

## **Chapter Four**

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## Chapter IV

### **Tibetan Refugees in Nepal; their Socio-economic Conditions and Political Status**

This chapter is based on fieldwork which was conducted in the official Tibetan settlements as well as the scattered communities in Nepal. It contains the complete descriptions of the socio-economic conditions and the Political status of the Tibetan refugees in Nepal. The study areas in Nepal are Jawalakhel Carpet Centre and its Samdupling settlement and also the surroundings of Syambhunath Temple in Kathmandu.

#### **4.1. A Brief history of Tibetan Refugees in Nepal**

The relationship between Tibet and Nepal can be traced back to ancient times. Historically, Nepal and Tibet enjoyed close relations in terms of economy, cross border migration, diplomatic relation and cultural exchanges. The marriage between King Songtsen Gampo (617-650) of Tibet and the Nepalese princess Bhirikuti who is credited for introducing Buddhism to Tibet is an evidence of the relationship between the two. In the early seventeenth century due to increased trade between the two countries, Malla Newari (1624-1674) rulers of Kathmandu minted coins to use as Tibetan currency. The countries signed a trade treaty in the year 1645 which boosted the trade relationship between the two nations. One of the clauses of this treaty also agreed for Kathmandu court the right to post a representative (*naya*) in Lhasa. Further it was also guaranteed that the trade with India would be channelized through Kathmandu instead of routes like Sikkim, Bhutan or Tawang. But the reign of Pritivinarayan Shah's Gorkha expansionist Programme (1743-1775) caused conflict with all the neighboring countries including Tibet (Praag, 1987). And the Gorkha armies even invaded Tibet in 1788. In order to wipe out Manchu intervention, Tibet negotiated a treaty with Nepal in the year 1789. But instead, the Gorkha destroyed the Shigatse and the monastery of Panchen Lama. In the year 1792 the combined forces of Tibetan-Manchu and the Chinese army was able to sent Nepalese army back. The Gorkha army again invaded Tibet in 1854 over the claims to the Border districts of Kuti and Kyron. Besides this Jung Bahadur Rana wanted to establish his supremacy by replacing Manchus in Tibet. However, it was clear that Nepal wanted complete independence of Tibet from the Manchus which was

very clear from their negotiations with the Tibet as a nation. Henceforth, on March 1856 Nepal-Tibet Treaty of Friendship which is also known as Thapathali Treaty was signed between the two. It was concluded that Nepal would help Tibet from any kind of foreign attack and both the parties would respect each other keeping its religious and cultural bond (Praag, 1987).

Annamari Nahide Ali in her thesis "*Tibetan refugee women in Nepal-full of life but formally non-existence: Paths from vulnerabilities to resilience*" has mentioned that the treaty of 1645 which was concluded between Tibet and Nepal also, gave Nepali men the right to marry Tibetan women and settle in Tibet. The male child born out of such a marriage would be given Nepali citizenship and the female child a Tibetan citizenship. This system was regarded as *Khachara* System (Ali, 2016). This system continued till 1956, after when China occupied Tibet and Nepal had to recognize Tibet as an autonomous region of China. Thus, whatever privileges the Nepalese citizens used to enjoy were revoked (Ali, 2016).

From history we come to learn that the Government of Nepal has always been interested in maintaining relationship with Tibet in various occasions and events. With religious and commercial ties Tibetan migration have been taking place in Nepal from those times only. That may be the reason why she has granted political refuge to those Tibetans who left Tibet under difficult situations and compulsions since the period of political turmoil caused by China inside Tibet. Keeping in mind its historical connection and ties, Nepal, in spite of being one of the least developed countries in the world, extends an appreciable degree of support to the Tibetan refugees since the beginning.

Nepal had also played an important role in the Sino Tibet relation for about two decades from the 1960s onwards. It had in fact provided a foothold to the Tibetans to carry on their resistance movement against the Chinese takeover of their country in the form of guerrilla warfare under the organisation Chusi Gandrung. And in that era of Cold War and American antagonism towards the Communist regime of China they had been backed by none other than the C.I.A. The story started a decade ago, from the 1950s onwards.

The Tibetan resistance to the Chinese takeover of Tibet started from 1950 onwards as a series of independent uprisings in the Kham district of Tibet. These independent groups were later organised into a voluntary army under the name Chusi Gandrung or the Four Rivers and Six Ranges. From the very beginning of its initiation the Chusi Gandrung tried to garner international support primarily from the US and of course from India. Following the signing

of the 17 point agreement between China and Tibet on May 17<sup>th</sup>, 1952, several high ranking Tibetan officials, that included Gyalo Thondup, Dalai Lama's elder brother, even travelled to India and consulted PM Nehru who however advised them to encourage a peoples' democratic movement that would be recognized by the world as a legitimate alternative to the Chinese. Within a few years the movement took turn to guerilla warfare against the Chinese. From 1956 onwards the condition worsened in Kham with the bombing of four monastic complexes. A group of Khampa leaders met with Gyalo Thondup to ask him to contact foreign countries for military help. By this time C.I.A had already taken notice of the movement against the Chinese. The Far East Division of the C.I.A decided to support the Tibetan resistance in their fight against the Chinese. The resistance was organized by Andruh Gompo Tashi. The C.I.A established its Tibet programme and in 1956 an initial group of six Tibetans were even trained in the island of Saipan and then airdropped in Tibet. The secret training of Tibetans continued in US, first in Virginia and then from 1958 onwards in secret Camp Hale in Leadville in Colorado.

