

# One or Many Paths: Coping with the Tibetan Refugees in India

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## Introduction

In April 1959, about 80 thousand Tibetans fled Tibet along with their religio-temporal leader, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, to escape the persecution in the hands of the Chinese Red Army. The refugees from the northern parts of Tibet adjoining China had to walk for weeks together, under constant fear of being intimidated, to reach the Indian border whereas others living nearer the Indian border did not have to walk much. Although their number is not known some of them had fled earlier, between 1949 and 1959, and they suffered less as they could choose the appropriate season for crossing the narrow passes or avoid the thick snow. These Tibetans, who have settled privately in the Himalayan regions, had the opportunity to bring considerable movable property like gold and cattle along with them. The third wave of flight took place after 1986 and some of them continue to arrive in India with woeful stories of their flight, the persecution of their religious institutions, violation of human rights, and even stories of harassment at the Tibet-Nepal border. The last category of refugees, who number about 25 thousand, have refreshed the fading memories of trepidation of their tradition and culture in

Tibet. Their stories of flight as well as what is happening in Tibet are horrendous by any standard and constitute the bulk of Internet literature on the Tibetans.

Chinese atrocities in Tibet causing many Tibetans to flee their homeland and suffer from nightmares throughout their lives had actually begun soon after the People's Republic of China was inaugurated on October 1, 1949. There are innumerable accounts of the Chinese 'Cultural Revolution' leading to the destruction of the Tibetan monasteries and persecution of those who tried to resist their imperialist designs in Tibet. The Tibetan guerillas did try to resist the Chinese army in some parts of Tibet but being inferior in military power could not continue the fight with the Chinese army for too long. Finally, on March 17, 1959 the Fourteenth Dalai Lama was persuaded to leave Tibet and he did so in the guise of a layman and in the cover of darkness to reach India on March 31, 1959. He was followed by a huge number of Tibetan soldiers, officials, monks, women, children, etc. often without anything in hand.

Makeshift arrangements were made at Misamari in Assam and Buxa Duar in West Bengal for receiving the refugees. In the former, 300 houses were hastily constructed and each house accommodated about 30 of them. Despite best efforts and intentions on the part of the Indian government, the physical hardship that the refugees faced in these camps was tremendous. Having come from alpine climate with no time to develop immunity to the tropical diseases, many of them fell prey to tropical diseases like cholera, tuberculosis, and malaria (Hetzl, 1968: 6). It is reported that as many as 167 children and 65 adults died in the camps (*Tibet in Exile*, 1969: 1-2). Although they were asked to cut their hair and change into cotton clothes they were not prepared for the impending death of many of their inmates. They found each other funny-looking in the new appearance and laughed at each other without knowing that some of them would fall sick and die soon. Those who survived physically were affected mentally as the nightmare of their flight returned in their sleeps and they often woke up sweat-sodden.

More than four decades have gone now and many of those refugees have either died or become old. Even the children of some such refugees are married and have children. Whereas

the first generation refugees had no secular education the new generation has an extremely successful educational achievement of 96 percent (Moynihan, 1997), which is rarely matched by any Indian community despite being exposed to secular education for such a long time. The younger generation is clearly driven by a strong sense of competition and survival, which allows them much lesser time for religion than their parents or grandparents had. They are like the youths and children of any other Indian community-eager to pursue a career that would give them status and comfort. The respect for their traditions has certainly not eroded but everything of the past is not 'practical' today to some of them. Quite a few of them have been settled in Switzerland, Canada, Germany, and the United States of America and they are today considered to be more 'fortunate' by their people in India, who keep contact with them and keep trying to go overseas for better opportunities. Some such refugee children who have been successful abroad support their parents and other family members in India and Nepal in various ways.

