

TIBETANS IN KASHMIR; A COMPERATTIVE STUDY BETWEEN OLD AND NEW GENERATION*

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Abstract:

This paper attempts to explore the comparative notion of home from the perspective of the old and new generations of Tibetans living in Kashmir for the last fifty years. The small group of people, the Tibetan Muslims in Kashmir, have been living in Hawal and Eidgah area of Srinagar and battling with the nuances, ambiguities, and inevitable 'othering' tags of dissimilar identities for quite long. The Kashmiris consider this community as Tibetans. However, before 1959 when they were living in Lhasa, they were considered Muslim foreigners. On the other hand, the community itself emphatically believes themselves to be Kashmiri and consider the Kashmir as their motherland. In Old generation some wishes go back to their homeland and considered Kashmir as their second home are less in numbers, and battling for identity more as compared to new generation who are on the road of development and moving forward shows getting assimilated into local culture as place of birth matters. But due to limited availability of assets and problem of unemployment are the biggest obstacles to their social mobility and identity as their identity mainly depends on policies of local government in terms of domicile rights, attitude and equal opportunity in all walks of life and less depends on how their ancestors reminisces the houses where they had once lived as political baggage of the past is not shared among the younger generation nor they are connected to Tibet and Tibetan political movement. With the equal opportunity in all walks of life and domicile rights the new generation can rebuild their lives and future and can resolve their identity crisis in Kashmir.

Key words: Tibetans, Exile, Kashmir, identity, Policies and unequal opportunities.

1.Introduction

According to historical documents, spice merchants from Kashmir visited Tibet around 12th century AD. They settled there, married Tibetan women and converted them to Islam. Very few people in Kashmir know that the community commonly perceived as Tibetans in Kashmir are originally of Kashmiri descent. Lacking the official state subject status Indo-Tibetans are living as semi-refugees in their own land since their return. In Tibet we were called Kashmiris. In Kashmir we are called Tibetans," says one Tibetan. Their ancestors had gone to Tibet for trade purposes and settled there. As time passed by they formed their own identity distinct both from Kashmiris and Tibetans. Indo-Tibetans returned to Kashmir in 1960, leaving a Tibet invaded by China.

The migration was not smooth. India secured their migration from a reluctant Chinese government on the basis of Kashmir origin of these families. Official communications between India and Chinese government reveal that India

produced a list of 129 Muslim families of Kashmir origin, who were then repatriated from Tibet in 1960. In Srinagar they are housed in colonies at Hawal and Eidgah. Today there are 236 families. (Kashmir newz, Reclaiming their Kashmir identity: A story of Indo-Tibetans). This community is easily distinguishable from the rest of Kashmiris. Speaking broken Kashmiri, carrying Mongoloid facial features, adorning a unique culture and dresses are their apparent personality traits. People usually speak Tibetan at home with each other. Even children born here are socialized in the Tibetan language. Apart from this, men, children, young women and young girls speak Urdu as well. Elderly women speak also a bit. The educated stock which is not too much in number also speaks English and can write and read in Urdu to a great extent. Their marriages, festivals, and other rituals are distinctly Islamic, but this community is in a transition. Their new generation is highly receptive to prevalent changes in lifestyle. In spite of merging with Kashmiri culture and ethos for decades now, the Tibetan Muslims have maintained their identity. Their Kashmiri names and surnames like Trumboo, Malik, Bhat, and Shah etc. have not diluted their distinct Tibetan cultural identity. However they yearn for domicile status in the state. They are marrying Kashmiri and Ladakhi girls to avail state benefits.

2.Literature Review:

Nawal Watali(29 June 2018): in his The duality of identity: Tibetans in Kashmir and Kashmiris in Tibet. This article is about the identity of Tibetan Muslim in Srinagar. The Kashmiris consider this community as Tibetans, however before 1959, In Tibet they were called as "khache" meaning Kashmiris, a term later used for all Muslims. The community itself claims to be Kashmiris and they consider the place as mother land. The relationship between Kashmir and Tibet goes back to 13th century, when traders from Kashmir visited and worked in Tibet and settled there. The only evidence of their Kashmiri identity is a white paper issued by the government of India in which they recognize Kashmiri Tibetans and Ladakhi Tibetans as citizens of India. However the people rely on the oral tradition passed on through generations about their roots to Kashmir. In Little Tibet in Our Backyard: Understanding 'Tibetan' Muslim Identity in Kashmir the Farrukh Faheem briefly highlights Tibetans and Kashmiri linkage and identity.