After 1959 the guerrillas shifted to Mustang in Nepal. With the flight of the Dalai Lama to India many Chusi Gangdrug units had also shifted to India and they took up jobs in Darjeeling and Sikkim. Later on, under the leadership of both Gompo Tashi and Gyalo Thondup about 200 leaders and 3000 soldiers decided in a meeting in Kalimpong to move out of India and set up military operations in Mustang in Nepal. Mustang was a territorial enclave extending into Tibet some 350 miles southwest of Lhasa and even though it was nominally under Nepal it was ruled by a king who had Tibetan ancestry and practiced Buddhism. Gompo Tashi was familiar with the area as he had travelled several times to that place for trading purpose. Selection of this place was approved by both the C.I.A and Gyalo Thondup. India was also aware of the developments. Mustang's geographical location made it a politically strategic base for resistance operations and the army even managed to achieve some initial successes and snatched some important documents from Chinese soldiers that revealed the actual condition of Tibet to the international community. Men who were chosen as leaders were sent for training to U.S and other recruits received training in India itself before leaving for Mustang. In Mustang the C.I.A trained guerrillas provided training to other soldiers. Two airdrops of supplies consisting of arms, ammunitions and food were made in 1962 and in 1965. Later on the CIA even provided financial support to the resistance movement via the intelligence headquarters in Delhi. In fact, India too became involved in the operations, particularly since the border war with China in 1962. Tibetans were recruited

in the Indian armed forces and became operative in defence of India's border in the Himalayan region. Even though they were never allowed to cross over the border into Tibet, the Tibetans thus recruited considered themselves the Indian counterpart of the Mustang guerrillas. Initially they operated under the joint supervision of both India and the C.I.A. For India these soldiers represented a potential force for attaining an independent Tibet which would in the long run provide ultimate security to the Himalayan frontier. The Tibetans accepted the support of both the countries in the hope of using it for their immediate objective of reestablishing an independent Tibet.

The U.S support however was not to last long. The U.S supported the Tibetans as a means of challenging Chinese aggression as a part of Cold War struggle. They wanted to use these Tibetans as a means of intelligence gathering from China. With the changing international scenario U.S decided to patch up relations with China and thus to wind up the Tibet operations. U.S relations with India also soured in 1970s as India turned more towards Soviet Union. In the meantime, Gompo Tashi had passed away and the leadership was in the hands of Mustang Commander Baba Yeshe. There was shortage of weapons along with some other problems among the guerrillas themselves. By May 1965 half the men in Mustang had not been armed. Initially C.I.A even wanted to relocate them inside Tibet as it was impossible to get Washington's approval for further armsdrop in Nepal. Early in 1969 C.I.A. informed Gyalo Thondup that it was withdrawing its support and Thondup was asked to prepare a resettlement plan to be carried out in course of the next three years. Even after the C.I.A.'s role ended, the Mustang based operations continued for another five years. A few years later, even the Nepal government ended its policy of turning a blind eye. Pressured by the Chinese authorities, the Government of Nepal tried to force the guerrillas to shut things down, publicly calling them bandits and claiming not to know that guerrillas were there in that place. An earlier picture of the King in the camp however speaks otherwise. Not until 1974 however did the Tibetan soldiers finally call it quits. Even then, they did so only in deference to the pleas of the Dalai Lama. Dalai Lama's brother carried a taped message to the soldiers in Mustang by hand. The Tibetan spiritual leader, who was the greatest unifying force of the exiled community, urged the soldiers to surrender saying that it would not be good for them to fight with the Nepalese army. The guerrillas finally ended their operations and turned over the weapons to Nepali officials.

Chusi Gandrug continued to operate with head office in Darjeeling and later Delhi and Dharamsala. In Nepal Mustang veterans formed an organisation called Lo -thik to address

issues of social and economic welfare. Lo thik provided and still provides a pension to veterans based on their years of service. The fund was generated through different Chusi Gandrug business ventures in Nepal and India. No pension was provided by the C.T.A or the U.S Government (Morrison, 2002). This little known account of Tibetan resistance has now received the attention of several scholars and books have been published on the theme

Actual influx of the ordinary Tibetans refugees started in Nepal from 1949 onwards when the People's Liberation Army moved to Tibet. The numbers rose after the Tibetan Uprising in 1959. Initially, Nepal facilitated the refugees to resettle in their soil with the help of other international organizations (Mandal, 2011).