During the last forty years or so, their population figure has reached about 1,20,000 and they are spread over many more countries. India has given refuge to more than 80 percent of them and the new refugees are almost entirely India-bound. They are now found in almost all towns and cities of India. The number of their settlements today is estimated to be more than 40 whereas it was less than 20 till 1969. Some of their major settlements are following:

	State	Settlements
Karnataka	Luksung Samdubling (Bylakuppe) and Mundgod	
Madhya Pradesh	Phendeling (Mainpat)	
Orissa	Phuntshokling (Chandragiri)	
Himachal Pradesh	Dolanji (Shimla)	
Arunachal Pradesh	Kurangling (Changlang) and Dhargayling (Tezu)	
West Bengal	Kurseong, Darjeeling, Kalimpong	
Sikkim	Nathang, Nangdup, and Kewzing	

In 1976, the following states had more than 3000 Tibetan refugees: Arunachal Pradesh, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, and Karnataka. Of these states,

the state of Karnataka had the highest number of them, followed by Uttar Pradesh, and finally Arunachal Pradesh. The population of Tibetan refugees in Nepal is next only to India. The population figures on the various settlements, states, and countries are however highly tentative as no accurate figures actually exist. This is because of reasons like no periodic updating of their birth and death figures, infiltration of some new members from across the border, relocation of refugees by the government-in-exile at Dharamsala, and the like.

The resettlement of the Tibetan refugees has been an ongoing process due to fresh arrival of new members from Tibet. Although the government of India does not recognise to be a refugee any Tibetan who arrived in India after 1963 they continue to arrive and vanish among the rest of their population. Moynihan (1997) reports that 5000 Tibetan children have arrived since 1990 to seek education in the exile schools in India. All this is putting a lot of stress on the community resources of the refugees but some refugees are worried for a different reason, which is that some of those newly arriving might actually have been indoctrinated and sent by the Chinese government. It is also apprehended that if the Nepalese government, instead of deporting them back to Tibet, as it often does, gives free passage to those fleeing Tibet, as desired by the United States of America, many more thousand of them would come to India and put the resources of (and for) the refugees under severe stress. The deportations of the refugees by the Nepalese government are thorny issues between the US government and Nepal as those who are deported are subjected to various forms of inhuman punishment by the Chinese authorities. This is also alleged to be one of the reasons why the refugees fleeing Tibet do not report the harassment at the Nepal-Tibet border to any international agencies. These problems or the physical difficulties of reaching India seem no deterrence to hundreds of enthusiasts among them, who include monks, women, and children. There is also some apprehension among some of them about what might happen to them if the government of India changes its policy towards the Tibetan refugees, or when the Dalai Lama dies, or the Indo-China relationship improves.

Despite such apprehensions, the story of Tibetan refugees has been cited as one of the most successful of all. To quote Moynihan (1997): "In 38 years the Tibetan settlements have grown from primitive campsites into unified, economically self-sufficient communities". Such a measure of success would certainly not be possible without the combined efforts of the refugees themselves, a band of highly committed officials of the Central Tibetan Relief Committee at Dharamsala, the respective state governments, international agencies, churches, charity organisations, and most importantly the Indian government. To this one must add the leadership of the Dalai Lama and the cultural capital they have brought from Tibet such as the knowledge of arts, crafts, and architecture, faith in non-violence, and hard work. Although the annual income of the refugees is reported to be a mere 150 US\$ compared to 350 US\$ for Indians the refugees appear economically very sound and admittedly cause jealousy among the hosts. This is considered to be one of the causes of the refugee-host tensions. I will dwell on this subject later.

### **Tibetan Renaissance in India**

The resettlement of the Tibetan refugees in India has indeed been a great success. They have been able to establish monasteries, continue with the monastic education, wear their traditional dress and ornaments, speak their language and even dialects to some extent, etc. in India. In other words, they have not only been able to recreate Tibet but multiply it in various parts of India. Christoph von Furer-Haimendorf has described the Tibetan refugee situation in India as 'the renaissance of Tibetan civilization' in his book with this title published in 1990.

