of

diaspora, i.e., the triadic or “triangular relationship” of the homeland, the host country, and the ethnic diaspora. As Gabriel Sheffer writes, “Modern diasporas are ethnic minority groups of migrant origins residing and acting in host countries but maintaining strong sentimental and material links with their countries of origin—their homelands” (1986:3).

In mapping out the history of Tibetan exile politics and the evolution of an imagined Tibetan nationhood that is not limited by its past, I have shown how the Tibetans have used exile as a creative space to find voice and agency within the international order of nation-states and speak back strategically against the dominant representations of Tibet and Tibetans disseminated by China. For instance, the evolution of the exile’s goal from a separate nation-state (total independence) to the current CTA policy of a Middle Way Approach that calls for genuine autonomy (drawing on the central themes of cultural and religious freedom, environmental protection, federalism and autonomy) within the framework of the constitution of People’s Republic of China reflects an acute understanding of the transnational realities of interdependence and interconnectedness in the contemporary global era. In fact, the Tibetan exile articulation of genuine autonomy in terms of cultural and religious freedom could be viewed as a transnational articulation of multiculturalism (Kymlicka and He 2005, Mahajan 2005, He 2005) in a non-Western context where the current Chinese leadership views the exiles’ call for genuine autonomy as nothing but a call for independence in disguise, and any international appeal for respect of human rights or cultural and religious freedom as interference in China’s internal matters that challenge its territorial sovereignty.

Diasporas are often assumed to exist in opposition to the nation-states and diaspora consciousness as incompatible with nationalism. However, the dynamics of the Tibetan exile case raise some pertinent questions on the contextual and historically contingent nature of

diasporic formation and politics. More specifically, the construction of an imagined Tibetan nationhood is essentially a post-exilic phenomenon, and the most sophisticated articulation of Tibetan national identity has taken place in exile under the leadership of the Dalai Lama who is viewed as the main architect of Tibetan nationhood and collective identity by both the Tibetans (inside and outside Tibet) and outside researchers. As I have argued in Chapter Two, reconstruction of collective national identity in exile is informed not only by the idea of cultural resistance and revitalization in the context of a continued occupation of Tibet by China, but should also be understood as a particular relationship of the Tibetan diaspora headed by the Dalai Lama to the policies of the Indian state which has been very supportive to the exile's desire to preserve the Tibetan language, religion and culture. In that sense, the Tibetan settlements in India could be viewed as "intentional communities" (Brown 2002; Pitzer 1997), or active sites of experimenting with a form of Tibetan culture that is in dialectic with the perceived 'taintedness' of Tibetan culture inside Tibet due to 'cultural genocide' perpetrated by the Chinese state. Furthermore, I argued that the Tibetan reconstruction of "authentic" culture in exile could be compared to a historical project of cultural resistance and revitalization, *Gandhian Utopia*, which Fox describes as a form of cultural innovation occurring in the context of people's resistance to and struggle against cultural meanings. Fox presents Gandhian Utopia as "a set or structure of cultural meanings" and as a "dream of a future India, perfected on the basis of its presumed ancient culture" (1989:37), a form of "affirmative Orientalism" that strives to uphold the positive aspects of Indian culture while rejecting its negative aspects, such as the caste system and sectarian politics (1989:107). This historical project has strong resonance with the exile Tibetan leaders' project of reconstructing their culture in exile through a practice of cultural resistance and revitalization that is in dialectic with the repressive state policies of China.

Therefore, it is not surprising both the Dalai Lama and the former elected leader of the Tibetan exiles, Kalon Tripa (Tibetan exile Prime Minister) Samdhong Rinpoche, are staunch Gandhian followers. In addition to the Dalai Lama's promotion of non-violence and future vision of Tibet as a zone of *Ahimsa* (avoidance of violence) and demilitarized zone of peace, the Central Tibetan Administration under Samdhong Rinpoche has actively adopted the principles of non-violence, sustainability, truth and democratic governance as 'directive principles' of the exile government. The Tibetan exile practices of environmental sustainability and non-violence complicates the charges of strategic essentialisms associated with the exile self-representation of "green" Tibetans (Huber 2008) or "non-violent" and "peace loving" Tibetans (Lopez 1998). For the Tibetan exiles, remaining stateless in India and recognizing the legitimacy of the CTA as the Tibetan government in exile is a strong reminder of ongoing projects of "neo-orientalism" and "neo-colonialism" in the context of a third world empire, *Pax Sinica* or China's imperialism, which the CTA, including the Dalai Lama, view as causing 'cultural genocide' inside Tibet. The Tibetan exile case therefore presents an interesting political phenomenon in the form of how an "exile government" operates in current international geopolitics, thus complicating the accepted norms and concepts of sovereignties in the international order.

