



## Socio-Economic And Cultural Characteristics of Tibetan Migrants : A Case Study of New Aruna Nagar (Majnu Ka Tilla), Delhi

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**Abstract** - This study explores the adaptation and livelihood strategies of Tibetan exiles in India, emphasizing the unique challenges they face related to their roots and socio-cultural and economic existence. Drawing on both primary qualitative observations and secondary literature, the research highlights the pivotal role of social and economic capital in the lives of Tibetans. Despite lacking established sources of livelihood and access to public services due to their refugee status, the community relies on strong social and cultural bonds to engage in informal economic activities such as handicrafts, carpet making, and traditional businesses. The study also identifies instances of socio-economic and political deprivation among Tibetan migrants. However, those residing in New Aruna Nagar (Majnu ka Tilla) express satisfaction with the available health and education facilities, showcasing a degree of socio-economic integration. The Tibetans exhibit a dual process of adopting certain Indian practices while retaining and perpetuating their Tibetan language and culture. The study underscores the complex dynamics of cultural preservation and modernization efforts among the Tibetan community, examining India's limited opposition to their cultural practices.

Keywords : Tibetan, Majnu ka tilla, CTA, Migration.

**Introduction** - The Tibetan refugees arrived in India in 1959, the then Indian Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru granted them asylum and they were rehabilitated in Refugee Camps across the country. The individuals(refugees) who were not restored(rehabilitated) into these camps were settled at the plot of "Samyeling" New Aruna Nagar in New Delhi called Majnu Ka Tilla , hence the Tibetan colony of Majnu ka Tilla created on the banks of stream Yamuna, North of Delhi on National Highway 9, covering a region of about 64,627.42 sq mts. The colony is divided into 12 blocks with 350 permanent registered families. An elected governing body of 7 members is directly elected by the people for a term of 3 years. The Tibetan Women association is also an elected body where we held many interviews. The Central Tibetan Administration has a permanent representative known as the Settlement Officer. The permanent population

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of the colony is estimated to be 3000 people (According to an Interview given to the author of the article Tibetan Enclave in Delhi 12/10/2013).



**Image 1:** Showing a monk sitting Infront of monastery in Majnu ka tilla (source: during primary survey)

**Background of Majnu ka Tilla-** The Name Majnu Ka Tilla is related to the historic reign of Sikandar Lodhi (1489-1517) literally it means the hillock of Majnu, after the tilla or mound. During Delhi Sultanate, Abdulla nicknamed Majnu (crazy) a local Persian Sufi met Sikh Guru, Guru Nanak on July 20, 1505. Majnu helped people to cross freely the Yamuna River as a service to God. In later history Sikh military leader Baghel Singh built the Majnu ka Tila Gurudwara to commemorate the stay in 1783, and the sixth Sikh guru, Guru Har Gobind who stayed there. Today it is one of oldest extant Sikh shrines in Delhi and the surrounding estate of donated by early 19th-century Sikh emperor, Ranjit Singh. Majnu Ka Tilla area has three main residential settlements with almost 3000 - 3500 homes, Aruna Nagar, New Aruna Nagar and Old Chandrawal village, which was came up in early 1900s, when British government settled labourers involved in the construction of the Central Secretariat buildings, during the construction of the New Delhi. The next round of settlement came post-independence (discussed further in detail) in 1958-59, when Aruna Nagar was developed by the Land and Development wing of the Urban Development ministry as it disburses 925 plots of 40 sq. yard each, to people resettled here from various part of North Delhi.

The Tibetan refugee camp later named New Aruna Nagar developed after 1960, and more recently two large jhuggi jhopari (hutment) clusters have developed on the periphery. The legal status of Majnu-ka-Tilla has previously come into dispute. In 1995, residents were “given a formal assurance from the Centre” that they would be allowed to remain at the site until the international dispute over Tibet was settled. In June 2006, the colony was served a court-issued notice indicating that it would be demolished in connection with the Delhi government’s road expansion and Yamuna River beautification plan. At least two buildings were demolished in connection with this order. As of 2012, however, a court order had avoided eviction, regularizing the status of the colony.

The colony, officially known as New Aruna Nagar Colony, remains unauthorized though in March 2013, Government of Delhi included New Aruna Nagar (Tibetan refugee camp) in its list of 895 “to-be-regularised colonies”. The refugee colony experienced widespread flooding in 2010 rainy season, as a result many of the

residents took reinforcement measure in their buildings. On June 20, 2013, during the North India floods, the Yamuna River breached its banks and inundated numerous houses in the low-lying area. They remained partially submerged for several days, and people shifted to upper floors or to relief camps. The floods also lead to power outages and water shortages, raising concerns of health. As shown Majnu-ka-Tilla is a well identified urban ethnic enclave in the North of the Indian capital. The citizens in New Delhi name the Tibetan niche the “Tibetan Colony” (Image 2)

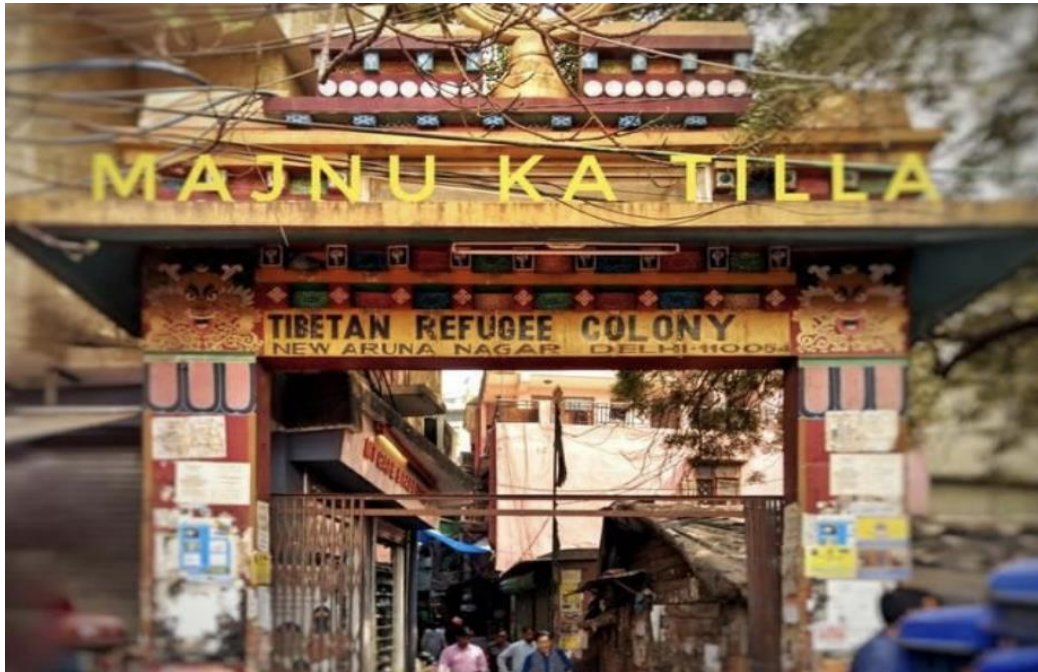


Image 2: – Entrance Gate to Tibetan Colony (majnu-ka-tilla)

Migration and issues related to it is one of the most important socio-economic and political concerns of our times. India has several refugee groups, among them Tibetans constitute a very significant proportion and scattered across the country, close to 25,000 living in Delhi itself. They are scattered in Majnu-ka Tilla, Kashmiri Gate, INA, Trilok Puri and other parts of Delhi/NCR. A significant number of Tibetans reside in a narrow-laned, small locality named as New Arya Nagar at Majnu-ka-Tilla. Therefore, the following study aims to study the socio cultural and economic aspects of Tibetan migrants residing in Majnu Ka Tilla with a geographical perspective.