They have certainly been one of the luckiest refugee groups in India and few would disagree with Furer-Haimendorf regarding his renaissance theory. But a deeper look at their society will reveal a lot of cracks, which need to be sealed before they grow wide enough to threaten the very identity and integrity of the society. The sectarian conflicts, which had weakened the Tibetan society and polity to a considerable extent prior to their subjugation by the Chinese, seem to have

been largely buried now. Similarly their class differences based on feudal background were rarely talked about until recently. It is only of late that both sectarian and class differences seem to have resurfaced affecting mutual trust and harmony in their society. There are also growing ideological differences within and jealousy getting the better of the hosts in treating the Tibetan refugees. The purpose of this paper is to draw the attention of scholars to these issues rather than suggest solutions, which will emerge once issues are identified and discussed. This, I think, is important in view of the national and international community looking at the Tibetan refugee resettlement as a model that could be tried on a host of other refugee communities in India and elsewhere.

## Emerging Issues

### *i) Ideological Cleavage*

This is a problem that most Tibetans consider, if at all they agree that it is a problem, to be highly private to their community. They usually do not admit that they have such a problem and even various scholars working on this society do not seem to view it with any seriousness. With such a large population exposed to different cultures, religions, languages, political ideologies, and economic opportunities for the past four decades or so it is not at all surprising to expect ideological differences within them. Which culture is ideologically homogenous any way? The tussle for domination between or among ideologies is part and parcel of every culture. The Tibetans are no exception. And the cleavages would perhaps show more clearly than they do if they were not settled in small numbers in different parts of the country.

One of the most important cleavages is between those who are considered as pro-China and those who are pro-Dharamsala. Such a division is reported to exist not only among intellectuals but also among the monks and the lay. There are some Tibetans who do not agree with the views of their own government-in-exile at Dharamsala. They are often alleged to be agents of China, who have infiltrated their society to weaken the fight for an independent Tibet. It does not

appeal to reasoning to equate every dissenting voice within the Tibetan society as the disguised voice of China but such a practice already exists. The pro-Dharamsala Tibetans are also worried that they cannot recognise the pro-Chinese Tibetans easily. All this has created a climate of mistrust within them and that is hampering their community interest in more ways than one.

Labelling the dissenting voices as 'pro-China' should perhaps be seen in the context of a feudal background that the Tibetan refugees come from. Living in a democratic country like India for so many years dissension and internal criticism are taken by many Tibetan youths as healthy signs of a civil society. The inability of the majority of the (more elderly) refugees to accept such voices as natural is not something that deserves to be condemned at this point of time. One has to remember that theirs is a very closely-knit society and it is quite natural to see danger in any difference. I would think that even if they had come from a background where democracy was well entrenched they might still resist any form of internal cleavage. I would also think that this is one of the strengths of this society and also one of the secrets of their success.

The Tibetans have been settled in small groups in various parts of India, which makes the preservation of their identity itself a formidable challenge for them. Driven by a strong desire to preserve their identity, which is deeply embedded in their religion, the first generation refugees have apparently encouraged insularity but the new generation Tibetans seek to open up and grab the opportunities the world has to offer. The new generation refugees are not at all lacking in respect for their religion nor do they respect the Dalai Lama any lesser but they also want something more than what their traditions offered or what the previous generations were satisfied with. This has been a cause for worry among the elderly Tibetans who wonder what might be in store for their future.

There are also growing differences of opinion regarding their future. Though most of them would answer that they would go back when situation in Tibet turned congenial for them to return and live as Tibetans. A few of them even said that they would leave the moment the Dalai Lama would ask

them to do so. This is a politically correct stand but it is not convincing to their hosts who believe that the refugees are here to stay (see Subba 1988). It is also clear that the new generation of refugees will find returning to Tibet and adapting to the climate and culture there as agonizing as it was for the first generation refugees to adapt to Indian culture and environments. Some youths are actually worried about what they would do and how they would earn their living if they were to go back immediately. They are not even sure if they would be able to adapt to their own people who have stayed back tolerating a regime that is apparently bent on decimating their civilization. In other words, the apprehensions and misgivings in the minds of the Tibetan youths about a possible future in Tibet are dampening the spirit of a possible liberation of Tibet from the hands of China.