3.OBJECTIVES OF PAPER

- 1. How do the old generations of Tibetans express themselves? To make a comparative study between old and new generations with regards Kashmir as their home at all or not.**
- 2. How does the new generations of Tibetans in Kashmir express themselves and seeks to understand whether they feel at home in Kashmir(or not)?**

4.UNIVERSE OF STUDY

The universe for this study is the Tibetan colony in Hawal and also carried out research in Tibetan public school District Srinagar. Some 120 families are believed to have migrated from Tibet, and at present there are about 270 families settled in these three localities Hawal, Eidgah and Gulshan Mohalla of Makhdoom Sahab which make up a population of about a thousand people. Around 143 households were granted small quarter like houses at Hawal in 1985 and later in Gulshan Mohalla in 2004 where present research was carried out.

5.Source of Data:

- Primary Source
- Secondary Source

6.Sampling

The total sample of the study is 20, on the basis of judgment sampling. 10 were taken from old generations of Tibetans between 50 onwards and 10 were taken from Tibetan public school in hawal under the age group age 16-20.both girls and boys were taken randomly and Structured interview was followed. The detailed of sampling population are given below in pie chart.

Analysis and outcomes

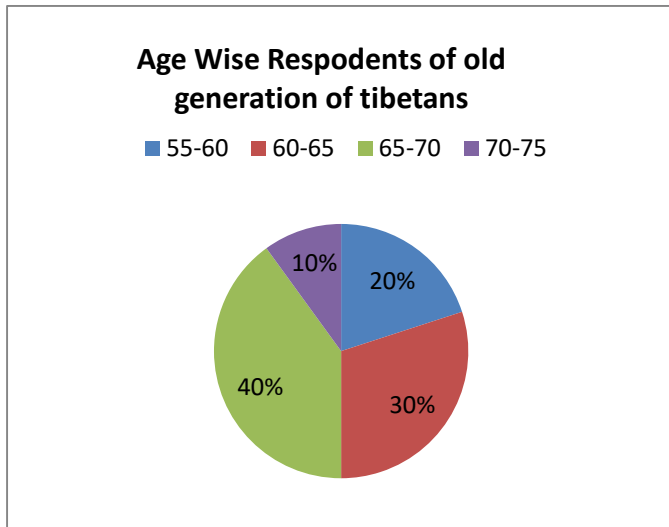


Table No.:01

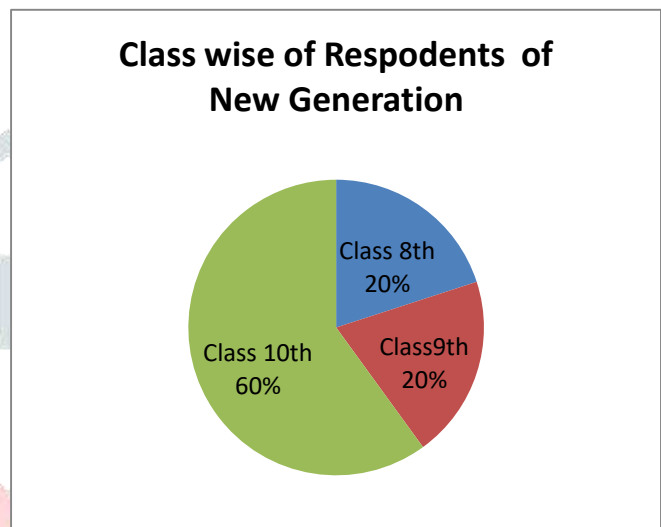
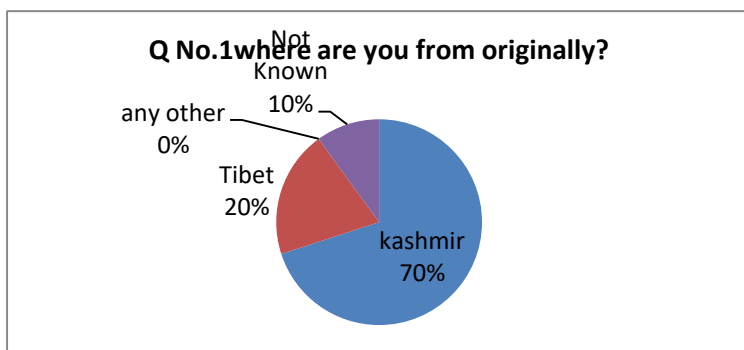