**Study Area-** Majnu-ka-Tilla is a colony in DELHI, INDIA that was established around 1950. Majnu-ka-Tilla is officially called New Aruna Nagar Colony, Chungtown, and Samyeling. It is part of North Delhi district and is located at the bank of the Yamuna River (NH-1) near ISBT Kashmiri Gate. With 28.7003° N, 77.2276° E latitude and longitudes. The colony is divided into 12 blocks with 350 permanent registered families. An elected governing body of 7 members is directly elected by the people for a term of 3 years. The permanent population of the colony is around 3000 people (According to an Interview given to the author of the article Tibetan enclave in New Delhi 12/10/2013). The colony, officially known as New Aruna Nagar Colony, remains unauthorized though in March 2013, Government of Delhi included New Aruna Nagar (Tibetan refugee camp) in its list of 895 “to-be-regularised colonies”.





3. To analyse the cultural aspect and different cultural practices done by these migrants.

**Research Questions** - Based on the objectives of the study, he given study addresses the following questions:

1. What is the Historical background of the Tibetan migrants in Delhi in respect with India?
2. What are the demographic characteristics of the migrants in terms of total male & female population, sex ratio and literacy rate?
3. What are the different professions, occupations and trade practiced by migrant population in New Aruna Nagar?
4. What is the level of income and expenditure of these migrants?
5. What is their nature of religious celebration and how often they visit temples or places of worship and does it impact their culture?
6. What is the level and condition of schooling system and the eating habits of these migrants and how it has impacted their lives?

**Methodology through table:**

Sr. No.	Research Question	Data Sources	Methodology
1.	What is the Historical background of the Tibetan migrants in Delhi in respect with India?	Primary sources and Secondary data Sources	-Direct Questioning from Migrants  -Official data from authentic source
2.	What are the demographic characteristics of the migrants in terms of total male & female population, sex ratio and literacy rate?	Secondary Data Sources	(Tibetan Association and Tibetan Demographic survey)
3.	What are the different professions, occupations and trade practiced by migrant population in New Aruna Nagar?	Primary Data Sources	Analysis of professions, occupations and trade practiced by migrant population
4.	What is the level of income and expenditure of these migrants?	Primary Data (Based on 50 correspondents)	-Direct questioning from the migrants

			- Survey from the local market and households
5.	What is their nature of religious celebration and how often they visit temples or places of worship and does it impact their culture?	Primary sources	-Direct questioning and interviewing from the locals (residents, shop owner, priest)
6.	What is the level of schooling and about the eating habits of these migrants and how it has impacted their lives?	Primary sources	-Direct questioning and interviewing from the locals (residents, shop owner, priest)

In this study, the mode of inquiry is qualitative (exploratory and explanatory). To gain an understanding of the underlying reasons and motivations and to uncover prevalent trends in thought and opinion, qualitative approach research is used. In-depth interviews, through questionnaires and schedules are used to collect in-depth information on people's opinions, thoughts, experiences, and feelings about the profession, different cultural practices and opinions on Temple(monastery), festivals and different aspect for the study.

The Primary data is based on 50 respondents (Total 50 questionnaire and schedules) Due to the Country wide lockdown the Primary data was been limited to only 50 from 150. So, the primary data is based on those 50 respondent's responses.

**Data Processing, Analysis and Representation-** In data processing, the main themes which emerge from the field notes of oral interviews are identified and an in-depth elaboration is given. And to get authentic data for Demographic aspects, websites such as Central Tibetan Administration website is used. This research is concerned with the subjective assessment of the migrant population living in the New Aruna Nagar (Majnu Ka Tilla) Delhi and to know their economic cultural and social aspects. Qualitative data analysis includes the discussion about the discrete or continuous variables having some range of difference. Sub-group comparison is also done and meaningful interpretation of the opinion of people and responses of the people is done with a clear portrayal of expression. Processed data is then interpreted in which a final analysis of the data would be drawn.

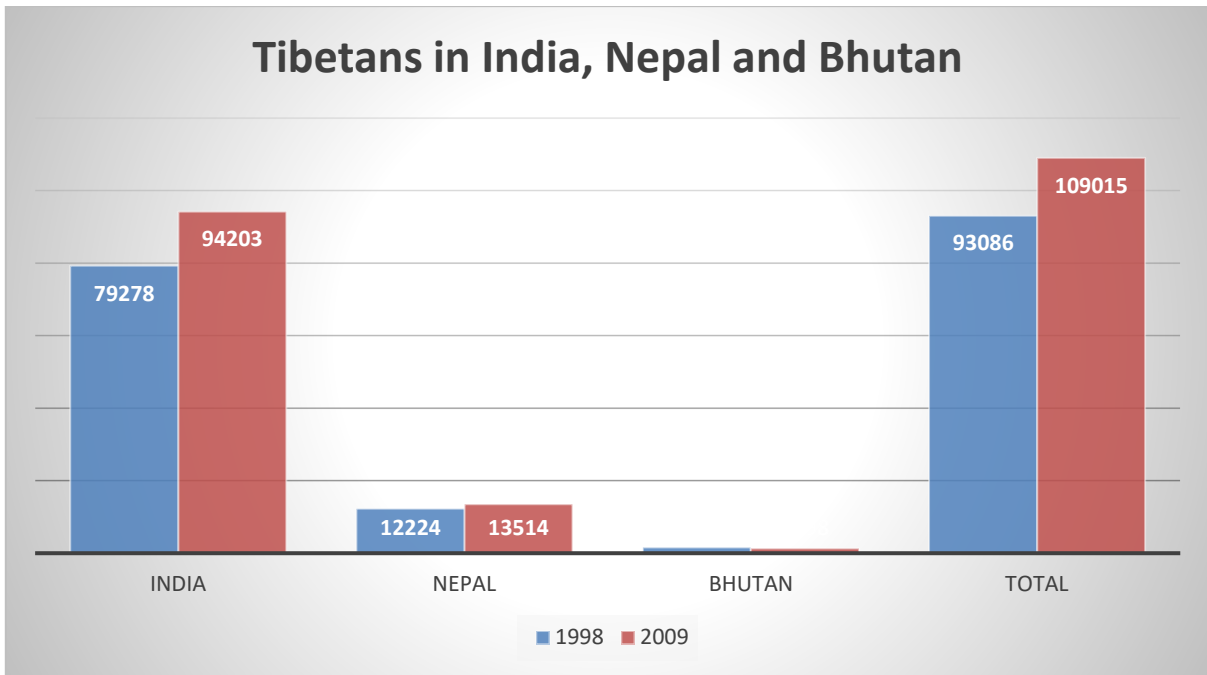
**Historical Background and Demographic Aspects: Tibetan Migrants** - A demographic survey from 2009 done by the Central Tibetan Administration stated that of the total 127,935 registered Tibetans, 94,203 were in India, 13,514 were in Nepal, 1,298 were in Bhutan, and 18,920 were scattered throughout the rest of the world. The numbers appear very limited. The Dalai Lama himself asserted that there are up to 150,000

Tibetans in India alone from three waves of refugees to India during three decades: the fifties, the eighties and the late nineties.



