Sense of belonging among Tibetan refugees in India:

A case study of the Bylakuppe settlement in Karnataka State

Anne Grent (5908051)

Utrecht University

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Supervisor: Dr. A. Bailey

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A. Grent
Student number: 5908051
Master thesis International Development Studies (GEO4-3509)
Faculty of Geosciences
Utrecht University
Supervisor: Dr. A Bailey
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E-mail: anne_grent@hotmail.com

Cover photo: Monks & Rickshaw, Tibetan Colony in Bylakuppe, Karnataka, India (Photo: Marc Ducrest (2005))

Abstract

This study examines the Tibetan refugee diaspora's sense of belonging towards Indian society. A large number of Tibetans fled from Tibet after the Chinese People's Liberation Army crushed a Tibetan uprising in the spring of 1959. The Tibetan refugee settlements were meant to be temporary and as such they were organised as separate from Indian society. However, as Tibetans have been living in exile for nearly 60 years, the dream of a free Tibet seems to be waning and an increasing number of Tibetans has been born in host country India. In this light, the question arises how Tibetan refugees perceive their own situation in India, specifically how they feel towards Indian society. This study examines this question by examining the Tibetan's sense of belonging through four main topics, namely receiving society receptivity, social capital, economic integration and exposure to the host society. The study conducted thirty-nine in-depth interviews with refugees in the Bylakuppe settlement, in addition to participant observation and photography. The findings of this study indicate that Tibetan refugees arguably have developed a sense of belonging towards Indian society to some degree, for example through positive perceptions of the social climate and socio-economic success. However, obstacles such as perceived discrimination and a limited language proficiency in the local language Kannada prevent a feeling of complete belonging. In order to reduce these barriers, policy recommendations include creating awareness of Tibetans among Indian citizens and enhancing knowledge of Kannada.

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Tenzin Tsundue – The Tibetan in Mumbai

The Tibetan in Mumbai
is not a foreigner.

He is a cook
at a Chinese takeaway.
They think he is Chinese
run away from Beijing.

He sells sweaters in summer
in the shade of the Parel Bridge.
They think he is some retired Bahadur.

The Tibetan in Mumbai
abuses in Bambaya Hindi,
with a slight Tibetan accent
and during vocabulary emergencies
he naturally runs into Tibetan.
That's when the Parsis laugh.

The Tibetan in Mumbai
likes to flip through the MID-DAY,
loves FM, but doesn't expect
a Tibetan song.

He catches the bus at a signal,
jumps into a running train,
walks into a long dark gully
and nestles in his kholi.

He gets angry
when they laugh at him
"ching-chong-ping-pong".

The Tibetan in Mumbai
is now tired,
wants some sleep and a dream.
On the 11pm Virar Fast,
he goes to the Himalayas.
The 8.05am Fast Local
brings him back to Churchgate
into the Metro: A New Empire.

Tsundue (2018)

1. Introduction

Worldwide, 68.5 million people are forcibly displaced (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2018). In pursuit of safety from violent conflict or persecution, these people are forced to seek shelter in other parts of their country, neighbouring countries or countries further beyond (Van Hear, 2006). Although predominantly the refugee flows towards the West seem to attract most attention, many of these flows take place in the Global South as well. An increasing number of people flee from some of the world's least developed countries to other developing countries (UNHCR, 2016).

For most refugees, their displacement is an enduring reality. Two-thirds of all refugees in the world face protracted displacement, which entails that they have been displaced for over three years; half of all refugees have been living in exile for over ten years (Crawford, Cosgrave, Haysom & Walicki, 2015). Some of these people live in refugee camps, which are temporary settlements built to accommodate refugees (UNHCR, 2018).

One group of people that has faced protracted displacement for a particularly long time is the Tibetan refugee diaspora, of which the largest share has resided in the neighbouring country India for 59 years. After the Chinese People's Liberation Army crushed a Tibetan uprising – a result of a decade of coercive Chinese communist state policy and constant human right violations in the Tibet region (Anand, 2003) – an estimated 80,000 Tibetans followed their spiritual leader, the 14th Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso, in his flight into India. Consequently, Tibetan refugees were accommodated in refugee settlements all over India and largely still reside there (Ahmad, 2012; Smith, 1996).

1.1 Problem statement

Tibetan refugee settlements were initially designed with the expectation that the exile would merely be temporary (Palakshappa, 1978). However, the protracted stay of Tibetans in India has led to an increasing realization that the dream of a free Tibet is in jeopardy and presumably far from realization (Ahmad, 2012; Anand, 2000). This is reflected in the standpoint of the Dalai Lama, who does no longer demand a free Tibet but considers it to be more realistic and materially beneficial for his people to stay within China with genuine autonomy (Piltz, 2006). Meanwhile, Tibetans remain officially stateless as they are not recognized by the People's Republic of China – currently governing the Tibet region as a part of China – nor have documents of any other country. This has limited many Tibetans in practicalities such as

travelling or career opportunities for a prolonged period of time (Falcone & Wangchuk, 2008). Could their precarious status and rather dim prospects result in attempts of Tibetan refugees to attenuate their separation from Indian society?

Additionally, the Tibetan refugees as well as the Indian government consider it desirable to keep the settlements separated from Indian society for the sake of preservation of Tibetan society and culture (Palakshappa, 1978). However, this is likely to become more challenging as the decades pass. An increasing number of Tibetans has been born in exile, which entails that more and more members of the refugee diaspora have never been to Tibet themselves and only get to know their homeland and culture through the stories of others (Falcone & Wangchuk, 2008; Prakash, 2011). Swank (2011) argues that whereas much of the older generation has continued many of the everyday practices of Tibet, most youth embrace the fashion, music and language of urban Indian youth. Along these lines, Falcone & Wangchuk (2008) pose the question: “Can a shelter ever become home?” (p.164)

1.2 Research questions and objective

This study aims to gain in-depth knowledge on individual perceptions of Tibetans in exile regarding the ways they feel or not feel ‘at home’ in India. As sense of belonging can be defined as a “personal, intimate, feeling of being ‘at home’ in a place”, it offers a suitable concept to study this topic (Antonsich, 2010). The research location for this study was the Bylakuppe settlement in Karnataka State, located in the South India, as it is the first and one of the biggest settlements in the country (Prakash, 2011). This study aims to answer the research question *“What perceptions do Tibetan refugees in India have about their sense of belonging towards Indian society?”*

While conducting a literature review on the concept of the sense of belonging, the following subtopics were identified as relevant: ‘receiving society receptivity’, how the host country welcomes and treats immigrants (Hou, Schellenberg, & Berry, 2017); ‘social capital’, immigrants’ social networks (Hou et al., 2017); ‘economic integration’, immigrants’ participation in the receiving society (Hou et al., 2017); and ‘exposure to host society’, contacts immigrants have with the majority group of the host country (Amit & Bar-Lev, 2015 & Hou et al., 2017). From this theoretical framework, which will be discussed further in the next chapter, the following sub-questions were derived:

1. How does the Tibetan refugee diaspora perceive their reception by Indian society?
2. In what ways do Tibetans in exile form social relations with both Indian nationals and other Tibetans?
3. In what ways does the Tibetan refugee diaspora experience economic participation in Indian society?
4. How do Tibetans in exile perceive their role in Indian society?

1.3 Relevance

1.3.1 Scientific relevance

The steady increase of migration is a central phenomenon in contemporary society. Migration is no longer limited to flows of people from the south towards the north and west, but also occurs between the south and east (Papastergiadis, 2018). This results in a growth of diasporas in both the North and the Global South, creating a need to understand them more thoroughly (Ahmad, 2012).

This study will result in a more comprehensive understanding of diasporas by examining the concept of the sense of belonging. Whereas belonging has been seen as an important aspect in academic literature since at least the 1950s, scholars have only recently started to examine the concept of the sense of belonging (Hou et al., 2017). Raijman & Geffen (2017) argue that further examination of a sense of belonging would complement our understanding of diasporas.

In addition to an improved understanding of diasporas in general, this study will specifically contribute to the understanding of the Tibetan case. Scholars have thus far predominantly focused on Tibetan social and cultural practices. Arpi (2011) argues however that there is a need for new perspectives on Tibetan culture and civilization. This study offers such a new perspective by focusing on the relations between Tibetans in exile and their Indian social environment, which is often neglected by scholars (Lau, 2010). Lau (2010) contends that this aspect is highly significant for the understanding Tibetans have developed of their own position in the Indian context. Similarly, Chen (2012) states that it is important to highlight exiles' feelings for local places in India itself, instead of merely focusing on the sentiment towards their homeland. By focusing on this new perspective, this study will also provide insights for future research on Tibetans in relation to their Indian localities.

1.3.2 Developmental relevance

The migration-development nexus has become a major focus for development policy since the turn of the millennium (Sinatti & Horst, 2015). Global migration has increased tremendously due to processes such as globalization and industrialization, as well as various push and pull factors, such as economic and religious uncertainties and digital communication. Therefore, diasporas will remain a topic on the international development agenda in the upcoming years (Ahmad, 2012). Relatively little is known about diasporas, making it difficult for policy makers to understand how diasporas affect and are affected by their policies (United Nations, 2008).

Regarding the increase of migration, more comprehensive knowledge of refugee settlements will be beneficial for the international development agenda. Every day, 44,400 people are forced to flee from their homes due to conflict and persecution, often ending up in refugee settlements (UNHCR, 2018). More knowledge about these settlements can be a tool for both governments and non-governmental organizations to structure their refugee policies and (international) aid.

1.4 Thesis outline

This thesis begins with outlining a theoretical framework, elaborating on important concepts for this study. Subsequently, these concepts are translated to a conceptual framework. Then, the sense of belonging among migrants in the Western, Asian and Tibetan context will be discussed in the literature review section, followed by an overview of the regional context of Tibetans in India, whereby specific attention is paid to the context of the research site Bylakuppe. Thereafter, the methodology chapter aims to clarify how the results of this study were acquired and what the risks and limitations of the research are. The consecutive empirical chapter encompasses a comprehensive presentation of the data. Finally, the chapter of the discussion and conclusion will discuss the findings relevant to the research questions, will answer the main research question and offers some reflections regarding the study.

2. Theoretical framework

Butler (2001) and Bruneau (2010) both argue that diasporas should be assessed in the context of the host country. In this regard, this study will focus on the sense of belonging of the Tibetan diaspora towards Indian society. This chapter will outline a theoretical framework by first elaborating on several complementary definitions of (refugee) diaspora. Subsequently, the relevance, definition and conceptualization of a sense of belonging will be discussed. This will be the basis of the conceptual framework in the next chapter.

2.1 Refugee diasporas

Since the second half of the twentieth century, there have been various interpretations of diaspora as a concept. Originally, diasporas were merely viewed in the context of the Jewish dispersion after 586BC (Anand, 2003). More recently, the term diaspora increasingly shares meaning with communities once categorized as immigrant, refugee and exile (Butler, 2001; Tölölyan, 2000). Sheffer (1986) provides a contemporary definition of the term by stating that "Modern diasporas are ethnic minority groups of migrant origins residing and acting in host countries but maintaining strong sentimental and material links with their countries of origin – their homelands" (1986, p.3). In addition, Butler (2001) argues that a community can only be termed a diaspora if there is a minimum of two destinations after dispersal, there is some relationship to an actual or imagined homeland and there is consciousness of an overall ethnonational group.

As the broad concept diaspora encompasses a rather large cluster of people, which makes the term lose its ability to distinguish phenomena (Brubaker, 2005), it is useful to apply the more specific term *refugee diasporas* to this study. In this study, refugee diasporas are considered to be different from other types of diasporas, as members of a refugee diaspora were forced to leave their homeland. Members of a refugee diaspora can be defined as people who have consolidated themselves in their territories of refuge due to persisted displacement (Van Hear, 2006).

Further distinctions of diasporas can be made by categorizing the concept into “state linked diasporas” and “stateless diasporas” (Sheffer, 1986, p. 122). State linked diasporas entail all those which are linked to societies of their own ethnic origin and that constitute a majority in established states. In contrast, stateless diasporas include those groups of dispersed people who have been unable to establish their own independent state.

Finally, Patterson & Kelley (2000) contend that diasporas can be analysed as both a condition and a process. Analysing diasporas as a condition implies an emphasis on the

structural features of an exile population, such as gender and religion. In contrast, analysing diasporas as a process implies a focus on lived refugee experiences, which are constantly in the making. As a condition, diasporas are viewed by scholars to have a static identity, whereas as a process, exiles can shape their identities.

2.2 Sense of belonging

Several scholars have emphasized the relevance of belonging for human development. Maslow (1954), for instance, highlights the concept as a basic human need in the third layer of his famous hierarchy of needs. In addition, Kestenberg & Kestenberg (1988) regard the importance of a sense of belonging beyond the scope of the individual by stating that "As the child grows, he develops a sense of belonging not only to the family, but to the community, the nation, and a cultural group" (p. 536).

When defining a sense of belonging, it is important to distinguish it from the concept of belonging. Belonging can be defined with three meanings that the Oxford Dictionary gives to the concept, as highlighted by Yuval-Davis (2003): (1) "to be a member (of a club, household, grade, society, state, etc.)" (p. 129); (2) "to be resident or connected with" (p. 129) and (3) "to be rightly placed or classified to fit in a specific environment" (p. 130). A sense of belonging, however, is defined by Hagerty, Lynch-Sauer, Patusky, Bouwsema, & Collier (1992) as "the experience of personal involvement in a system or environment so that persons feel themselves to be an integral part of that system or environment" (p. 173). Antonsich (2010) specifies this by defining a sense of belonging as a "personal, intimate, feeling of being 'at home' in a place" (p. 645). In addition, Fenster (2005) discusses the process in which a sense of belonging is established. He reasons that accumulated knowledge, memory, and everyday corporal experiences create attachment and sentiments to a place. A sense of belonging changes with time as these daily experiences increase. For instance, participants in his research described daily rituals as walking their dog as contribution to their sense of belonging. Thus, whereas belonging highlights a multi-dimensional membership component (Yuval-Davis, 2003), a sense of belonging emphasizes a more affective dimension (Hagerty et al., 1992).

This descriptive nature of the sense of belonging is interesting, but needs to be conceptualized in order to be studied effectively within academic research. According to Hagerty et al. (1992), the empirical referents – phenomena that show the presence of the concept – for a sense of belonging would be: (1) "statements from the person that he or she feels valued, needed or

important with respect to other systems or environments" (p. 175); and (2) "statements from the person that there are shared or complementary characteristics that promote a sense of fitting with other systems or environments" (p. 175). In more recent work from Hou et al., (2017), four aspects regarding a sense of belonging can be derived: receiving society receptivity, exposure, economic integration, and social capital. Each of these aspects contains several indicators by which immigrants' sense of belonging can be influenced. The four aspects are discussed below and to get a more comprehensive view of the concept, the framework of Hou et al. (2017) has been complemented with work of other scholars.

Firstly, the aspect of receiving society receptivity indicates how the host country welcomes and treats immigrants (Hou et al., 2017). Perceptions of the social climate about immigrants in the host country and perceived discrimination are commonly used indicators. The development of a sense of belonging is generally being discouraged by discrimination and a negative social climate towards immigrants (Antonsich, 2010; Hou et al., 2017).

Secondly, social capital refers in this regard to immigrants' social networks. Their sense of belonging can be influenced by the features of these social networks. Commonly used indicators are bonding and bridging social networks. Hou et al. (2017) state that bonding social networks – "ties with other members of same immigrant or ethnic group" (p. 7) – may strengthen immigrants' identification with the source country. In contrast, bridging social networks – "relationships beyond a tight-knit community" (p. 7) – may enhance sense of belonging towards the receiving society. Additionally, Raijman & Geffen (2017) contend that contacts with members of the host society facilitate and strengthen ties to the new home.

Thirdly, Hou et al. (2017) contend that economic integration offers a reflection for immigrants' participation in the receiving society. Commonly used indicators to measure this aspect are economic outcomes and socio-economic position. The sense to belong is arguably being enhanced by socio-economic success (Amit & Bar-Lev, 2015). Conversely, immigrants' sense of belonging decreases when there is a loss of status compared to pre-migration socio-economic position, unemployment or poverty (Hou et al., 2017).

Lastly, exposure to the host society emphasizes the contacts immigrants have with the majority group of the receiving country. Generally, a stronger sense of belonging towards the host country occurs when immigrants are more exposed to the host society. Important indicators are: proficiency in the host country's language, age at immigration, tenure in the country and commitment to remain in the host country (Amit & Bar-Lev, 2015; Antonsich, 2010; Hou et al., 2017; Raijman & Geffen, 2017). Proficiency in the language of the host country is important for the immigrants' feelings of attachment towards the new society, as

language is both a symbol of national identity and cultural solidarity. Moreover, language facilitates the immigrants' emotional identification with the host society, as it enables the transmission of cultural heritage (Raijman & Geffen, 2017). Regarding age at immigration, Raijman & Geffen (2017) argue that sense of belonging towards to receiving country is more evident in immigrants arriving as children or young adolescents – whose socialization proceeds in the new country – than as adults. Besides, tenure in the country is important as the exposure often increases when immigrants reside for a longer period in the host country. Although it should be noted that the presence of a large immigrant enclave may decrease the exposure but can provide support and prevent from marginalization (Hou et al., 2017). Additionally, more commitment to stay in the host country for a longer period generally motivates immigrants to develop a sense of belonging (Amit & Bar-Lev, 2015).

Moreover, cultural norms, values and practices – broadly defined as the manifestation of a culture (Zimmermann, 2015) – influence the concept of the sense of belonging as well. According to Vora (2008), culture is considered central to belonging. Weedon (2004) elaborates on this by arguing that belonging is influenced by what one has in common and what differentiates one from others. Thus suitable indicators to measure this topic would be cultural similarities and differences.

3. Conceptual framework

The previous chapter elaborated on (refugee) diasporas and the factors and indicators that influence the sense of belonging of their members. From this theoretical framework, the conceptual framework depicted in figure 3.1 is derived.