Table No.:02

7.KASHMIR AS SEEN BY THE OLD TIBETAN GENERATION:

The old generation reminisces the houses where they had once lived, the food they used to eat, the clothes they wore, their occupations, prayers, and the festivals they celebrated but they believed that Life was not easy back in Tibet. They miss the Tibet all the time become visibly emotional recalling their times in Lhasa. One respondent state I wish we could go and see our Lhasa one day again,” Some of them believes that they were originally from Kashmir. “We are basically Kashmiri, but people still call us Tibetans which hurts us. Moreover the old generation battling more as compared to new generation with the ambiguities of identities and worries for their future generation due to limited availability of resources and opportunities. They shows predilection to permanently settle down in Kashmir and not shared political baggage of the past to younger generation. Number of question has been asked to them and their responses were analyzed and are reflected in given pie charts.

Table no.:3

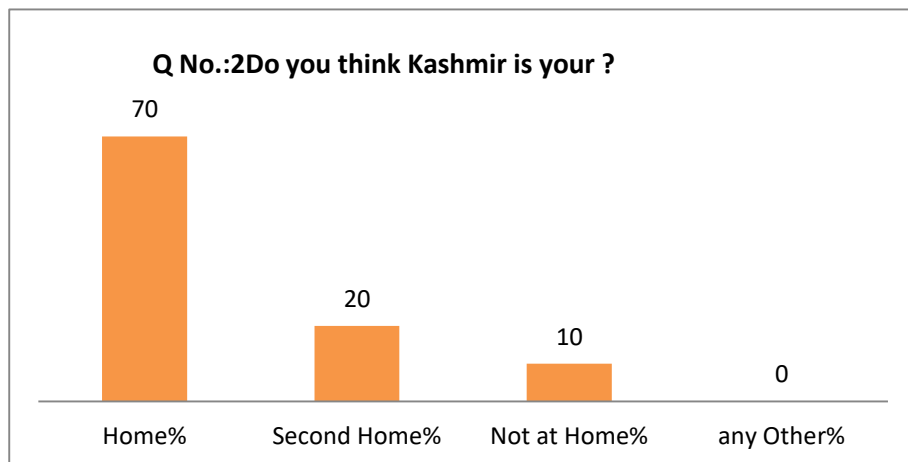


Source: Primary data:

The above table shows that out of 10 respondents from old Tibetan generation 70% would believe that they were originally from Kashmir. Like one respondent a resident of Hawal Said We are basically Kashmiri, but people still call us Tibetans

which hurts us,". As per oral history and narratives, Islam reached Tibet some 1000 years ago by a group of Muslim traders from Kashmir. These traders settled there, married Tibetan women and converted them to Islam giving rise to a growing Muslim community in the land of Lamas around Lhasai. During the critical period in 1959, when China occupied Tibet, the Tibetan Muslims organized themselves and approached the Indian mission in Lhasa to claim for Indian citizenship, referring to their Kashmiri ancestry and to escape Chinese tyranny.

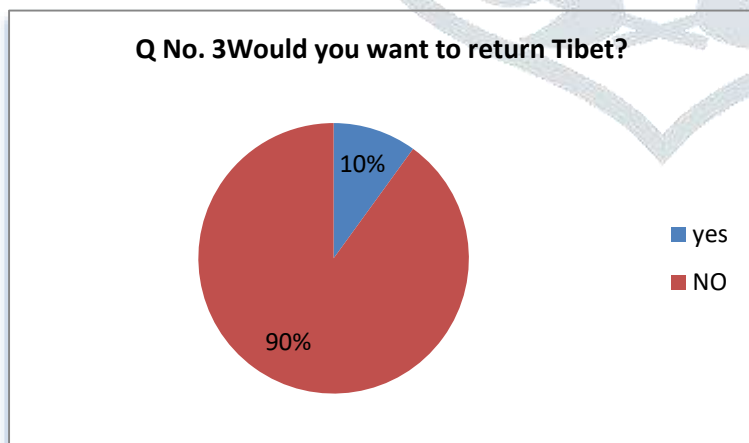
Table No.:4



Source: Primary data:

The above table shows out of 10 respondents from old Tibetan generation 70% think of Kashmir as their home land. 20% think of Kashmir as their second home and only 1(10%) respondent think of Kashmir as not home at all. This reveals that old generation is still battling the ambiguities of identity crisis and wants to resolve it for future generation by grating domicile rights.

