



FAMILY STRUCTURE OF TIBETAN COMMUNITY IN KASHMIR VALLEY

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ABSTRACT: the Tibetan community residing in Hawal-Badamwari, Eidgah, and Gulshan Mohalla areas of srinigar Kashmir fled Tibet (their homeland) in three stages; first in 1959, then in 1980 and later in 1996 due to certain unfavorable circumstances that prevailed. The following case study/ journal unravel their arrival in the valley, their lifestyle, their family structure, modes of marriage, their kinship, social stratification etc. The Tibetan Community is devout Muslims. On contrary to the other citizens, they face certain remote problems including hygiene, higher education scarce, unemployment and other social struggles. The family functioning and its structure as is reflected in the title is the major field of interest of the following research paper. What the future holds for the said minority community is discussed as well.

INDEX TERMS: Tibetan community; Diaspora; Refuge; Family structure; Social Stratification; Kashmir; Endogamy; Knitting and embroidery; Chubba; Thuppa.

INTRODUCTION:

The Tibetan Diaspora is a term used to refer to the communities of Tibetan people living outside their original homeland of Tibet. Tibetan emigration has three separate stages. The first stage was in 1959 following the 14th Dalai Lama's escape to Dharamshala in India, in fear of harassment from the People's Liberation Army. The second stage occurred in the 1980s, when China opened Tibet to foreigners. The third stage began in 1996 and continues today although with less frequency. Not all emigration from Tibet is permanent; today some parents in Tibet send their children to communities in the Diaspora to receive a traditional Tibetan education. The 2009 census registered about 128,000 Tibetans in exile, with the most numerous part of the community living in India, Nepal, and Bhutan. However, in 2005 and 2009 there were estimates of up to 150,000 living in exile. The Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) provides a Green Book - a kind of Tibetan identity

certificate - to Tibetan refugees. Based on a CTA survey from 2009, 127,935 Tibetans were registered in the Diaspora: in India 94,203; in Nepal 13,514; in Bhutan 1,298; and in rest of the world 18,920. However, their number is estimated at up to 150,000, as mentioned by both Edward J. Mills et al. in 2005 and by the 14th Dalai Lama in 2009. The larger of the other communities are in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Norway, France, Taiwan and Australia.

The Tibetan Muslims, also known as the Kachee, form a small minority in Tibet. The Tibetan word Kachee literally means Kashmiri and Kashmir was known as Kachee Yul (Yul means Country). Tibetan Muslims are mostly the descendants of the Muslim merchants and traders of the neighboring countries of Tibet who settled in Tibet between the 14th and 17th centuries. The Muslim merchants visited Tibet in connection with trade and later married Tibetan women, who adopted their religion, their children adopted the Tibetan dialect and absorbed much of the Tibetan customs and traditions at the same time followed the religion of their parents. There were about 3000 Muslims in the U- Tsang province and a substantial number in the Kokonor region of Amdo province before the Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1959.

Tibetan Colony of Kashmir is still a mystery for most of the Kashmir's. Many people do not know much about them. After converting to Islam, these people migrated to Kashmir from Tibet around 1960, and are since then called as 'Tibetans'. They settled in Srinagar city in the areas of *Hawal, Eid-Gah and Gulshan Mohalla of Makhdoom Sahab*, the place now known as the 'Tibetan Colony'. Some 120 families are believed to have migrated from Tibet, and at present there are about 270 families settled in these three localities, which make up a population of about a thousand people. With typical Mongoloid features, these people have still held onto their culture. Their food comprises of famous Momo, Thukpa, Chowmein and their women wear 'Chub'-a gown and they speak mostly in their mother tongue Tibetan. They relish these symbols of their identity. Every household has varied items of Tibetan origin like utensils, fabrics, carpets or wool. Majority of these people are associated with the business of embroidery, hosiery or tourism. These people are hardworking and honest, which has earned them good reputation among other communities. Due to lack of state domicile they have to face many problems like problem related to education, employment in governmental institutions lack of any specific reservation, low income and poverty, problem of land etc. Though many studies have been carried upon the Tibetan Diaspora, hardly any attention has been paid to this vulnerable and forgotten community who still live the life of miserable and alienated beings. Sociologically, this community is worth studying for their culture and traditional philosophy. They are however despite all these hurdles moving forward and struggling with the conditions to improve their selves in Kashmir.



STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The main focus is to know about the ‘family structure of Tibetan Diaspora in Kashmir’. It is important to illustrate who Tibetans are. Since China occupied Tibet in 1950 and claimed that Tibet was part of the “motherland”, more than 130,000 Tibetans have crossed the Himalayas and traveled through Nepal to arrive in the neighboring country of India. Tens of thousands of Tibetans are also to be found in Nepal and Bhutan, as well as in other parts of the world. Tibet, known variously as “Shangri-La” or “Paradise on Earth”, had a legacy of independence dating back 2,000 years, with the exception of the 13th and 18th centuries. The people formed a unique culture of their own, on the basis of the religious teachings of the Buddha. Also known as the “Roof of the World”, Tibet is a vast plateau between India and China, 13,000 feet above sea level, with 2.5 million sq km of area, surrounded by the Himalayan, Kuntun and Karakoram ranges. It consists of three provinces: U-Tsang (Central Tibet), Amdo (Northeast Tibet) and Kham (Southeast Tibet). The people of Tibet maintain that Tibet has historically been an independent country. This assertion is made on the basis of the many discernible differences between the Han Chinese and the Tibetans. The distinctions are on the basis of language and race. Thousands of Tibetans escaped to India, either out of loyalty to the Dalai Lama or out of the fear of persecution at the hands of Chinese forces, for the most part, they followed the old trade routes through Bhutan and Nepal. These routes were later brought under the control of the Chinese border guards to stop the Tibetans from escaping into India. If caught, the Tibetans were either sent back home or sent to prison. Due to these developments, they started going through paths which were twisted with difficulties. The Government of India was highly supportive and helped them in resettling into various parts of India. Like Kalimpong, Sikkim, West Bengal and Darjeeling.

It is believed that the arrival of Arabs, Turks, Ladakhi's, Nepalese, and Kashmiri's, etc lead to spread of Islam in Tibet. Merchants from Kashmir entered Tibet in around 12th century A.D, settled in different areas, married Tibetan women and converted them to Muslim faith. Tibetan Muslims believe that they the descendants of the Muslim merchants and traders of the neighboring countries of Tibet who settled in Tibet between the 14th and 17th centuries. Tibetan community in Srinagar is a homogenous community, consisting of 220 families and settled in three communities in Srinagar, Viz. *Idgah, Hawal-Badamwari, and Gulshan Mohalla*. This community escapee from Lhasa in late 1959, a group of about 70 families, moved to Kashmir calming Kashmir to be their ancestral land, which is not proved yet.

The topic chose for project work is family structure of Tibetan Diaspora in Kashmir. Family in simple words is a group of people related to kinship in which adults assume responsibility for the care and upbringing of their natural and adopted ones. Tibetan families are both joint and nuclear. Many of the families are joint where parents live with their married children's. Most of families are nuclear also. They marry amongst themselves; very few marriages have been outside their own community. Most of the families are patriarchal and men hold the power. The organization of family is based on traditional Tibetan culture. The Tibetan families had a tight bound with each other because of isolated from community. They help each other whenever they are in need during happiness and sorrow. Women usually do domestic work and take care of their family but in present time they also prefer to educate their girls so that they become aware about their rights. The Tibetan families are so much religious and almost all families adhere Sunni faith. They do things according to their Tibetan culture because of attachment with their culture.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Attempts were made to present the available review of literature on Tibetan community in systematic chronological order. The reviews are from different dimensions like that of socio-demographic studies, health aspects, educational scenarios, ethnographic studies on Tibetans, democratization of exile administration, Tibetan's identification and so on. The available reviews on the literature which is relevant to the present study are presented in this section.