In short, this study reveals two important findings that problematize certain common conceptualizations in diaspora studies: first, Diasporas do not necessarily exist in opposition to nation-states. Nationalism can be the very product of the diasporic project as demonstrated by the Tibetan exile case in which the very purpose of exile is viewed as the active site of reconstructing an imagined nationhood and maintaining collective national identity. Second, diaspora and transnationalism means more than an "innocent concept of the essential diasporan subject, one that celebrates hybridity, 'cultural' border crossing, and the production of

difference” (Ong 1999:13), and can be viewed in certain historically contingent and contextual experiences as an active site of contestation. In the case of the Tibetan exiles, they use powerlessness to speak back to power in the form of strategic essentialism or affirmative orientalism as demonstrated by the emphasis on cultural preservation, something I documented by dwelling on the key theme of tension between settlement and mobility. As discussed in Chapter Two, I am not arguing for a reified and essentialist form of Tibetan culture and identity or Tibetan exceptionalism, but drawing attention to the historically contingent and strategic nature behind the essentialist claims of the Tibetan exiles’ self-representations of their collective identity and transnational articulations of their imagined nationhood.

In the same chapter, I discussed the overall project of Tibetan-ness in exile, an ongoing process of imagined nationhood that needs to be situated in two large socio-political contexts: China’s repressive and spiritually stifling policies on Tibetan religion and language inside Tibet, and the challenges of living in exile where people are confronted by the prospect of cultural assimilation and dissolution through migration abroad. I have also demonstrated how the exile’s project of maintaining collective identity occurs at three broad arenas of interaction: dealing with the international geopolitical order and community for outside political and material support for the Tibetan cause, confronting Chinese state building and its effort to incorporate Tibet into modern China, and, within the Tibetan exile community, forging a strong national identity. In the process, I have established the historical and geo-political contexts for interpreting ethnographic accounts of the lived social reality of the Tibetan exiles and argued for a more nuanced understanding of the blurred lines between the externally-oriented discourse directed toward the West to garner sympathy, a form of strategic essentialism, and the internally-oriented discourse to reconstruct a strong sense of imagined nationhood and national identity.

In Chapter Three, I examined more closely the history and development of Tibetan settlements in India to discuss how Tibetans have made India their “second homeland”, that is, the site of collective struggle as well as the preservation of Tibetan cultural and national identity. I have documented how, right after coming into exile, the Dalai Lama who was then just 25 years old and in the unenviable position of leading the Tibetan people in its darkest period of history, initiated three projects in India which are now seen by Tibetans as visionary and critical to sustaining cultural and national identity in exile. The three projects are: a) the establishment of Tibetan settlements in India, b) the establishment of separate schools for Tibetan children, and c) the organizing of non-sectarian establishments to rehabilitate Tibetan monks who had just fled their homeland. The first part of the chapter documented the role of the Tibetan government in exile, the Indian government, and international development agencies in the rehabilitation of Tibetan refugees in India. The second part introduces the primary fieldwork site of Doeguling and provides a descriptive analysis of the fieldwork site to set up the background political, socio-economic and demographic structures for my later discussion of tension between mobility and settlement. In the process, I have illustrated how the Tibetans themselves have successfully created economic niches within India in the form of sweater selling and petty businesses. Military service has also been an important source of income for the settlers from the early years.

The CTA continues to view the Tibetan settlements as important sites of cultural continuity and invests substantial resources and efforts through integrated development projects that seek to ensure the economic viability of settlements and maintain their central role as places of enculturation. Meanwhile, as a result of settlement-based economic strategies (e.g., farming and sweater selling) that many see as limited, international ties forged through assistance, and high levels of education, population mobility has become an important feature of the younger

generation. Migration is transforming the settlements into “lifephase spaces” rather than “lifecourse spaces”; many young people born and raised in a Tibetan cultural milieu ultimately leave seeking higher education, employment, and upward mobility through migration.