The conceptual framework consists of the factors 'receiving society receptivity', 'social capital, 'economic integration' and 'exposure to host society'. These factors directly influence the sense of belonging of Tibetan refugees. Cultural norms, values and practices of the refugees have an influence on the factors, the sense of belonging, as well as the process between the two. The definition and operationalization of these concepts can be seen in table 3.1

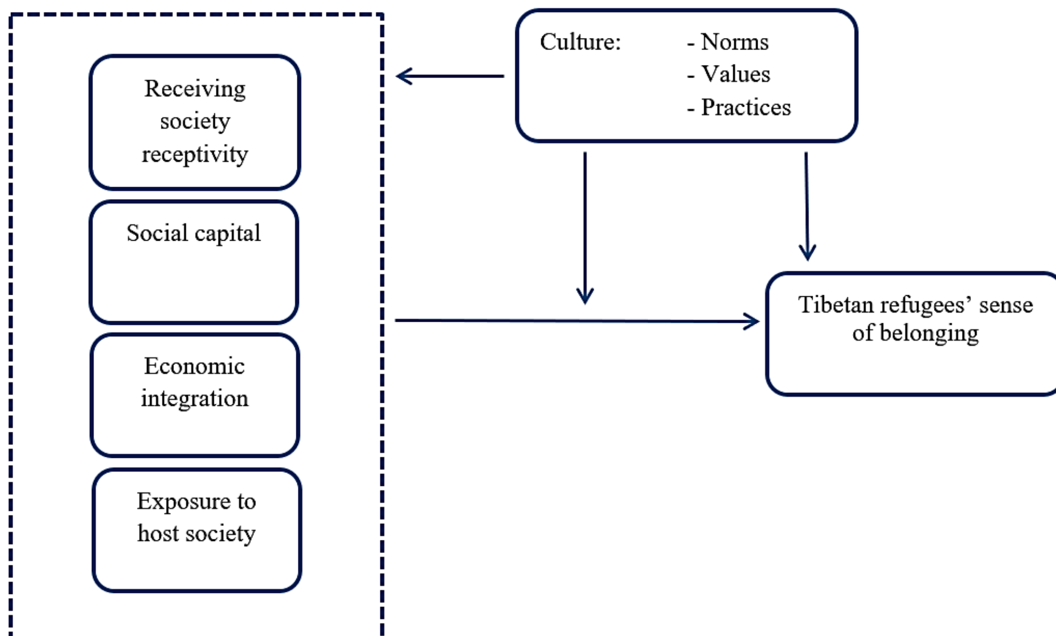

Figure 3.1: Deductive conceptual framework for research on sense of belonging (Source: Based on Hou et al. (2017), Antonsich (2010), Amit & Bar-Lev (2015) and Raijman & Geffen (2017))

Table 3.1: Definition and operationalization of concepts

Concept	**Definition**	**Operationalization**
Sense of belonging	"Personal, intimate, feeling of being 'at home' in a place" (Antonsich, 2010, p. 645).	- Receiving society receptivity - Exposure - Economic integration - Social capital - Cultural norms, practices and values *[Operationalized further at concepts below]*
Receiving society receptivity	How the host country welcomes and treats migrants (Hou et al., 2017).	- Perceptions of social climate towards immigrants in host country - Perceived discrimination
Social capital	Immigrants' social networks (Hou et al., 2017).	- Bonding social networks - Bridging social networks
Economic integration	Reflection of immigrants' participation in the receiving society (Hou et al., 2017).	- Economic outcomes - Socio-economic position
Exposure to host society	The contacts immigrants have with the majority group of the receiving country (Hou et al., 2017).	- Proficiency in the host country's language - Age at immigration - Tenure in the country - Commitment to remain in the host country
Cultural norms, values and practices	The manifestation of a culture (Zimmermann, 2015).	- Cultural similarities - Cultural differences

4. Literature review: The sense of belonging among migrants in the Western, Asian and Tibetan context

This chapter will first shortly set out some studies on the sense of belonging among international migrants in the West, before summarizing studies that are focused on the Asian context. Subsequently, studies focusing on the sense of belonging among Tibetans in India will be discussed. However, it should be noted that little literature specifies on the sense of belonging of (refugee) diasporas in particular. Consequently, the first two paragraphs of this literature review are mainly based on studies regarding the overarching category of migrants.

Antonsich (2010) states that there is a tendency of scholars to focus on belonging as a synonym of collective identity or citizenship, instead of as an emotional feeling of being at home in a place. This is, for instance, also true for the study of Siu (2001) on the Chinese diaspora in Costa Rica, which claims that it is through the process of claiming political-cultural citizenship in the country of residence that one's belonging increases. However, as this research has a focus on sense of belonging – thus the affective aspect of belonging – this literature review will focus on studies that consider this concept in particular.

4.1 Sense of belonging among international migrants in the West

Hou et al. (2017) found that post-migration experiences – e.g. receiving society receptivity – and immigrant entry status – e.g. age at immigration – affect immigrants' sense of belonging in Canada. The results of their study show that 93% of all immigrants had a strong sense of belonging towards Canadian society. As Hou et al. (2017) offer a recent and comprehensive model for studying the sense of belonging, a considerable share of the theoretical framework of this thesis is derived from their study.

The factors identified by Hou et al. seem to be confirmed by multiple other studies. For instance, an empirical study of Kaptani & Yuval-Davis (2008) on the Kosovan, Kurdish and Somali refugees in East London showed that there was a stronger sense of belonging in the British society when they had built a professional life, instead of merely being engaged in casual work. Also, the study of Archambault & Haugen (2017) on refugee children in Norway shows through narratives of refugee children that a stronger sense of belonging occurs when children share common interests with the majority. Conversely, feelings of non-belonging are created by boundaries, such as a different language or way of dressing. By emphasizing economic participation and language acquisition (an indicator of exposure to

society), these studies partially substantiate the claims made by the conceptual model of this thesis.

4.2 Sense of belonging among international migrants in Asia

Several studies on the sense of belonging among migrants in Asia also support the conceptual model of this thesis. For instance, the importance of social networks is emphasized in the studies of Lam & Yeoh (2004) and Murris (2014). Lam & Yeoh (2004) studied the way Chinese-Malaysian trans-migrants in Singapore perceive the concepts of home and national identity. Their results show that over a third of the respondents define home in terms of social relations, which entail family ties and social networks. In addition, the study of Murris (2014) on belonging in Malaysia within two generations of Chinese Malaysians emphasizes the relevance of the generational aspect in these social relations. The results of this study show that youth construct their own sense of belonging and ethnic identification in interaction with family and peers.

Furthermore, the importance of receiving society receptivity is enhanced by the studies of Schram (2009) and Raijman & Geffen (2017). Schram (2009) studied the children of Bhutanese Lhotshampa refugees in Nepal and their attachment to their homeland. This study concludes that their feelings of homelessness were enforced through discrimination by local Nepalese locals. Similarly, the study of Raijman & Geffen (2017) on the sense of belonging of post-1990 immigrants in Israel emphasizes that sense of belonging to Israeli society seems partly determined by the ways in which immigrants perceive how Israelis define them – as either a member of the majority group or as a member of an ethnic group.

Interestingly, whereas in the Asian context there seems to be an emphasis on the aspects of both social networks and receiving society receptivity, the studies on the Western context focus more on economic participation and exposure to the host society.

4.3 Sense of belonging among Tibetans in India

Earlier in this chapter, it was mentioned that there is a tendency of scholars to focus on belonging as a synonym of collective identity or citizenship. A large share of the study of Falcone & Wangchuk (2008) on the extent to which Tibetan refugees in India feel at home in their host country focuses on this aspect of belonging. In this light, they extensively discuss the difficulties for Tibetans in exile to acquire Indian citizenship and the difficulties that come with their current official statelessness. Interestingly, however, they also make some comments on

Tibetans' sense of belonging – the emotional feeling of being at home in a place. They state that Tibetans express ambivalent feelings towards Indian society. For example, on the one hand, they support the Indian cricket team, on the other hand, they express prejudice against Indians. Falcone & Wangchuk conclude that Tibetans in exile might benefit from embodying a 'third space' between being Tibetan and Indian. They argue that this might close the gap between the two disparate categories, but they do not go into detail what this third space would resemble.

Similarly, the study of Lau (2010) on emotional attachments and personal identity in the Tibetan refugee diaspora in India contends that conflicting senses of belonging for Tibetans in exile lead young Tibetans to characterize themselves as a remix between Tibetan, Indian and Western. Younger Tibetans in exile engage with Indian popular culture such as Hindi films, which present them with social tensions between old and new ways to view certain aspects – e.g. romance and marriage. Consequently, Lau emphasizes the importance of social networks across the lines of the diasporic community. These social interactions are significant for the understanding Tibetans have developed of their own position in the Indian context.

Along these lines, the study of Piltz (2006) on internet and public identity among Tibetan youth also emphasizes the interaction of Tibetan youth with people outside of the diasporic community. Piltz argues that social interactions through the internet cause Tibetan youth to lose their sense of belonging by crossing both the visible and invisible boundaries that exist between Tibetan and anti-Tibetan views.

Unfortunately, few studies have focused on the sense of belonging of Tibetans in India. The studies that do make notion on their sense of belonging largely focus merely on social networks and especially on youth. The factors of economic participation, receiving society receptivity and exposure to the host society are not highlighted in these studies, whereas these are emphasized in studies on the Western and Asian context.

5. Regional context: Tibetans in India

This chapter provides an overview of the regional context of Tibetans in India. It will first provide a summary of the Tibetan migration towards India from 1949 onwards, after which the demographics on the global and national, as well as the regional and local scale will be explained. Then the process of settlement formation and cultural preservation within these settlements will be discussed, followed by an introduction to Tibetan-Indian interactions, both around the settlements and in the wider national context. After examining the political and legal position of Tibetans in India, this chapter will conclude by focusing on the settlement of Bylakuppe in particular.

5.1 Tibetan migration towards India

While some of the Tibetan refugees that followed the Dalai Lama in his flight eventually sought refuge in Nepal and Bhutan, India was the final destination for most. In the years since, a steady flow of Tibetans fled to India. There are several reasons for the fact that most Tibetans sought refuge in India. Most importantly, no other country was ready to welcome such a large number of Tibetans. In addition, India is geographically proximate to Tibet, making it in that sense an obvious choice. Furthermore, as the Tibetans generally believe that the proximity of the Dalai Lama is the only thing that can bring happiness when in exile; the settlement of this spiritual and political leader in India is an important pull factor for Tibetans to reside in this country. Equally important is that the headquarters of the Tibetan government in exile were established in Dharamsala, making India the locus of Tibetan political life in exile. Lastly, the refugee settlements that were established in India enabled Tibetan refugees to live among themselves, creating a sense of common Tibetan identity (Bentz, 2012).

5.1.1 Three major migration phases

Tibetan migration first began to take shape in 1949, when communist China's invasion of Tibet was followed by on-going human rights violations. Fundamentally, broadly three major Tibetan migration phases can be traced in the history of Tibetan displacement (Ahmad, 2012).

The first phase began in 1959 when the Chinese People's Liberation Army crushed the Tibetan uprising against the Chinese communist authorities (Federal Office for Migration Switzerland, 2013). Communist China annexed Tibet, which resulted in the previously mentioned escape of the 14th Dalai Lama, followed by an exodus of 80,000 Tibetans through the Himalayas into India (Ahmad, 2012).

The second phase of Tibetan displacement began in the early 1980s, caused by three major events. Firstly, the Bhutanese government forced the exiled Tibetans living there to owe allegiance to the country by accepting its citizenship and adopt Bhutanese culture. After India's approval, approximately 3,100 Tibetans migrated from Bhutan to India. Secondly, after Tibet was opened to trade and tourism between 1986 and 1996, another estimated 25,000 Tibetans arrived in India (Ahmad, 2012). Thirdly, a lot of Tibetans fled from their homeland in 1988, when martial law was proclaimed in Tibet (Federal Office for Migration Switzerland, 2013).

The third phase of Tibetan displacement can be said to have started from 1996 until the present date and comprises todays Tibetan New Arrivals. However, this phase is not as distinct and can be seen as an extension of the second phase (Federal Office for Migration Switzerland, 2013). Prakash (2011) states that 3,000 refugees per year make the rather dangerous crossing over the Himalayas to India.

5.2 Demographics of Tibetans in exile

Available data on the numbers of Tibetans in exile vary from source to source and are often outdated. According to Childs (2009), the most reliable available sources on demographics are the Tibetan Demographic Surveys of 1998 and 2009, conducted by the government in exile. However, one needs permission to acquire these documents. Consequently, this paragraph makes use of documents that are based on information from these surveys.

5.2.1 Demographics on the global and national scale

According to Bentz (2012), the latest Tibetan Demographic Survey of 2009 states there are 94,203 Tibetans in India out of the 127,935 Tibetans who live outside Tibet (73,63%). In the Tibetan Demographic Survey of 1998, there were 85,000 Tibetans in India out of 111,170 Tibetan refugees worldwide (76.46%). Thus, the Tibetan community does not grow very rapidly throughout the years. This is caused by a high mortality rate in the first years of exile (due to harsh living conditions, which will be elaborated in the next paragraph), a process of further dispersion and a relatively low birth rate due to the large percentage of monks (Bentz, 2012).

Tsekyi & Thimmaiah (2014) more extensively describe the current place of residence of the total population of Tibetans in exile. In figure 5.1 and table 5.1, one can see that India is the country where most exiles live (74%), followed by Nepal (10%) and a small percentage in Bhutan (1%). Also, a considerable percentage of Tibetans live in other parts of the world (15%). Subramanian (2002) describes that this particularly concerns Switzerland, Canada, Germany

and the United States of America – as some Tibetans were sponsored to go there by individuals and organizations.

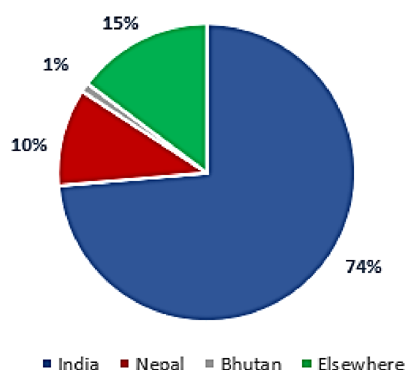

Figure 5.1: Place of residence Tibetans in exile (Source: Tsekyi & Thimmaiah (2014))

Country	Number of Tibetans in exile
India	94,203
Nepal	13,514
Bhutan	1,298
Elsewhere	18,92
Total	127,94

Table 5.1: Place of residence Tibetans in exile (Source: Tsekyi & Thimmaiah (2014))

5.2.2 Demographics on the regional and local scale

The settlement of Bylakuppe consists of an old and a new camp, as will be described more extensively in the last section of this chapter. As shown in table 5.2, the old camp of Bylakuppe has significantly more inhabitants than the new camp – although the population of the old camp is slightly decreasing and the population of the new camp slightly increasing.

Table 5.2: Total population Bylakuppe settlement from 2007 to 2014 (Source: Tsekyi & Thimmaiah (2014))

Year	Old camp	New camp
2007-2008	16017	4555
2008-2009	15903	4581
2009-2010	15881	4618
2010-2011	15713	4636
2011-2012	15681	4664
2012-2013	15652	4681
2013-2014	15611	4705

It should be noted that the monks from the monasteries are being counted into the old camp (Tsekyi & Thimmaiah, 2014). Furthermore, in the new camp of Bylakuppe, 72.7% of the monks were born in India in 1994-96. Naturally, the number of Tibetans of Indian origin increases (Prakash, 2011).

5.3 Tibetan settlements in India

Of the approximately 94,200 Tibetans in India, most live in refugee settlements, while some of them live in so-called 'scattered communities' among local communities or outside of these communities (Federal Office for Migration Switzerland, 2013). A rudimentary understanding of these settlements facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the context of Bylakuppe. Therefore, this section will elaborate on the number of settlements, how these were formed and the relevance of cultural preservation within these settlements.

A map of the settlements is presented in figure 5.2. The figures on the precise amount of Tibetan refugee settlements in India vary slightly from one official source to another. For example, according to the Department of Home – one of the seven departments of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) that forms the government in exile – 39 of the 58 settlements are situated in India (CTA, 2018). However, Bentz (2012) argues that the Tibetan government in exile states that India is home to 35 of the 52 refugee settlements. This variance in numbers can be explained by several fusions of settlements throughout the years.

5.3.1 The process of settlement formation

When tens of thousands refugees arrived in India in the months after the Dalai Lama arrived in April 1959, the Indian authorities established two transit camps: Buda Duar in West Bengal and Missamari in Arunachal Pradesh. Tibetans soon had to cope with overpopulation, heat and a dysentery epidemic that broke out in the first months. To deal with overpopulation and to simultaneously answer some of India's needs, some Tibetans were sent to build roads in mountain areas. Living conditions there, however, were not much better than in the transit camps (Bentz, 2012).

It soon became evident that another solution was required to accommodate Tibetan refugees, resulting in the construction of refugee settlements. This marked a change of perspective on the part of Tibetan refugees, as they had to acknowledge that the exile might be more permanent than initially hoped. Most refugee settlements were established in the 1960s, on land given by either the central government or by state governments (Bentz, 2012). The settlements were established according to local conditions and varying sources of funds

(Pulman, 1983). Several states leased forest reserve and unused land to the refugees for settlements and agriculture, in consultation with the Indian Prime Minister Nehru (Jorden, 2000). In the beginning, living conditions were very harsh within these settlements. Especially in South India, Tibetans faced a hot and humid climate, animals from the jungle and new illnesses such as tuberculosis (Bentz, 2012).

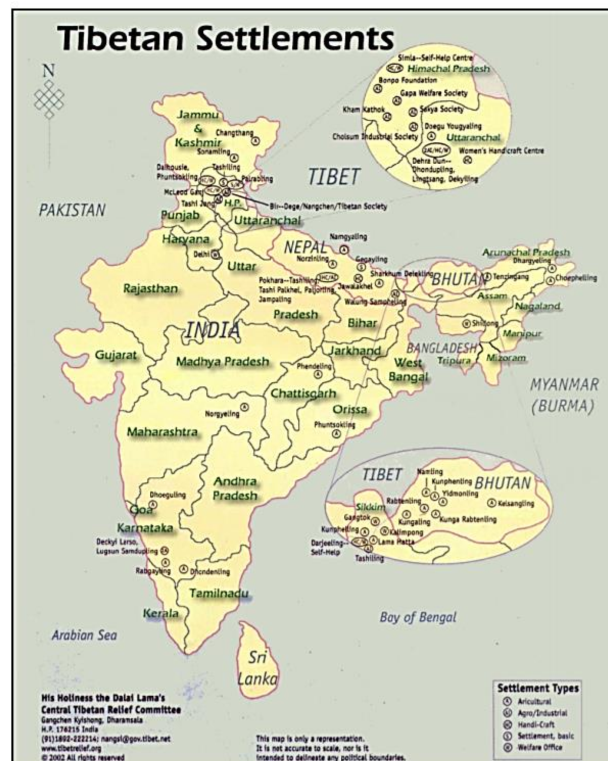

Figure 5.2: Tibetan Settlements in India, Nepal and Bhutan (Source: Central Tibetan Relief Committee (2002)

5.3.2 Cultural preservation within the settlements

Both the Tibetan government in exile and the Indian government intent to keep the Tibetan refugees in the settlements isolated from Indian society. The government in exile's aim is to preserve the Tibetan culture and population. The social, religious and geographical distribution of each settlement is meant to match that of Tibet as a whole. This entails that refugees should belong to all social classes and to the four main Buddhist schools, similar to the proportions of Tibet. Also, they should come from the three regions of Tibet: U-Tsang, Amdo and Kham.