Initially it was only the Swiss international organization that gave full assistance to the Tibetan refugees in Nepal since the year 1960. This organization was responsible for helping the refugees to resettle and rehabilitate. It took full initiative to set up a carpet industry including the establishment of Carpet export companies in Nepal for them to be self-sufficient economically. The carpet industry after a while became the main source of income for the Tibetans and finally turned out to be the largest foreign currency earner in Nepal. In 1963, through technical, financial and other assistance, the Swiss Government started the industry at various places in Nepal like Tashi Palkheil, Jawalakhel, Dhorpatan and Chialsa. Apart from this organization, The UNHCR and The International Committee for Red Cross (ICRC) were the main organizations that helped Tibetan re-settlement in Nepal through their assistance in terms of food, finance, health care and other relief programmes etc. It also established the Kathmandu Tibetan Welfare Office which functioned as a liaison between the Tibetan refugees, various aid organizations and the Nepalese government. In course of time many Tibetan settlements developed in Nepal, Jawalakhel, Boudha, Swayambunath, and Jorpati in Kathmandu; Jampaling, Paljorling, Tashi-Ling and Tashi Palkhiel in the Pokhara region, and Dhorpatan, Chialsa, Chairok, Shabrus and Lumbini in the northern regions of Nepal. The majority of these settlements were established in the early to mid 1960 to 1974. Estimate of the total number of Tibetan refugees currently living in Nepal differ. Approximately 20,000 were believed to have arrived in 1959 during the initial conflict. Many more arrived in the following years, and it has been reported that almost every year Tibetans try to escape through Nepal to other countries particularly India. In fact, Nepal acts as a transit zone for Tibetans who wish to leave Tibet. Thus, the actual number of Tibetans residing in Nepal is indefinite as Tibetans immigrate to other countries. According to The Demographic Survey of Central Tibetan Administration, Dharamsala, in 2009, the population

of Tibetan refugees in Nepal stood at 13,500. The legal and socio-economic status of these refugees are dependent on the refugee policy of the Government of Nepal which, in its turn is determined by the country's security concerns and foreign policy vis a vis China.

#### **4.2. The Gentleman's Agreement:**

This Agreement happened to be the important landmark in Nepal's policy towards the Tibetan refugees. The "Gentleman's Agreement" is an informal agreement concluded between the Government of Nepal and the United Nations Higher Commission for Refugees to ensure that "Nepal will allow Tibetans leaving Tibet a safe passage to escape from China to India". The objectives mentioned under this agreement are:

Firstly, to ensure safe access in the territory of Nepal for Tibetans who want to enter India.

Secondly, the prohibition of forced return (refoulement) in the Nepal-China borders.

Thirdly, to ensure that Tibetans are neither detained, nor penalized on grounds of immigration for "unlawful entry".

And lastly, it will ensure that the Nepalese government would provide exit permits to newly arrived Tibetans by the UNHCR to allow them to depart to India in time (Centre, 2002).

Tibetans detained by the police at first arrested be handed over to the Department of Immigration and then interrogated in order to find out the reason for their escape to India. Only after this process, Tibetans would be able to apply for permits in the Indian embassy. Once the entry permit is issued, the UNHCR sends a request to the Department of Immigration for exit permits to be issued to them. This permits the person, the right to travel to the Indian border at Sonauli.

Under this agreement, UNHCR with government of Nepal was to allow only 2,500 Tibetans Refugees per year to cross over to India. This is an unwritten agreement in which it is the Nepalese police that is to ensure Tibetan's entry into Nepal and help them to carry on the subsequent formalities through. But in reality, the terms of the agreement was followed only slackly whereby, Tibetans enter Nepal independently or with the help of local guide (Tibet, Dangerous Crossing , 2004). Their passage to India is also not always smooth. According to

the report “Dangerous Crossing” 2004 update by International Campaign for Tibet; in May 2003, a group of 18 newly arrived refugees were imprisoned in Kathmandu and were handed to the Chinese authorities. All of them were maltreated in Chinese custody where they were kept for three months in jail. There had been other cases of refoulement in the year 2004, when groups of 11 and of 4 were detained. Another group of 13 were beaten and robbed by the Nepalese security forces in civilian clothes.

The Nepalese authorities lifted up the “Gentleman’s Agreement” in 1990 for Tibetans or for those who got arrested by the Nepalese security force. In recent years, the Gentleman’s Agreement has become insignificant following the border monitoring harmonization between The Chinese officials and The Nepalese officials. Nepal’s policy towards the Tibetan refugees has been changing as a result of its changing relation with China. Thus, Nepal owing to its security concern has been accused of violating this agreement by forcing Tibetans escaping Tibet to return. The Tibetan welfare office and the office of the Representative of His Holiness Dalai Lama were opened in the year 1960 with task of assisting the newly arrived Tibetans in Nepal, were closed down in 2005 with the order of King Gyanendra with the reason that it was not held by Nepali citizens required by the law. Even though the closure of these two offices was condemned by the international community, it was assumed that Gyanendra closed to show its support with the Chinese government (Tibet, 2011). However this issue has been discussed in details in the subsequent chapter.