Image 5: Showing Tibetan Migrants and Spiritual Leader Dalai Lama (Image source: CTA)

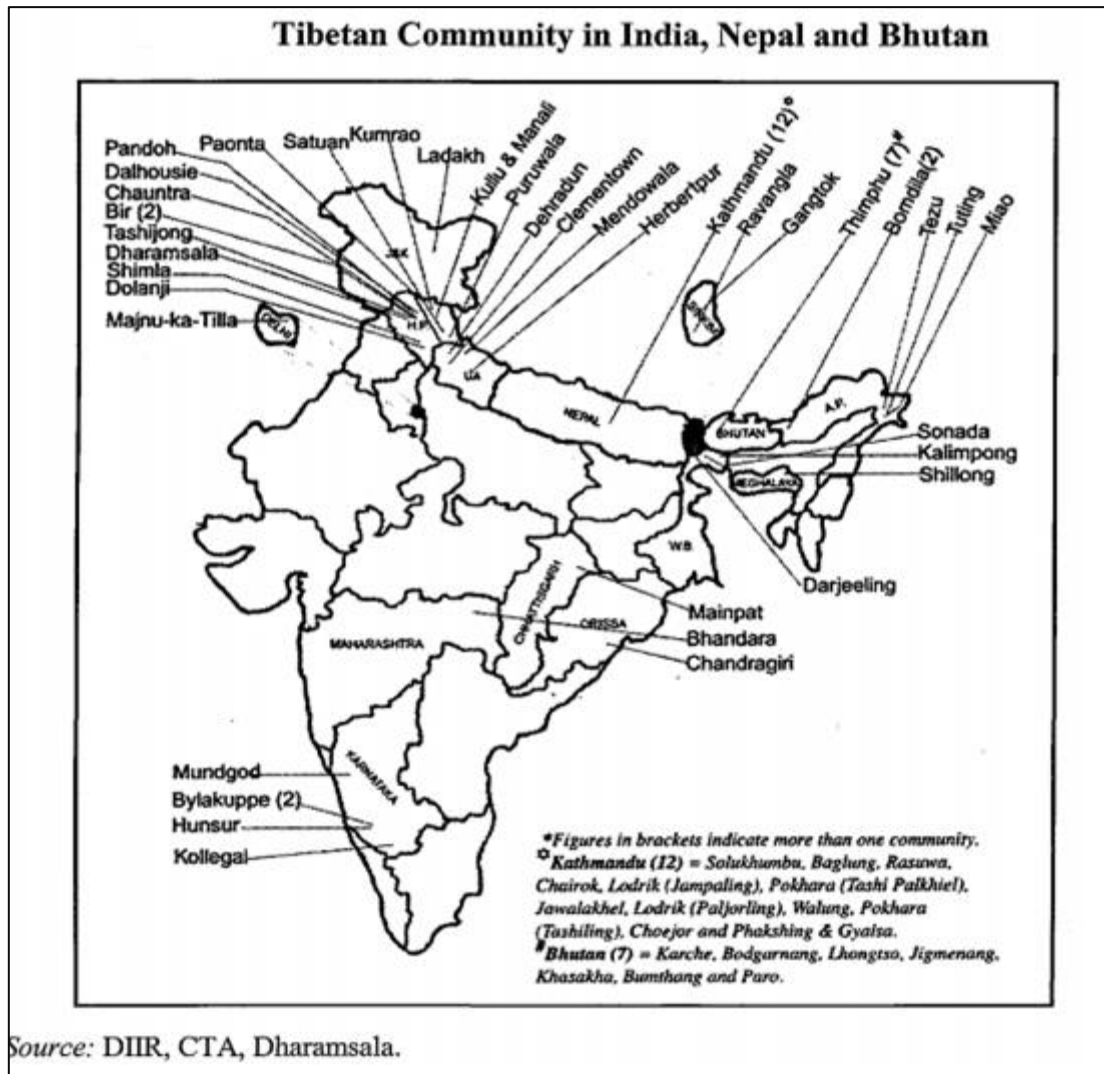
According to the same demographic survey 2009, the North America has the highest number of Tibetans living outside Asia continent with 11,112 followed by Europe with 5,633 and Australia with 1,120. Such demographic information on Tibetans abroad was carried through the office of Tibet in those nations. As a result, the role of India for the Tibetan exiles is central and pivotal as India hosted the most Tibetan refugees in the world. The survival of the Tibetan culture, language and religion depends on India's generosity to host them and to allow them to administer their own schools in order to keep the Tibetan cultural memory alive. The majority of the refugees were dispatched in 52 settlements, comprising 26 agricultural, 17 agro-industrial and 11 handicraft units, spread throughout India, Nepal, and Bhutan.



**Figure 1:** Source: Compiled from the Data from Tibetan Demographic survey 1998 and 2009

All of the Tibetans were registered as “foreigners” in India. Although, Two national statutes govern the legal status and rights of the Tibetans in India: The Foreigners Act of 1946 and the Registration of Foreigners Act. These juridical texts characterize Tibetans simply as “foreigners,” a broad legal rubric that refers to everyone except the Indian citizens. The Tibetans, as other foreigners, are subjected to a list of restrictions affecting property ownership, employment rights, freedom of movement and freedom of speech and assembly (Tibet Justice Centre, 2016). The **Central Tibetan Administration (CTA)** has established its headquarters in Himachal Pradesh, 500 km north of New Delhi in Dharamshala at MacLeod Ganj hill station. This Administration was centred economically, politically and also culturally. It also provides the Tibetan diaspora living in India coherence despite scattered geographic locations - to a certain extent and degree - all over India.





**Image 6 :** showing Tibetan community in India, Nepal and Bhutan

It is interesting to note that only in the case of Tibetan refugees, India adopted a relatively planned rehabilitation programme. So that the Tibetan refugees can 'officially' accommodated in selected settlements by the Government of India itself. Before talking about the Demographic characteristics and other aspects of Tibetan migrants in India, it is important to give a background and their revolution as refugee group in India. The exile of Tibetans was begun during 1950s which is a most controversial part of Tibetan history (Adams, 2005). The political contest with China brought changes in the socio-cultural as well as demographical scenario of Tibet and, thus, resulted in a large number of Tibetan exoduses to many other countries especially neighbouring countries. There were three large waves of Tibetan migration to India.

**First wave – Also known as The First Exodus** - The first wave was evident in 1959 during the Tibetan uprising following the Chinese invasion when the 14th Dalai Lama and his government escaped to India to seek asylum. From 1959 to 1960, about 80,000 Tibetans followed the Dalai Lama to India through the Himalaya Mountains. Even Permanent flights, ranging from in the numbers of 1,000 to 2,500 a year, flew to India in the following years, increasing the population of refugees to an average of 100,000. This forced migration could be named an "exodus" referring to a massive migration and transfer of Tibetan people to India.



**Image 7:** showing Tibetan migrants on their way to India (source- CTA)

**Second wave – The Second Exodus-** The second wave of Tibetan migration resulted due to the political impressions. The increasing Chinese political repression during the 1980s which resulted in the Chinese policy for opening Tibet to Chinese trade and tourism. During that time (1986-1996) around 25,000 more Tibetans joined the exiled community in India. This influx of refugees during this second wave is sometimes referred to as a "second exodus".



**Image 8:** Tibetan refugees on the move with their livestock (Source- M-10 memorial)

As stated by a US message issued by WikiLeaks, from 1980 to November 2009, 87,096 Tibetans arrived in India and registered at the Dharamshala reception centre, whereas 46,620 returned to Tibet after a pilgrimage in India. This wave is a typical education forced migration by students (and their parents) wishing to offer a full Tibetan education in the boarding schools of Dharamshala. There are 73 Tibetan schools in India according to Central Tibetan Administration:

“The Department of Education currently oversees 73 Tibetan schools – excluding the pre-primary sections and private schools – in India and Nepal under different autonomous administrative bodies. There are around 24,000 students and 2,200 staff members in these schools. The autonomous school administrative bodies include: Central Tibetan Schools Administration (28 schools), Tibetan Children’s Villages (18 schools), Tibetan Homes Foundation (3 schools), Sambhota Tibetan Schools Society (12 schools), and Snow Lion Foundation (12 schools)”. (Department of Education.) (CTA website)

**Third wave – Present Situation-** The third and current wave can be distinguished by a decline in the number of the visitors and exiles, with an increase in number of monks and nuns. It was seen that, 2,200 Tibetans arrived in India in 1998. Most of them were monks or nuns seeking religious freedom and complete religious education. This can be due to the fact that the religious culture is very superficial under the Chinese rule. In addition, there was a rise of short-term visitors from Tibet. For example, up to 100,000 Tibetans from Tibet attended the Kalachakra ceremony in Sarnath in 1990. (CTA official site). Most of these visitors journeyed in part on foot. One more interesting fact, The Tibetan refugees who came to India or were born in India before 1979 received Indian residence permits, which must be renewed each year. Residential permits are required to obtain work, rent an apartment, open a bank account, and obtain identity certificates, which are necessary for international travel.