### *ii) Question of Class*

The question of class may be considered strange in the context of a refugee community. But this looks strange only because of the stereotype of a refugee community we have in our mind. There are many who are technically refugees but not quite so economically or even socially. Simply put, the pre-flight class differences have either resurfaced over the years or new inequalities have emerged within them due to the new opportunities they found after coming to India. First of all, it should be remembered that most of those who fled Tibet before 1959 are rich and so are some of those who came in 1959. Those who came in 1959 were actually a mixed group in terms of their economic or class backgrounds. Such differences did not surface in the initial years of their settlement in India, due to shared perceptions of insecurity and uncertainty in the new environments. But as they struck roots and gained some confidence the old cleavages have begun to resurface. Although it is not a very serious matter at present this phenomenon deserves due attention while trying to understand the Tibetan refugees in particular.

Until the Chinese invasion and subjugation of the country the Tibetan society was divided into nobles/aristocrats, monks, and the commoners. While the monks controlled the ecclesias-

tical world the nobles and aristocrats controlled the mundane world of the people. The latter not only controlled agricultural lands in southern and eastern Tibet from where many fled to India before 1959 but also were major beneficiaries from the pastoral economy or trade in Tibet (for more details, see Stein 1972, Wiley 1984, Goldstein 1986, Miller 1988, etc.). In the post-flight situation, they were deprived of two major foundations of such stratification, namely land and pastoral economy, but service, trade and business have been responsible for such stratification to resurface.

### *iii) Refugee-host Relations*

One of the most important issues that I would like to discuss here is the refugee-host relationship in India, which of late is not doing well in India. I have tried to draw the attention of scholars early towards the growing resentment among the local communities against the Tibetan refugees (1990, 1992). I was actually quite aware of this problem in Sikkim and Darjeeling even before I formally took a study on them. However, Dawa Norbu, a Tibetan refugee himself and one of the most competent and best known Tibetan scholars, did not take my views very kindly nor did he take the views of a Ladakhi scholar positively for pointing out the tension between the refugees and the local people in Ladakh (1995: 87). Norbu does agree that there are some tensions between the refugees and the host communities in the Himalayan region. His explanation for this is the threat perception of the Himalayan elite from "the vigorous refugees" who had "centuries of cultural dominance" in the Himalayas. But he holds the view that the actual cases of conflict are quite rare and dismisses the refugee-Bhutanese conflicts cited by Stobdan (1996) and earlier by myself (1990) as, "an intricate case of a political intrigue" (1995: 87).

Referring to my view on the subject, he writes: "... a Nepali intellectual strongly objects to a Tibetan journalist's remark that Nepali language and culture have 'invaded' Tibetan tongues and homes in Darjeeling and Sikkim" (1995: 87). This is not a correct representation of my view. Let me quote what I had actually written:

Tsering Wangyal (the journalist in question) has rightly pointed out that the Nepali language has 'all-pervasive influence' on the Tibetans. But it should be remembered that this influence pervades a host of other communities also like the Lepchas, Bhutias, Marwaris, Biharis, Rais, Mangars, and Gurungs, who are commonly subsumed under the Nepali community. Worse than the Tibetans, many members of these communities cannot converse in any language except Nepali (Subba 1990: 143-44).

Arguing further that the refugee-host relations are free from tensions and conflicts in most of India, he writes:

No South Indian intellectuals have ever aired or articulated their resentment towards the refugees. In fact Palakshappa concludes that the various side benefits that the host population have received from the Tibetan settlement "have gone a long way in developing more positive Indian attitude towards the Tibetans". In North India too, according to Saklani who did extensive field work, no host-refugee conflict appears apparent. In her survey she found that 76.92 percent of Indian attitude towards the Tibetan refugees was positive while 85 percent of Tibetan attitude towards the Indians was positive. (Norbu 1995: 89).