Consequently, the more permanent refugee settlements in India were meant to represent a Tibet in exile (Bentz, 2012).

This re-creation of Tibetan culture and society in India was encouraged by the Indian government as a matter of policy. Norbu (2004) highlights two aspects of India's policy towards Tibetan refugees: "(1) the liberal 'non-assimilative' framework as reflected in the separate settlements, and (2) the broad 'delegated' authority of the Tibetan leadership headed by the Dalai Lama over the Tibetan settlements in India" (p. 204). This reveals that interference with the organization of Tibetans in exile is to be limited to a strict minimum, which is considered to be in the best interest for the exile community. After some basic rules were set – Tibetans are not allowed to take part in any political activity and there is no recognition of the government in exile – Tibetans were free to organize themselves. Prime Minister Nehru allegedly even encouraged the Dalai Lama to establish a separate education for cultural preservation. Moreover, Indian authorities did not try to push Tibetan refugees towards integration into India in any way, let alone assimilation (Bentz, 2012).

However, it should be noted that scholars are still undecided on whether this reciprocal goal of cultural preservation has worked or not. Whereas some scholars remain sceptical, others argue that the goal of preserving Tibetans as a group has been achieved (Bentz, 2012).

5.4 Tibetan-Indian interactions

Despite the discouragement of Tibetans in exile to integrate into Indian society, interactions between Tibetans in Indians do occur both around the settlements and within the wider Indian society. It is, however, important to note that in some regions Tibetans and Indians have closer relationships than in others. In Ladakh, for instance, the presence of Tibetans goes back to a time before exile and Buddhism is present in the whole region (Bentz, 2012). Consequently, the interactions between Tibetans and Indians described in this paragraph may or may not be valid for the Tibetans in Bylakuppe in particular.

5.4.1 Around the settlements

Palakshappa's study (1978) on Tibetans in the Mundgod settlement in Karnataka showed that Tibetan-Indian interaction occur first and foremost through the economy. When Tibetans in Mundgod were given a plot of land to cultivate, local Indians assisted them, thereby making them familiar with agricultural work. Subsequently, Tibetans required assistance from local Indians during busier periods in the agricultural cycle, e.g. the weeding and harvesting seasons. The agricultural surplus produce was sold at the local market. Tibetans also went to these

markets to buy basic products, visit banks, hospitals and schools, all predominantly staffed by Indians. Because of these interactions, friendly relations formed between Indians and Tibetans, which is according to Bentz (2012) valid for Indian-Tibetan interactions in most settlements.

However, there have also been tensions between Indian and Tibetan communities. For instance, economic disparities between the two communities have resulted in some incidents around Dharamsala. Here, the gap between the Indian and Tibetan communities widened as Tibetans were receiving a lot of tourism money, as well as amenities from the Indian government and international community. Consequently, Tibetans accomplished to achieve a much higher living standard within a single generation than the local Indian population had ever known. This enabled them to employ Indians, for instance as waiters or to build Tibetan monasteries, which was not always appreciated by the local Indian communities (Prakash, 2011).

5.4.2 Within the wider Indian society

Economic interaction between Tibetans and Indians does not only occur around the settlements, but also within the context of Indian society through, for instance, the sweater business. Over the winter months, Tibetans leave the settlements to sell cheap clothes on the sidewalks of bazaars and marketplaces across India. These clothes include sweaters – not homemade but bought from the factories in Punjab – to which the business owes its name (Bentz, 2012). As the sweater business is a lucrative source of income, over half of the Tibetans from Dharamsala, Manali, Orissa and Bylakuppe engage in these activities (Dhondup, 1994).

In addition, interaction with Indian society occurs through Tibetan students who enrol in Indian universities. Tibetan education stops at the secondary level; for tertiary education Tibetans have to attend an Indian university. In these universities, they build lasting friendships with Indian nationals – established through regular meetings in classes, dorms and cafeterias. Besides, student groups such as Students for a Free Tibet serve as a form of interaction. These interactions provide a bridge between the Indian and Tibetan communities (Bentz, 2012).

5.5 Political and legal position of Tibetans in India

5.5.1 Political position of Tibetans in India: Government in exile

The CTA formed after negotiations of the Dalai Lama with the Indian authorities, soon after he arrived in India. Although the CTA is not officially recognized by any country, it has been organized as the sole and legitimate government of the Tibetans. The CTA takes care of the overall wellbeing of the settlements, with minimum interference of the Indian government. It

has itself set the task to both rehabilitate Tibetan refugees and to restore the freedom of Tibet, headed by the Dalai Lama. The CTA has an elected Parliament and Prime Minister, thereby functioning as a constitutionally democratic state. Furthermore, each refugee settlement has a settlement officer who functions as the representative of the Department of Home and is appointed by the CTA (Prakash, 2011).

Furthermore, Tibetan refugees are not registered with the UNHCR, but with the CTA instead. The CTA receives its financial support from various governments and international organizations across the world. Furthermore, the CTA collaborates closely with the Tibet Fund that provides health care, education, refugee rehabilitation, religious and cultural preservation, elder care, as well as community and economic development programs for the communities in exile (Prakash, 2011).

5.5.2 Legal position of Tibetans in India: Documentation

Indian legislation regarding Tibetans has become stricter since the beginning of this century. Since 1950, Tibetans need to possess a Registration Certificate (RC), no matter whether they have been born in India or whether they have come to India for education, pilgrimage or other purposes – just like other foreigners. The duration of these RCs varies from one month up to one year, meaning that every Tibetan needs to reapply for a RC at least once a year. On top of that, Tibetans that entered India after 2002 need a 'Special Entry Permit' (SEP) issued by the embassy of India in Kathmandu, Nepal. In addition, Tibetans can now only enter India through two check-posts, Sonauli in Uttar Pradesh and Raxaul in Bihar, which makes it more difficult for Tibetans to come to India (Bentz, 2012).

Tibetan refugees in India have several options regarding their legal position, which are often debated among Tibetans. Firstly, they can choose to stick to their Tibetan identity and live with a restrictive refugee status. Secondly, all children of Tibetan refugees born in India before 1 July 1987 are entitled to Indian citizenship. Lastly, any foreigner who legally resides in India for twelve years can acquire naturalization (Bentz, 2012). In general, Tibetans rarely claim Indian citizenship, a result of the social pressure generated by the proclaimed discouragement by the CTA and other Tibetan refugees (Falcone & Wangchuk, 2008).

5.6 The settlement of Bylakuppe

According to Prakash (2011) the name Bylakuppe means "a place of rains" (p. 504). Whilst the average rainfall in India is 300-650 mm annually, the average annual rainfall in Bylakuppe is 1027 mm. The settlement lies on a flat plain about 87 kilometres from the southwest of Mysore City (Prakash, 2011). The average temperature is 38° Celsius in the summer months from March until June and 24° Celsius in the winter months from November until February (CTA, 2018). In order to provide adequate context for this study, the research site will be discussed in detail in the following section.

5.6.1 Formation of Bylakuppe

The government of Mysore, now Karnataka, allocated 3,000 acres of land to the 3,000 Tibetans of the initial population of Bylakuppe (Bentz, 2012). These distributed lands were largely uninhabited and consisted of dense forests with wild animals. The Indian government employed and paid the Tibetans to clear these forests (Kantharaj, 2006).

Nowadays, Bylakuppe officially consists of two separate settlements, often referred to as the old and new camp. The old camp is called the Lungsung Samdupling settlement and counts numbers around 15,600 residents. Established in 1960, it is the oldest settlement in India. The new camp. Dickyi Larsoe, was set up in 1969 and has a smaller population of approximately 4,700 people (Kantharaj, 2006; Tsekyi & Thimmaiah, 2014).

5.6.2 Housing in Bylakuppe

The settlement is divided into 23 villages, of which 16 villages belong to the old camp and 7 to the new camp (CTA, 2018). These villages are located about 2 to 3 kilometres apart from each other in the old camp and 4 to 6 kilometres in the new camp (Prakash, 2011) – except for two villages of the old camp which are located in Chowkur 25 kilometres away. The villages are numbered in sequence according to the order in which they were initially formed, and each has its own Tibetan name as well. Each village consists of approximately 30 families, ranging from four to fourteen family members (CTA, 2018; Prakash, 2011).

Figure 5.3 shows one of the larger houses of the old camp, demonstrating that houses in the settlement are considerably Indian instead of Tibetan. Huts – common in Tibet (Prakash, 2011) – are rare in the settlement, as most houses are made of brick. Furthermore, a considerable number of houses in Bylakuppe are fenced, which is also unlike Tibetan houses. Most of the houses have toilet facilities and a sizeable hall with a bedroom and kitchen (Prakash, 2011).

Figure 5.3: House in the old camp of Bylakuppe (Photo: Anne Grent (2018))

5.6.3 Livelihood of settlers

In the beginning, technical and financial assistance was provided by the Indian government, non-governmental organizations, foreign-funded agencies and individuals (Bentz, 2012). For instance, houses were provided by the Mysore Rehabilitation and Development Agency (Prakash, 2011), the Swiss sent agricultural experts and equipment, and the National Christian Council of India participated in the establishment of a dairy farm. Furthermore, the Tibetan refugees themselves started a cooperative society to execute the trading activities of all Tibetans in Bylakuppe. Within a few years, the refugee settlement managed to become self-supportive – effectively serving as a model for the other agricultural based settlements (Bentz, 2012).

Nowadays, most families in Bylakuppe own a small piece of agricultural land for their living. However, due to a lack of irrigation facilities, the Tibetans have to practice rain fed crop agriculture. Consequently, agriculture is not sufficient to sustain the families, requiring the settlers to engage in other activities as seasonal sweater selling, trading, shop-keeping and food service. Furthermore, the abovementioned cooperative society runs a few small enterprises, such as a flour mill, a poultry farm, a carpet weaving centre, a mechanical workshop, several shops and an animal husbandry program (CTA, 2018).

5.6.4 Educational and religious facilities in the settlement

The Save Our Souls (S.O.S.) Tibetan Children Village school in Bylakuppe serves simultaneously as a boarding house and an educational facility. Only 55% of the students at the S.O.S. school have parents, who reside either in Tibet or throughout India. The school system is modelled off the traditional Tibetan system, whereby songs, art and activities form the main teaching methods. In addition, the children are taught about their motherland and Tibetan culture (Prakash, 2011). According to Prakash (2011), the school is well organized and has plenty of supplies. Education is perceived to be an important factor to eventually dispel the Chinese out of Tibet (CTA, 2018).

Lastly, Bylakuppe is home to some of the largest monasteries of Tibet, such as Sera, Namdroling and Tashi Lhunpo. These monasteries play an important role in both the preservation of Buddhism and community development. The Sera monastery is the biggest among them, with an occupation of almost 3000 monks (CTA, 2018). This monastery is the re-establishment of one of the most important monasteries existing in Tibet (Arpi, 2011). Tashi Lhunpo (figure 5.4), inaugurated by the Dalai Lama in December 2015, is the newest monastery in Bylakuppe (CTA, 2018).

Figure 5.4: Tashi Lhunpo monastery (Photo: Anne Grent (2018))

6. Methodology

This explorative research aims to gain more in-depth knowledge on the sense of belonging among Tibetan refugees in Bylakuppe towards Indian society. The selected study site was the Tibetan settlement Bylakuppe in Karnataka State due to it being the first and one of the biggest settlements in India (Prakash, 2011). The characteristics of Bylakuppe have been discussed in the previous chapter on the regional context. The study was conducted in collaboration with Manipal University‘s Transdisciplinary Centre for Qualitative Methods, which assisted with the preparations for the data collection by reviewing the research instruments and introducing me to the study site.

This methodology chapter will first elaborate on the research methods employed to measure the concepts operationalized in the third chapter of this thesis. Following, the used strategies for participant recruitment are discussed. After an elaboration on the data analysis approach, limitations and risks of this study are considered. Finally, both the positionality of the researcher and an ethical review are presented.

6.1 Methods

The data for this study was acquired by mixed qualitative research methods, derived from the interpretive paradigm (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2010). The methods used were participant observation, in-depth interviews and photography. This paragraph will discuss these methods, their suitability, as well as their contribution to the validity and reliability of this study.

6.1.1 Participant observation

In order to get an understanding of the context being studied, participant observation was applied throughout the fieldwork period. Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte (1999) define this method as "the process of learning through exposure to or involvement in the day-to-day or routine activities of participants in the researcher setting" (p. 91). Importantly, however, Kawulich (2005) notes that observations are not data unless they are recorded into field notes. Therefore, a field diary was maintained during the fieldwork period. In this field diary, both elements of the physical environment – involving the surroundings of the setting and providing a written description of the context – as well as a description of the participants, and recorded activities and interactions that occur in the setting were included. Furthermore, short summaries of informal conversations were added to the field notes as well. This concerns the informal

conversations during social gatherings that were considered relevant for this study. An example of a field note is demonstrated in table 6.1.

Participant observation is suitable for this study for a number of reasons. Firstly, this method enables the researcher to get a better understanding of the context and phenomenon being studied (Kawulich, 2005). In this study, for instance, participant observation brings the possibility to identify how Tibetans in Bylakuppe behave and interact in social situations – especially occasions in which they interact with Indian people. This is fundamental to answer the sub-question "In what ways do Tibetans in exile form social relations with both Indian nationals and other Tibetans?" Secondly, participant observation helps with establishing rapport with the study population, often a necessity for conducting in-depth interviews successfully (Hennink et al., 2010). Thirdly, participant observation enhances the understanding of the direct context in which the interview was conducted. This is important, as an in-depth interview does not occur in a vacuum and as a significant amount of communication occurs through non-verbal cues. As such, ignoring these aspects of the interview would erode the total possible value of the in-depth interview. Therefore, participant observation was also applied during the interviews, for example by observing the body language and social environment of the interviewee (Kawulich, 2005 & Schensul et al. 1999).

Table 6.1: Example of field note

Date	**Observation**
17/3	In the closest Indian town, called Kushalnagar, Tibetan people and monks can be seen in shops and restaurants – although most of the people are Indians. The physical environment of Kushalnagar is different from Bylakuppe. There are more people, shops and traffic. → In an informal conversation, I was told that Tibetans usually do their shopping in Kushalnagar because there are more vegetables available than in Bylakuppe and it is a possibility to bargain for a cheaper price.

Moreover, participant observation enhances the validity of this study in multiple ways. It enables the researcher to observe what people do, which can differ from what people say they do (Bryman, 2016). Additionally, participants are likely to act more naturally in a natural setting – as opposed to a more formal setting during interviews (Bryman, 2016). Lastly, Lincoln & Guba (1985) argue that data is considered more valid when there is a prolonged observation

period through a considerable amount of time spent in the setting. This prolonged interaction with the community enables the researcher to have more opportunities to observe and participate in a variety of activities over time. In this research, the observation period within the settlement was two and a half months.

However, participant observation also has two important downsides for the reliability of the research that have to be taken into account. Firstly, it is almost impossible for other researchers to repeat this method similarly, as it relies on the personal skills and characteristics of the researcher. The use of a field diary minimizes this risk, as it gives other researchers insights in the way the observations were conducted. Another disadvantage of participant observation is that involvement and sympathizing with the research population can lead to biased data (Bryman, 2016). This risk was minimized by efforts to avoid making assumptions and sufficient reflection on the observations, whereby multiple plausible explanations were considered.

6.1.2 In-depth interviews

In addition to participant observation, the study conducted in-depth interviews with Tibetans that live within the Bylakuppe settlement. According to Hennink et al. (2010), in-depth interviews allow researchers to identify individual perceptions, beliefs, feelings and experiences. With this reasoning, this method is suitable to investigate the perceptions of Tibetans about their sense of belonging.

In total, this study conducted 39 interviews with Tibetan refugees from both genders and a wide variation of ages, as can be seen in table 6.2. As it turned out to be challenging to interview more women, the point of saturation was considered despite this data bias. When approximately 35 interviews were conducted, it became apparent that no new perspectives were derived from the interviews (Hennink et al., 2010). Abovementioned data bias will be more extensively discussed in the section on limitations and risks.

The interviews generally lived up to the expectations, although some participants were more able than others to answer the rather broad and often challenging questions about, for example, similarities and differences between the Tibetan and Indian culture. Important to note is that some participants were significantly more fluent in English than others, which generally enabled them to not only give more extensive and nuanced answers, but also to express their thoughts and feelings better. In some cases, interviews were conducted through a translator, which will be further discussed in the section on limitations and risks of the research. Overall,

depending on the abovementioned circumstances, some interviews took about half an hour, whereas others lasted for more than one hour.

An issue regarding the validity of in-depth interviews is that it is difficult to ensure that the participants' understanding of a concept is similar to that of the researcher. To minimize this risk, the interview guide (Appendix 1) was pilot tested with the help of two gatekeepers. Initially, it turned out not to be necessary to make any changes to the guide, as the gatekeepers seemed to understand both the concepts and the questions correctly. However, after eight weeks some minor changes were made to the interview guide to enhance the validity. For instance, the opening question "Can you tell me something about your life in Bylakuppe?" provoked some participants to give a rather extensive answer, which was not too relevant for the research at all. The more specific opening question "What do you do during an average day in Bylakuppe?" resulted in a more relevant answer, which enabled the topic to change smoothly towards the key questions regarding economic integration. Another example is that most of the participants required clarification for the key question "When do you get outside of the settlement?" Therefore, this question was made more specific by asking "When do you visit Indian towns or cities?" instead. This resulted in more specific and relevant answers, as participants could understand the question more easily, effectively enhancing the validity of this study.