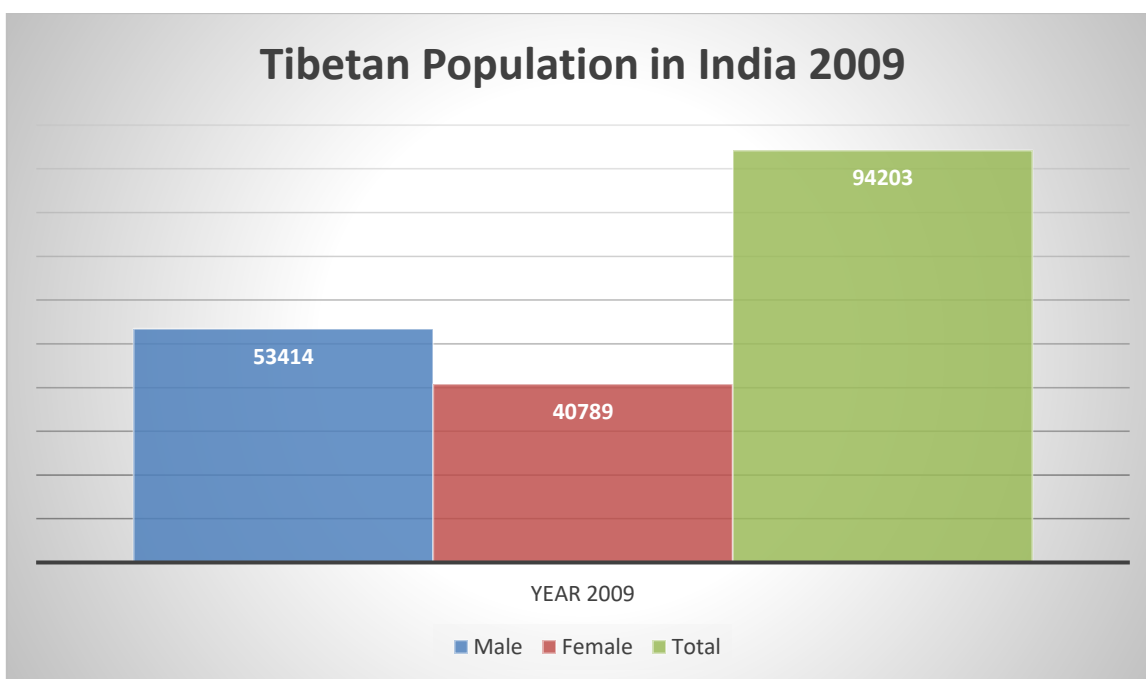
**Tibetans in India-** Tibetan population in India, is reported to live in 38 different locations. A Tibetan settlement might comprise of multiple survey points, which come under the jurisdiction of Tibetan settlement officers. However, it is important to note here that from administration point of view the jurisdiction of a particular settlement officer or the office might not be limited to a state in India nor a settlement office oversees the entire state. For instance, there are number of settlements in the state of Himachal Pradesh, each headed by a settlement officer. There are instances also where the coverage of a settlement office extends to multiple states, for example, Samyeling Tibetan Settlement office based in Delhi, covers not only the National Capital Area of Delhi, but also Tibetans living in Haryana, Rajasthan and Gujarat. Tibetans are living in as many as 23 states of India besides various locations in Nepal and Bhutan.





**Image 9:** Image showing Tibetans in a simplified manner (source- Serena Chopra: Majnu Ka Tilla Diaries)

**Current Population of Tibetans in India (CTA)-** Estimates of the number of Tibetans living in exile vary. According to the last census taken by the CTA in 2009, total of 127,935 Tibetans lives in exile outside Tibet, including 94,203 who live in India. Most other sources report higher estimates: the U.S. Committee for Refugees and the UNHCR report put the number of Tibetans in India at about 110,000,100 while the U.S. Department of State reports that more than 125,000 Tibetans live in India, Nepal and Bhutan. Many of those are Tibetans who were born in India.



**Figure 2:** Depiction of total Tibetan population in India (male and females)

Source: Tibetan Demographic survey 2009

**Overview of Tibetan Settlements in India (CTA)-** India is a federal republic made up of 28 states and 9 union territories. Each state has its own powers over internal policy. There are official Tibetan settlements or scattered settlements in twelve of India's states, and informal Tibetan enclaves in cities across the country. Most Tibetans in India live in thirty-eight formal settlements or scattered settlements and more than fifty other informal Tibetan communities scattered throughout the country. One of these is Dharamshala (or McLeod Ganj), which is the seat of the Central

Tibetan Administration, and the location of the Dalai Lama's residence and monastery, the Tibetan Refugee Reception Centre, and the headquarters of many Tibetan NGOs and institutions, such as the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts and the Tibetan ex-political prisoners' association Gu Chu Sum. It is essentially the Tibetan "capital-in-exile." In total, approximately 75% of the Tibetan refugees in India reside in the settlements, and 40% of this number live in the southern Indian state of Karnataka. About 15,250 Tibetan monks in India reside in 169 monasteries located in or near 54 of the settlements.

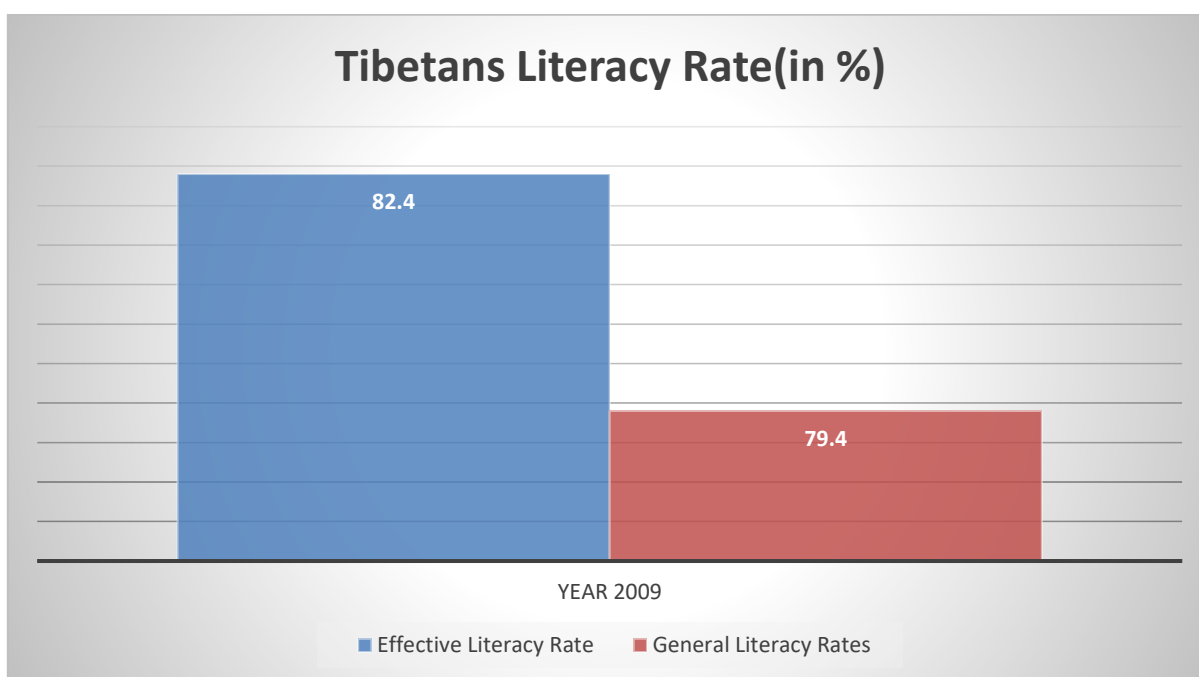
**Tibetan Migrants In Delhi- New Aruna Nagar (Majnu-Ka-Tilla)-** Majnu-ka-Tilla also known as New Aruna Nagar Colony, Chungtown, and Samyeling. Situated in the North Delhi district and is located at the bank of the Yamuna River (NH-1) near ISBT Kashmiri Gate. The permanent population of the colony is around 3000 people (According to an Interview given to the author of the article Tibetan enclave in New Delhi 12/10/2013 – Data from Secondary sources). The colony is divided into 12 blocks with 350 permanent registered families. An elected governing body of 7 members is directly elected by the people for a term of 3 years.