Maulana Abu Bakr Amirudin (1979): even though a considerable amount of work on Tibetan Muslims is scare, the work of Maulana Abu Bakr Tibeti namely "Tibet Aur Tibeti musulman". This work is available in Urdu and was published in 1979. (Nami Publishing Press). This work deals with Tibetan Muslims in general, their history, causes of migration and social crises faced by Tibetans at the hands of Chinese in and around 1959.in addition it mention even the problems faced by the community in the new settlement.

Mahmoudi K.M (1992) explored on "Refugee cross-cultural adjustment: Tibetans in India". The study gives a view about refugees in general with more focus on Tibetan refugees in India. It stated that Tibetan in exile have adjusted well in their host country with diverse culture and ethnicity. The paper further pointed out that, it was mainly because of Tibetan's rich culture and Buddhist practice, which in turn has helped them to adjust in the new environment. In sum, Tibetans in exile are often referred as a model for other refugee's community.

Chimni (1994) analyzed on “The legal conditions of the refugees in India”. The study revealed that in year 1992, there were nearly 400,000 refugees in India from eight different countries. In particular, the second largest refugee group after Sri Lankan Tamils is Tibetan Refugees with 100,000 in India. These groups of refugees also come under same treatment as Non-Refoulement principle. Even though Tibetan Advocates for genuine autonomy under Chinese rule, but still to some extent the very presence of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and his followers have become political issues between Indo-Chinese relationships. It observed that Tibetans were given special treatment on par with other refugees’ community in India. On agriculture field, Tibetans were provided with agricultural land on lease based for their resettlement. They were provided with free education up to higher secondary by government of India. The study mentioned that Tibetans are legally registered refugees with freedom to move freely throughout India and free to engage in various economic activities for their livelihood. Conclusion of the study stated that equal treatment should be given to all refugees in India.

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

The objectives of study are as follows:

1. To develop the profile of the Tibetan families in Srinagar.
2. To study about the family structure of the Tibetan community in Srinagar.
3. To know about the condition of women in family.
4. To know about who hold the authority in the family.
5. To know about the economic condition of the families.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH: Research is a careful investigation or inquiry specifically through search for new facts in any branch of knowledge. The term research is combination of two words- Research. Re means again and again, search means to find out something. Research can simply be defined a task of searching from available data to modify a certain result or theory. Some people consider research as a movement, a movement from known to the unknown.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: it is a way to systematically solve a research problem. It is a science of studying how research is done scientifically. Essentially it is the procedure by which the researcher goes about their work of describing, evaluating and predicting phenomenon. It aims to give the work plan of research. It provides training in choosing methods, materials, scientific tools and techniques relevant for the solution of the problem.

Research methodology refers to:-

- A systematic study
- Defining a problem
- Formulating a hypothesis
- Collecting and analyzing data
- Deductions and conclusions

UNIVERSE: while preparing a sample design, it is required to define the set of objects to be studied. Technically it is known as universe.

UNIVERSE OF STUDY: The universe of study was three communities in Srinagar, Viz. Idgah, Hawal-badamwari and Gulshan mohallah. The area chose for study was Hawal-Badamwari. There are almost 80-90 families in Hawal area and i interacted with them and gather information. The aim of study was to know all about the family structure of the community. About 20 to 30 families were chosen for study and collect information about family structure.

SOURCES OF DATA

The required data were collected from both primary and secondary sources.(Primary data are those which are fresh and first time used) The primary data were collected from direct interaction with families during field study.

(Secondary data have already been collected by someone else). The secondary data were collected from reports, journals and use of internet.

RESEARCH TYPE

The type of research conducted / used for the field study is exploratory research design.

EXPLORATORY RESEARCH DESIGN

This research is mostly carried out when there is not sufficient information available about the issue or topic to be studied, or the researcher has either no knowledge or limited knowledge.