In Chapter Four, I demonstrated how, despite the official portrayal of India as a cherished second homeland that draws on the idealized view of historical India as the Holy Land and source of Tibetan religion and culture, many ordinary Tibetans, in particular younger generations born in exile, share a more ambivalent view of India as a Tibetan place. In the same chapter, I dwelled in length on the local Indo-Tibetan interface in order to tease out some of the tensions arising out of the protracted stay of Tibetans on Indian soil and how this is reinforcing collective Tibetan identity as well as shaping the outlook of the younger generation toward seeking a better life outside India.

While the Tibetan leaders constantly emphasize that the Tibetans should never forget the generosity of the Indian government and maintain harmonious relationship with the local Indians, ordinary Tibetans, particularly the younger generation, see injustice and discrimination in the actions of the local Indian leaders and bureaucracy. The dynamics of the local Indo-Tibetan relationship is also crucial for understanding the motivations among the younger Tibetans to leave the settlement and see the West as an attractive destination. I also discussed how preferential treatment of the Tibetan refugees from the Indian state and foreign aid is being played out in the context of the local Indo-Tibetan relationship.

Although the CTA lacks coercive power of a state to stop the outmigration, ironically, it is mainly responsible for the current migration wave through its active support of the resettlement project. The collective decision to remain stateless in India is now increasingly challenged due to two factors: first, the hindrances to socio-economic mobility many young,

highly educated Tibetans face in accessing professional education opportunities and participation in formal economies, and second, the new realities of Tibetans seeking foreign citizenships in the countries outside India. Although debates about citizenship or what it means to be a member of imagined political community are still strongly connected to the project of a nation-state system at large, or what one historian calls the “hegemonic social ideology”(Duara 1995), the reality of transnationalism has impacted modern citizenship practices as “the conditional *jus soli* gained in importance over the classic nation-state principle of *jus sanguinis*” resulting in what Joppke calls “de-sacralized and less nationalistic” citizenship (2007:39). Thus, the idea of an individual as a resident citizen bounded in one national community is challenged by the increasing practices of ‘dual citizenship’ and its acceptance by many states and ‘denizenship’ or permanent residency without naturalization (Hammar 1989). To capture the emerging practices of citizenship that is devoid of much of ethnic nation contents and significances, scholars have developed the notions of “post-national citizenship” (Soysal 1994, Sassen 2002), “multicultural citizenship” (Kymlicka 1995, Kymlicka and He 2005) and “flexible citizenship” (Ong 1999).

Although citizenship is very much a juridical construct and the role of the state remains pivotal to how we imagine a political community, I argue that citizenship in practice is a historically contingent and dynamic social process so there is a need to move beyond a legalistic or formalistic view to one that is “historically contingent, interactive vehicle of articulation, conflict and dialogue” (Seider 2002:203). If citizenship is viewed as a social practice and identity politics integral to citizenship, this process can be viewed from two perspectives: how the ordinary people themselves perceive citizenship, and the official perspective propagated by states and state-like entities. Without subsuming the role of the state as an active agent in the construction of identity, I have looked at the legal and productive effects of citizenship in the

Tibetan exile context. For instance, the Tibetan exiles' own political and social practices, and their spatial identities, are implicated in the conceptualization of citizenship by different state and state-like actors. The Tibetan exiles problematize the dominant binary construct of "the citizen resident, bounded in a national community and its archetypical 'other', the refugee" (McConnell 2013:967) because the Tibetan exiles living in India assume three different political identities at the same time: 'Tibetan citizens' in the eyes of the Tibetan government in exile; 'refugees' in the eyes of international community; and 'foreigners' in the eyes of the Indian state. The case of political exiles provides interesting perspectives on the identity claim of a citizen of a country without necessarily having a sense of 'belonging' to or 'being' of the country.

Tibetan exiles are increasingly becoming aware of their right to Indian citizenship. Nevertheless, beyond those highly educated members of the younger generation who are motivated by career aspirations, at present the majority of Tibetans are not actively pursuing Indian citizenship. Many who are involved in the informal economy through seasonal sweater selling and petty trading do not see any material or political benefits from acquiring Indian citizenship. There is still a strong political and symbolic meanings attached to the status of remaining stateless and, closely related, a strong social stigma associated with becoming an Indian citizen.