Similarly to the method of participant observation, the reliability of this research is threatened by in-depth interviews, as it depends on the personal skills and characteristics of the researcher (Bryman, 2016). However, the reliability of this study was enhanced by the semi-structured nature of the interviews, as this enables other researchers to repeat the research more easily. This entails the usage of an interview guide with a list of questions and topics, as can be seen in Appendix 1. Consequently, the interviews were guided, but had the flexibility to follow topics that participants brought up themselves (D. Cohen & Crabtree, 2006).

Table 6.2: Overview participant characteristics

Number	Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Generation	Age when leaving Tibet *(when applicable)*	Occupation
1	Gyatso	Male	56	First	2	Teacher
2	Tenzin	Male	38	Second		Teacher
3	Sangye	Male	41	Second		Field officer
4	Lobsang	Male	39	First	19	Monk
5	Pasang	Male	41	Second		Teacher
6	Sonam	Male	41	Second		Postman
7	Ngawang	Male	41	Second		Employee NGO Animal care
8	Tsering	Male	28	Second		Teacher
9	Rinchen	Male	28	First	13	Provider of internet services
10	Dolma	Female	43	Second		Shop owner
11	Dorje	Male	38	Second		Administrator of monastery
12	Tashi	Male	64	First	4	Retired (former teacher)
13	Tsetan	Male	33	First	13	Teacher
14	Dawa	Male	21	First	8	College student
15	Lhundup	Male	23	First	8	Teacher
16	Pema	Male	26	Second		Teacher
17	Metok	Male	27	Second		Teacher
18	Dhondup	Male	53	Second		Librarian
19	Gyemtsen	Male	19	Second		School prefect
20	Yangkey	Male	30	First	9	Teacher
21	Phuntsok	Male	51	Second		Teacher
22	Rigzin	Male	28	Second		Accountant
23	Tsundue	Male	26	First	7	Teacher
24	Bhuti	Male	28	First	8	Teacher
25	Kelsang	Male	18	First	6	10th grade student
26	Namdol	Male	53	Second		Tibetan traditional doctor
27	Chokey	Female	32	Second		Assistant accountant Tibetan Agricultural

						Co-operative Society
28	Nyima	Female	38	Second		Employee Tibetan Agricultural Co-operative Society
29	Gelug	Male	36	Second		Shop owner
30	Jampa	Male	50	Second		Founder Karuna Home for disabled children
31	Norbu	Male	43	Second		Supervisor
32	Tinley	Male	74	First	15	Retired (former nurse)
33	Wangchuk	Male	76	First	17	Retired (former farmer)
34	Lhamo	Female	38	Second		Teacher
35	Yama	Male	19	First	6	12th grade student
36	Yonten	Male	37	First	18	Monk
37	Thokmay	Male	87	First	27	Monk
38	Thekchen	Male	22	Second		Monk
39	Duga	Male	29	First	11	Electrician

6.1.3 Photography

Lastly, photography was used as a research method. Collier & Collier (1986) argue that a camera is an instrumental extension of our senses that decreases our subjectivity; thus, the inclusion of photography enhances the validity of this study. Although photographs also gather selective information, the scope of the camera captures a comprehensive representation of the circumstances concerned. As photographs provide a context that is usually absent from written notes, it is a suitable addition to participative observation.

Photography was conducted during the fieldwork period to, among other things, capture the interactions between Tibetans and Indians, as well as influences of the Indian culture in the settlement. In order to build rapport, people were asked permission for taking their photograph. These photographs will be presented and elaborated upon in chapter 7.

The main issue with using merely qualitative approaches is that one has to be extremely careful to make generalizations about the results, as the small sample size and non-probability sampling methods inhibit this severely (Bryman, 2016). Although qualitative methods are

needed to explore the research topic in-depth, quantitative methods such as surveys can enumerate opinions, behaviour and attitudes. The survey, which is a standardized interview format, also ensures that each candidate is asked the exact same questions. Thus, the use of surveys in addition to the other methods would be a suitable alternative approach which could have led to a more reliable research. For instance, Hou et al. (2017) used surveys in their study on immigrants' sense of belonging in Canada, enabling them to generalize their results. Therefore, this study cannot make broad generalisations and future research into this thesis topic should consider including methods to gather quantitative data.

6.2 Strategies for participant recruitment

Considering the recruitment of participants, Hennink et al. (2010) argue that the process involves two stages. The first stage includes defining the appropriate study population, which takes place during the research design phase. Regarding this, a generational aspect was first included in the study population of this thesis. The original idea was to compare first-generation Tibetans in exile – which entails people who were born and have lived in Tibet – with second-generation refugees, who were born in India (Bruneau, 2010).

Inductive refinement of the study population took place during the data collection phase (Hennink et al., 2010). It turned out to be unfeasible to make a comparison between first- and second-generation refugees. The main reason for this is the lack of participants that belong to the first-generation refugees who fled Tibet during the first migration phase. Many first-generation refugees were New Arrivals, who arrived in the past 20 years. In addition, the study population varied considerably in characteristics such as occupation and length of tenure in India. Therefore, the comparative aspect of this study was not considered as sufficiently substantiated and would merely jeopardize the validity of this research. Therefore, the specific generational aspect was removed from the research questions, as well as the theoretical and conceptual framework.

The second stage of participant recruitment entails the identification of strategies for recruiting participants from the defined study population. Several complementing recruitment strategies were used to recruit different types of participants (Hennink et al., 2010). Due to the qualitative nature of this research, strategies of non-probability sampling were considered suitable to get an in-depth understanding of the study population (Blackstone, 2012).

The strategies for this research included the use of gatekeepers and snowball recruitment. The use of gatekeepers – people with a prominent and recognized role in the local community (Hennink et al., 2010) – was a central form of participant recruitment in this study. One of the gatekeepers was a prominent monk from one of the biggest monasteries in Bylakuppe, who offered assistance in the process by introducing me to his fellow monks and families that he was acquainted with. Another gatekeeper was the headmaster of a monastic secondary school, who introduced me to both the teachers of the school and some of his friends. The study was attentive to identifying any potential problems in the gatekeepers' selection of participants, as gatekeepers might purposely select participants they would like the researcher to include in the research (Hennink et al., 2010). To prevent this as much as possible, multiple gatekeepers were consulted and snowball recruitment was used as an additional recruitment strategy.

Once the gatekeepers had introduced me to some participants, more people were involved in the study through snowball recruitment. For instance, participants were asked whether they knew others in the settlement that would be interested to participate. An advantage was that participation in the study increased, as a trusted person could describe the interview process to potential participants. A disadvantage of this method is that oversampling a particular network of peers can lead to a bias, as participants' social networks are not random and usually consist of people who, for instance, have the same occupation (Robinson, 2018). In this study, this became evident as many participants are occupied as teachers. Efforts were made to minimize this effect by having several different starting points for snowball recruitment in order to acquire participants with varying characteristics.

Participant recruitment turned out to be quite challenging in the first data collection phase, as the arrival in Bylakuppe took place just before Losar, the Tibetan New Year. During that time, people – among which the gatekeepers – were busy with preparations for the festival. The actual Losar celebrations lasted from 16 February until 3 March, during which people spent time with their family and did not go to work. However, once Losar was finished, the participant recruitment went smoothly.

6.3 Data analysis and management

The data of this study was analysed through thematic analysis as developed by Braun and Clarke (2006). This analytic approach was selected as it enables researchers to identify patterns

within the data, which is useful given the explorative nature of this study. The thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006) includes six phases: familiarization with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes among codes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. Table 6.3 shortly summarizes what each of these phases entail and what the results of these phases were. The corresponding codebook is included in Appendix 2.

As data analysis is a cyclical process, it involved going back and forth between the different phases. In addition, tasks are often conducted simultaneously at different points in the analysis. The circular nature of qualitative data analysis enables researchers to develop a more extensive understanding of the issues (Hennink et al., 2010).

Table 6.3: Data analysis

Phase	**Process**	**Results**
1. Familiarization with data	To prepare for data analysis, the audio recordings of the interviews were single-handedly transcribed and simultaneously anonymized. The data from the observation field dairy was typed out and anonymized as well. The data was re-read to enhance familiarity with it – which gave a first indication of patterns that occur (Braun & Clarke, 2006).	- Transcripts of interviews - Document with field notes
2. Generating initial codes	Initial recurring patterns of the data were labelled into codes using the software program NVivo (Braun & Clarke, 2006).	- Initial codes (Appendix 2)
3. Searching for themes among codes	Previously generated codes were merged into code families and overarching themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006).	- Code families and overarching themes (Appendix 2)
4. Reviewing themes	The ways in which the themes support the data and overarching theoretical perspective were reviewed (Braun & Clarke, 2006).	- Reviewed codes
5. Defining and naming themes	The overarching themes were defined and named, to give readers an understanding of the meaning and importance of them (Braun & Clarke, 2006).	- Renamed codes
6. Producing the final report	In this phase, it was decided which themes make meaningful contributions to the understanding of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).	- Thick description of results (Chapter 7)

6.4 Limitations and risks of the research

The data collection phase faced a number of limitations and risks, concerning culture, language and data bias:

Culture

The Tibetan culture differs quite a lot from the Dutch culture. Consequently, the data collection process may have been unwittingly influenced by risks such as misunderstanding. Effort was made to minimize these risks by taking time to get more familiar with the settlement before collecting the data, to better understand the local culture of Tibetans in exile. For example, I have taken several tours, guided by local Tibetans, to Buddhist temples and monasteries in the first weeks of my stay. Also, by pre-testing the interview guide with the help of the gatekeepers it was ensured that the interviews were culturally appropriate.

Language

Although many participants spoke English rather well, their mother tongue is Tibetan. Additionally, my native language is Dutch, and I do not speak any Tibetan. Although the communication in English generally went quite well, some important information might have got lost in translation – such as nuances in emotions or descriptions. These risks were minimized by formulating more specific questions in case of ambiguities.

Furthermore, some participants did not speak English at all. Consequently, working with a translator was sometimes necessary. As Bujra (2006) highlights, the interference of a translator has some risks. Due to misunderstanding of either the context or language, a translator could transform the message. Furthermore, a translator that is familiar to the participant may influence the results of the research, as participants may feel hesitant to open up about their opinions and give socially desirable answers. These risks were minimized by collaborating with a translator that is familiar with the settlement but did not have a personal relationship or live close to the participants in question. However, people who were willing to translate were not trained to do so and often were not fluent in English themselves. Consequently, during these interviews it is likely that more information got lost in translation.

Data bias

Data bias has occurred in this study in several ways. Firstly, as is apparent from table 6.2, participants of this study are predominantly male. In the second phase of data collection, efforts

were made to interview more women. However, this appeared to be challenging as considerably less woman were willing to participate. One reason for this is that I was located in the lama camp, where mainly male Tibetan monks live, which made it more difficult to build rapport with women before asking them to participate. In addition, my colleague's research focused specifically on women. Whenever we visited a family together, she usually interviewed the female participants. Only few were willing to participate in multiple interviews. Thus, the results of this study unintentionally predominantly represent male opinions. For example, Tibetan men might maintain different social relations with Indian citizens than Tibetan women. Although the underrepresentation of female opinions in this study is unfortunate and arguably jeopardizes the validity to a certain extent, the interviews themselves revealed no explicit differences between the perceptions of women and men. Nonetheless, in order to more clearly include the female perspective, future research should be especially aware about gender dynamics when designing their data collection strategy.

Secondly, the data regarding economic integration is biased as Tibetans who work in Indian society are likely to be excluded from the study, as most of them do not live in Bylakuppe due to a lengthy daily commute to Indian cities.

Chances are that that some limitations and risks remain unexposed, although efforts to prevent this were made by remaining critical of oneself and the research process.

6.5 Reflection on positionality

The researcher's values will always have some impact upon research processes, meaning that research methods are essentially not value-free. Therefore, it is important to consider the researcher's position in relation to participants (Holmes, 2014). In the section on limitations and risks of the research, the positionality regarding language and culture has already been discussed. However, there are more factors that influence my positionality as a researcher that require consideration.

Firstly, when I arrived in the field I noticed that the stereotypical image of Tibetans in exile that I had formed turned out not to be correct. Before I went to the field, I read significant amounts of literature about the preservation of Tibetan culture within the settlements. Consequently, I had expected Tibetan culture to be predominant in all aspects of the participants' lives, except for maybe some influences of Indian culture. However, it turned out that Western culture quite significantly influenced the lives of Tibetans as well. For instance,

almost everyone in Bylakuppe seemed to listen to Justin Bieber and One Direction – even the Tibetan monks. Thus, regarding this aspect, reality turned out to be quite different from my expectations. By maintaining an open mind I was able to adjust my expectations appropriately.

Secondly, my positionality was also influenced by the fact that I went to the field with a colleague. One of the most important consequences was that we sometimes interviewed the same participants, occasionally influencing the participant's answers. Most notably, in occasions where my colleague interviewed a participant first, the answers I received from such a participant sometimes tended to be more focused on the role of women – uncoincidentally the focus of my colleague's research. For example, when I asked about differences between the Tibetan and Indian culture, these participants tended to bring up the topic of gender equality. Furthermore, as previously discussed, a data bias concerning gender has also occurred partly due to these circumstances. However, the presence of this colleague also formed an advantage as it enabled me to discuss practical issues regarding this research.

6.6 Ethical review

This paragraph provides a review on the way ethical issues have been dealt with throughout the research process. As a researcher, I have attempted to remain culturally sensitive as this is necessary to assess ethical issues in qualitative research (Hennink et al., 2010).

Core ethical issues during participant recruitment in qualitative research include seeking permission for the research and providing adequate information (Hennink et al., 2010). The process of seeking permission already began at the Indian Embassy, where I applied for an internship visa, formally registering the purpose of my travel. Furthermore, I acquired a Protected Area Permit, which allowed me to legally stay within Bylakuppe. This meant that both the Indian government and the Central Tibetan Administration were informed about my motivation to come to India and gave me permission to do so. Furthermore, upon arrival I sought permission from a prominent monk to conduct my research in Bylakuppe.

The participants were provided with adequate information by providing them with an information sheet. Before starting the data collection, it is important to provide sufficient information about yourself as an interviewer, the purpose of the research, how the data will be used and what the outcomes of the study will be. Before the start of the interview, written informed consent for participation and recording of the session should be acquired (Hennink et al., 2010). The participants were handed an information sheet, for which they were given sufficient time to carefully read and ask questions about. Consequently, all participants have

signed the informed consent form – through which they stated to be informed sufficiently and agreed with voluntarily participating in the research. While conducting participative observation, however, giving too much information to participants that they are taking part in a research might influence the data collection process.

As the study findings will be included in a master thesis, confidentiality – referring to not disclosing information that is discussed between the researcher and the participant (Hennink et al., 2010) – cannot be completely ensured. It has been ensured to the extent that only I have access to the recordings of the interviews, while only me and my supervisor can access the transcripts of the interviews. Furthermore, by arranging a location where the interview cannot be overheard by others also partially ensured confidentiality. Anonymity, however, is completely ensured as all identifiable information will be removed from the data. Participants were informed that they cannot be identified from the documents that will be published (Hennink et al., 2010). Consequently, all participant names used are pseudonyms.

7. Sense of belonging of Tibetan refugees in Bylakuppe

After the important discussions about the background, the conceptional framework and the methodology, this chapter finally presents the data obtained during the fieldwork. Each section focuses on one of the sub-questions, which relate to the concepts of the conceptual framework. Consequently, the subtopics 'receiving society receptivity', 'social capital', 'economic integration' and 'exposure to host society' will be discussed. Furthermore, there will be an overall focus on Tibetan cultural norms, values and practices which are occasionally influenced by both the Indian and Western culture.

Throughout the empirical chapter, a distinction will be made between Indian people that are native to the Bylakuppe area and those who are non-Bylakuppe residents. This distinction is made because the findings of this study indicate that Bylakuppe residents – Indians who live near the Tibetan settlement and are directly associated with Tibetans – mostly got used to the Tibetan complexion and have knowledge of their origin. Non-Bylakuppe residents, on the other hand, are not familiar with their appearance and have little knowledge of Tibet – as they usually do not get in touch with Tibetans on a regular basis.

7.1 Receiving society receptivity

As previously discussed in the theoretical framework, receiving society receptivity relates to the ways in which a host country welcomes and treats immigrants. Perceived discrimination and a negative social climate towards immigrants discourage the development of a sense of belonging (Antonsich, 2010; Hou et al., 2017). Consequently, this section focuses on the sub question: *How does the Tibetan refugee diaspora perceive their reception by Indian society?*

To answer this question, first the ways in which participants perceive discrimination by both Bylakuppe and non-Bylakuppe residents will be discussed, followed by a discussion on the perceptions of the social climate towards Tibetan refugees in India. To fully understand the latter, similarities and differences between the Tibetan and Indian culture are explained.