Exploratory research design is taken to find different kinds of information of family structure of Tibetan community. It helps in exploring the finding of the families which studied. Exploratory research design was adopted i.e. to gather preliminary data of the respondents selected for study. The aim of the study was to know about family structure of community, control over authority, status of women in family etc.

SELECTION OF SAMPLE

Out of three communities in Srinagar i.e. Idgah, Hawal-Badamwari, and Gulshan mohallah the Hawal-Badamwari were selected for sampling and respondents were chosen randomly. So the Hawal-Badamwari becomes the sample size. For field study Random Sampling was done.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Here is a migrant community which has come from Tibet and has settled down in Kashmir and claim that they are basically kashmiri Muslims because they claim that their ancestors were basically belonging to Kashmir. These people have developed new economic, social and religious activities. The topic I chose for study was family structure of Tibetan community in Hawal area Srinagar and the findings of the study are as follows.

FAMILY: family is a group of people, related by kinship or similar close ties, in which the adults assume responsibility for the care and upbringing of their natural or adopted children. “family is a group of persons united by ties of marriage, blood or adaptation; constituting a single household; interacting and communicating with each other in respective special roles of husband and wife, mother, son and daughter, brother and sister; and creating and maintaining a common culture”(Burgess and Locke). The family organization is not independent in it but is connected to a wider social network. Historically and comparatively, there have been wide variations in the family form. In order to analyze differing family arrangements we use the key notions of the (Joint family) and (Nuclear Family). The joint family refers to a group of people, related by kinship, where more than two generations of relatives live together or in very close proximity, usually forming a single household. The nuclear family comprises merely parents and their dependent children.

FAMILIES OF TIBET: Tibetan families are both joint and nuclear. As far as the concept of family is concerned Tibetan after marrying their children's suggest them to live separately, they mostly prefer to live in nuclear family right after the marriage. The main reason for this is that they have scarcity of place. They can't accommodate big family in a single house so they prefer nuclear family. But it is not the cases with all but mostly it happens. Most of the Tibetan families are patriarchy and men are usually the heads of the family.

MARRIAGE IN FAMILIES

The practice of Tibetan marriage is quite different from Kashmiri. Kashmiri have the custom of give and take. Right from engagement of a Kashmiri girl to a Kashmiri boy, the custom of give and take gets started. But it is not the case with the Tibetans, engagement ceremony is very simple bride and her family is gifted with clothes with not high rate and the time gap between the day of engagement and the marriage is not so long. During this period no give and take process takes place between the families. The bride grooms family does not demand for dowry or other things but bride's parents' gives according to desire whatever they want. They usually perform endogamy and hardly go for exogamy with Kashmiri people. On the marriage ceremony invitation is given to both the girls and boys relatives at the same place and the marriage is being celebrated. Whatever the expenditure is that is given half by bride's parents and half by bride grooms parents. Caste and class had hardly importance in the selection of brides and grooms. Marriages by choice, love marriages are also conducted. According to them late marriages are not prevalent but at adequate age youth are married.

RITUALS OF FAMILIES

If we talk of marriage rituals, they have different rituals from Kashmiri's they said that there was no Mehendirat celebrated before they came to Kashmir. After now they celebrate Mehendirat. In Kashmir after marriage bride comes to her home after seven days but Tibetan people does not perform such ritual and Kashmiri bride comes for delivery purposes

to her parents home but Tibetan bride does not come, she performs all the rituals in the bride grooms house.

FESTIVALS OF FAMILIES

They are the Muslims but they said that they celebrate only two festivals i.e. Eid-ul-fitar and Eid-ul-zuha. The way of their celebrating the eid is different from the Kashmiri Muslims, they believe that kashmiri people spend much money on different things unnecessarily especially on bakery. They spend very little money and prepare bakery on homes for eid and other food items, while as the other are same they wear new clothes, Eidi etc.

KINSHIP TERMINOLOGIES OF FAMILIES

The kinship ties among the Tibetan families are very strong. They call different relatives by different names which are different from Kashmiris like

Father- Abala, Mother- Amala, Chacha- Chachala, Chachi- Chachila Masi- Sumbala, Mama- Mamala, Mami- Mamali.