At first glance, there seems to be contradiction in that the CTA simultaneously encouraged the migration and taking of foreign citizenship of some Tibetans to the West while encouraging Tibetans living in India to remain stateless. But if the CTA and the Tibetan exile practices are situated in a transnational context and seen as engaging in flexible citizenship, this contradiction can be interpreted as an articulation of Tibetan exile agency at both the individual and collective levels. They simultaneously negotiate transnational realities by accessing the

political and economic resources in the West while preserving the legitimacy of the Tibetan government in exile and maintaining the exile society in India as the active site of cultural and national identity maintenance.

The practice of stateless citizenship among the Tibetans in India demonstrates how citizenship is a historically contingent and dynamic social process. Until recently, the majority of the Tibetans in India have collectively decided to remain stateless to maintain the CTA's twin goals of seeking justice for the Tibetan homeland and maintaining Tibetan identity and culture in exile. However, in light of increasing migration to the West and individual desires to achieve upward socio-economic mobility through migration, the collective decision to remain stateless is being challenged. The view now gaining strength is that a flexible approach towards seeking Indian citizenship is necessary to attain certain economic rights and is being driven by those who have professional skills and education but whose lack of citizenship hinders full participation in the formal economic sector. It remains to be seen whether the new awareness of the legal right of Tibetan exiles to Indian citizenship generated by the two high court cases will lead to a trend of Tibetans becoming Indian citizens. This does not seem plausible if the current challenges of India's bureaucratic messiness and arbitrariness towards Tibetans becoming Indian citizens remains in place.

Furthermore, by examining citizenship politics among the Tibetan exiles in India, I illustrate how all claims for citizenship are not necessarily contingent on territorial sovereignty. Transnational logics and practices have opened up spaces for a form of territory-less sovereignty in which statelessness serves as a form of citizenship. The idea of a 'Tibetan citizen' under the Exile Charter, if taken as a form of stateless citizenship, is neither a form of post-national

citizenship nor a territorial citizenship, but a claim towards a future citizenship that is contingent on specific historical and geopolitical factors.

Chapter Five addressed the key theme of tension between the collective desire to maintain cultural and ethnic identity envisaged in the project of resettlement and the individual needs and desires to achieve upward socio-economic mobility through migration. I have demonstrated how in the process of reconstructing an “authentic” Tibetan community in exile, the settlements are undergoing profound social and economic transformations which pose both challenges and opportunities for the Tibetan exile leaders who are concerned with the twin goals of ensuring justice for the homeland and preserving Tibetan identity and culture in exile. For instance, one common refrain I hear from some of the young monks, a pun on the idea of being a twenty-first century monk, is that of a “Geshe⁷⁸ learning English, carrying the latest cell phone in his hand, a laptop bag strapped to his shoulder who globe-trots and does not have time to teach monks and lay people in the settlement.” This statement encapsulates the twin key themes of mobility (often facilitated through the symbolic capital of Tibetan religion and transnational connections of Buddhist centers and rich Buddhist patrons abroad) and threats to the viability of Tibetan settlements.

For the Tibetan exiles in India, emigration to Western countries, particularly those in North America and Europe, is a recent phenomenon. Today’s immigration wave actually took off as an after effect of the US Immigration Act of 1990 that granted 1,000 immigrant visas to the Tibetan exiles in India and Nepal. Since the visas were granted to individual Tibetans, it enabled the original 1,000 to subsequently bring their family and relatives through family

⁷⁸ A title officially given to a monk scholar who has completed more than 20 years of training in Buddhist philosophical training, Geshe is often considered equivalent to the degree of Ph.D.

reunion. This phenomenon is related to the popular perception that Tibetan settlements are getting depopulated because it is more noticeable when an entire family leaves rather than just individual members. Slightly different from the above migration is the mobility of young and highly educated Tibetans. Universal primary and secondary education and a high percentage of young people continuing into higher professional education facilitated mostly through direct scholarships granted by the Central Tibetan Administration and other organizations is partly responsible for this surge in out-migration to other parts of India and emigration abroad.