7.1.1 Perceived discrimination by Bylakuppe residents

Reported experiences of discrimination by Bylakuppe residents jeopardize the receptivity of Indian society and thereby the development of participants' sense of belonging. Regarding this, it is important to note that participants solely note instances of discrimination on the individual level. Some even explicitly state that no problems have occurred on the community level, such

as Yonten (Monk, 37 years): *"Between some individuals and the local Indians there are some cases, but on the community level there are no problems."*

Participants that do experience discrimination by Bylakuppe residents often elaborate on two kinds of discrimination. Firstly, most participants mention overcharging as a common form of discrimination. When Sonam was asked if he ever saw occasions of Tibetan people being treated differently by local Indians, he answered:

> *"I would say, that is a bit of an everyday thing. If I want to go to the next town, I have to go by auto rickshaw. They charge Tibetans a little bit more, where they don't charge that much to their local Indians."* (Postman, 41 years)

Overcharging does not only occur in taxis, but also in shops. Duga explains:

> *"Sometimes I am going to buy things for my shop. They [Bylakuppe residents] see that I am a Tibetan and they raise their rate. But I am also a worker, so I need every rupee. I should also be able make a profit."* (Electrician, 29 years)

Secondly, participants reportedly experience discrimination by Bylakuppe residents that insult Tibetans without clear reasons. Gelug speaks about one of these occasions:

> *"The Indian that was working in this service station, he was using a lot of bad language in local Kannada. He thought that I did not know any Kannada.* (…) *He was saying a lot of bad things to me and to my wife also."* (Shop owner, 36 years)

Additionally, participants mention that discrimination by Bylakuppe residents in the form of overcharging and insults are exacerbated by several circumstances. Firstly, they indicate that communication gaps between Bylakuppe residents and Tibetans might fuel disagreements. Many Tibetans who were born in Bylakuppe speak Hindi and Kannada to some degree. Tibetan New Arrivals, however, often merely speak Tibetan. Consequently, participants note that these Tibetans and, for instance, taxi drivers are sometimes not able to understand each other – which may lead to disagreements. Nyima substantiates:

> *"Sometimes, due to the communication gap, they [the Bylakuppe taxi drivers] used to fight. Those who come from Tibet, they can't speak Hindi but only speak in Tibetan. The Indians can't speak Tibetan, so then something goes wrong in the communication. Sometimes when discussing the auto fare, some disagreements come up."* (Employee Tibetan Agricultural Co-operative Society, 38 years)

Secondly, jealousy of Bylakuppe residents towards Tibetans is often reported as a motive for the perceived discrimination. Tashi explains how he thinks Tibetans have managed to develop rather quickly while Bylakuppe residents did not manage to develop quite as fast and still suffer from poverty:

> *"This settlement started in the 70s; in the beginning there was nothing. The Tibetans had to cut the forest and then make a living out of that, it was a very though life. And then slowly, the Tibetans developed. They had a lot of help from around the world and they prospered. And now the Indians around feel a little jealous. Why are the Tibetans developing so fast? Now they are going abroad and all these things. They carry money!"* (Retired, 64 years)

Financial aid and remittances from all over the world, as well as hard work of the previous generation are mentioned as reasons why Tibetan exiles in Bylakuppe developed faster than Bylakuppe residents. Regarding this, Gelug (Shop owner, 36 years) says: *"Our parents have worked very hard to have a better life for us. In terms of finances, in terms of getting all the basic needs."*

Furthermore, according to some participants, Bylakuppe residents are jealous because the Indian government provided Tibetan refugees with land while they did not get anything themselves. Tsering (Teacher, 28 years) mentions that this results in Indians abusing him by saying: *"Why are you here? Indian people are suffering, but you guys are like bugs; coming over here and taking over everything.''*

However, Tinley (Retired, 74 years), sees discrimination as something for which no explanations are necessary, as it is a natural phenomenon. He states: *"Indians treat Tibetans as something different from them, that is natural.''*

Conversely, whereas the majority of the participants says to have experienced discrimination by Bylakuppe residents or have seen it happening to others, it is important to stress that this is

not the case for all participants. Some participants state that Bylakuppe residents have only ever been friendly. Yangkey (Teacher, 30 years) says: *"Usually when two communities meet, there is always discrimination. But with Tibetans, there is no discrimination at all.''*

Also, the importance of not generalizing is often stressed by participants. Participants that do experience discrimination, mostly emphasize that this is not always the case. As Chokey (Assistant accountant Tibetan Agricultural Co-operative Society, 32 years) states: *"Most of the times, it is ok. It is everyday life, so you can't expect the ideal life. Sometimes I face problems, but normally it is ok."* Similarly, Tenzin (Teacher, 38 years) says: *"Out of 100 persons, maybe 5 or 10 persons are bad people."*

Whereas communication gaps and jealousy reportedly exacerbate discrimination, financial benefits and knowledge of the local language were highlighted as elements that prevent some Bylakuppe residents from discriminating – supposedly enhancing the receptivity of Indian society towards Tibetan refugees.

Regarding financial benefits, participants note that Bylakuppe residents are friendly to them because they financially prosper due to their presence. Tibetan people go to their shops, make use of their *auto* [auto/taxi rickshaw] services, eat in their *hotels* [restaurants] and hire them for construction work. Wangchuk notes:

> *"We live here in Bylakuppe. This whole area is given to the Tibetans by the Indian government. We have used it to such an extent that the Indians around it have developed. They prosper because the Tibetans live here."* (Retired, 76 years)

Pasang specifies this by stating:

> *"Indians who are directly associated with the Tibetans, like the people who run shops, they are very close with the Tibetans because they also get benefits. Tibetans (...) go to Kushalnagar and they do some shopping. The money is invested in the shops. The shopkeepers, they feel very good seeing Tibetans."* (Teacher, 51 years)

Another participant, Namdol (Tibetan traditional doctor, 53 years), says: *"If you do business with more Indians, they will like you. If you don't do so, they are not so friendly."* This indicates that financial benefits do not always merely keep Bylakuppe residents from discriminating, but sometimes form more of a condition.

Furthermore, regarding knowledge of the local language, numerous participants report that their ability to speak the local language Kannada enhances positive feelings of Bylakuppe residents towards Tibetans. They explain that some Bylakuppe residents have little knowledge of the Indian national language Hindi but are fluent in Kannada – as will be elaborated upon in the section of exposure to Indian society. Rigzin explains:

> *"If you speak in the local language, they [Bylakuppe residents] feel very happy. I notice that if I speak one word, they immediately respond to me. If I say 'did you eat lunch?' in the local language, they can immediately reply. If you speak in another language, they don't understand. Then it is very hard to get response."* (Accountant, 28 years)

Moreover, communication gaps and jealousy reportedly exacerbate discrimination by Bylakuppe residents, supposedly decreasing the participants' development of a sense of belonging. On the other hand, financial benefits and knowledge of the local language reportedly prevent some Bylakuppe residents from discriminating – arguably enhancing the development of a sense of belonging.

7.1.2 Perceived discrimination by non-Bylakuppe residents

Participants do not merely experience discrimination by Bylakuppe residents, but also report to face discrimination caused by non-Bylakuppe residents, which is likely to decrease the receptivity of Indian society as well. Similar to the perceived discrimination by Bylakuppe residents, perceived discrimination by non-Bylakuppe residents has also merely occurred on an individual level.

Experienced forms of discrimination by non-Bylakuppe residents can be illustrated by the case of Dorje, a 38-year-old monk from Bylakuppe. Firstly, Dorje speaks about the prejudices that he thinks non-Bylakuppe residents have about Tibetan monks:

> *"Most Indians don't know why we are here. They think that we monks, because we wear those robes, are from China and know Kungfu. (...) I used to tell them that we are not Chinese, we are from Tibet. If I get the chance to tell them, I always try to make them understand about the situation between China and Tibet."*

When Dorje visits Indian cities, people regard him as a Chinese and call him *chinkie* – which means something along the lines of 'Chinese person' or 'flat eye'. He also feels like Indian people often stare at him in an inappropriate manner when he walks through the city streets. Whenever this happens, he feels like an outsider. He states: *"In the settlement, we don't feel like outsiders. But when you move out of the settlement into the city, at that time I sometimes feel like an outsider."*

The case of Dorje is one of many cases, as many participants report to have been called *chinkie*. For instance, Gyemtsen (School prefect, 19 years) states: *"I met lots of Indian people who thought of our Tibetan face as a yellow type, so they call us chinkies. They treat us differently this way."*

Other than perceived discrimination by non-Bylakuppe citizens, discrimination by Indian government officials is also an issue that participants mention. It has been mentioned multiple times in both interviews and informal conversations that Tibetans experience difficulties with processing paperwork, as they feel like they are regarded as foreigners. For example, it frequently takes more time for them than for Indian citizens to acquire necessary signatures. In addition, they are often expected to pay more money, as Tsundue comments:

> *"They [the Indian government officials] always try to extract more from us than from the locals. Whenever you have to do some work, they come up with high prices. If the official amount is 50 rupees, and everybody has to pay 50 rupees, they will ask more from us. Because we look different, and then they think we are better off than people from their own society. They consider us as outsiders."* (Teacher, 26 years)

Multiple participants indicate that these forms of discrimination by non-Bylakuppe residents and Indian government officials are fuelled by a lack of awareness of the Tibetan identity and heritage. Participants mention that whereas Indian people around Bylakuppe are familiar with Tibetans, in bigger cities – such as Bangalore and Mysore – Tibetans form a minority group. Pema explains: *"Some people know about Tibetans, for them it is not that much of a problem. Some don't know about us. They think of us as outsiders or foreigners."* (Teacher, 26 years)

Some participants report that the perceived discrimination can be diminished by explaining the Tibetan origin and situation to non-Bylakuppe residents, which substantiates the argument that a lack of awareness is an incentive for discrimination. Metok shares his experience:

"When I went to college, they called me Chinese. I told them that I am not Chinese, I explained that I am a Tibetan. They asked me whether Tibet is a country, and I explained them our situation. Later on, in the fourth year, Indian students knew about me and called me a Tibetan." (Teacher, 27 years)

Similarly, Dolma (Shop owner, 43 years) argues: *"It depends on the knowledge and awareness of Tibetans among the Indians. If they know our nature, then Indian people are very kind to us."* (Shop owner, 43 years) Thus, according to participants, more awareness leads to a more receptive Indian society and arguably enhances participants to develop a sense of belonging.

Although many participants mention instances of perceived discrimination, multiple participants also state that they never encountered any problems with non-Bylakuppe residents. Tenzin says:

"Tibetans and Indians have a huge understanding. There is generally a huge sympathy for the Tibetan cause among Indians. They help us a great deal. They have a tremendous affection for us. Wherever Tibetans live, there are no problems." (Teacher, 38 years)

Regarding this, Tsetan (Teacher, 33 years) comes up with a web page of Quora, a website where questions are asked and answered by its community of users. On this page, the following question was asked: *"Do Indians hate Tibetans?"* (Quora, 2018). The Indians who answered this question were overwhelmingly positive. For Tsetan, this is a confirmation of his perception that Indian society is receptive towards Tibetans.

7.1.3 Perceptions of the social climate in India towards Tibetan refugees

Similar to perceived discrimination, the social climate towards Tibetan refugees supposedly influences the development of participants' sense of belonging towards Indian society. Positive perceptions of the social climate should enhance their sense of belonging, whereas negative perceptions have the opposite effect.

Gratitude towards India

Participants largely imply a positive social climate in India towards Tibetan refugees through the expression of their gratitude towards the way Indian people and the Indian government have welcomed them as refugees. Tashi elaborates on this:

"Indians provided us with everything really. No other country in the world can provide what the Indians have done for the Tibetans. They have given us school systems, paid for the school systems, gave us huge pieces of land to settle in. We have our own government, we have our own administration, everything. And their government does not say anything. If we try to do this in Holland, they will shut us down in one minute. They will say; assimilate! Now you are in Holland, behave like a Dutch person! It is ridiculous actually, the amount of help that the Indians have given us, the space to function." (Retired, 64)

Figure 7.1: Poster Thank You India concert (Photo: Anne Grent (2018))

To show their appreciation of the positive social climate towards Tibetan refugees, Tibetans in exile organized the 'Thank You India' event in Dharamsala – residence of the Dalai Lama – on 31 March 2018. This event marked the beginning of the 60th year of the Tibetan people's arrival in exile. For this same purpose, the 'Thank you India' concert in Majnu-ka-tilla, New Delhi was organized, of which an advertisement poster is shown in figure 7.1. Regarding this, Tsundue elaborates on how this event is celebrated throughout India:

"On the 31st of March, we have been living here for almost 60 years. We are celebrating this 60 years of political asylum in India. Many of our people are performing Tibetan dances and songs which say thanks to India. In many parts of India

where Tibetans live, they are going on a market to say thank you to India. These are Tibetans who are happy in India. They are feeling thankful for the Indian government and the Indian people for letting us stay here. We will never forget what they did for us." (Teacher, 26 years)

Similarities between the Tibetan and Indian culture

Furthermore, similarities between the Tibetan and Indian culture are likely to increase positive experiences of the social climate towards Tibetan refugees. According to Weedon (2004), a sense of belonging is influenced by what one has in common and what differentiates one from others. Consequently, perceived similarities arguably enhance participants' sense of belonging towards Indian society.

Cultural similarities between participants and Bylakuppe residents are largely focused around religion. Similarities between Buddhism – which is the predominant religion in Tibetan culture – and Hinduism – one of the main religions in India – are often mentioned by participants. These similarities are often explained by the fact that Buddhism originates from India. Gelug states that:

"Tibetan culture is all about Buddhism. Buddha was born in India. He was enlightened in India. All of the Tibetan culture comes from India. So, there is a very huge connect. I think India's biggest gift to the world is Buddhism. Not just to Tibet, but to the whole world." (Shop owner, 36 years)

This religious connection reportedly takes the form of similar religious practices between Buddhism and Hinduism, such as certain rituals. Jampa (Founder Karuna Home for disabled children, 50 years) states: *"Lots of rituals are similar to that of Indians. Even if the way they do it is a little different, there are a lot of similarities."* Chokey (Assistant accountant Tibetan Agricultural Co-operative Society, 32 years) explains: *"Tibetans do meditation, Indians also do meditation. They are doing puja [worship], we are doing puja. Also, Hinduism and Buddhism have some similarities, in terms of believing in karma."*

Differences between the Tibetan and Indian culture

Whereas perceived similarities in religion and religious practices arguably enhance positive perceptions of the social climate towards Tibetan refugees, differences between the Tibetan

and Indian culture may have the opposite effect. Some participants perceive the Indian culture to be completely different from the Tibetan culture, such as Norbu (Supervisor, 43 years): "*Our culture is 100% different, nothing is the same."* Dawa (College student, 21 years) has a milder opinion: "*As Tibetans coming to India, settling in here, we are not totally 100% Indians, so there will always be some differences. The culture is different, the race is different, there always will be."*

While religion is mentioned by some as a similar ground between the two cultures, other participants mention several differences regarding this aspect. Some state that, although Buddhism originates from India, Hinduism is the predominant religion in India nowadays. The Buddhism that is still present in India these days is Hinayana Buddhism, whereas Tibetans follow Mahayana Buddhism. Furthermore, whereas Tibetans are mainly Buddhist, India has a great diversity in religions. Bhuti (Teacher, 28 years) says: *"India is a land of diversity. There are so many different cultures and religions around here. We don't practice Hinduism. There are so many differences."*

Furthermore, some participants mention physical differences. Thokmay (Monk, 87 years) explains: *"Our traditional dress is different. We came from the Himalaya region. The way we look, our complexion, is also different. The way we dance and the way they dance is totally different."*

Whereas abovementioned differences in religion and physical characteristics concern non-Bylakuppe residents as well, some participants emphasize more personal differences that mainly relate to Bylakuppe residents.

Firstly, participants perceive the mindset of Bylakuppe residents regarding conservatism, finances and gender equality to be different from that of Tibetans. Multiple participants regard the Bylakuppe residents to have a more conservative mindset. Tinley names an example of this conservative thinking:

> *"Most of the times, we wear Western clothes, which might not be offensive in our eyes, but it might not suite their culture. So sometimes, they point at us and sometimes they tease us in the market. But not often, only sometimes. Especially with the girls, when they wear shorts. People will stare, and people will point at them. Because of the thinking. Ideologically, they are more conservative. Because of which, they hardly accept those things."* (Retired, 74 years)

Also, some participants perceive the financial mindset of Bylakuppe residents to be different from that of Tibetans. Pasang elaborates on this by saying:

> *"Most Tibetans, when they got money, they do not save. They love showing off. They spend their money, they buy things, they enjoy. Most of the Tibetans have the same mentality as foreigners. We do not put a lot of money in the save. Money comes, and money goes. But when it comes to Indians, like 99%, they save lots of money. This is a dissimilarity between the Indian and the Tibetan culture. Although these days Indians are increasingly going out as tourists and spend their money [figure 7.2]"* (Administrator of monastery, 38 years)

Lastly, some participants regard the mindset of Bylakuppe residents to differ from that of Tibetans when it comes to gender equality. They argue that gender equality is more predominant in Tibetan culture, whereas in Indian culture it occurs that women are not treated equally to men. Pema (Teacher, 26 years) argues: "*In Tibetan society, there is not much discrimination against the girls, however there is in Indian society. At least in our localities."*

Figure 7.2: Indian tourists in the Golden Temple
(Photo: Anne Grent (2018))

In summary, most participants experience some discrimination by both Bylakuppe residents and non-Bylakuppe residents in several forms, possibly decreasing participants' development of a sense of belonging. However, factors such as financial benefits, knowledge of the local language and creating awareness are mentioned as preventing some to discriminate, possibly

enhancing the receptivity of Indian society towards refugees. Furthermore, gratitude towards India and cultural similarities possibly enhance perceptions of a positive social climate towards Tibetan refugees, arguably increasing the receptivity of Indian society and simultaneously the development of a sense of belonging. On the other hand, perceived differences regarding religion, physical characteristics and mindset are likely to give participants a more negative perception of the social climate towards Tibetan refugees.

7.2 Social capital

Social capital relates to the social networks of Tibetans, which influences their sense of belonging (Hou et al., 2017). Both bridging social networks – ties with Indian people – and bonding social networks – relationships with fellow Tibetans – are considered relevant for an assessment of social capital. Consequently, the following sub-question will be a central focus of this section: *In what ways do Tibetans in exile form social relations with both Indian nationals and other Tibetans?*

This section will predominantly elaborate on the nature of bridging social networks between participants and Indian citizens, whereby both Bylakuppe and non-Bylakuppe residents are being considered. A short notion will also be made on the bonding social networks of participants, even though these are considered less relevant to this study.

7.2.1 Bridging social networks

Bridging social networks between participants and Bylakuppe residents

Bridging social networks between participants and Bylakuppe residents seem to be predominantly centred around business, which may strengthen feelings of attachment towards Indian society to some extent. Sonam (Postman, 41 years) states: *"I would consider the relationship with local Indians more as a business deal. We need them, we pay them. It is of a business deal from two sides."*

Regarding these business relationships, multiple participants speak about the economic functions that Bylakuppe residents occupy within Bylakuppe. Firstly, Tashi (Retired, 64 years) talks about the construction work that they do: *"Indians come here into our settlements to work, they do all the skilled and repair work."* During interviews, participants argue that Tibetans are generally not that interested in undertaking construction work themselves. Furthermore, a Tibetan monk shared during an informal conversation that Bylakuppe residents usually do all

the construction work because planning permission from the Indian government is required – which is harder to obtain for Tibetan people due to their refugee status.