Norbu has actually missed a critical point in my book, which he himself has foreworded, and that is the observation that tensions and conflicts are more evident or imminent in places where the refugees interact with the local people more closely than where such interaction is minimal. This is the reason, I have argued, that despite racial, linguistic, and religious connections and commonalties the refugees have a tense relationship with the hosts in the Himalayan regions like Darjeeling, Sikkim, Dharamsala, Shimla, and Arunachal Pradesh. Where interaction is minimal or nil between the two categories of people, such as in South Indian settlements, there is little tension and no conflict reported. This is precisely the reason why Palakshappa and Saklani, referred to above by Norbu, have not mentioned anything about conflict with the hosts. But the study of Saklani, for instance, also showed that there was "not much social interaction between the Tibetans

and the local people" (1984: 235). Where conflict with the hosts is missing, she has reported of cleavage within the refugees, particularly between those who fled from Lhasa and U-Tsang areas and those who came from Amdo and Kham regions over community resources and opportunities (Saklani 1984: 393-94). In the same study, Norbu misses an early warning. She writes:

A large majority (86.90%) were critical of the cultural closeness of the Tibetan refugees. They suggested that the Tibetans should try to integrate themselves with the Indians at social, cultural, and economic levels, learn Indian languages and even intermarry with the Indians (1984: 380).

Lack of interaction with the local communities is not only pointed out by Palakshappa's work in Mundgod, Karnataka (1978) but also by Melvyn Goldstein, who worked in another South Indian Tibetan settlement called Mundakuppe (1978). The latter writes: "there has been virtually no assimilation to Indian cultural and social institutions" (p. 403).

There are actually innumerable media reports pointing out a strained relationship between the Tibetan refugees and the local people in various Himalayan areas, including the North-east India. Although the number of Tibetan refugees in Shillong, the capital of Meghalaya, is negligible they are quite visible because of their engagement in restaurants and shops selling foreign goods. Those living in Arunachal Pradesh have totally different occupations and yet have already been an eyesore to the local tribes who look pretty much the same. The local people all over India believe that they deal with a host of shady business such as sale of illicit liquor and smuggled articles, although they forget that the local people are not less involved in such activities. In Sikkim, the standing complaint of many indigenous tribal people, particularly the Bhutias, is that the Tibetans have taken advantage of their similarity with the Bhutias. Even the jobs reserved for the scheduled tribes of Sikkim, viz., the Lepcha and Bhutia, are alleged to have been appropriated by the more enterprising Tibetan refugees by surreptitiously acquiring scheduled tribe certificates. These may be mere accusations but they show in a way a growing bitterness about the Tibetan refugees.

All this is not something to celebrate nor try and conceal even by a Tibetan scholar. The desirable effort should be to identify the issues, debate over them and try to build a healthier refugee-host relations. The responsibility here does not lie entirely with the hosts: the refugees must also be sensitive to the moods of the hosts and make an effort to respond to the same. The refugees will not gain anything by following the policy of insularity or blaming their neighbours for the weaknesses of the country as a whole. Nor will they gain anything by orienting themselves to the West and ignoring their immediate neighbours as frequently alleged about them. In this respect the gesture of a group of Tibetan refugees visiting the earthquake-hit Gujarat early this year and trying to rebuild one of the wrecked villages had a tremendous symbolic value and it won a lot of goodwill. More of such gestures are necessary to show that they are like any other Indian community and not an exotic, exclusive, group of people from the tablelands of Tibet. Who ultimately as well as in times emergency matter are the neighbouring communities. Their goodwill is therefore very important for the future of these refugees in India. No other factor can perhaps ensure their safety and dignity as this particular factor will.