The status of the Tibetan refugees in Nepal is going to be affected further in Nepal if the news published in the Tibet express 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2020 is authentic. As per this report: China and Nepal have signed an agreement recently during Chinese President Xi-Jinping’s visit to Nepal in October 2019. The agreement with the objective of curtailing the entry of Tibetans in Nepal is about handing over people entering illegally to each other’s country without enough supporting documents from their country of origin within 7 days of being taken under custody. Khabarhub, a Kathmandu based News portal the revelation is said to have come from Nepal’s Minister of Foreign Affairs Pradeep Gyawali’s written clarification to the members of Parliament. It was the first point of the 20 point agreement signed by the foreign ministers of both the countries during Xi Jinping’s visit to Nepal. It was basically targeting the Tibetans who arrived from Tibet. It will officially come into effect from February but Nepal seems to be under influence to enforce it before time’. Before Chinese Presidents’ visit to Nepal it was widely reported that Kathmandu was being pressed to sign an extradition treaty

with Beijing during his visit. The Agreement was criticized for violating the Gentlemen's Agreement with UNHCR which advocates the refugees' right to travel to a third country. (Tenchae, 2020)

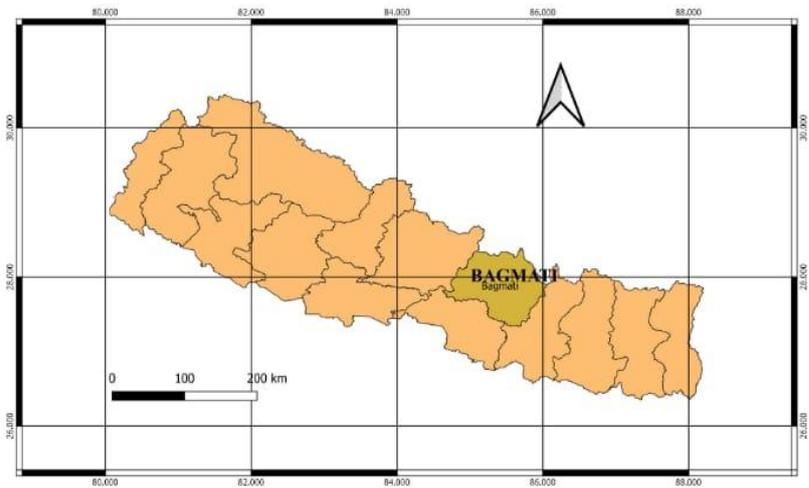
**Table No.1. Population Distribution of Tibetans across various settlements in Nepal**

<b>Settlements</b>	<b>Populations</b>
Namche, Solukhambu	145
Swoyambhu, Kathmandu	1919
Kathmandu city Area	727
Namgyaling, Mustang	278
Deleking, Solukhambu	486
Samdupling, Jawalkhel	1082
Tashipaikhel, Pokhara	913
Gageling, Rasawa	181
Tashigang, Pokhara	62
Pajorling, Pokhara	368
Jampaling, Tanahum	618
Sampheling, Walung	318
Tashiling, Pokhara	688
Manang	688
Nubri	57
Norziling, Dhorpatan	250
Boudha and Jorpati	5250
Others	52
<b>Total</b>	<b>13611</b>

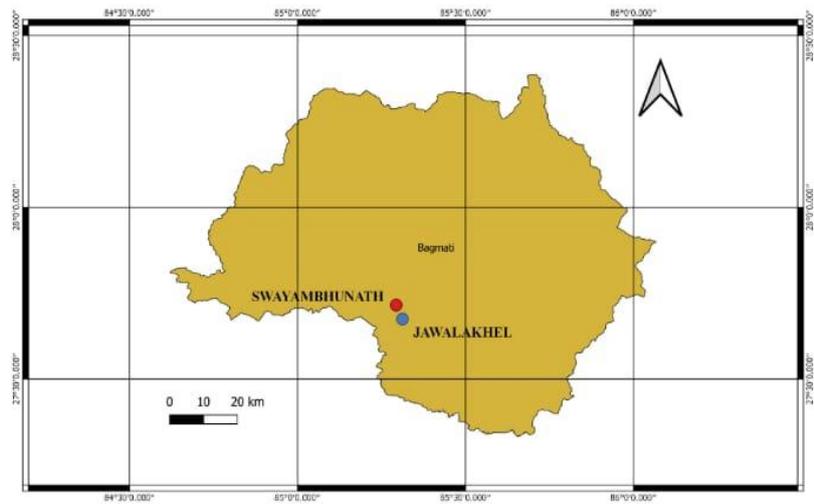
Source: Annual Report 2008-2009 Snowline foundation.