Table No.:5



Source; Primary data

The above table shows that out of 10 respondents from old Tibetan generation 90%(9) would not prefer to go back except 1(10%). One respondent name withheld states he wishes to go back where he was born due to alienation and unequal treatment in land of kashmir

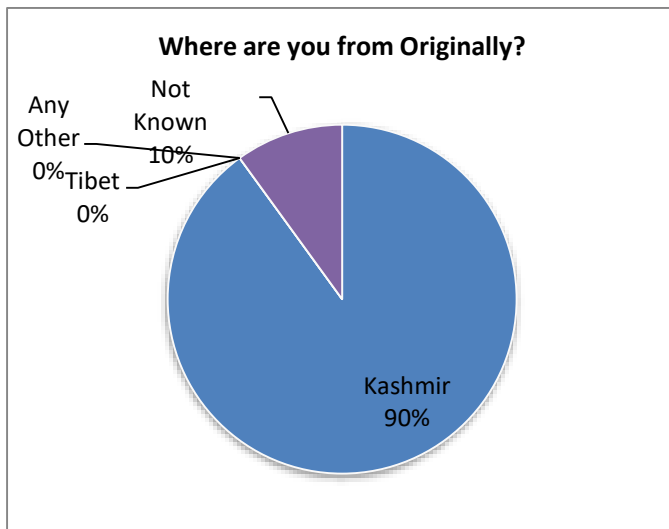
8. Kashmir as seen by new Tibetan generations:

The same questions have been asked to new generation Tibetans in Kashmir and responses were different from old generation. The following factors are cause for different responses.

- a. Place of Birth.
- b. Shows fast assimilation in local culture.
- c. Political baggage of Tibet is not shared to them.
- d. Disconnected to struggles for liberation of Tibet.
- e. Looking forward to survive and live comfortably in Kashmir and to make a prosperous future for themselves.

The analysis of responses is given below in pie charts and was compared with old generation subsequently.

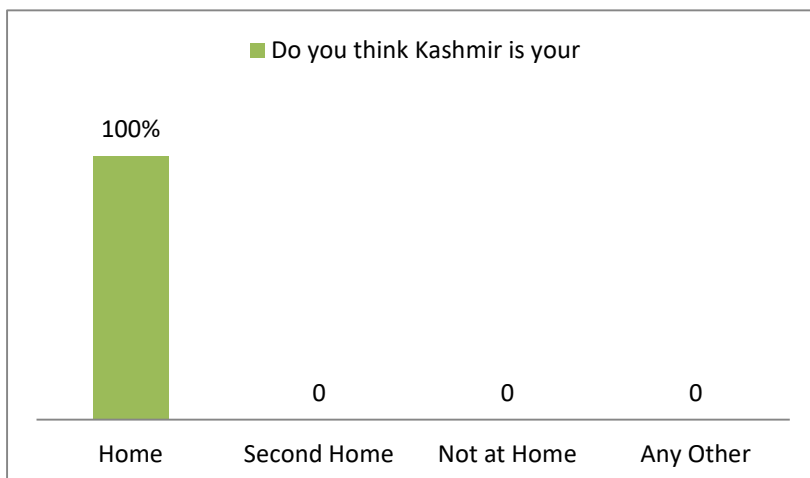
Table:06



Source: Primary data:

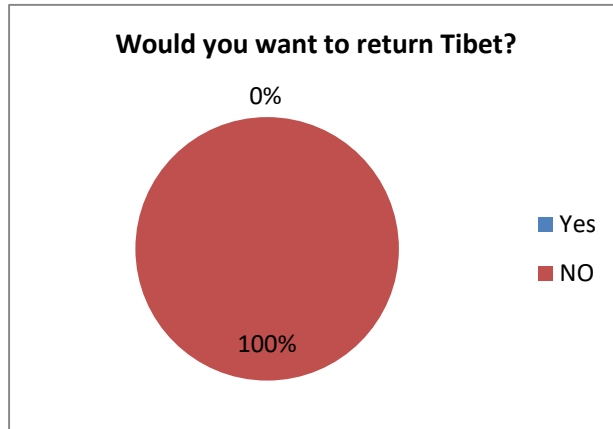
The above table shows that out of 10 respondents from new Tibetan generation 90% would believe that they were originally from Kashmir and nobody believes Tibet as their place of origin as 20% old generation would believe. It shows that the identity of new generation shifted mainly into a certain degree of place of birth, making it different from their traditional old generation identity. Moreover, the 10% new generation responded with not known is mainly because of availability of limited resources and unequal opportunity.

Table No.:7



Source: Primary data:

As compared to 20% old generation who believe Kashmir as their second Home. This table shows out of 10 respondents from new Tibetan generation all think of Kashmir as their home land. No one think of Kashmir as their second home or not home at all. It is because of assimilation in local culture, place of birth and disconnected from the Tibetan nostalgias and Political movement.

Table No.08**Source; Primary data**

The above table shows that out of 10 respondents from new Tibetan generation no one wants to go back anywhere. The new generation is on the road of development and moving forward shows getting assimilated into local culture. But due to limited availability of assets and problem of un-employment are the biggest obstacles to their social mobility and their identity.

9. Comparative Study Between Old and new Generation.

The political baggage of the past is not shared among the younger generation. The only purpose of their life is to survive and live comfortably in Kashmir and to make a prosperous future for themselves. The younger generation respondents have been born and brought up in Kashmir considered Kashmir as their ist home and don't want to go anywhere, as compared to some respondents from old generation who consider Kashmir as their second home or not at home and wants to go back as they seems emotionally connected to their born place. Like one respondent state that they prefer to go back Tibet becomes visibly emotional recalling their times in Lhasa yet but the children of new generation, born here although time of birth matters as well is socialized in the Tibetan language besides, they speak Urdu and are in a position to speak Kashmiri to a great extent and have developed a good comprehending power of Kashmiri language. Tibetan educated youngsters and school children have developed English comprehending power as well. Compared to old generation, new Tibetans is on the road of development and moving forward. The basic tool which has led to the social mobility of new Tibetans is education and new jobs like textile business, teaching etc. It cannot be wrong to say that due to the problem of inadequate and insufficient resources of income, limited availability of assets and problem of un-employment are the biggest obstacles to the social mobility of new generation Tibetans in Kashmir. Apart from the limited resources Most of the Tibetan Kashmiri families have embedded Kashmiri ethos in themselves and the Tibet political issue is hardly finds any resonance among

new generation as compared to old generation. A Group of Tibetan teenagers reply when asked about the return to Tibet as "Even if tomorrow Tibet might be liberated from China, we will stay here only we are Indian nationals and wishes to stay in Kashmir forever . as compared to old generation 20% still believe Kashmir as their second home and Tibet at first but the identity of new generation shifted mainly into a certain degree of place of birth, making it different from their traditional old generation identity.

10.Conclusion:

The central aim of this article has been to highlight the inadequacy of the nature and character of Tibetan identity in old and new generation in Kashmir and In the course of analysis of data, however, several constructive views have been emerged. Like Despite the fact they make strong identification with Kashmir and majority of Tibetans believed they were originally belongs to land of Kashmir and wants to live here feels alienated in terms of limited resources and opportunities Because the state government refuses to grant them permanent resident certificates, although they have lived in the state for more than 60 years or their whole lives. The old generation reminisces the houses where they had once lived hardly impacts the new generation as political baggage of the past is not shared among the younger generation neither they are connected to Tibet in any fashion. It has been observed that by granting equal opportunity in all walks of life will induced the new generation rebuild their lives and future in Kashmir but without it they might like of some old generation feels Kashmir as their second home and get indulged in low self-esteem ahead as One of respondent of new generation states we are counted, possess voter identity cards and cast votes as well, but without equal opportunity hurts us. Not being able to own land or property and job in government services make them feel alienation is the biggest challenge for new Tibetans. No doubt they are on the road of development and moving forward shows getting assimilated into local culture but it cannot be ignored that their identity and self-esteem depends less on how their ancestors reminisces the houses where they had once lived rather than the policies of local government in terms of domicile rights, attitude and equal opportunity.

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