### One or Many Ways?

There are habitats where tension or conflict between the refugees and the host communities has already manifested. Elsewhere, the conflicts are dormant but are likely to manifest in near future. Still elsewhere, there are no conflicts or tensions at present but the same can develop in future. The reasons for assuming so are many. Some such reasons are pan-Indian whereas others are highly localised. Some of them lie with the refugees—with their growing affluence, their insularity, etc. Others lie with the hosts—with their sense of jealousy, resource crunch, unemployment, land alienation, etc. It is also to be observed that people all over India, tribal or non-tribal, are increasingly growing intolerant in general. This is partly due to the dwindling of resources and partly the fault of our educational system that creates a drive for seeking jobs but seldom makes us good human beings.

A proper understanding of the reasons for tension or conflict is essential for envisaging ways of coping with the situations, which vary both in time and space. Even in Mundgod, the situation is not the same as it was more than two decades ago when Palakshappa went there nor is Clement Town same as Saklani saw it in early 1980s. I spent one month during January 1997 at the Air Force camp adjacent to Clement Town and could see the changes that had taken place there since Saklani visited the area.

Keeping in mind certain broad aspects of their relationship with the host communities certain suggestions may be made here towards amelioration of the refugee-host relationships in India. Any one or more of these suggestions may be considered in the event of perceptible degeneration of such relationship or impending conflict between them in any part of India.

### *Enabling the Refugees*

One of the foremost obligations on the part of the host society and state is to enable the refugees, and this obligation has been fulfilled to the extent that facilities have been created for them to acquire necessary skills for earning their livelihood besides providing land, equipment, etc. Many donor organisations from India and abroad have also been of great help particularly with regard to providing equipment. As a result the refugees themselves admit today that their settlements are self-sufficient.

But does our obligation end here? Have we treated them like our guests? Have we inquired ever if they are feeling comfortable or if they need anything? The answer is negative. In many parts of India their neighbours do not like them. Even in the Himalayan regions, where they are invisible due to racial and cultural proximity with the local peoples, they are not always welcome as a group. Such feelings are usually expressed only in drunken brawls because no organisation or political party that I know of has made it a part of its agenda to oppose their stay in India. Nor is it likely that such a situation will arise in the near future. Yet tensions may escalate and turn violent. What do we do then? How do we protect them?

Here comes the question of enabling them legally. True, there are many sane voices that say that they are adequately enabled in this sense in India. They cite innumerable Articles in the Constitution, the judicial activism, the National Human Rights Commission, etc. giving adequate protection to the refugees. With particular reference to the Tibetans, it is also stated further that although they are not supposed to be involved in politics the Indian government ignores such involvement of the refugees. Much to the chagrin of the Chinese authorities, even their government-in-exile is allowed to function from Dharamsala. The Indian government continues to allow anti-Chinese statements and activities by the refugees from its soil despite the fact that it does not recognise the Dharamsala government (Bose, 2000). It also considers Tibet to be a part of China. The refugees have even been given employment in its educational institutions, industrial set-ups, and in its paramilitary and police departments. Although they are issued residential and work permits, they are in many senses treated very much like other Indian citizens.

Yet there is some justification for legal protection of the refugees. India has neither signed the 1951 UN Convention nor the 1967 Protocol relating to the status of refugees. It has not enacted a domestic refugee law nor does it have a uniform national policy towards all categories of refugees. India therefore has reserved the right to deport them back if she thinks it to be expedient. But it would also make India's refugee burden lighter by allowing some international humanitarian agencies to assist the refugees more meaningfully than they are allowed so far. Absence of such a legal regime also makes the refugees vulnerable to local pressure groups or state governments, which may treat the refugees, as they would like to. Furthermore, the future of such a large group of humanity, which has already suffered enough, cannot be left to the care of judicial activism.

