Exiled Business:

Migration, Movement, Trade & Gender

A short study on Tibetan Winter Sweater Business

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Disclaimer

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ABBREVIATIONS

HHDL: His Holiness the Dalai Lama

CTA: Central Tibetan Administration

SARD: Social and Resource Development

WED: Women's Empowerment Desk

TRTA: Tibetan Refugee Traders Association

TWA: Tibetan Women's Association

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BACKGROUND

Every year, approximately 45% of India's 94,000 Tibetans[1] leave their refugee settlements in October to set up winter markets in cities and towns throughout India. These markets disband in February or March when Tibetans return home to their settlements to celebrate *Losar*. This seasonal winter trade, or *guntsong* as it is called by Tibetans, began in the 1960s by a small group of Tibetans from Amdo[2]. In the earliest iteration of this itinerant trade, traders would haul their goods on their backs, moving from village to village to sell their goods. As Tibetan refugees' livelihoods in India progressed over time, this informal economy also followed a similar progression, eventually transforming into the bustling business that we recognize today.

Currently, there are 178 active markets set up all over India that sell a wide variety of merchandise, including jackets, sweaters, scarves, shawls, and shoes. The largest market in Jaipur hosts as many as 187 families and the smallest in Odisha comprises as few as five family vendors.[3]

Anthropologist Timm Lau calls these market economies "transient communities, disbanding and reforming anew every year at their trade destination."[4] While this winter business forms a significant source of income for its Tibetan refugee population, it is not without risks and precarity. Yearly challenges include transporting goods, securing market spaces, and managing decreased business sales during warmer winter months. In many ways, the tenability of this business and the context of migration that it is situated within mirror the larger Tibetan exile narrative of migration and precarity.

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[1] Success Story Report Success Story Report- The 45% is taken from the report, but as of 2009, the population is 94,203 whereas the number reported in the Success Story Report is 120,000. The most recent numbers for 2019 is likely lower.

[2] Timm Lau, "Sweater Business: Commodity Exchange and the Mediation of Agency," 98.

[3] Tibetan Refugee Traders Association's "TRTA Contact List."

[4] Lau, "Sweater Business: Commodity Exchange and the Mediation of Agency in the Tibetan Itinerant Sweater Trade in India," 98.

PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

Thus far, with the exception of anthropologist Timm Lau's ethnographies, scholarship around the Tibetan winter market trade has been scant. And of those that do exist, they have largely centered around the economic viability of this trade, not on the gendered dynamics of these economies. Given that women do make up a significant presence in this particular economic landscape- both in numbers and in responsibilities- a study on the gendered aspects of this market economy is certainly worthwhile. What makes this trade and the patterns of migration particularly an interest of study is that these business owners often travel in families. Husbands and wives usually go to the markets together, oftentimes bringing along children who are not school-age. Grandparents also sometimes come to hang out and help by looking after their grand-children or by cooking meals for the family. The familial dynamics of these markets underscore how family-centered this trade is. This characteristic is further underscored by the fact that in their database of all 178 markets throughout India, the Tibetan Refugee Traders Association (TRTA), the governing body that oversees this trade, chronicles ownership not in terms of individual vendors, but in terms of the number of family owners in each market. These families travel in units, essentially recreating in these migratory communities the family institutions of the settlements. In lieu of the governing settlement officers, there are instead market associations that govern the laws of these transient settlements.

Given the significant presence that women occupy in this economic landscape, this research thereby proposes to explore how women's roles in this particular economic geography shape these markets and how these markets in turn shape the lives of these women. Of particular interest is how these gendered roles intersect with community and reflect a reassertion of family and settlement life. By studying this specific economic terrain that Tibetan women occupy, this project seeks to get a better understanding of how broader issues such as safety and gender-disparity in leadership affect Tibetan women. Finally, this report will conclude its findings with potential suggestions on how to expand opportunities for women in entrepreneurial spaces.

METHODOLOGY & SCOPE:

Executing this research entailed conducting fieldwork in four markets in and around the Delhi area. This included the Tibetan Refugee Handloom Association Market in Gurgaon, the Tibetan Refugee Woolen Association in Lal Quila, the Tibetan Refugee Market in Greater Noida, and the Tibetan Refugee Market in Dwarka. These markets ranged in size and regional diversity- providing a good panoramic representation of India's Tibetan population.