**Map V: Map showing study area in Jawalakhel and Swayambhunath, Nepal**

**LOCATION MAP SHOWING STUDY AREA**



**STUDY AREA: SWAYAMBHUNATH AND JAWALAKHEL**



### 4.3. The Socio -economic Conditions of Tibetan Refugee in Nepal

The major influx of Tibetan Refugees in Nepal started from the year 1959 onwards. The Nepalese Government at first allowed them to settle down in the different places like Jawalakhel, Tashi Palkheil, Dhorpatan, Chialsa, Chairok, Shabrus and Lumbini. Later on other places were also added both in Kathmandu and Pokhara area. All these settlements were established with the help of the Swiss Association for Technical Assistance with the founding of Carpet Industry in Nepal. That later became to be the largest source of livelihood amongst them and eventually this establishment emerged to be a pioneer of Tibetan carpet industry in Nepal.

The Jawalakhel handicraft centre is situated to the south of the Kathmandu city, the capital of Nepal. This centre provides employment to about 500 Tibetans from the settlement. The people are engaged in different stages of carpet weaving. This centre produces high quality carpets. This centre not only helps the poorer Tibetans living in the camps in earning their livelihood but it also contributes immensely to the foreign exchange of the Government of Nepal. This handicraft centre was established with certain aims and objectives like preservation and promotion of traditional Tibetan handicrafts, to provide employment to its people and educate their children in exile, etc. It aims at helping the needy and destitute, old Tibetan citizens, including the preservation of its culture and religious tradition. The premise of the handicraft centre has a small *gumba* on the right side, a four storied building and a warehouse. There is a cooperative office inside the centre that is run by the management of the centre.

The settlement officer is responsible for the entire management of the settlement. There are three elected members from the community called the *thume*. They act as decision makers in the centre. Other than this, the community also elects 15 members called the *thojok* (elected by people) who are engaged in welfare activities of the settlement. They coordinate the people in the settlement and the welfare office in the meetings. The welfare office has to send an annual report about the settlement to the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) in India. The CTA also helps them in times of crisis, but usually the settlement office takes care of the centre and the camp in Jawalakhel.

The Samdupling settlement at Jawalakhel, adjacent to the ring road of Kathmandu was built in 1960 by the international committees with funds allotted by the Swiss government in the

land allotted by Government of Nepal for Tibetan refugees at the initial stage. But after many years the Swiss Corporation handed the responsibility of the camp over to Nepalese government. It is situated just opposite to the handicraft centre. There is a row of huge three storied buildings with a monastery at the center of it. Today about 105 families live there with a population of around 1082 in the camp. The staffs of the centre reside in staff quarters provided by the centre. There is a Jawalakhel Co-operative Society founded in the year 1966. It is a multipurpose society. It ventures a poultry farm, food market and other small businesses. It runs the handicraft stores which sell antiques, handicrafts and curios. There is an old age home supported by the Snow Line Foundation and the Jawalakhel Cooperative. There is a management board that is responsible for the functioning of the society consisting of eleven members who are elected for a term of three years. The income of this cooperative society is used for the maintenance and management of the old age home, health clinic and the administration of the society. The surplus profit is also distributed among the shareholders during the Tibetan New Year '*Losar*' every year.

There is a Norbulingka sports club which started in 1972, emphasizing on social and cultural activities. It organizes programmes related to education and the environment, among them. The Snow Line Foundation has a clinic in Boudha and Jawalakhel which caters to both the Tibetan and the Nepalese people.

Pictures from Nepal



Pic. 38. The Jawalakhel Handicraft Center



Pic. 39. Carpet Display room



Pic.40. Atisha Primary School



Pic. 41/42. Samdupling Tibetan Settlement



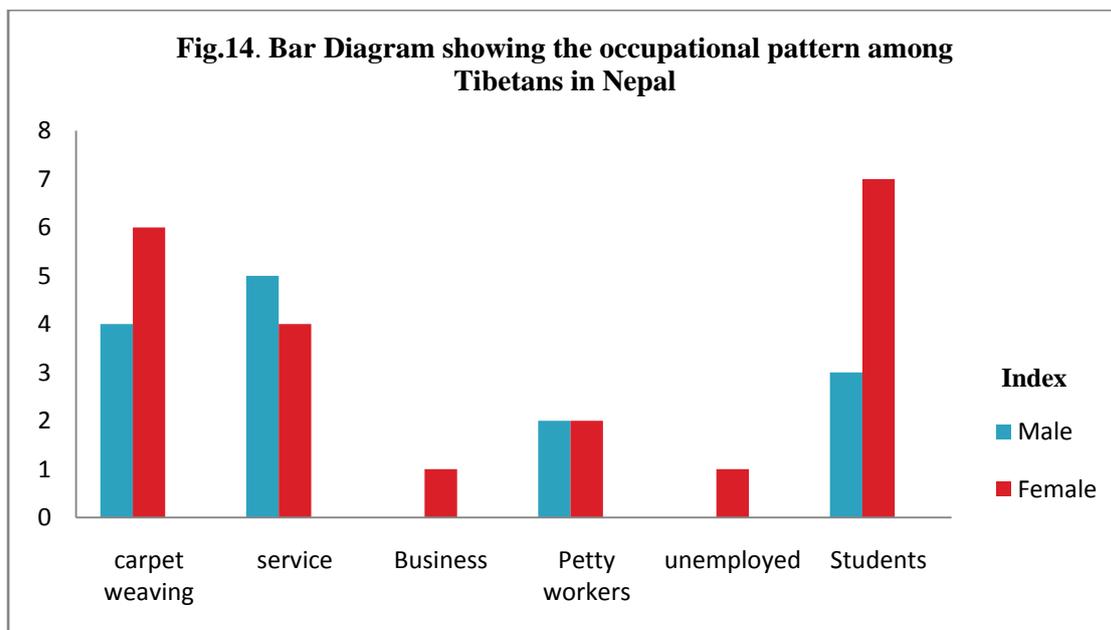
Pic 43/44 First generation Tibetan Refugees