Jampa confirms that many Bylakuppe residents do construction work, but also elaborates on other economic functions that they occupy in the settlement:

> *"They [Bylakuppe residents] work as shop keepers, waiters, businessmen, taxi drivers and so many people work in construction. So many constructions are going on, and all the people working in construction are Indian people."* (Founder Karuna Home for Disabled Children, 50 years)

Figure 7.3: Indian autos in Bylakuppe (Photo: Anne Grent (2018))

Many participants state that the *autos* in Bylakuppe are always driven by Bylakuppe residents (figure 7.3). Consequently, participants often get touch with them when they use the *autos* to travel in the settlement and towards Kushalnagar. Additionally, shops and hotels within the settlement reportedly and visibly often employ or are run by Bylakuppe residents.

Furthermore, participants state that Tibetans frequently hire Bylakuppe residents to cultivate their land, as they do not have enough manpower and skills themselves. Tenzin explains:

> *"The Indian government has given us some agricultural land. But our family is very small, so we had to hire Indians from around the settlement. Some of the Indian people, they come as laborers, and we give them daily wages.* (…) *They also have more skills for it."* (Teacher, 38 years)

Additionally, some participants occupy jobs whereby they maintain a business relationship with Bylakuppe residents as colleagues. Rinchen (Provider of internet services, 28 years) explains: *"There is so many Indian staff in our company. Half of the people are Indian."*

Except for business relationships, some participants note they maintain some social relationships with Bylakuppe residents as well, which may also enhance feelings of attachment towards Indian society. Gyatso (Teacher, 56 years), for instance, states: *"It is a Tibetan tradition. When somebody comes home, we have tea. We just say: come on, sit down, have tea. And the Indians sometimes offer us tea as well."* Along these lines, Lhamo elaborates:

> *"A couple of times when I visited my cousin, I saw an Indian guy come over and bring Indian food during the Tibetan festivals. My cousin wanted to taste some Indian homemade food. When the Indian guy came over, he also tasted Tibetan homemade food. So, there is a give and take kind of policy. There is a healthy relationship between the local Indians and the Tibetans."* (Teacher, 38 years)

However, these bridging social relations are often not regarded as friendships, supposedly reducing the development of a sense of belonging towards Indian society – although opinions about this matter vary slightly between participants. On the one hand, Lobsang (Monk, 39 years) states: *"I just talk and drink tea with Indian people, but we are not friends."* Similarly, Rigzin (Accountant, 28 years) says: *"For my work concern, I have some contact with local Indians. I have contact with contractors and some workers, but not as friends."*

Nyima (Employee Tibetan Agricultural Co-operative Society, 38 years), on the other hand, does regard the relationships with some Bylakuppe residents as friendships, although not close friendships. She says: *"We don't have close friendships with local Indians. We have friends, but I would not invite them to my house."* Tsundue (Teacher, 26 years) agrees to this: *"I have one Indian friend, who drives auto. His name is Anil. We are just friends. Not close, but friends."*

Moreover, some participants do not have much business nor social relationships with Bylakuppe residents at all. This is especially reported by monks, who mostly live quite segregated in the separate *lama* [monk] camp within Bylakuppe. Thekchen (Monk, 22 years) highlights his lack of relations with Bylakuppe residents by saying: *"Usually, we don't have that much communication and that much time with local people. What I know, I have learned from looking at their movies."*

Bridging social networks between participants and non-Bylakuppe residents

Whereas there largely seems to be a lack of bridging social networks based on friendship with Bylakuppe residents, participants allegedly maintain more friendships with non-Bylakuppe residents, presumably increasing feelings of attachment towards Indian society. This merely concerns participants who have pursued their studies in Indian cities such as Mysore or Bangalore, which will be elaborated upon in the section on economic integration. Metok (Teacher, 27 years) explains: *"When I was in college, I was the only Tibetan in my class. All the other 60 students were Indians. I made so many Indian friends there."* Along these lines, Tsering (Teacher, 28 years) states that he even has more Indian than Tibetan friends: *"In college, all my friends were Indians. I had the best moments of my life at college. I explored so many things. I have even fallen in love with an Indian lady. It was my first love."*

Figure 7.4: Tibetan public at the Losar Mega Show (Photo: Anne Grent (2018))

Participants that made non-Bylakuppe friends in college indicate that they primarily stay in touch with them through social media. Tsetan (Teacher, 33 years) states: *"They [non-Bylakuppe friends] usually have WhatsApp, so I usually communicate with them through WhatsApp and Facebook."*

A reported reason for this is the distance between the participants and their non-Bylakuppe friends, which makes it easier to communicate through social media than to visit each other. When asked whether he maintains contacts with his Indian friends in real life, Pema (Teacher, 26 years) answers: *"When time permits, they live quite far away you know."*

Given the reported scarcity of face-to-face communication, friendships with non-Bylakuppe residents arguably do not play a predominant role in the daily lives of participants after their college time. This raises questions as to what extent these friendships influence participants' feelings of attachment towards Indian society.

Figure 7.5: Golden Temple in Bylakuppe (Photo: Anne Grent (2018))

Moreover, although some participants mention to have acquired friendships with non-Bylakuppe residents, participants primarily seem to maintain friendships with fellow Tibetans. This can also be observed during public Losar celebrations, such as the Losar Mega Show. In figure 7.4 can be seen how the public of this show merely consists of Tibetans, with many Tibetan monks in particular. There were no Bylakuppe residents noticeable in the public, although they were working in the food stalls, confirming the notion that the ties with local Indians are mainly business relationships. In addition, Tibetans occasionally meet among themselves in the monasteries and Buddhist temples (figure 7.5), where some participants do prayers on a daily basis. These predominantly bonding social networks may strengthen the

identification of participants with Tibet, reducing their sense of belonging towards Indian society.

In summary, bridging social networks mainly consist of business relationships with Bylakuppe residents and friendships with non-Bylakuppe residents maintained through social media. Bonding social networks – i.e. friendships with fellow Tibetans – are predominant among participants. Consequently, the social capital of participants largely seems to facilitate their strengthened identification with Tibet and arguably has a rather minor influence on their development of feelings of attachment towards Indian society.

7.3 Economic integration

Economic integration offers a reflection of the participation of Tibetan refugees in Indian society – indicated by economic outcomes and socio-economic success (Hou et al., 2017). Regarding this concept, this section focuses on the sub-question: *In what ways does the Tibetan refugee diaspora experience economic participation in Indian society?*

To give a comprehensive description of participants' economic integration, this topic is divided into educational integration and occupational integration. These sub-topics are discussed successively in this section – focusing on the school- and college-time, as well as the working life of participants.

7.3.1 Educational integration of Tibetan refugees in Indian society

Educational integration may enhance participants' development of a sense of belonging towards Indian society. To assess the educational integration of Tibetan refugees in Indian society, it is important to have an understanding of the Indian school system. Pasang explains:

> *"Here in India, you go through 5 years of primary education, 3 years of middle school education, 2 years of secondary education and then plus 2. So that is basically 12 years of schooling. After 12 years of schooling, you go to college. In India, an undergraduate degree takes 3 years. After this, you go on to do your master's."* (Teacher, 41 years)

Participants note that they have been to Tibetan schools until the 12th grade. The origin of the Tibetan school system is explained by Tashi, a 64-year-old retired teacher. In the 1960s, Tibetan refugees who had just arrived in India lived in harsh conditions in so-called road camps in the North, where they made roads for the Indian government. Tashi was orphaned soon after

arrival when he was only 4 years old, along with many other Tibetan children. He explains what happened thereafter:

> *"The older sister of the Dalai Lama, Tsering Dolma, sent officials, people responsible for education and things like that and told them to collect all the children from these road camps and bring them down to Dharamsala. This project was a wonderful thing for me, because I was left on the side of the road with my parents dead. It was easy for them to pick me up and carry me on their backs. They brought me all the way to Dharamsala. That is where I started my real life."*

Tashi arrived at the Tibetan nursery for Tibetan refugee children, what would later become a large educational institution called Tibetan Children's Villages (TCV). He remained in this school until the 12th grade. Another educational institution for Tibetans is the Central School for Tibetans (CST), also present in Bylakuppe. The majority of the participants went to either TCV or CST until the 12th grade. This indicates that until the 12th grade, there is little educational integration into Indian society, presumably limiting attachment towards Indian society.

Figure 7.6: Monastic school in Bylakuppe (Photo: Anne Grent (2018))

On the other hand, some participants state that both TCV and CST abide the Indian school curriculum. This means that Tibetan children get to learn about subjects such as Indian history and the Hindi language. This may enhance attachment towards Indian society.

However, special attention is paid to Tibetan cultural values as well, enhancing attachment to the Tibetan community simultaneously. Gyatso (Teacher, 56 years) elaborates on this by stating that: *"The Dalai Lama speaks the language of compassion, kindness and altruism. In our school, teachers very often tell children to be compassionate."*

Whereas TCV and CST reportedly mainly focus on the Indian curriculum with some Tibetan value education, Tibetan values are arguably more predominantly present in the monastic schools of Bylakuppe (figure 7.6). According to some participants who either teach or study at one of these schools, the school system works slightly different there. For instance, specific attention is paid to Tibetan subjects – such as a Tibetan writing class (figure 7.7).

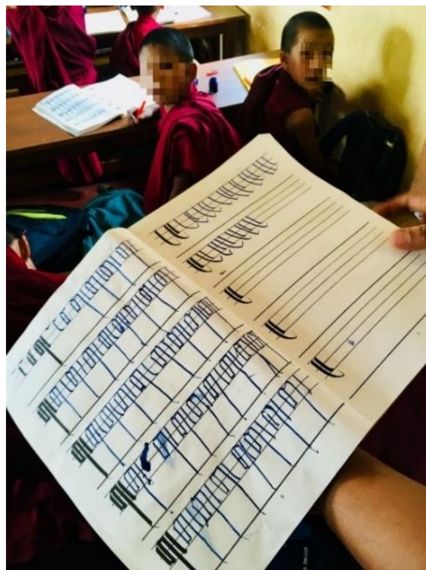

Figure 7.7: Tibetan writing class in monastic school (Photo: Anne Grent (2018))

Reportedly, once monks have completed the 10th grade, they go on to study Buddhist Philosophy at one of the monastic universities (figure 7.8). Thekchen (Monk, 22 years) explains what happens after class 10 by saying: *"If you want to get the highest degree, which we call geshe and is like a PhD, we have to study about 24 years."* Consequently, for monks the educational integration into Indian society remains limited – which means that even after the 12th grade their education will likely not stimulate the development of a sense of belonging.

Whereas monks will study within the Tibetan settlements for an indefinite period and experience little educational integration in Indian society, most *lay* participants – those who

are not Monks – mention that they pursued their college education and sometimes master's degree in Indian cities. Tsering elaborates on this:

> *"I did my bachelor's degree in Mysore city. It was a four-year integrated course, a bachelor Science and Education. After that, I went to another city. It is called Madras, now Chennai, where I pursued my master's degree in Science."* (Teacher, 28 years)

Consequently, once some *lay* participants pass the 12th grade, their educational participation in Indian society increases considerably, which is likely to positively affect their sense of belonging towards Indian society. However, not all participants have finished a bachelor's or master's degree, as Sonam (Postman, 41 years) elaborates: *"I went to school up till year 10. After that I have been helping the family business."*

Figure 7.8: Monastic university in Bylakuppe (Photo: Anne Grent (2018))

7.3.2 Occupational integration of Tibetans in Indian society

Although the educational participation in Indian society of most participants is enhanced after class 12, the occupational integration of participants is rather limited. This entails that most participants are employed within the settlement itself. For instance, numerous participants are employed as teachers (figure 7.9) – as seen in table 6.2. The schools where they work are all located within Bylakuppe. Other participants are, for instance, part of the monasteries in Bylakuppe – either as monk or as employee – or work for the Tibetan Agricultural Co-operative Society.

Figure 7.9: Teacher in monastic school (Photo: Anne Grent (2018))

Not many participants work outside of the settlement. Rinchen (Provider of internet services, 28 years), however, works both in and outside the settlement. He says: *"My job is to provide internet service, rural broadband, in Bylakuppe and in Indian towns. But my office is only here in Bylakuppe."* Consequently, few participants experience a higher level of occupational integration in Indian society – which can enhance their development of a sense of belonging.

Some participants indicate that their occupational integration is being compromised by their refugee status – as will be elaborated upon in the next section on exposure to Indian society. If these participants would possess an Indian passport, they would have picked a job in Indian society and thereby enhance their occupational integration. Tsering (Teacher, 28 years) says: "*The problem for us is that our official status is still that of refugees. I thought maybe I should go and enter the Indian market, but that is difficult with a refugee status."*

The majority of the participants, however, indicates to be content with their occupation within Bylakuppe – despite the lack of a high salary. This entails that those participants would not pick another job when given the chance, which might indicate that they feel no desire to enhance their sense of belonging through enhanced occupational integration. Tsetan is overwhelmingly positive about his job:

> *"Even though the salary is not high, I love this place. I love to teach monks and to learn about Tibetan Buddhism. I love this environment and I love to stay with the monks as well."* (Teacher, 33 years)

Alongside income from work, income from international aid and remittances improve the socio-economic position of participants, arguably enhancing their sense of belonging towards Indian society. Socio-economic success is likely to enhance a sense of belonging (Amit & Bar-Lev, 2015). As previously discussed in the section of receiving society receptivity, Tibetans are generally more developed than Bylakuppe residents due to abovementioned factors. Nyima (Employee Tibetan Agricultural Co-operative Society, 38 years) elaborates: *"Tibetan people use to go abroad and work, they send money to their parents over there. They sometimes build a house for their parents."*

In summary, the educational integration of lay participants remains limited until the 12th grade. Although some participants experience a higher level of educational integration during their college-time in Indian cities, they usually start working within the settlement afterwards. So, after their sense of belonging is supposedly enhanced for a short period of time, it is likely to decrease again soon thereafter. Monks, however, form an exception as they usually complete their education with a stronger focus on Tibetan values within the settlements – which is likely to limit their development of a sense of belonging towards Indian society. Furthermore, the enhanced socio-economic position that partly derived from international aid and remittances might result in the development of a sense of belonging towards Indian society.

7.4 Exposure to Indian society

The topic exposure to the host society emphasizes the contacts immigrants have with the majority group (Hou et al., 2017). Consequently, this section is centred around the sub-question: *How do Tibetans in exile perceive their role in Indian society?* To answer this question, this section will elaborate on the topics 'regular visits to Indian towns and cities', 'language proficiency' and 'commitment to remain in India'.

7.4.1 Regular visits to Indian towns and cities

According to Fenster (2005), sense of belonging changes as corporal experiences create attachment and sentiments to a place. Therefore, regular visits to Indian towns and cities could influence participants' sense of belonging. Regarding this, the majority of the participants mentions that they visit the nearest Indian town Kushalnagar (figure 7.10) the most often – at least once a week. These regular visits arguably enhance attachment towards Indian society.

Figure 7.10: Main street of Kushalnagar (Photo: Anne Grent (2018))

A typical case is that of Sangye, a 41-years-old field officer. Every Tuesday, he takes an *auto* or rides his motorbike to Kushalnagar to visit the weekly market. When he goes there, he buys vegetables or necessities for his house. He explains why he does not do his shopping in Bylakuppe itself:

> *"Before, when I was small, the settlement was not much developed. Compared to the last 20 years, the settlement has improved a lot. You can get almost everything inside the settlement, but in Kushalnagar things are very cheap. We bargain with the shop owners and more items are available."*

However, Sangye does not only go to Kushalnagar for the market but also for other purposes:

> *"Kushalnagar is only 10 to 15 minutes away, so occasionally I use to go there. (...) I get a haircut there and get Xerox copies. Also, I go there to get petroleum or repairing services for my bike and car."*

Like Sangye, many participants frequently visit Kushalnagar, although not all of them go to run errands. Lobsang (Monk, 39 years) explains: *"Sometimes I am walking to Kushalnagar with my friend monks. On the way, we talk about Buddhism. When we get there, we drink sweet tea."*

Whereas Kushalnagar is frequently visited, participants less often go to more distant Indian cities, indicating that a sense of belonging is mostly being developed towards local Indian society. Participants mostly state to visit Mysore and Bangalore. Mysore is the nearest city, two hours by bus from Bylakuppe. Participants go there sometimes for recreational purposes. Ngawang (Employee NGO animal care, 41 years) explains: *"We go there because Mysore is a big city you know. We can get whatever we need; medicines, movies, whatever."* Similarly, Dawa (College student, 21 years) says: *"Sometimes I go to Mysore with friends, just to go to the mall and watch movies."*

Bangalore is less frequently visited by participants, as it takes five hours by bus to get there. An often-mentioned reason to go there is to visit Tibetan friends that live there, as Tsetan (Teacher, 33 years) explains: *"Some of my friends are in Bangalore. Sometimes I go there, and I spent one or two nights, then I come back. I just go there to meet my friends and enjoy with them."*

Except for towns and cities in Karnataka, a few participants also visit northern states of India sometimes. However, whenever participants go to the North they mostly seem to stay in Majnu-ka-tilla in Delhi or McLeod Ganj in Dharamsala. Both places have a large population of Tibetans, which indicates a limited exposure to Indian society when participants visit there. Along these lines, Gyatso (Teacher, 56 years) explains:

> *"Sometimes I go to Delhi to meet my sister's son and his family. He is working there at the Tibetan Reception Centre. (...) And sometimes I go to Dharamsala also, when there is a training for teachers or a workshop on a new teaching methodology."* (English teacher, 56 years)

7.4.2 Language proficiency

Language serves as a symbol of national identity and cultural solidarity, facilitating emotional identification with either the home or the host country (Raijman & Geffen, 2017). Regarding language proficiency, the majority states that they feel most comfortable communicating in their mother tongue, the Tibetan language. This indicates more attachment towards the Tibetan community than towards Indian society. Tsering (Teacher, 28 years), for instance, says: *"I prefer to speak in my own mother tongue, in Tibetan."*

A few participants indicate that they feel similarly comfortable communicating in English. Pasang (Teacher, 41 years) says: *"When it comes to speaking both Tibetan and*

English but writing in English. I stopped learning Tibetan when I finished my class 12. That was in 1996, almost 22 years ago."