**Sex Ratio (Based on Tibetan demographic survey)** "The sex ratio for Tibetan population in exile has gone up. It's presently 798 females for 1,000 males against 792 in 1998," said the planning commission of the central Tibetan administration in its report titled "Demographic Survey of Tibetans-in exile.



The survey, conducted in April 2009 worldwide by the government-in-exile based here, said the total population of Tibetans outside Tibet stood at 127,935, comprising 70,556 males and 57,379 females. The Sex Ratio for Tibetan population in India has been recoded as 1130 males over 1000 females for the year 2009. With total 53414 males and 40789 females and sums as 94203. (Tibetan demographic survey 2009). Sex ratio is seen as a demographic determinant, which is outcome of the interplay between sex differentials in mortality sex selective migration, sex ratio at birth and at times, the sex differential in population enumeration. Change in the sex composition shows the underlying socio-economic and cultural patterns of a society. It is an important social indicator to measure the extent of prevailing equality between males in society at a given point of time. Sex ratio for Tibetan population in exile is 798 females per 1000 males, which is an improvement of 6 point over 792 recorded in Tibetan demographic survey, 1998. (TDS'98 and 2009).

**Literacy Rate-** As per the report of Tibetan Demographic Survey 2009, the literacy rate among the population 6 years and above stands at 82.4 percent (effective literacy rate) as against 79.4 percent of general literacy rate. General literacy rate refers to the overall literacy rate of a given population irrespective of their age. Whereas effective literacy rate does not include population aged 5 years and below.



**Figure 3 :** Graph showing a comparison between General literacy rate and general literacy rate for Tibetan population in India (Data Source: Tibetan Demographic survey 2009)

In other words, over four-fifths of male population and about three-fourth of female population in India are literate today. It has also been noticed that gap between male and female literacy rates has been rapidly declining.

**More about current scenario (based on Secondary Source)** - The demographic aspects of the Tibetans migrants living in exile has drastically changed, with more than half the population shown by survey to have moved from India to Western countries. Today, an estimated seven million Tibetans live in Chinese-occupied Tibet, in an area of 2.5 million square kilometres.

Kunchok Tsundue, Chief of the Planning Commission of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), confirming the demographic changes to Tibet Sun, said the number of Tibetans has reduced drastically in India. (CTA Website)

According to the CTA demographic survey of 2009, there were 94,203 Tibetans in India, 13,514 in Nepal, 1,298 in Bhutan, and 18,999 in the rest of the world, scattered in 27 countries, mostly Western countries.

Kunchok Tsundue, Chief of the Planning Commission of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), confirming the demographic changes to Tibet Sun, said the number of Tibetans has reduced drastically in India.

Due to the exodus, many schools are now on the verge of closing, and 70% of the cultivable land is lying waste, and the number of Tibetans is likely to further reduce in the coming years, he said.

Tsundue's office has been conducting the demographic survey for year 2019 for the past year. "We have collected all the data, which needs time to process. After fine-tuning them, we will get the Cabinet's approval for announcement."

Searching for better economic opportunities is the main reason for the population movement, followed by educational facilities, explained Tsundue.

"Moving to the West has gained exposure and economic growth, but these are not necessarily useful for the Tibetan movement for a free Tibet, and the education they receive is all Western-value oriented."

There are constraints and challenges for Tibetans in India, but also great opportunities, he added.

"We have a strong base for the Tibetan movement in India. There are 45 settlements, 72 schools, 220 monasteries in an area of 25,000 acres of land given by the Government of India."

He argued that mere economic gains are not enough for the Free Tibet movement and to keep the Tibetan culture alive. "All that's needed for a strong movement could be built in India, and the Tibetan-ness could be retained here, with the environment and the infrastructure that's already there in India."

However, he admitted that a lot needs to be done. "CTA need to create better opportunities and programmes to sustain the Tibetan community in India, and at the same time make a strategy for those who are already in the US and Europe."

"Our fear is the new generation of Tibetans growing up in the West. Weekend language classes and occasional gatherings are not enough to preserve our culture and the Tibetan movement. We have to even think of bigger Tibetan clusters with schools and other facilities, to create that environment, like in India, so that they could be raised as Tibetan in a good sense, who could carry the baton forward."

Speaking about the data-collection process, Tsundue regretted that many in the Western countries were indifferent to participate, and even those who came forward were half-hearted. "Those who didn't participate felt that they are now a citizen of another country."

"We need the data to make the right strategies on different issues. We have a rough idea, but it's not the complete picture."

He said the final record would be made public sometime in March next year

**Socio-Economic Structure of the Tibetan Migrants-** Tibetans have settled their community market which is known as "Tibetan Market" in Delhi. They have ethnic and cultural products, garments, foods and jewellery

to sell in their shops where even the helpers and workers are also from their own Tibetan community. They run small business activities namely small eateries, garment shops, hotels and restaurants for the survival. The feeling of belongingness and fellowship gives nature and comfort in their monetary lives. As saw and observed in the field that every individual is noteworthy and worried for the network all in all and always try to contribute towards the society.

To make a study on the socio-economic structure and aspects of a group of refugees (Tibetan migrants) who have been able to settle, develop and progress in a foreign land by contributing to the development and progress of the area of their settlement would be an interesting, informative and educative proposition for a geographer. Accordingly, it is thought that a socio-economic study of Tibetan refugees at New Aruna Nagar(Majnu-ka-Tilla) settlement in Delhi could contribute a lot to the understanding of socio-economic dimensions of life and prospects of a set of refugees who have been able to successfully settle in a land away from their native place.



**Image 10** : Showing a street of Tibetan colony (Delhi) (image source – primary survey)

During the study, it was observed and discovered that the Tibetans have their own market around their homes. Most Tibetans who runs eateries or food stalls sell their traditional eatables. These food stalls are mostly been run by both males and female of the family so that their livelihood can be sustained and they don't face any economic problem. The Tibetans are always fond to eat their own food and traditional dishes which can be easily seen and understood from the eatable shops. Tibetan are said to be have great business knowledge it is based on this knowledge they are running many small hotels, restaurants and eateries and are earning huge profits and in return are also resulting in providing employment to the local Tibetans for survival.

The food stalls, eateries and small hotels provide a really mouth-watering food which has become really famous among the Delhi youngsters and for food lovers, even some of the food joints are really famous worldwide because of their dish speciality. Even the Tibetan market has become a place to delight and to spend time with friends, family and colleague while having and enjoying Tibetan food, in short it can be said that Tibetan colony really become and evolved as a great hotspot from a refugee's colony to a well organised colony.





**Image 11** : showing a local stall of Tibetan traditional ornaments (image source – primary survey)

*The food available at this place is highly delicious and economical as the same time. I mostly come here with my friends to have some food and for shopping as the kind of cloths and ornaments which I find here I can't get them anywhere else. And this place is really a very lively and interesting place to visit with your friends and family*

*Visitor at New Arya Nagar*



**Image 12** : – A street view of Tibetan colony showing local shops (eateries) (image source – primary survey)

The local jewellery shops have become a tourist attraction, because of the fact that these shops been selling the traditional jewellery which is really different from the jewellery one can find in rest of the world so because of that especially tourist from the western world gets really attracted toward the jewellery shops and really likes buy jewellery from these shops. Even the workers who supposed to make this jewellery belongs from Tibetan colony and are Tibetans in nature so in this term it is said that Tibetans are highly associated and really care for their own people. These shops are very famous for selling *jhumkas, kangan, kade and angoothi etc.* which are based on their tradition the shops also sell accessories and ethic ornaments and really made the Tibetan tradition to spread worldwide. These jewellery shop owners are earning good amount of money out of this business.