Despite the official discourse about the viability of settlements, Doeguling remains a thriving society both in a demographic and economic sense. Remittances continue to make a significant impact on the economic well-being of the exile community. Monastic institutions are playing a very significant role not only in cultural and religious affairs but also in economic and demographic spheres. Through the attraction of funds for cultural preservation as well as increasing interest in Tibetan Buddhism among a rich and urban population in other Asian countries and the West, the monastic institutions are having many positive spillover effects on the settlements, including the significant in-migration of ethnic Tibetans from the Himalayan region and Tibetan monks and nuns from Tibet. The in-migration is contributing to the common Tibetan cause of preserving religious and cultural institutions in exile.

Although the relatively higher standard of living in the Tibetan settlements compared to the surrounding local India community is a source of tension among certain sections of the local Indian population, the Tibetan settlements are also an important source of low skill jobs as illustrated by the increasing tendency to hire local labor in farming, handcrafts, and small-business undertakings of the settlement co-operatives and monastic institutions. This is closely related to the higher educational attainment of the younger generation of exiles who are shunning

the low skilled manual jobs of the settlements for higher paying jobs in the cities. Ironically, internal migration facilitated by education is opening economic opportunities in the settlements for the surrounding Indian communities.

In Chapter Six, I used case studies of households and individuals to elucidate how the migration process looks from inside out and from the ground up. In addition to presenting a range of diverse migration streams from the perspective of households and individual who have differential access to financial resources and social networks that could potentially facilitate migration abroad, I also documented the tensions between settlement and mobility. There is an inter-generational difference in attitudes towards going abroad, with the older generations generally more critical while the younger generations view emigration as an attractive option for achieving upward social mobility.

Individuals do not migrate in isolation, and transnational migration occurs at huge social and psychological costs. For instance, the prolonged period of family separation between the time an individual emigrates and earns enough income to be able to acquire the proper papers for initiating family reunion can impact negatively on family life as well as children's education. There are other sources of discontentment with emigration, such as the fact that many young but unskilled Tibetans must resort to illegal and risky methods to facilitate their travel abroad, putting families into huge debt. On the positive side, remittances from Tibetan migrants contribute not only to the welfare of individual families but also to the larger community through the funding of development projects like basketball courts, community halls, homes for old people, and health and education projects.

The new realities of increased emigration of Tibetans from the settlements to abroad are also enabling certain groups of people, in particular the migrants themselves, to maintain

multiple social relationships both at individual and collective levels across national borders. Although outmigration, both seasonal and permanent, will continue to impact the Tibetan settlements, some of the larger ones like Doeguling which have large monastic institutions continue to remain viable due to both positive economic spill-over effects of monastic affluence as well as substantial in-migration of Buddhist practitioners from the Himalayan regions of India, Bhutan and Nepal. This trend is a sign of how successful the Tibetan settlements have been in reviving the traditional role of Tibetan monasteries as the learning seats of higher Buddhist studies as well as active recruitment drives by the different monasteries in exile who are facing the issue of new admission in light of dropping fertility in exile as well as inside Tibet. This creates a new phenomenon of pan-Tibetan identity that is based on shared religious and cultural affinities, and is intimately tied to the discourse of preserving Tibetan culture and religion not only for its own good but for the benefits of the larger world.

In addressing the key research theme of tensions between settlement and mobility in the exile context, I have taken up the call for anthropological approaches towards transnationalism and migration to articulate both the people and process (structure and agency) by incorporating both the macro-level social and political economic structures and micro-level individual and household perspectives in the migration decision-making. Furthermore, studies of migration have amply documented how assimilation or integration into the host community are not the only outcomes and that even for second and third generations there is a vast range of possible outcomes (Brettell 2003, Levitt 2009, Vertovec 1999). Recent academic writings on transnationalism critique empirical and theoretical ambiguity (Kivisto 2001, Portes 1999, Brettell and Hollifield 2000) and call for more rigorous and innovative methodological and theoretical frameworks for capturing the heterogeneity in transnational practices and communities. My

study is an attempt to provide a better understanding of transnational behavior by focusing on the household strategies and a range of contextual factors that influence how decisions are made to migrate or remain in place, to travel back and forth, and to facilitate the migration of others.