OCCUPATION OF FAMILIES

The main occupation of the male Tibetan is embroidery work and the female Tibetan is knitting. They do not go for government services because they have the problem of state subject, so this is main occupation of families. They do embroidery and knitting and after completing these things sell into the market and earn money from that.

SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

Among Kashmir's there is a concept of social stratification but among Tibetan families there is no such stratification concept. Everybody is treated equal, there of no concept of low and high.

LITERACY AND EDUCATION AMONG TIBETAN FAMILIES

In previous times the literacy rate was low but it has increased said the families. They give equal preferences to boys and girls education and treat them equally. But they don't prefer their children's to give higher education because they feel that it will be simply wastage of time as well as money. Because they feel that higher education is being given for higher job. But they can't get job here one because they don't have state subject and the other thing is that there is scarcity of jobs in Kashmir.

MIGRATION

They claim themselves to be Kashmiri. They said that around 1959 when china ruled over them, they migrated to Kashmir in 1961 because they claim that there were Kashmiri who used to come to Tibet for trading purposes and then they married there with Tibetan women and then they left Tibet and come back to Kashmir and after that they never returned.

RELIGIOUS PRACTICES OF FAMILIES

They all have same religion i.e. Islam, they have 100% faith on God. All the Tibetan families are Hanfia. They do not go to shrines like dargah etc. They are stanch religious believers.

CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT

There has been a tremendous changes and development in the life of Tibetan families. When they migrated from Tibet they used to live in the tents having no basic facilities like food, water, electricity. But with the will of almighty and by the help of Sheikh Abdullah, buildings were constructed for them and basic facilities were made available to them and today they live a luxurious life having all the facilities.

PROBLEMS OF TIBETAN YOUTH

The basic problem of the Tibetan youth is the scarcity of jobs, they don't get job so that is why they don't go for higher education. Another thing is that there is scarcity of land so they don't have much space to do something for business.

HEALTH AND HYGEINE OF FAMILIES

They said that they don't have any medical facility available nearby; they have to move to other hospitals for treatment purpose. They claim that there colonies are not cleaned properly in spite of paying per month to the sweeper.

CULTURE OF FAMILIES

They have almost changed their culture and have adopted culture of Kashmir like they have adopted the celebration of Mehendirat, wazwan, dress pattern and even language. They used to wear Chubba dress by both the males and females but they wear clothes as same of Kashmiri people. The brides at the time of marriage still wore chubba and bride groom wear coat pent. But old people still wear Tibetan dress i.e. chubba.

LANGUAGE OF FAMILIES

They usually speak five languages i.e. Tibetan, Urdu, English, Kashmiri and Ladakhi. They speak usually Tibetan language when they interact one another. The new generation is now speaking Kashmiri and don't have any problem while interacting with Kashmiri people.

FOOD HABITS

They have the same food habits as that of the Kashmiri like rice, tea, wazwan etc. the few food items which are different from the Kashmiri people is thupa, momos and chowmin. But now the Kashmiri people also like to eat this food items.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion it can be said that the Tibetan families since their migration have changed and flourished in the Kashmir. They established their roots in the Kashmiri soil and obtain a place for residing. They have advanced economically, educationally and socially. Talking about the religious aspects of life of families, they seem to be religious by refusing superstitious and other practices like going to shrines etc. The women of families seem to be more secured socially as well as economically because they do participate in strengthening the respective economy of their homes by knitting and selling these products in the market. The Tibetan families have not only retained the good aspects of their culture but also adopted Kashmiri culture as well. The families have maintained the language of Tibet and at the same time learned other languages like Kashmiri, Urdu etc. The stratification in this community is very smooth. These families have totally ignored the concept of give and take and also of the dowry system. From the above discussion it is clear that families have embraced Kashmiri as well as Tibetan culture and are cherishing the said.

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