Source: Field Survey

**Note:** As I have mentioned above that there are many Tibetan settlements in Nepal but I conducted my field survey only in The Jawalkhel Handicraft Centre and its settlement. There were many difficulties in conducting the survey in Nepal for various reasons. The settlements in Nepal mostly lie in the remote interior places so my target group was only those Tibetan refugees living inside the Kathmandu city area. Here, I have presented only the occupational chart of them. This is because of the hesitation of the Tibetans to respond to other queries. The Nepal government in recent years has been harsh upon them by imposing strict rules

imposing all sorts of restrictions on their social, cultural and civil liberties. Even their livelihoods and sustainability is at risk. Many cases of detention and arrests have taken place. In such a situation their awkwardness or hesitation to speak out is understandable. So whatever written here is based upon my personal observations and conversation with the people at the restaurants during my repeated visits to the place. The exact data is unavailable regarding their educational status because it was difficult to communicate with them, particularly with the youths as they were unavailable and it was the same regarding other issues also. All these statements were provided on the basis of a few respondents working in the centre and through normal conversation with the people in the restaurants in and around the camp.

#### 4.3.1: Occupational Chart



**Source: Field survey**

Out of 35 respondents, 14 were male and 21 female. 6 female and 4 male were engaged in carpet weaving jobs. The number of educated female working in the Jawalkhel Carpet Centre office and school nearby is 4 compared to 5 male. Besides these, they were 2 male and 2 female either running small eateries or food stalls outside the camp or works in unorganized sectors like beauty parlours, hotels and other offices as receptionists which has been categorized as petty workers with very less income. Only one female owns a leased curio shop in the Syambhunath Temple premises. Apart from that there was 3 male and 7 female

college going students age ranging from 18-25. Among all the respondents only 1 female was employed.

After the establishment of the carpet industry in Jawalakhel, hundreds of Tibetans were employed in the centre to work for carpet production and administration of the centre. This centre has now become the main source of livelihood for the people living in the camp. Here, varieties of work are performed by the people, both male and female, ranging from weaving to spinning and packing. Basically, women are experts in weaving and spinning. Other works like packaging and labouring are done by the males. There is a big showroom displaying beautiful carpets inside the centre. Many tourists and customers come to see and purchase it. Tibetans having the skill and interest in carpet weaving, work in the centre, while the remaining population of this camp survive and support their livelihood themselves doing odd jobs. They do not get any kind of support from the Nepalese government.

Initially the carpet weavers in the centre come from the first generation of skilled workers. After that, their skills were transferred to the second generations who have now become master weavers. The carpet weavers are mostly illiterate and learnt the skills that their parents had passed on to them. The working hours are from 8am to 5pm, with one hour lunch break. The finished products are sent for export. The handicraft centre is a popular destination amongst the tourists in Kathmandu. This settlement has become one of the most successful rehabilitation centres in the urban setting in Nepal.

As for their living arrangements, one room is allotted to one member working in the centre and if two members of the house work, then two rooms are allotted to them. Ultimately, if the numbers of family members are more, they will definitely have accommodation problems. The people do not have to pay the rent of the house but they have to contribute for all facilities in the camp like sanitation, healthcare and other development works. The workers get a salary of about 7000 per month or even less depending upon their work. With this income, they have to bear the expenses of food, health, education, etc. of the children and the others. Since Kathmandu is reasonably expensive, the people expressed that it is very hard to maintain their families with such a small amount of money. Since they have to look after the overall expenditure of the family, healthcare and education of their children, so they are left with little money or minimal savings for the future. There is a small hospital for them which is not up-to-date they have to visit private dispensaries in case of emergency, which is beyond their means. So in such cases, they have to face lots of crisis in terms of money and are often

left in debt. Unemployed women are also higher in numbers compared to men. Men are mostly engaged in the service sector which means that the male members work in the management and administration of the offices and the camp.