Part of this research also included conducting a survey that asked survey respondents questions about their background, whether they felt the market was safe, if they have or have not participated in market leadership, and how they, within their families, divide up the different roles and responsibilities of the market. Both men and women answered these survey questions.

In Noida, of fifty families who work at the market, twenty-six were surveyed. In Gurgaon, of 77 families, thirty-two were surveyed. In Dwarka, of the forty families who work at the market, thirty-five were surveyed. And in Lal Quila, of 111 families who worked at the market, sixty-four were surveyed. The surveys were conducted at random.

While the surveys targeted all four markets that were visited, the bulk of the qualitative research and assessments however are informed by data collected from interviews, both individual and group interviews, with women in the Gurgaon market. A total of twenty women participated in these interviews and they included people from diverse ages and regions. The interviews were conducted over a span of ten days in Gurgaon between the end of November and early December, 2019.

Commentary on the Methodology & Scope:

Broadly speaking, this research is a study on Tibetan women but it is also important to acknowledge that within this large umbrella of Tibetans, there exists a wide diversity within this collective, a diversity that mirrors itself in the markets' wide membership. In the Lal Quila market, there are Tibetan Muslims from the Kashmir region who have worked at the market for many years. And in Gurgaon, there is a small group of Tibetans who had settled in India long before the Chinese occupation and who by in large have Indian citizenship. These people are commonly referred to as *khyampas.* Some of the markets also include people who are not Tibetan but hail from the Himalayan regions of India. Due to

the limited scope of this study, more nuanced research on how womens' experiences in these communities may or may not differ from the broader patterns found amongst the surveyed Tibetan women could not be probed into. It must also be mentioned that because the surveys were collected at random, the survey data does include responses from these minority factions. However, because these demographics made up just a small percentage of the total survey respondents, their survey responses likely did not alter in any significant ways the trends from the data and therefore likely did not adulterate this paper's larger commentary on gender in the Tibetan community.

These clarifications are important to make for multiple reasons. The first reason being to demonstrate that when talking broadly about Tibetans, there is always a chance that it may not speak to the reality of all Tibetans simply because the Tibetan experience is not a monolithic experience. And the second reason being that in raising the minority subsets within the Tibetan population, it also calls into question what exactly do we mean by the term *Tibetan.* Who is included in this categorization of "Tibetan?" And in creating these categorizations of Tibetans and elevating certain narratives, what narratives do we leave out? The Tibetan *khyampas* and Muslims therefore must be mentioned in order to raise the possibility that in speaking of "Tibetan women," as this one, singular category, it may not do justice to the experiences of certain communities like the Tibetan Muslims.

SAFETY & GENDER

Uprooting from the comforts of their homes and settlement camps, many women come to big cities and towns across India to work this seasonal trade. And like any women anywhere in the country or globe, they face certain safety risks. Although men also face certain risks to their safety such as threats of robbery and other violent confrontations, women are more susceptible to other kinds of danger such as stalking, eve-teasing, etc. In other words, how women experience space, wherever that may be, is dramatically different from men simply because of their gender. Safety and how one navigates and experiences an environment is therefore a gendered experience. Simply put, women have to think about their bodies and be alert about the space around them in ways that men have the privilege not to.

SURVEY DATA ON SAFETY:

Survey data on all four markets was compiled to report whether men and women in these markets experienced any concerning safety issues. According to the graph below, men and women generally reported these markets as safe. There is however a discernible difference between how many men reported they felt unsafe versus how many women reported they felt unsafe. According to the chart below, of the 61 men across the markets who felt safe, only 10 said they didn't feel safe. Compared that to the 58 women who reported they felt safe, 27 said they didn't.