Similarly, the Tibetans' traditional dresses and costumes such as **Full Red Gown** also called *chupa* and *pankhda* are very attractive and fascinating for many tourists as well as local people of Delhi. These traditional dresses are not been seen by most of the people and tourist, so in result they always try to buy these traditional costumes. However, one can also purchase the western cloths such as jeans, skirts, shirts, etc at a very reasonable prices and with good quality fabrics.

*I started this business (jewellery selling) 7 years ago. In the beginning phase it was really hard to sustain but now it has become easy for me to run this business. Now I deal with around 40-50 customers on daily basis. Even I also have 1 helper with me to assist me in my work and yes I am earning enough to sustain my livelihood and most important I am happy with my work.*

*A jewellery Shop-owner at New Arya Nagar*



**Image 13** : A Tibetan shop selling cloths and cosmetics (image source – primary survey)



Other, activities such as making and selling of traditional carpets, shawls, sweaters, winter-clothes etc. are the main activities of Tibetans in Delhi and in this term, it can be said they are great businessman. Although, the work of making and weaving of carpets, shawls, sweaters, winter-clothes and selling of these items has been distributed among women and men of the family. The women work is the making, weaving and suing of carpets, shawls, sweaters, winter-clothes and then the men work is to sell it is in the market, basically in his shop, to earn for his livelihood. In this term, it can also be said that there is equal participation of male and female in the Tibetan society (both male and female contribute in running the livelihood).



**Image 14:** A Tibetan shop selling traditional carpets (image source – primary survey)

Sometimes women also sell their weaved and sued carpets, shawls, sweaters, winter-clothes to the shop in Tibetan colony at low prices just to run their livelihood. From here, it can be observed that Tibetan owning a shop are earning comparatively higher and are having higher living standards as compared to Tibetans who don't own any shop.



**Image 15:** Two monks passing through the streets of Tibetan colony (image source – primary survey)

It has been seen at around 70% of the Tibetans in India have sweater selling business (CTA web-site). Although, recently new local business such as food stall and owning restaurant has also become a major earning source of livelihood of Tibetans in India such as in Tibetan colony of New Aruna Nagar. The average annual income of the Tibetan settler household is approximately INR 80,000 per annum with moderate variation across region. (CTA web-site). Not only there is Tibetan workforce present in Delhi but also there are several students and scholars living in the colony and are really pursuing higher education from various universities across the India in this sense it can be seen that even the Indian govt. is also promoting them to pursue higher education which really shows the govt. is putting its best to provide education to everyone living in country.

*CTA is really helpful as it is really trying to provide us education as well as shelter so that we can survive here although it is very difficult to live in an alien country with very less friends but really I appreciate Indian govt. and CTA for really making us feel safe and just like home. I am a worker at the garment shop in the Tibetan market and earn a decent amount of money so that I can run my livelihood which is most important (17 year, Resident at New Arya Nagar, Majnu-ka-Tilla)*



It has also been observed that there is no discrimination of any kind (caste, race, gender, etc) when it comes to earning for livelihood (economic activities) of Tibetans. Both male and female shares equal participation in the process of sustaining their livelihood. These activities are generally adopted by their personal motives and income perspectives i.e. workers(labour) will have their own personal motives and their motives will be far different from the individual who owns that business.



**Image 16:** A shop in Tibetan colony selling Tibetan traditional sarees and other traditional ornaments, (image source – primary survey)

The Tibetans who established in Delhi earlier have more expanded business activities compared to new Tibetan refugees. It can be noticed here that, Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) play a very influential role in the lives of Tibetan when it comes to economic activities. They not only provide funds but also economic assistance sometimes to the weaker section (financially weak) so that their livelihood can be sustained. CTA also provide unemployment allowance to the Tibetans who don't have any job or are unemployed. CTA plays a major role in crises period also to the Tibetans by proving them with funds and Financial help. CTA always supported the Tibetans in terms of economic, social, educational and other forms of needs.

*I am doing this business from 11 years and selling artefacts has become easy now earlier these are low in demand but now with changing time the demand also rose and now its easy to sell these show pieces and artifacts and earn decent amount of profits*

*(A shop owner of artifact selling shop, Majnu-Ka-Tiila)*



**Image 17:** A lady shop owner selling artifacts, ornaments to run her livelihood (image source – primary survey)

Crockeries, artifacts, show-pieces shops are also present in the Tibetan colony, these crockeries, artifacts, show-pieces are usually for decoration purpose and is really popular and possess a great demand among tourist and visitors. The customers(tourists) even use to come from different parts of India to buy all these products.





**Image 18** : showing a Tibetan tour and travels business, (image source – primary survey)

There is another business for which Tibetans living in New Aruna Nagar famous that is the business of tour and travels it is said to be one of the major occupations of the Tibetans living in Delhi. One more interesting fact is observed that is, the participation rate of Tibetan in formal sector especially in-service sector is very low this in result shows that Tibetans prefer business more than doing any service. The reason for not doing service may vary from individual to individual but from here it is clear more preference is given to the business in the Tibetan community.

*Tour and travels business really helped us with sustaining our livelihoods and making us more economically sufficient. I am in this business from last 7 years but now the scope is limiting because of online and the competition is also rising day by day*  
(A Tibetan tour and travels shop owner)

It is also been observed, that it was very hard for Tibetans to adjust to a unknown and new occupational pattern in a new country, but still, they have adopted to this really quick and now they are more stable as compared to past in terms of economic structure. Although most of the Tibetan migrants are engaged in the occupation which they were doing in their native country i.e. Business: sweater selling, shop keeping, restaurant owning etc, handicrafts (carpet weaving, wood carving, knitting, painting etc).



**New Occupation by Tibetan Youngsters In Delhi-** Teaching as a noble profession is another prominent profession chosen by university graduates. As the Tibetan saying goes, “**come to learn and go to serve**”. Most of the graduates prefer to serve in their community by imparting knowledge and enlightening the young Tibetan minds. Not only that, since Tibetans are refugees by nature, there exist a narrow job opportunity other than teaching or to serve in administration. As per the findings of Tibetan Demographic Survey 09, there are total of 2,352 teachers accounting for 7 percent of the entire working population with a greater number of male teachers. Statically, there are more numbers of male teachers with 1,254 as opposed to 1,098 female teachers.

**Cultural Practices by Tibetan Migrants-** Culture lies at the core of personal and collective identity and consists of both material and cultural practices. Cultural continuity is critical to their self-identity and helping in maintain their political identity as Tibetans in exile. The Tibetan people live together with mutual trust and faith. They want to live their life with peace, prosperity and non-violence. The social and cultural capital plays a very important role in the economic life of any diaspora, Tibetans are no exception. There is no established source of livelihood for Tibetans in Delhi, but it is interesting to see that they are very much socially combined with each other with proper social networking. While with the changing nature of time and space, Tibetan community started engaging in different works and followed different pattern required for their survival.



**Image 19:** showing the cultural practice of Tibetans (Source: CTA website)

**Tibetans Religion – (Dominated by Buddhism)** - Tibetan culture and identity is incomplete without mentioning the Tibetan Buddhism. Religious practice and Buddhist principles are a part of daily life for most Tibetans.

Monks and nuns play a major role in their communities, providing and propagating, guidance and education. They are often very active in protecting and promoting Tibet's environment, language and culture. Almost all Tibetans are deeply devoted to the Dalai Lama and his exile and treatment by the Chinese government are sources of grief and anger.

*Forty-seven-year-old, Ranzink Khunza (follower of Buddhism), while doing survey told the importance of religious teaching and Buddhism in his life.*

*He told that my religion (Buddhism) tells us the way to live life in a peaceful manner without harming anyone. And also teach us about the importance of salvation. Also mention about the role of Dalai Lama (spiritual leader) in his life.*



**Image 20** : showing Buddhist monks practicing yoga

Tibetans' allegiance to the Dalai Lama and to Tibetan Buddhism is seen as a danger to the occupying Chinese state and, as a result, all aspects of religious practice is closely monitored and controlled.