Besides working in the carpet industry and its offices, the people of this camp are engaged in various other jobs. Few of them work outside the centre. Some travel to Boudha to work in shops as shop keepers or make handicrafts. A few own small eateries outside the camp and in the surrounding areas. Some of them run the shops around the Kathmandu valley especially in the Shyambhu temple area. Only one or two Tibetans have an established garment business out there in Kathmandu. Others struggle to earn their livelihoods. Some male youths do manual work as cooks and waiters in the restaurants, potters, tourist guides etc. Educated youths fail to get employed with government affiliated institutions without a Nepali citizenship. They somehow manage to get jobs in small enterprises or in private firms with less pay. Otherwise they have to stay unemployed.

Tibetans do not have property rights in Nepal. Since they cannot acquire any property legally, they buy properties in the name of local people or the residents of Nepal. Some Tibetans run guesthouses and restaurants or garment shops in the city. For the registration of this business, they have to have a business partner having Nepalese citizenship. But after 2009 these registrations are also strictly checked or else the registration may be cancelled. If anyone had a running business, then they had to pay double tax to the Government.

Tibetans are not being allowed to own any motor vehicle since the past two to three years. Earlier they could possess vehicles but now the government has stopped issuing any kind of license to them. Whoever owns a motor vehicle, now faces the problem of renewing the license as it could not be done in Kathmandu or it can be an expensive affair. So they go to 'Pokhara' (another Tibetan settlement in the outskirts of Nepal) where the renewing of such a license is possible. "Life of Tibetans in Nepal is not easy like that in India"- was the opinion of the people living out there in the settlement.

Apart from The Jawalakhel Handicraft centre, there are other carpet factories in Nepal namely, Solukhambu, Dhorpatan, Pokhara, etc. These factories are the major sources of livelihood for the refugees and even Nepalese people. About 280 Tibetan-owned carpet factories are there with 300 home-based weavers. However, following the Maoist movement in Nepal (1996-2006) these factories had to face a crisis, meeting the demand of Maoists for money. Even the Trade Union of Nepal started black mailing the owners regarding the

regularization of the work backed by the insurgent groups. The Maoist movement in Nepal and the subsequent political crisis in Nepal have badly affected the situation of Tibetan refugees economically.

#### **4.3.2. Education status of Tibetans in Nepal:**

There are thirteen schools in Nepal which is operated by the Snow Line foundation and other NGOs with the help of the Tibetan Government in exile. Earlier, these schools used to teach Tibetan with other subjects as well. In the 1970s, these schools were nationalized and the curriculum was changed as a result of which no schools are allowed to teach Tibetan. Hence, Tibetans feel alienated from their mother tongue. The education of Tibetans is headed by the Snowline foundation in Nepal. After the completion of their primary education, students enroll themselves in the Namgyal boarding school in Syambhu which is far away from the camp. Again, the travelling cost becomes an extra burden for the school going children. The settlement office often helps the students to find sponsors for them to fund their education. According to the people in the camp; they had experiences with the sponsors as there have been cases where the sponsors left the children in the middle of their schooling and the children had to face lots of problems and finally had to leave the school in the middle. Some Tibetan parents admitted that they prefer monastic education for their children as it would prove to be better for their future. They would be inclined towards their religion and culture, and moreover, their future would be secure. The chances of being unemployed would not be there. A few parents want their children to take up small professional courses in mechanical jobs, carpentry and others, so that they would earn their livelihoods wherever they live, as they do not have any certainty of their own selves. Wherever they go, they will be able to earn their livelihood by doing these kinds of manual work. They do not want their children to go for higher education because they believe that they will never be able to get government jobs or any other high-official white collar jobs in Nepal because of the fact that they are refugees. Hence, they feel that educating their children is apparently a waste of their hard earned money. Tibetans do not get any kind of scholarship or financial assistance from the government in the field of education. They do not even have reservations in higher studies like that in India. So they do not have faith of goodwill from The Nepalese Government. They believe that they do not have freedom of religion, culture and others like Tibetan refugees in India.

Some Tibetan youths have already migrated to foreign countries for a better life and still a few wanted to migrate but it is not easy to get a visa for them in Nepal. Since the youths, especially males are not interested to work in the carpet industry; it has started to face the shortage of workers.

#### **4.3.3. The Political or Legal Status of Tibetans refugees in Nepal**

All Tibetan refugees are required to have their registration card to stay in Nepal according to Nepalese laws, which has to be renewed annually. In order to have freedom of movement and to work, The Refugee Identity Card is a must. The Refugee Identity Card has been an important document for the Tibetans, issued since the year 1974, for their movement in the unrestricted areas of Nepal. As this card is required to be renewed annually, Nepalese officers usually visit the camp or settlement offices for the renewal of the cards and the people there have to pay NPR 100/- for each card, which is illegal, according to the people in the camp.

