

Name: Maria Khanam

Subject: Development Studies

Centre: Centre For Jawaharlal Nehru Studies

Supervisor: Prof. Bharti Sharma

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Findings of the Study

The study shows that identity among Tibetan refugees in Delhi is shaped by legal status, gender, religion, livelihood, community institutions, and everyday experiences of prolonged exile. Identity is sustained through daily practices and negotiation with changing social and economic realities.

The absence of a comprehensive refugee law in India has resulted in prolonged legal uncertainty. Although many participants were born and raised in India, successive generations continue to live under temporary documentation systems and administrative discretion. Periodic document renewal reinforces a sense of permanent temporariness, while women face additional challenges related to documentation, mobility, and family responsibilities.

The everyday lives of Tibetan refugees extend beyond economic survival. Women and men contribute in different ways to sustaining households and the refugee community. Women combine paid work with domestic responsibilities, childcare, elder care, religious participation, and community service, while men increasingly share livelihood and family responsibilities. Much of the unpaid care and community work, however, continues to be performed by women.

Majnu-ka-Tilla has increasingly become a commercial and tourist destination, creating livelihood opportunities alongside overcrowding, inadequate infrastructure, and rising living costs. Residents manage these challenges, while women bear a disproportionate share of responsibilities related to household management and care. Tibetan cultural spaces are preserved through language, food, religious practices, festivals, and community life.

Identity preservation depends largely on women's role in transmitting language, religious traditions, family histories, and cultural values to younger generations. This responsibility extends beyond formal institutions into everyday family life. Urbanisation, formal education, digital media, and changing aspirations among younger generations have made cultural transmission increasingly difficult.

Religion remains central to everyday life. Religious institutions and practices provide emotional support, strengthen community bonds, preserve collective memory, and reinforce a shared sense of belonging across generations.

Family relationships and gender roles have changed under prolonged exile. Economic pressures have altered the roles of both women and men. Women's participation in paid work has increased without reducing their domestic and community responsibilities, resulting in a

continued triple burden. Men also experience changing expectations regarding livelihoods, family responsibilities, and community roles.

Community organisations, including the Tibetan Women's Association, Resident Welfare Association, and monasteries, play an important role in welfare, cultural preservation, dispute resolution, and community mobilisation. Much of this work depends on voluntary efforts, particularly those of women, raising concerns about its long-term sustainability.

Humanitarian and community organisations provide support in education, health, livelihoods, and cultural preservation. However, gaps remain in addressing women's everyday concerns, including economic security, infrastructure, ageing, mental well-being, legal protection, and recognition of unpaid care work.

The perspectives of non-Tibetan Indian visitors show that Tibetan settlements are appreciated for their culture, spirituality, cleanliness, and peaceful environment. However, this appreciation rarely extends to an understanding of the legal insecurity, political marginalisation, and gendered responsibilities experienced by refugee women.

Overall, the findings show that identity is shaped by legal conditions, gender relations, livelihood strategies, religion, community institutions, family life, and social recognition. Prolonged exile remains an enduring social reality in which Tibetan refugees sustain family life, preserve cultural continuity, and maintain community institutions. Within this process, women play a particularly significant role in care work, cultural transmission, and community participation despite persistent structural constraints.