Simply possessing an image of the Dalai Lama can result in arrest and torture. Monks and nuns are frequently targeted by security restrictions and they make up a significant proportion of political prisoners in Tibet.

## Festival Celebrations By Tibetan Migrants



**Image 21:** showing the celebration of traditional Tibetan festival

Tibetans culture and their faithfulness can also be seen in the fact that they(Tibetans) celebrate all relevant days connected with Buddha's life and festivals celebrated by various sects of Mahayana Buddhism (various sects although a small minority are Muslims), the birthday of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, not only this, Tibetans also celebrates other cultural festivals which are uniquely Tibetan and connected with its agricultural calendar such as the New Year (Losar).

- Losar: Losar is Tibet's New Year which is celebrated in the month of February or March wherein the date corresponds to the first day of the lunisolar Tibetan calendar.
- Shoton: Shoton is celebrated to mark the end of the hundred day's summer retreat of all the monks. It commences with the unveiling of an embroidered 500-square meter portrait of the Buddha. After this, the people of Tibet indulge in dance, music, arts and gluttony which make it the liveliest festival of Tibet.

**The Bathing Festival:** The Bathing Festival is considered healthy to the body and lasts for a week starting from the 7<sup>th</sup> month of the Tibetan calendar. It is believed that during this time of the year, the water in Tibet is sweet, cool, soft, light, clean, clear and absolutely kind to the throat and the belly. All of Tibet participates in this festival to free themselves from any and all illnesses since the water is considered holiest during this time.



*Twenty-one-year-old, Jampa Rango, during survey tells the role of traditional Tibetan festivals in the lives of Tibetans and how they celebrate them with full enthusiasm*

*He tells about the Losar, Shoton, and other traditional festivals and how they have a important role in Tibetans life. Shoton a festival celebrated to mark the end of the hundred day's summer retreat of all the monks. And Losar a Tibetan festival as the Tibetan's New Year*

Important days such as 10<sup>th</sup> March is also celebrated to commemorate important political event such as the National Uprising Day and 4th July to commemorate the Four Rivers six ranges (Chushi GangDruk) movement. Many of them are aware and join in the national celebrations such as the Indian Republic Day (26th January), the Indian Independence Day (15th August), and the Birthday of Mahatma Gandhi (2nd October).

Festivals are a way of life for Tibetan migrants. They actively participate in all Tibetan festivals and celebrate life to the fullest. It is such jollity and enthusiasm that makes Tibetans remember their culture and traditions all the more.

**Role Of Monasteries in Life of Tibetans** - Not only in Delhi, but elsewhere in the world the role of monasteries is very important for Tibetans' livelihoods and to their culture. These monasteries possess a are very important religious and devoted life for the Tibetans in Delhi also. Also, theses monasteries play a very important role in their spiritual and devoted life journey.

Tibetans sincerely believe in Tibetan Buddhism and many families have their children become monks(Lamas) at a very young age. Religious faith is always the first and most important thing for them so that temples have earned a noble social status.

**Tibetan monastery architectures** are the places where local people hold religious activities and play an important role in their daily life. These temples have absorbed the essence of architectures and arts and become the precious treasures.

According to a study, Tibetans use to have a big monastery situated around their settlements, Same can be seen in the case of Delhi (Majnu-Ka-Tilla) also.

The monasteries also have language, character, poetry, medicine, and astronomy and calendar education. Tibetan Monasteries and temples usually take Cuoqing Hall and Dratsang as the center. The layout of the architectural complex is flexible and freedom.





*Image 21: Showing a Monastery in Majnu-ka-Tilla(Delhi) (Source: Primary survey)*

*Thirty-five- year-old, **Kunphell Ranzik** A monk living in Tibetan colony, Delhi , tells about the importance of monastery in the life of a Tibetan and how does it impacts their culture and lives.*

*Monasteries are the places known for their piousness and for peace. Also, a monastery is seen as the place of worship by Tibetans and really have a big role in the lives of Buddhist people. Most Buddhist people usually visit monastery at least once a week*

Monastery is seen as a pious place for prayer for Tibetans. It signifies the building, or complex of buildings, comprising the domestic quarters and workplace(s) of monastics, whether monks and nuns, and whether living in community. The monasteries provide of togetherness and commonness among their community people. These monasteries manifest a kind of cultural identities towards the Tibetans, all over the world. A monastery is usually similar to a Buddhist College. Except for religious activities, studying Buddhism is also a key activity in the monastery

*Forty-one-year-old, A local of Tibetan colony, tells more about the importance of Tibetan monasteries and how often he visits Tibetan monastery.*

*He said monastery are not only places of religious activities, but also a place of political, economic and cultural center. It really has a big importance in the life of a Tibetan, studying Buddhism is also a key activity in the monastery. He said mostly all Tibetans here visit monastery once a week at least.*

**Schooling System of Tibetans Migrants-** The unique Tibetan schooling system has ensured that all Tibetans learn to read and write their language and the establishment of monasteries and different Institutes for

perpetuating language and culture has ensured that Tibetan language flourishes in exile (Phuntsong, 1998). Most Tibetans who have been born and brought up in India have thus benefitted from some form of higher education and this also has influenced their interaction with the host community. Studies revealed a positive and strong correlation between educational status of a person and multilingualism, higher levels of local interaction, stronger economic participation, and greater social and cultural ties with the local residents.



**Image 22 :** *A Tibetan school (Image source – Internet-CTA)*

The heart of that effort is about 70 schools run by the Tibetan exile administration in India, which is home to the world's largest Tibetan refugee community. After the Dalai Lama fled to India following the 1959 failed uprising against Chinese rule, New Delhi allowed the setting up of separate Tibetan settlements and schools where a third generation of Tibetan refugees now study. These schools emphasize learning in Tibetan until grade three. All subjects from science to math and environmental studies are taught in the junior classes. A reading room is not just stacked with books translated into Tibetan children sit on the floor to peruse the books placed on low desks in keeping with Tibetan tradition. In an adjoining room, young girls and boys play music on traditional Tibetan instruments. Still hopes are high in the Tibetan community that those educated and brought up in India will carry the Tibetan influence and tradition with them outside.

*Twenty-five-year-old Tenzin Donzing migrated to New Zealand in 2012 with her family. In India recently on holiday, she said during survey that, she misses the Tibetan ambience in communities like Majnu-ka-Tilla. But the culture she assimilated as she grew up and studied in Dharamshala, the seat of the Tibetan government in exile, remains strongly with her.*

*"I really feel very sad that I can't see Tibet, but through the elder stories and through our teachers, when we learn Tibetan subjects we learn a lot of history and I do really feel very connected with Tibetan cultures and I do have some imagination how Tibet looks like surrounded by all mountains, all the monastery," she said.*

**Condition of Tibetan Schooling system in Delhi from A Teacher Perspective** (Based on Secondary Data) - Teacher Sonam Choedon at the Tibetan school in the Indian capital points out that Beijing has sharply scaled back the teaching of languages spoken by ethnic minorities. "In Tibet, now Tibetan language, Chinese they

are suppressing, even in class they are not allowed to talk in Tibetan," she said. "So to preserve our language here in exile, especially in school, everything we try to convert in Tibetan only." "With the unparalleled support from India we have from the ashes of destruction revived Tibetan civilization, rebuilt Tibetan Buddhism, revived Tibetan culture, and preserved and promote Tibetan identity in India," Lobsang Sangay, prime minister of the Tibetan exile administration, said recently at a "Thank You India" event held to observe 60 years of the Dalai Lama's arrival in India. The effort has made its mark. In Majnu-ka-Tilla, the Tibetan settlement where the New Delhi school is located, prayer flags are strung across a central square, maroon-robed monks light candles inside a Buddhist temple, old and young come to turn a prayer wheel and Tibetan food is commonly available. Nearby Tibetan handicrafts made by those who know the craft are sold. Language is generally the essential toolkit for both expressing and perpetuating a culture and inextricably connected with affirmation of distinct ethnic identity (Anderson, 1983). Survival and adaptation to new cultural contexts and integration in a community is evident in the adoption of language of the hosts and the everyday use of Tibetan dialects and languages and their literary perpetuation and expression especially among the refugees and their first-generation immigrants. (Arora, 2011) They used and were fluent in their own Tibetan dialect, and with variability were fluent in Hindi and English. Learning Hindi language is essential for their economic and social survival and communication with the host community and tourists visiting India. While, the younger generation both men and women who have benefitted from the modern schooling system are quite fluent in the English language.