A large share of the participants, however, feels more comfortable communicating in Hindi than in English. Proficiency in Hindi supposedly enhances feelings of attachment towards Indian society. Chokey (Assistant accountant Tibetan Agricultural Co-operative Society) says: *"I choose the Tibetan language first, then the Hindi language, and then English."*

Participants who speak Hindi have usually learned this in two ways. Firstly, Hindi is taught in school. Yama (12th grade student, 19 years) explains: *"We learn Hindi in class 6, 7 and 8. Only three years. We learn the alphabet and some words."* This also substantiates the argument that the Indian curriculum at Tibetan schools enhances educational integration. Secondly, some participants state that they learned the Hindi language from Bollywood movies (figure 7.11) – which the majority of the participants like to watch. Tsetan (Teacher, 33) says: *"When I was in school, I used to love movies. Most of the movies are Hindi. I learned Hindi by seeing movies."* Consequently, those who understand the national language arguably get more insights into the Indian culture that is distributed through movies – enhancing the development of their sense of belonging.

Figure 7.11: Advertisement poster for a Bollywood movie in Bylakuppe (Photo: Anne Grent (2018))

Whereas some participants state to be fluent in Hindi, most participants say their knowledge of the Hindi language is limited – arguably preventing them to develop their sense of belonging towards Indian society. Rigzin (Accountant, 28 years) says: *"Most of the time I*

try to communicate in Hindi, but I only have some basic knowledge." Dhondup explains that he faced difficulties by not being fluent in Hindi:

> *"Local people in this area are speaking very less in Hindi. We have to study Hindi until class 8, after that we do not have Hindi. We only have English and Tibetan. After class 12, we have to choose a second language. Most of the universities are not giving additional English, so I was forced to choose Hindi. It is very hard to choose a language that is unfamiliar to us. Because of Hindi, I got lower grades in my BA."* (Librarian, 53 years)

Furthermore, Bylakuppe residents usually speak Kannada instead of Hindi. Participants that belong to the category second-generation refugees – those who were born in India – and grew up in Bylakuppe mostly speak the local language Kannada. Knowledge of Kannada supposedly enhances a sense of belonging towards the local Indian society. Dolma (Shop owner, 43 years) says: *"Mostly in Bylakuppe itself, Tibetans speak Kannada very fluently. People do get better relations with the local people by learning the Kannada language."*

On the other hand, participants who are first generation refugees – people who were born and have lived in Tibet – or those who grew up in another state often do not speak Kannada. Their attachment towards local Indian society is likely to be limited by this factor. Kelsang (10th grade student, 18 years), who is a first-generation refugee, says: *"I don't even know how to say 'what is your name?' in Kannada. I just know how to count to three. But I forgot about it now."*

7.4.3 Commitment to remain in India

According to Amit and Bar-Lev (2015), more commitment to stay in the host country for a longer period of time generally motivates immigrants to enhance their efforts made to belong. With regard to this, numerous participants state that they view India as their second homeland. Tsetan (Teacher, 33 years) says: *"I must say that India has become my country, my second homeland."* Similarly, Tashi (Retired, 64 years) elaborates: *"My entire life, as a child, education and working, everything was in India. So, I am a Tibetan, but in my heart I am an Indian in that sense."*

Feelings of India as a second homeland may be enhanced by the fact that a large share of the participants was born in India or arrived as children or young adolescents. This results

in their socialization being proceeded in India and a lengthier tenure in the host country – making the development of a sense of belonging more likely.

That many participants see India as a second homeland becomes apparent in the ways Indian culture has influenced their lives throughout the years. First, although some prefer to listen to Tibetan music, participants mostly enjoy listening to Bollywood music as well. Namdol (Tibetan traditional doctor, 53 years) says: *"I like Bollywood music. Indians make great traditional and modern-day music. Sometimes we sing Indian songs together."*

Figure 7.12: Tibetan monk preparing tsampa for breakfast (Photo: Anne Grent (2018))

Second, although Tibetan food – like *tsampa* (figure 7.12), *momo's* (7.13) and *thukpa* – is consumed within Bylakuppe, participants often say they enjoy Indian food as well. In restaurants, it is not unusual that both Indian and Tibetan food is being served – as is illustrated in figure 7.14. Participants consume Indian foods such as *puri*, *parotta* and *dosa*. Some participants even prefer Indian food to Tibetan food. When Pema asked what kind of food he prefers, he answers:

> *"Definitely Indian. I was born and raised in India. I always had the Indian diet, which is rice and all these things. I didn't have our own diet much. In the sense of food, I am more towards Indian food. They have multiple cuisines, whereas in Tibetan society there are hardly 8 to 10 cuisines, that's it. So, there is more choice in Indian food. And*

we are used to Indian food. When we were in school, there was Indian food, rice and dahl. Dahl is not grown in Tibet at all, but now we are used to it.” (Teacher, 26 years)

However, Lhamo (Teacher, 38 years) says: *“If we have a party, we have Tibetan food, such as momo’s, and Indian food. If we have the maximum amount of momo’s, then momo’s are always completed. They barely eat the Indian food.”*

Also, participants state that whereas Tibetans originally used to drink butter tea, they now usually drink Indian chai. Sonam (Post man, 41 years) explains: *“My grandparents did not drink chai, we had butter tea. Nowadays, people do not drink much butter tea, they prefer more Indian chai, sweet tea.”*

Abovementioned influences of Indian culture in the daily life of participants possibly enhance their commitment to remain in India, effectively increasing efforts to belong in India. Gyatso (Teacher, 56 years) has gotten so used to India that he wishes to stay there. He says: *“Given a choice, I would love to stay in India. I feel very comfortable here.”*

Figure 7.13: Steamed momo’s (Photo: Anne Grent (2018))

Figure 7.14: Restaurant that serves both Tibetan and Indian food (Photo: Anne Grent (2018))

Opinions about Tibetans taking up Indian citizenship

With regard to the commitment of participants to remain in India, the topic of Indian citizenship is often debated within the Tibetan community. Under certain circumstances, it is a possibility for Tibetan refugees to apply for an Indian passport, which reportedly brings about individual benefits, but a communal disadvantage for Tibetan society.

One of the individual benefits often mentioned by participants is that applying for an Indian passport would expand employment opportunities for Tibetan refugees. Tashi elaborates:

> *"Being separated from India, not being an Indian citizen, there are certain things you can't do and certain jobs you can't get. Like for example government jobs, or in the military, in the navy, armed forces, whatever. As a Tibetan, you can't get a job there, because we are not Indians. Our young people, they have to go in private companies for jobs. Privately, they employ us. All the government things are blocked for us. Starting a business is easier when you are a citizen; it is more difficult if you are not a citizen."* (Retired, 64 years)

Those who wish to expand their employment opportunities in Indian society arguably are more prepared to stay in India for a longer period than those who do not wish to do so.

Another reported individual benefit is that taking up Indian citizenship would make travelling easier, which is difficult now due to the lack of a passport. Nyima explains:

> *"If you travel on an IC [Identification Card], you have to go for an exit permit for the visa. It will take time. We have to go to Mysore for the police clearance, and then go back to Bylakuppe police station. If we have Indian passport, we don't have to go for all of this."* (Employee Tibetan Agricultural Co-operative Society, 38 years)

Moreover, taking up Indian citizenship would allegedly expand employment opportunities and make travelling easier – indicating a stronger commitment to remain in India.

Other participants, however, emphasize the communal disadvantage for Tibetan society. For them, the wish to return to Tibet is likely to be stronger than their commitment to stay in India. Phuntsok explains the main communal disadvantage:

"Once we have an Indian passport, then the whole purpose of being in India in exile is lost. The reason why we have a separate school system, separate parliament, separate Tibetan administration is to preserve our Tibetan identity." (Teacher, 51 years)

This implies that one cannot have an Indian passport and simultaneously keep the Tibetan identity, but should choose between these nationalities. Consequently, according to some, applying for Indian citizenship would undermine the Tibetan cause to eventually return to Tibet. Yangkey, however, does not agree with the notion that documents are central to one's identity. He explains:

"In order to keep our identity, it is not necessary to keep Tibetan documents specifically. It is the 21st century; we have to move on. Even though it is so important to keep our Tibetan culture and Tibetan rituals going, it is not necessary to keep the Tibetan documents to prove that you are from the Tibetan community. You are not Tibetan because you got a green book. It is not necessary to show them. (…) There are some people who really need to apply for Indian citizenship in order to ease their personal issues. Not because they don't like the Tibetan identity, it is not because they hate Tibetans. They did that because they need to do that." (Teacher, 30 years)

Moreover, the communal disadvantage of a jeopardized Tibetan cause seems to outweigh the individual benefits for most participants, as only few would apply for an Indian passport themselves, indicating a weak desire to remain in India. Only those who would like to expand their employment opportunities or travel more frequently would consider applying. However, some participants did not make up their mind about the matter yet, as in the case of Tsering:

"Since my childhood days, my parents have been telling me the same thing: there is a reason why you are still a refugee, there is a cause you have to fight for. One aspect is that I want to do great business, and then one is my family's wish to serve the country, to fight for our own country. So, I am still in the middle. I am still not able to decide." (Teacher, 28 years).

Nonetheless, most participants seem to have feelings of solidarity towards those who choose to do acquire an Indian passport. Bhuti elaborates:

> *"We were born and brought up only here in Bylakuppe. Here, I have my land which is given by the government, so there is no reason to apply for citizenship. My advice is for those who stay in college or work in the city, [they] should apply for Indian citizenship. Because, those students who stay in city life, they don't have any agriculture land, they don't have any property given by the central government. They are working on their own and staying on their own feet."* (Teacher, 28 years)

Wish to return to Tibet

Moreover, as already indicated by the fact that most participants do not wish to apply for Indian citizenship, most participants express a strong desire to return to Tibet. This debatably reduces efforts made to belong to Indian society. Lobsang states:

> *"My mother used to tell me that we are to get back to our country. Our ancestors are all from Tibet. If we get our independence, we will definitely go back to Tibet. Why do we have to stay in India? This is our second home; our main home is Tibet. Every year me and my mother pray for Losar to go back to Tibet very soon."* (Monk, 39 years)

Reported reasons for the wish to return to Tibet seem to vary between first- and second-generation refugees but seem to have nothing to do with dislikeable characteristics of Indian society. First-generation refugees – those who were born and have lived in Tibet – often report a wish to return to see their family. Dawa (College student, 21 years), who was born in Tibet, says: *"I have two sisters and one brother who still live in Tibet. I want to meet them and them also want to meet me."* Second-generation refugees, on the other hand, have never been to Tibet themselves and express a wish to see their homeland. Rigzin, a second-generation refugee, explains that he merely has ideas about Tibet from stories of others and pictures but wishes to go and experience the reality:

> *"I was born in India. People say that we are Tibetans. The first thing that came to mind was 'where is Tibet?'. I wonder what our capital Lhasa looks like, the Potala and everything. It is just the pictures I can see, not the reality. We don't have freedom yet. (...) We are hoping that soon we can go back."* (Accountant, 28 years)

Participants who want to return to Tibet predominantly express that they will remain in India until the Chinese government agrees with the middle way approach, as is proposed by the Dalai Lama. This entails that Tibet can stay within the People's Republic of China but acquires genuine autonomy. Tsetan explains:

> *"We are looking for genuine autonomy, not full independence. This is the middle way approach. Tibet was an independent country before, but if you see the current situation, China is very powerful. The Tibetan population is also very small. Many Chinese have come to Tibet, and Tibetans are already a minority in our country. This is the problem, that is why we are not looking for complete independence. It is a win-win proposition."* (Teacher, 33 years)

Whilst many agree with the middle-way approach, some participants state that they wish for *rangzen* [freedom] for Tibet. Norbu (Supervisor, 43 years) explains: *"I wish for complete independence, I need it. I don't want Tibet to be a part of China."* Along these lines, Tsetan continues to argue: *"There is a non-governmental organization which is called the Tibetan Youth Congress. They fight for rangzen, which means they want complete independence for Tibet."*

Although many participants express a strong desire to return to Tibet, some explicitly state that they do not feel the need to do so. Participants indicate to imagine the current Tibet region as backward with a lack of health care, employment and educational facilities. Consequently, returning to Tibet would mean they would have to lower their living standards. This indicates a stronger desire to remain in India as of now. Furthermore, many feel that the Chinese have influenced Tibet too much. Sonam elaborates on this:

> *"It is not Tibet anymore, the Chinese completely changed it. It is not like you can see lots of yaks and sheep, see these rivers and forests, it is not anymore. The Chinese have polluted it. It is not like the old Tibet, it has been changed so much. They just literally destroyed everything. From the monasteries, to the daily lives of people, to the landscape, or even the rivers and forests. There is nothing to see in Tibet now. It is just the name Tibet, but it does not feel like my land anymore."* (Postman, 41 years)

On the other hand, some participants have not made up their mind about whether they wish to return to Tibet yet. Gyemtsen (School prefect, 19 years) says: *"If we were allowed to go to Tibet, then I don't know. I was raised here, my thoughts are developed in this country, but I really want to meet my parents. I want to help them."*

Desire to go to the West

Whereas many express the desire to return to Tibet and some wish to remain in India, many participants make notion of the tendency of mainly young Tibetans in India to move to Western countries. This desire to go to the West implies a weak commitment to remain in India, arguably reducing the efforts made to belong to Indian society. Tashi explains this phenomenon:

> *"Now, slowly what is happening is that going back to Tibet as a free people is becoming more and more difficult. Young people don't see that happening now. So many young Tibetans are looking towards the West to settle. Not so much India. If they get a visa today, they will go. They see the West to be wonderful, the land of milk and honey, money to be picked from the trees. Everything is shiny, wonderful, clean, spotless, you know. They see that. They want to go there. So that is what they do. There is a huge effort to try to go anywhere. Holland, Germany, French, Denmark, Sweden or whatever, it does not matter. Not towards Tibet, nobody goes to Tibet."* (Retired, 64 years)

Some, mainly young, participants expressed a desire to go to Western countries themselves to either study or work there. They generally believe there are more opportunities for them there. Lhundup (Teacher, 23 years) says: *"I am planning to join one of the universities in Australia. I am still working on this. I don't give up. I was a big dreamer when I was in school, and I will remain a big dreamer."* Dawa (College student, 21 years) adds that he would like to study abroad, but afterwards return to India to serve the Tibetan community: *"If I get the opportunity to study abroad, I go there and then return to the Tibetan community to serve here."*

Furthermore, participants indicate that Tibetan refugees have been influenced to go to the West by people they know. Phuntsok (Teacher, 51 years) says: *"I am 99% sure I am going abroad. (...) I want to go to the United States, because my brothers are there."* Namdol explains:

> *"Some of the Tibetans have a very peculiar mindset. For example, in your family one or two members are in Western countries. So other people are thinking: oh my god, in our family none have gone across the ocean, so we have to go."* (Tibetan traditional doctor, 53 years)

However, many older participants, like Tashi who has studied and worked in the United States, are not eager to settle in the West at all, showing a commitment to remain in India. Tashi says:

> *"I never really had the desire to live in America. The way of life there is very different, you don't get the time to think and reflect, you are hurrying all the time. The American dollar is very good when you compare it to Indian rupees. That makes you work hard. For me it is far better to live a peaceful live in India."* (Retired, 64 years)

Tashi continues to argue that a more peaceful life in India connects better to Buddha's teachings that say to be content with what you have and not to be deceived by wealth. According to him, the priorities of Western countries clash with Buddhism. He says:

> *"Buddha says to be content with what you have. Don't hunger, don't thirst, don't crave, don't rush. When you do that, you will suffer. The more you have, the more you want. When you try to invite these teachings into your life and then go to a country where everything is about competition, materialism, success, achieving and individualism, then there is a problem, because it is clashing all the time."*

Moreover, influences of the Western culture have become apparent in Bylakuppe when it comes to music, possibly indicating an increasing sense of belonging towards Western countries. When sitting in *coffee cafés* [coffee shops] or walking through the streets, one can hear Justin Bieber blaring from the speakers. You can also buy bags with the face of Bob Marley on it in many shops. Sangye (Field officer, 41 years) states: *"I love English songs. Now, there is Justin Bieber. In my time, there were Michael Jackson, Charlie Chaplin and Bob Marley."* Ngawang (Employee NGO Animal care, 41 years) adds: *"I love Western music. To be honest, nowadays, the younger generation of Tibetans is more attracted to the Western culture."* With regard to this, Rinchen (Provider of internet services, 28 years) reasons: *"It is not like because I am Tibetan I only should like Tibetan songs, that is not necessary."*

Generally, participants appreciate Tibetan, Bollywood and English music equally – reflecting the mix of Indian, Western and Tibetan influences in their daily life. Dolma (Shop owner, 43 years) says: *"I listen to Hindi, Tibetan and English music, all mixed up. I don't have a preference. I like music with a lot of beats."* At musical concerts, Tibetan, Bollywood and Western dances are performed, shown on the advertisement poster for a musical concert in figure 7.15.

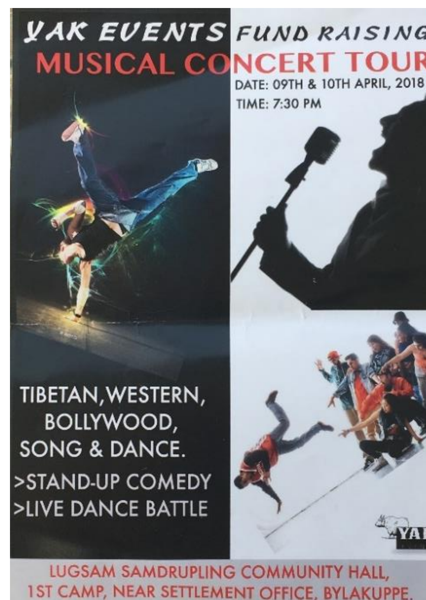

Figure 7.15: Advertisement poster musical concert (Photo: Anne Grent (2018))

In summary, participants most frequently visit nearby Indian towns and cities – indicating an enhanced sense of belonging towards local Indian society. Regarding language proficiency, participants prefer to speak their mother tongue Tibetan, which indicates a strong attachment to Tibet. Most participants do speak Hindi, although not fluently. Those who speak Hindi mostly watch Bollywood movies and are arguably more knowledgeable about the Indian culture due to more exposure, enhancing their sense of belonging. Second-generation refugees who grew up in Bylakuppe mostly speak the local language Kannada as well. Furthermore, although some participants would prefer to stay in India, most report a strong desire to return to Tibet, reflected in the lack of willingness to take up Indian citizenship. Others, mostly young participants, wish to go towards the West, showing little attachment to Indian society. Interestingly, a mix of the Western, Indian and Tibetan culture is noticeable if one considers participants' musical preferences.