Since 1989, Nepalese officials have stopped issuing this card for new arrivals following Chinese pressure and even renewal has become difficult. Tibetans nowadays, face lots of difficulties and harassment to renew the card. Again, if they fail to get their RC renewed, they are subjected to pay bribes to avoid arrest and detentions. Prior to 1970s, during the reign of King Mahendra, there were two ways of getting a Nepalese citizenship for Tibetans. Firstly, it was granted to those groups of Tibetans who were inhabitants of the Himalayan regions along with the Sherpas, Tamangs and Dolmas, who had been politically marginalized or the ones who lived outside the settlement. These people would qualify for citizenship because they shared some common ethnic characteristics with other Himalayan people. Receiving citizenship under this system was called '*Nagrikta*'. Taking advantage of this system, many Tibetans took up *Nagrikta* in Nepal. Another form of citizenship was called '*Angrikta*' which was given by the King to the Tibetans who had surrendered before The King from Tibetan Guerilla groups after 1974 (Tibet, 2011). But these cases are very rare. There are few individuals who have acquired citizenship through unlawful means by paying huge amounts of money. But after the 1990s, the practice of getting citizenship through bribe has also become impossible because of the changing behavior of Nepalese Government towards them. So during my field survey I did not find anybody holding a Nepalese citizenship. Not a single Tibetan in Nepal has taken up the Nepalese citizenship like the Tibetans in India.

They do not have the right to take part in Nepali electoral processes or have any part to play in the political system there. They vote for the Central Tibetan Administration in India. The interview taken during the field work with Tibetans in Kathmandu revealed that there were restrictions on their freedom of expression. One of the respondents revealed that whenever any kind of human right violation incident occurs Tibet, Nepalese security force come over to watch and examine the settlements and camps for counter protest movements without understanding the situation properly. They are kept under tight surveillance, sometimes for day or more for anything that happens in Tibet. The respondent revealed that any form of expression relating to the issues of Tibet or China indiscriminately falls under severe scrutiny and subject to restriction. For instance, there have been incidents of arrest for carrying Tibetan flags in a peaceful protest against human rights violation in Tibet and the use of T-shirts reading 'Free Tibet'(Narrative from respondents). Respondents informed that restriction on expression is not limited to political issues but they face restrictions on cultural and religious expression as well. Two three years ago, they could not even celebrate the birthday of His Holiness, the Dalai lama or even *Losar* (Buddhist festival) in a grand way, but now again the authorities have become lenient on these celebrations. Tibetan refugees in Nepal are warned by local authorities to refrain from any sort of political involvements at all times within their territory.

From my observations and interactions with Tibetans, it was obvious that the status and condition of the Tibetan refugees is highly challenging, which changes from time to time. This fact is understood by the Tibetans as well. They are aware that their situation and treatment depends upon the affairs between Nepal and China, for various aids granted by Chinese government to Nepal. Thus, it is apparent that the activities of Tibetans in Nepal if construed are anti-Chinese or harmful to the Nepal-China foreign relations. Any act of insecurity on the Nepali side indiscriminately subjects Tibetans to restrictions or imminent expulsion.

Tibetans in the camp however have developed a good rapport with Nepalese people and yet they maintain their culture, tradition as in India. In spite of living in Nepalese society and experiencing the blend of cultural and religious traditions for years, Tibetans are successfully keeping their Tibetan culture and tradition intact and alive amongst themselves. They have been successful in transmitting the same to the next generation, who are more exposed to contemporary western cultures. Otherwise, Tibetan youths strictly remain inclined towards their culture and traditions in their day to day life in Nepal. There are a few civil societies in

Nepal which have supported them in situations when their Human Rights have been curtailed by the authorities especially after the 2008 uprising in response to the Beijing Olympics and crackdowns across Tibet. There is a Human Rights Organization of Nepal (HURON) which has organized two interaction programme with Sambad- Nepal to discuss on the situation of refugees in Nepal. The basic idea was to add refugee law in Nepal but this could not yield a fruitful result.

Tibetans living in Nepal now belong to the third generation and a few first generation old people are still present. They still have painful memories of leaving Tibet when they were just 8-13 years old. They remember their houses, families and life in Tibet. Some of them still could not speak Nepali or any other language except Tibetan. They live with their family and a few live alone, but they believe it was their karma (deeds) that they had to pay by leaving their homeland. Most of the Tibetans from this camp have not travelled outside Nepal except a few middle aged men and women who had visited India for *kaal-chakra* or for the pilgrimage tour to Dharamsala. Still, they are satisfied with their life and thankful to the people and Government of Nepal for their help and support.

All Tibetans have strong faith that one fine day 'Tibet will be free' and there will be a place on earth which they can call their country or homeland. Only few of the respondents have expressed their grievance against Nepalese Government while others apparently are happy and feel free in Nepali soil or at least they want outsiders to believe that in spite of their hardships and insecurity, Tibetans in Nepal have been successful in keeping their culture, religion and traditions alive and they never give up their dream of seeing 'Free Tibet'.

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