The issue of culture is also very huge challenge for them. The second and third generations Tibetans are basically dwelling in heterogeneous cultural setting where they used to interact with the different cultural background people. They are regarded India as their second home and for Tibetan is alike an imaginary land. Therefore, the recognition of their culture, language and the social-acceptance are important for them.





**Image 23:** Showing Buddhist monks passing through the streets of Majnu-ka-Tilla

At his most recent appearance at the event to mark his 60 years in India, the Dalai Lama again stressed the importance of saving Tibetan culture. "We are not demanding separation from China but the Tibetan people should have the autonomy to preserve their culture, language, environment and religion," he said. And many like principal Tsering, hope one day to carry the cultural roots they are so carefully nurturing in India to the homeland they fled or never saw. "We have truth, one day we go back to Tibet, I just believe that," he said

**Food habits of Tibetans Migrants in Majnu-ka-Tilla-** Human diet and eating habits differ in quantity and composition in space and time. Although much of this variation may be due to availability of food in a particular area, there is the intriguing possibility of selection of certain classes of food or adaptations of dietary habits, which help in acclimatisation to a given environment.

Keeping this view in mind, the purpose of the present study to examine the food habits and to assess the impact that how a particular food habit dominates in a particular culture and has impact on it.

**Outcomes After Conducting Survey** - The present survey was conducted among the Tibetan refugee population, of New Aruna Nagar more commonly known as Majnu-ka-Tilla or Tibetan colony of Delhi. A total of 50 respondents have been surveyed randomly in the selected area. The adult of these selected households was interviewed using a questionnaire schedule. The information on the kinds and frequencies of food eaten by subjects were collected.

**Food Habits of Tibetans** - As, we know Tibetans belong from very high-altitude areas but Delhi being a low altitude area also made a very immense impact on their Traditional dietary habits which is been practiced in Tibet. The diet of the high-altitude people is rather a tedious one as the ecological conditions permit only a limited variety of plants to flourish and make rising of poultry or livestock extremely difficult. Consequently,

the source of food (nutrition) of these people is limited (Gupta, 1998). As reported (Bell, 1928), the common diet of the native Tibetans like most of the highlanders, comprised of high animal proteins and fat. The staple diet of an ordinary Tibetans in Tibet was yak's meat, mutton, barley-flour, cheese and invariably butter tea. Along these items, especially the rich Tibetans or those who dwelled in the lower altitudes in Delhi (Majnu-ka-tilla) consumed few vegetables and fruits.



**Image 24:** showing Tibetans having Tsampa (their traditional diet)

The main staple food, **Tsampa** (Tibetan toasted flour) was made from barley. Wheat and maize were also eaten in the survey region. Most of the Tibetan migrants preferred three regular meals in a day. The first meal was taken in the morning usually with tsampa soup, sometimes with roasted soybeans pieces of chura (dried cheese), butter and occasionally with dried meat and tsilu (dried fat). They took hot buttered tea with the soup.

The major meal of the day was served at noon and dinner was always light. The Tibetan migrants in Tibetan colony confined themselves to eating mutton and pork as much as necessary.

They refrained themselves from eating water born animals such as fish, crabs, shrimps and various other seafood. They believed it was sinful to kill an animal with full of life.

Drinking tea was almost a habit with the Tibetan migrants. Most people drink tea throughout the day when they were at home. They prefer mostly drinking butter-tea.

Traditional butter tea or sweet tea was served in small or large thermo flux because both give their best smack when served hot. The local habit of drinking tea had a relation with the local food composition.

*Twenty-five-year-old, Tanzin ronza told that butter was one of the main dairy products of Tibetans. He said Tibet my native country, is a country where cattle form the principal livestock.*

*Understandably, milk and milk products were plentiful and cheap there. Fat products like butter also keep the body warm and help to fight against cold climate. But here in India, we have to buy it from local shops*



**Image 25:** showing Tibetans traditional diet thukpa

As a continuation of their traditional food habits in most of the cases the migrant Tibetans in India prefer to take tsampa in the morning and rice as a meal with dal (pulse) and vegetables in the afternoon.

Chapatti- flat bread made of flour, is the other staple diet used in place of rice. Thukpa (noodle soup with vegetables and meat) is one of the favourite dishes among the Tibetans. They prefer to take thukpa in dinner. Tibetan migrants always like to have food with spices like fried green chilies or a paste of red chilies.

All members of the family in their daily life also frequently consume **chhang** freely. It has social and religious value as it is taken especially during marriage ceremonies, religious functions and other ceremonial festivals. In the Tibetan society women generally consume chhang during the festivals. Ara, a spirit distilled from rice, maize, wheat or barley, is also widely favored. Doma or betel nut is offered as a customary gesture of greetings





**Image 26:** showing Tibetans traditional sweet tea or sugar tea

The new generation of the migrant Tibetans generally prefer to drink **sweet tea**, which is prepared by mixing milk and sugar with boiled fermented tealeaves. It serves as the refresher. But aged people still prefer butter tea more out of their old habit than anything else.

**Dietary habits of a Tibetan Monk – A different approach-** Monks are some of the most revered members of Tibetan society. They are viewed as the ultimate source of spiritual guidance, and - with their radiant beauty, and abundant, youthful energy - the pinnacle of optimal health. For this latter reason, it is often found that even those who do not subscribe to any particular religious faith are longing to emulate these holy men. And since ***we are what we eat***, we're digging into the details of a traditional Tibetan monks' diet in an effort to become more like these men we hold in such high esteem.



**Image 27: A Buddhist monk having their food (source-Internet)**

Tibetan monks are known to eat a diet high in vegetables and fruits, limiting their intake of proteins, fats and starches. Eat the bare minimum, only enough to meet the body's needs. For this reason, healthy individuals who have their nutrient requirements met go without these richer foods for periods of time, only returning to consuming them when need be.

Typical staples of a Tibetan monk's diet include salads, beans, lentils, noodle soups, and stir-fried or steamed vegetable dishes. Simple and always seasonal, as they believe that which is presently growing on this earth is the exact food we are meant to be eating at this time of year for optimal nourishment.

**CONCLUSION-** The Tibetans in India are considered an exile diaspora having a very unique strategy in their adaptation and livelihood in the alien land (India). Although, there are many Challenges relating to their roots as well as to the existential socio-cultural and economic issues but that what makes the Tibetan community unique. Based on both primary (qualitative observation) and secondary (existing literature) sources of data, it has been seen that the social as well as economic capital plays a very important role in the life of the Tibetans. Unlike us (Indians), they have no established source of livelihood or access to public services owing to their refugee status. However, due to strong social and cultural bond, they are able to engage in informal economic activities. Occupations such as handicrafts, carpet making, woollen-making, traditional arteries, ethnic food-costumes and ornaments businesses, travel and restaurant business etc. are the major sources for their livelihood. It has also been seen that these Tibetan migrants also sometimes face socio-economic and political deprivation due to different reasons.

But still it has been observed that Tibetans migrants living in New Aruna Nagar (Majnu ka Tilla) are quite satisfied with the provision of necessary facilities for the health and education of their community. They have also adopted some of the food habits, dressing sense, and languages of the India which really

helped them in surviving with some minimal socio-economic integration while on the other hand they also retain and perpetuate their Tibetan language and culture which ensured that they have integrated or assimilated into Indian society. Routary (2007) has analyzed Tibetans' effort to protect their religious and cultural system on one hand and their modernization efforts on the other and significance of almost zero opposition by India to their cultural practices.

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