8. Discussion and conclusion

On 31 March 2018, the 'Thank you India' event marked the beginning of the 60th year of exile for the stateless Tibetan refugee diaspora in India. Ever since 1959, Tibetan refugees have resided in India in separate refugee settlements – designed to preserve the Tibetan society and culture. The settlements were initially designed to be temporary, but after all these decades the dream of a free Tibet seems inconceivable in the foreseeable future (Palakshappa, 1978; Ahmad, 2012). Consequently, the aim of this study was to gain in-depth information of Tibetans refugees' individual perceptions regarding the ways they feel 'at home in India'. The main research question was: *What perceptions do Tibetan refugees in India have about their sense of belonging towards Indian society?*

In order to answer this question, this study has focused on four main topics and corresponding sub-questions in the context of the sense of belonging, namely 'receiving society receptivity', 'social capital', 'economic integration' and 'exposure to host society'. In this section, this study will first discuss the results presented in the previous chapter along the lines of these topics by reflecting on the findings and making suggestions for possible policy recommendations. Following, it will discuss the interesting dynamic between the overall findings and the concept of identity in this case study. Lastly, it will answer the main research question, reflect on this study's limitations and hindsight improvements, and propose routes for future research.

The first topic discussed is 'receiving society receptivity', which entails how the host country welcomes and treats immigrants. For this study, this topic was translated into the sub-question *How does the Tibetan refugee diaspora perceive their reception by Indian society?* In answering this question, this study looked specifically at two indicators: 'perceived discrimination', which entails experienced instances of discrimination by Indian citizens; and 'perceptions of the social climate with regard to immigrants in the host country', which includes how Tibetan refugees feel towards Indian citizens.

The findings of this study show that most participants perceive instances of discrimination on an individual level by both Bylakuppe and non-Bylakuppe residents. Most reported were instances such as overcharging and being insulted. Although these instances of discrimination do occur, most participants emphasize that this is not always the case and merely inflicted by few Indian nationals. Regarding the social climate towards Tibetan refugees in India, most participants express positive perceptions by emphasizing their gratitude towards

Indian society for the way they have been and are being received. Furthermore, similarities between the Tibetan and Indian culture possibly increase positive perceptions towards the social climate, although perceived cultural differences simultaneously jeopardize this.

According to Antonisch (2010) and Hou et al. (2017), the development of a sense of belonging is generally being encouraged by a lack of discrimination and a positive social climate towards immigrants. Furthermore, Weedon (2004) states that belonging is influenced by what one has in common and what differentiates one from others. The findings of this study therefore indicate that whereas participants' development of a sense of belonging is arguably being discouraged by perceived discrimination and cultural differences, positive perceptions regarding the social climate towards Tibetan refugees and cultural similarities simultaneously enhance it.

In terms of policy recommendations, since participants state that more awareness reduces instances of discrimination, it would be worthwhile to take steps to create more consciousness of the Tibetan situation among Indian citizens, for example through the organization of information-evenings in which Tibetan refugees can raise awareness about their situation. It would be especially relevant to focus on non-Bylakuppe residents, as they are less familiar with Tibetan refugees than Bylakuppe residents.

The second topic discussed is 'social capital', which entails immigrants' social networks. For this study, this topic was translated into the sub-question *In what ways do Tibetans in exile form social relations with both Indian nationals and other Tibetans?* In answering this question, this study looked specifically at two indicators: 'bonding social networks', which entails ties with fellow Tibetan refugees; and 'bridging social networks', which entails ties with Indian citizens.

The findings of this study indicate that bonding social networks are predominant among participants, which means that they predominantly maintain friendships with fellow Tibetan refugees. Conversely, most participants indicate to have only few and limited bridging social networks. Their relationships with Bylakuppe residents reportedly mainly evolve around business, for example in *hotels* or during *auto* rides. Merely participants who pursued their education in Indian cities maintain ties with non-Bylakuppe residents, which mainly take place through social media once these participants returned to Bylakuppe.

According to Hou et al. (2017), bridging social networks may enhance sense of belonging towards the receiving country, whereas bonding social networks may strengthen immigrants' identification with the source country. Therefore, the findings of this study

indicate that the presence of primarily bonding social networks and scarce nature of bridging social networks allegedly discourage participants' development of sense of belonging towards Indian society and strengthen their sense of belonging towards Tibetan society instead.

As the enhancement of bridging social networks is likely to make Tibetan refugees feel more at home in Indian society, a policy to create opportunities for Tibetans and Indian citizens to bond socially would possibly have effect. To establish social interactions between Tibetans and Bylakuppe residents, setting up a community centre may be beneficial.

The third topic considered is 'economic integration', which reflects participants' participation in the receiving society. For this study, this topic was translated into the sub-question *In what ways does the Tibetan refugee diaspora experience economic participation in Indian society?* In answering this question, this study considered two indicators: 'economic outcomes', which relates to the jobs Tibetan refugees occupy and the education they have pursued; and 'socio-economic position', which reflects the position of Tibetan refugees in Indian society based on their wealth.

Regarding economic outcomes, this study found that participants experience a rather low level of economic integration during their school-time and working life, since they go to Tibetan schools and are predominantly employed within Bylakuppe. The phase in which many participants experience most economic integration is during their college years in Indian cities. Monks, however, form an exception as they usually complete their education with a stronger focus on Tibetan values within the settlements. Furthermore, most participants regard their socio-economic position to be developed, especially compared to the generally less developed position of Bylakuppe residents. This enhanced socio-economic position is partly due to international aid and remittances.

According to Amit and Bar-Lev (2015) and Hou et al. (2017), sense of belonging is likely to be enhanced by positive economic outcomes and socio-economic success. Thus whereas the general lack of economic integration is likely to reduce the sense of belonging of participants, their developed socio-economic position arguably enhances it simultaneously.

In order to enhance the economic integration of Tibetan refugees, policy could focus on offering them more employment opportunities within Indian society without the condition of becoming Indian citizens. For example, since Tibetan refugees are prohibited to work for the government, the government could allow them to occupy certain jobs in order to stimulate economic integration. This would make life easier for those who want to expand their

employment opportunities and develop themselves but want to stay loyal to the Tibetan cause simultaneously.

The fourth topic discussed is ‘exposure to host society’, which emphasizes the contacts immigrants have with the majority group of the receiving country. For this study, this topic was translated into the sub-question *How do Tibetans in exile perceive their role in Indian society?* In answering this question, this study looked specifically at four indicators: ‘proficiency in the host country’s language’, which concerns the extent to which Tibetan refugees are able to communicate in Hindi and Kannada; ‘commitment to remain in the host country’, which relates to whether Tibetans want to stay in India; ‘age at immigration’, which entails the chronological age of Tibetans upon arrival in India; and ‘tenure in the country’, which concerns the number of years individuals have resided in India.

Regarding language proficiency, the findings of this study indicate that the majority of participants feels most comfortable communicating in their mother tongue Tibetan. Most participants speak Hindi to some degree, although generally not fluently. Mostly participants that grew up in Bylakuppe are able to communicate in the local language Kannada, whereas others usually are not. Furthermore, most participants retain a strong desire to return to Tibet and show little willingness to take up Indian citizenship – indicating little commitment to remain in India. Young participants often express a desire to go to the West, which could be explained by the dream of a free Tibet being in jeopardy. In addition, a large share of the participants was either born in India or arrived as children or young adolescents. Thus, their socialization proceeded in India and their tenure in the host country has been lengthy. Moreover, participants are exposed to local Indian society by regular visits to Kushalnagar.

According to several authors, proficiency in the host country’s language, more commitment to remain in the host country, a young age at immigration and prolonged tenure in the country are beneficial to the development of a sense of belonging (Amit & Bar-Lev, 2015; Antonsich, 2010; Hou et al., 2017; Raijman & Geffen, 2017). Furthermore, Fenster (2005) states that sense of belonging changes as corporal experiences create attachment to a place. Therefore, the generally limited proficiency in both Hindi and Kannada and little commitment to remain in India are likely to reduce participants’ feelings of attachment towards Indian society. On the other hand, their generally young age at immigration, long tenure and regular visits to nearby Indian towns and cities arguably enhance their development of a sense of belonging.

To make it easier for Tibetan New Arrivals and others who did not grow up in Bylakuppe to communicate with Bylakuppe residents, Kannadan language classes could be facilitated. As most participants only learn Hindi in school, they face difficulties with acquiring language skills in Kannada. Improved proficiency in Kannada could make it easier for Tibetans to enhance their role in Indian society on a local level.

Overall, this study found a mixed picture when it comes to participants' sense of belonging. Positive indicators as well as negative indicators were found, arguably indicating a limited sense of belonging among participants. This limited sense of belonging also becomes evident if one reflects on the language of participants. During interviews and informal conversations, Tibetans often used words as 'our' and 'us' when referring to Tibetan nationals, and words as 'their' and 'them' to refer to Indian citizens. This reflects a perceived distinction between the participants and Indian citizens, indicating that they regard themselves not to be a part of Indian society.

In order to better understand the ways in which participants develop a sense of belonging towards Indian society, it is helpful to reflect on the concept of identity. As discussed in the literature review, previous work of Falcone & Wangchuk (2008) conclude that Tibetans in exile might benefit from embodying a 'third space' between being Tibetan and Indian. This notion of a third space is derived from the 'third space theory' of Homi Bhabha and entails the space where people (re)construct their own identity, without becoming this or that (English, 2002). Similar to the study of Lau (2010), this study found that the lives of participants are being influenced by the Tibetan, Indian and Western culture simultaneously – which, for instance, becomes evident in the musical preference of participants. Consequently, the identity that Tibetans (re)construct in Bhabha's third space is likely to be a mix of Tibetan, Indian and Western identities. This entails that they would be able to develop a sense of belonging towards all those places, as one identity does not exclude the other but are being mixed. Hereby, the importance of analysing diasporas as a process whereby refugees can shape their identities is stressed (Patterson & Kelley, 2000).

Concluding, through extensive field research this thesis sought to answer the research question *What perceptions do Tibetan refugees in India have about their sense of belonging towards Indian society?* In order to answer this question, this thesis first developed a theoretical framework, resulting in the focus on four main topics and corresponding research questions, namely: '*How does the Tibetan refugee diaspora perceive their reception by Indian society?*'; '*In what ways do Tibetans in exile form social relations with both Indian nationals and other*

Tibetans?'; '*In what ways does the Tibetan refugee diaspora experience economic participation in Indian society?*'; and '*How do Tibetans in exile perceive their role in Indian society?*'. The detailed answers to these sub-questions have been discussed earlier in this chapter; therefore, at this point it suffices to specifically focus on providing an answer to the research question.

The findings of this study seem to suggest that development of a sense of belonging among Tibetan refugees is possibly both enhanced and reduced in abovementioned subtopics and depends on the specific aspects. Ultimately, of course, this depends on how representative the participants were for the larger population, but at the very least this study arguably gives a valuable indication. Overall, participants were more likely to create feelings of attachment towards Indian society due to positive perceptions of the social climate, cultural similarities with Indian society, socio-economic success, a young age at immigration and a long tenure in the country. On the other hand, perceived discrimination, cultural differences with Indian society, primarily bonding social networks, a lack of economic integration, limited language proficiency in Hindi and Kannada and a weak commitment to remain in India simultaneously jeopardize participants' development of a sense of belonging. Consequently, the findings of this study seem to indicate that Tibetan refugees feel like they belong to Indian society to some degree, but that obstacles remain, preventing a feeling of complete belonging.

In addition to contributing to the understanding of the Tibetan refugees in India, this study also provides some insights into the broader topic of refugee diasporas and settlements. Firstly, the focus on topics such as perceived discrimination and bridging social networks offers insights in the relations between diasporas and their local social environment. Secondly, topics such as educational and occupational integration offer insights in the realities of refugees in settlements. These insights could provide development policy makers with a better understanding of how diasporas are connected to their policies, and for both governments and non-governmental organizations to structure their refugee policies and (international) aid.

While the findings of this study are of interest and arguably a valuable addition to the understanding of the case specifically and the broader topic of diaspora's in general, importantly this study has also discussed a number of its own limitations. Two of the most important limitations were the difficulties regarding generalization of the results and the underrepresentation of female perceptions. In hindsight, this study could have made alternative approaches in these areas, which would have increased the reliability of this research. The issues regarding generalization could for example have been minimized by including some

form of standardized survey, whereas the gender-issue could have been largely prevented by a stronger focus on women.

Recommendations for future research on this topic include the comparison of different Tibetan refugee settlements with regard to how the Tibetan diaspora develops a sense of belonging towards Indian society. Especially receiving society receptivity may vary significantly between different settlements, as this indicator strongly depends on the local context. Perceived discrimination could be similar or differ between several localities. It would be particularly interesting to compare a settlement in the north of India with one in the south, as the context where Tibetan refugees live in may differ a lot between these places. Furthermore, future research could include the host population in the target group to facilitate a different perspective on the matter. In this study, merely the view of Tibetans is included. Lastly, a quantitative survey based on the theoretical framework presented in this study could either confirm or contradict the results of this qualitative research.

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Appendix 1: Interview guide

Introduction

Thank you for making time available for this interview. My name is Anne Grent and I am conducting this research for my master's course International Development Studies at Utrecht University in The Netherlands. I am interested to find out how Tibetans relate to Indian society, and whether this differs between generations. The information you tell me will be used only for this research project and will not be shared with anyone outside the research team. Your name will not be used, which means that you cannot be identified in any of the information that is presented in the report. Now that you know all of this, do you consent to take part in this interview? Is it okay for you if the interview is being recorded? This will only help me to process the information of this interview and will not be made available to other people. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Background information

No. of interview:
Gender:
Age:
Place of birth:

Opening question

1. What do you do during an average day in Bylakuppe?
   Probes: Family? House? Leisure activities?

Questions about exposure to host society

2. For how long have you been living in India?
   Probes: Born here/moved here? Age? Same settlement?
3. Which languages can you speak other than Tibetan?
   Probes: Understand, write and read? Fluently? Feel comfortable communicating? Speak them often?
4. When do you visit Indian cities or towns?
   Probes: Often? Work, obligations or leisure time? Positive experience?
5. What do you like about Indian society?
   Probes: People? Culture? Regulations? Dislikes?
6. Do you see yourself staying in India in the long term?
   Probes: Why? How? Indian citizenship?
7. Some Tibetans have applied for Indian citizenship. What do you think about this?
   Probes: Do you know people who did this? Would you do it? Why or why not?
8. When would you be comfortable to go back to Tibet?
   Probes: Political/Economic/Social conditions? Would you go back?

Questions about receiving society receptivity

9. How do you think Indians look at Tibetans?
   Probes: Positive/negative? Accepting? How can you tell? Does it differ from the attitude towards other refugees?
10. Have you seen instances of Tibetans being treated differently by Indians?
    Probes: What happened? Example? Once or more often? Did it happen to you?
11. Having lived in India for some time; what do you think of Indians around you?
    Probes: Food? Culture? Movies?

Questions about economic integration

12. How many years have you gone to school in total?
    Probes: Elementary/Secondary? Highest level achieved? Study?
13. What do you do for a living?
    Probes: Employed? Within or outside of Bylakuppe? Prefer another job? Satisfied with income?

Questions about social capital

14. In what context do you have contact with Indian people?
    Probes: In real life, by phone or through the internet? In leisure time, for work? Indian friends? Is language a problem?
15. Do you feel like it is easy for you to get in touch with Indians?
    Probes: Reasons? What way? Example?
16. In what context do you have contact with Tibetan people?
    Probes: Same settlement? Friends or family? Means of contact? Context? Preferable over contact with others?

Questions about cultural norms, values and practices

17. Which elements of Tibetan culture are important for you in your daily life?
    Probes: Religion? Education? Music? Food?
18. Which elements of Indian culture are part of your daily life?
    Probes: Clothes? Bollywood movies? Food? For others as well?
19. In what ways are the Tibetan and Indian culture similar?
    Probes: Norms and values? Practices?
20. What are the major differences between the Tibetan and Indian culture?
    Probes: Norms and values? Practices? Religion?

Closing questions

21. In what ways do you see India as a second home?
    Probes: Could it ever truly be your home?
22. Would you like to add something?

Appendix 2: Codebook

Codes level 1: Overarching themes	Codes level 2: Code families	Codes level 3: Initial codes
Personal characteristics		
	Age	
	Place of birth	
Cultural norms, values and practices		
	Differences Tibetan and Indian culture	
		Eating habits
		Gender roles
		Language
		Mindset
		Physical differences
		Religious differences
	Similarities Tibetan and Indian culture	
		Culture in North India
		Origin Tibetan alphabet
		Personality
		Religion
	Elements of Indian culture in daily life	
		Bollywood movies
		Bollywood music
		Indian food
	Elements of Tibetan culture in daily life	

		Tibetan Buddhism
		Tibetan values and traditions
		Tibetan eating habits
		Tibetan music
	Elements of Western culture in daily life	
		Hollywood movies
		Western clothes
		Western music
Economic integration		
	Education	
		Highest level achieved
		Length of studies
		Location of educational facility
	International aid	
		Community level
		Individual level
	Occupation	
		Income satisfaction
		Job satisfaction
		Jobs within the Tibetan community
Exposure to host society		
	Commitment to remain in India	
		Desire to go to the West
		India as a second home

		Return to Tibet
	Languages	
		Language proficiency
		Most comfortable language
		Way of acquiring Hindi and Kannada language skills
	Opinion about Tibetans applying for Indian citizenship	
		Individual willingness to take up Indian citizenship
	Regular visits to Indian cities or towns	
		North India
		South India
Receiving society receptivity		
	Non-Bylakuppe residents' perception of Tibetans	
		Perceived discrimination by non-Bylakuppe residents
		Positive perceptions
	Bylakuppe residents' perception of Tibetans	
		Perceived discrimination by Bylakuppe residents
		Positive perceptions
	Tibetans' general perception of Indians	
		Negative perceptions

		Positive perceptions
Social capital		
	Contact with non-Bylakuppe residents	
		Social relations
	Contact with Bylakuppe residents	
		Social relations
		Business relations
		Ease of contact
	Contact with Tibetan people	
		Social relations