### *Building Bridges of Friendship*

One of the best things to happen is building bridges of friendship between the refugees and the local communities. And for this establishing Indo-Tibetan friendship societies will not be enough although establishment of such societies should

in no way be considered unimportant. Conscious efforts must be made at personal level to make friends, to share problems, to confide in each other, and do all that happens between friends regardless of their ethnic, class or national backgrounds. I would specially put a lot of emphasis on such bonds, which can be potential sources of healthy information and stand as surety in times of crisis. But such relationships can build only if the refugees and hosts open themselves up or give up their insularity, accept each other's culture, listen to each other's woes, etc. Only such a relationship allows them to see each other not merely as potential competitors for the limited employment or other resources.

In this connection, the views of many host societies about what the refugees should do and what they should not may be briefly noted. There are suggestions that they should learn the local language, inter-marry, and make friends with the local people. As regards learning the language of the hosts I would consider that to be highly important for communication, which is a precondition for any meaningful relationship. And it is rarely that the hosts learn the language of the refugees. In this regard, I would think that the new generation refugees, particularly those, who go to local schools, are far more successful than those who go to Tibetan schools or those who belong to the earlier generation. They have also been able to build very close friendship with classmates of different ethnic backgrounds. But as regards marriage, I am not equally sure. Endogamy has been one of the earliest cultural practices and there is no clear evidence that it stands in the way of a healthy relationship between communities, nor do we know of inter-marriage leading to a healthier relationship. One might even argue that the cultural, linguistic, and religious differences might create hurdles in forging a smooth conjugal life although there is no evidence of such a relationship either. Hence, it is difficult to support some of the ideas of the host communities about what the refugees could do in India.

Building friendship is not easy without knowing each other. The educated members of both refugee and host societies must make a conscious effort to know each other better. Sometimes, misunderstanding, mistrust, or misgivings take upper hand due to lack of knowledge about each other. What we often

know about each other are the stereotypes. Of course it is natural for a community to construct the culture of another community on the basis of its own experience such constructions are often highly inadequate and they seldom help in building relationships between cultures or communities. Even the most educated persons can be constrained by such constructions, as shown by the construction by Dawa Norbu (1995) of the Nepalis who, he thinks, have no cultural, religious or racial similarities with the Tibetans. On the contrary, I have shown in the fourth chapter of my book (1990) how close the Tibetans are with the Nepalis in terms of racial, linguistic, and religious linkages and similarities.

### *Sharing of Resources*

Resources are usually limited and if they are not satisfactorily distributed that leads to conflicts between communities and if one of them happens to be a refugee community it is merely accidental. Fortunately, there is a lot of sharing of resources already taking place between the refugees and the host societies. Dawa Norbu (1995) is one of the many scholars who have drawn our attention to this aspect. He has shown how the various facilities meant for the refugees have benefitted the local people as well. The refugees have not only been responsible for improvement of infrastructure in otherwise remote areas but have also generated trade and employment for the host societies in such areas. The Tibetan system of medicine has cured ailments of many non-Tibetans and made them healthy in places where an allopathic doctor is unheard of and where modern medicines reach only when the usable date is expired already. The Tibetan monks have also fulfilled many of their sacred needs of the Himalayan communities in particular.

This is also true of the hosts. The refugees have been extended whatever facilities existed already but scholars writing on them seldom acknowledge this. The access to forest resources, water sources, grazing grounds, schools, post offices, banks, hospitals or other facilities are all open to the refugees as well. There is absolutely no restriction on them as regards such access without which their lives would have been much

more difficult. Any other help that may be called for is seldom denied on the ground that they are refugees.

## Conclusion

All this is no guarantee of a peaceful and cordial relationship between the refugees and the host societies. It takes years to build a relationship and a lot more effort to keep the same in good repair. It is however quite certain that if the refugees and host communities have developed a relationship of trust, reciprocity and interdependence it becomes that much difficult to ignore such a relationship. For doing so would bring a lot of hardship and create a vacuum in the local environment, which cannot be filled in so quickly and people know that very well.

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