In connection with theories of migration, by exploring the household dynamics I have demonstrated how social relationships in the form of social networks and connections contribute significantly to the perpetuation of migration streams once they have started as, “they lower the costs and risks of movement and increase the net return to migration. Network connections constitute a form of social capital that people can draw upon” (Massey et al 1993: 448). I drew links between the individual and community levels of analysis by prioritizing the household as the unit of analysis because it is also one primary site where decisions to migrate are made in conjunction with negotiated constructions of identity. I have highlighted the fact that the household mediates between the individual and the outside world, so a focus on the household allows one to better understand how migration decision-making considers not just economic prospects, but also political and social conditions as well as cultural norms. Furthermore, by looking at transnational migration from the perspective of a sending community, I have highlighted how issues of identity and cultural maintenance emerge not just after migrants have moved, but in the migration decision-making process itself. In short, the analysis of household dynamics and strategies to illuminate the processes that takes place in migration decision-making provides strong empirical insights into transnational practices in the Tibetan exile community.

Based on my research I also argue that defining transnationalism as a form of assimilation or adaptation neither fully captures the heterogeneity in the transnational behaviors amongst the Tibetan exiles nor fully accounts for why some Tibetan exiles build expensive houses and monasteries in the settlement where they do not live permanently. Here, it is helpful

to refer to an anthropological study of migration and transnationalism among Portuguese emigrants to Brazil and France where the author made an interesting observation of how those who return (referred to as *Braseliors* or *Frances* respectively) build lavish mansions, sponsor religious and cultural events, and engage in conspicuous consumption back home (Brettell 2003:67). The author argues that for many of these emigrants transnational migration does not necessarily result in upward social mobility and assimilation in the host country. Instead, many Portuguese emigrants undergo downward social mobility in France while attaining higher social status upon returning to through their display of wealth and conspicuous consumption. In Doeguling, I found certain aspects of conspicuous consumption, however, I would argue that the Tibetan emigrants are attaining upward social mobility in both their host country and back home. In the exile context maintaining links to the settlements, where only the elders and young children live permanently, cannot be fully explained by economic rationale alone and therefore should be viewed as a means for preserving ethnic identity at both the collective and individual level.

Although mobility has become a very integral part of the social life, the Tibetan exiles have long taken pride in their stateless identity and see it is a tool of recognition and legitimation of their political cause. Therefore, transnational migration has triggered a complex renegotiation of the future course for their struggle for imagined nationhood and identity maintenance. However, it is too early to predict what transnational practices and communities will take shape. What collective values and affiliations will emerge from utilizing transnational social ties? How will transnational families remain connected across the nation-state borders? Will the Tibetan settlements retain their central position as places of cultural preservation and continue to enculturate young Tibetans with a strong sense of national identity?

In future research on the Tibetan exiles, my dissertation has established a solid baseline for longitudinal research and for understanding the impacts of migration on family structures and dynamics. Theoretically, the dynamics of the Tibetan exile experience have significance on the conceptualization of diaspora and transnationalism as they support as well as challenge different defining characteristics of diaspora in all its diverse forms. The Tibetan exile case illustrates both the emancipatory as well as negative possibilities involved in the diasporic condition, and the need to appreciate essentialist claims as not only strategic, but also as contingent and contextual because the Tibetan exile case demonstrates that nationalism can be the very product of diaspora consciousness. At the same time we witness the emergence of a transnationalism that places ideological emphasis on universal values such as environmentalism, peace, human rights, and compassion as integral parts of Tibetan exilic identity. In addition to directing attention towards nationalism and transnationalism, the Tibetan exile case also draws attention to how Tibetans have appropriated the dominant languages of sovereignty, autonomy, and nationalism to make their own claims for collective national identity as part of the diasporic project.

In conclusion, this study documents the contradictory nature of diasporic experience. On the one hand, it highlights several negative effects involving the processes of flight and displacement, and the pain and suffering that emerge from forced migration and a desire to return to the homeland. On the other hand, the Tibetans have so far achieved relative success in resisting assimilation to the host society through a resettlement process focused on tight communities and the conscious valorization of statelessness. The collective decision to remain stateless rather than taking up of citizenship in the host countries of India, Nepal, and Bhutan, is viewed as a highly political act that defines the very purpose of being in exile. At the same time, it is also a costly one because it restricts many Tibetans born in exile in accessing certain

political and socio-economic rights, including owning businesses and pursuing certain professional jobs and educational opportunities. Therefore, the Tibetan exile case highlights the need to temper the current theoretical understanding of diaspora, transnationalism, and migration to address adequately the dynamics of the particular historicity of a displaced people and to consider witting and unwitting politicizations that shape the processes of adoption and appropriation of academic ideas and theories.

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