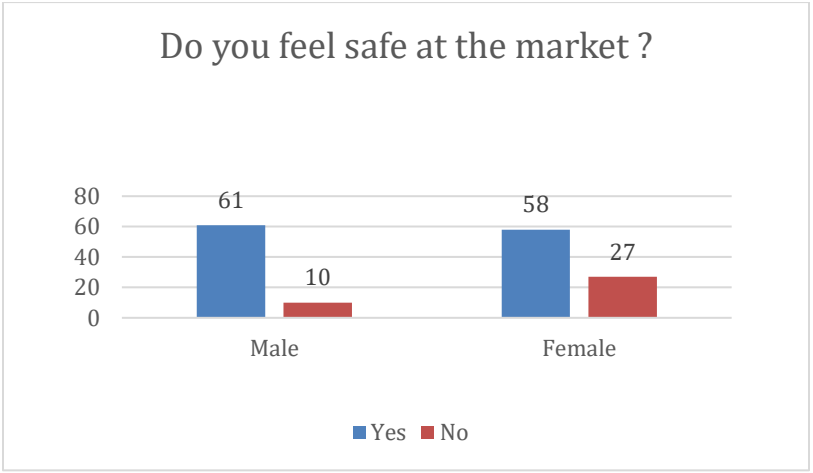


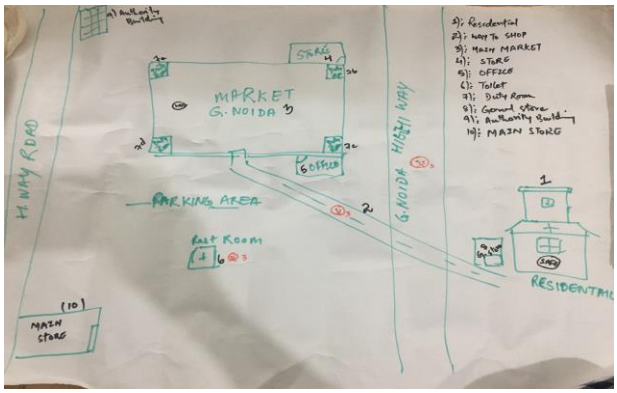
Figure 1: Safety at Market

Safety at the Noida Market:

While harassment is a possible occurrence in any of the four market areas, women's safety and the safety of everyone else seemed to be a particularly glaring issue in the Greater Noida area. Survey respondents in the other markets generally didn't express any major safety issues. And of the numbers that did express safety concerns, those responses were largely from Noida market vendors. In the Noida market, a safety-related workshop conducted with both male and female participants revealed especially important safety hazards that come with working in these markets.

Picture 1: Noida Tibetan Market

During this workshop, participants were instructed to draw a map of the marketplace- to include anything they would consider as falling under the purview of a workplace. In this exercise, participants included in their map outlines of the marketplace, the market association's office, the bathroom, the field outside the market, the road to and from their homes, and Ludhiana, the city in Punjab where they go to buy their merchandise. This conversation generated a broad, flexible interpretation of how to define a workplace and how then to use that flexible definition to interpret what constituted as workplaces in their specific market context. This exercise was followed by an activity where participants marked what areas in their workplace maps they viewed as unsafe. Areas in the maps that participants generally marked as unsafe included the restroom, the highway, and the streets to and from their home.



Picture 2: One group's workplace map

The workshop was a helpful tool in organically generating conversation around safety concerns. One particular information that this workshop resulted in was that of a recent incident where a local Indian man had sneaked into the women's bathroom and slapped a woman's butt. Other helpful information that this discussion was able to extract was how there weren't enough street lights and that many of the women experienced unwanted attention and harassment. In what is a racially and ethnically homogenous neighborhood, Tibetans' racial and ethnic differences stood out and therefore made them an easy targets for such harassment. Another alarming incident that the vendors raised was of a case where a local man had lynched his wife- leaving her to hang on a tree. These details, however alarming, are important to mention to bring attention to the kinds of environments that these women are working within. While the situation in Noida isn't necessarily uniform across all markets in India- in fact many women in the other markets expressed no major safety concerns- it is certainly likely that of the 176 existing markets in India, there are other winter markets that are situated in similar environments- shedding an important perspective on the potential dangers that women are up against in these migrational economies.

Although vulnerable to certain safety threats, these traders found community-based strategies to protect themselves from such vulnerabilities. In Lal Quila, it was common for people to travel together in packs when returning home from the markets. During a visit to Lal Quila, after the market had closed at 8 PM, when the sky had already turned dark, families who lived in the same neighborhoods would group together to go back to their rented rooms. One area that a group of vendors had rented out rooms in was in the neighboring Dharia Ganj area. After the market bells rang, signaling the close of the

market, the Dharia Ganj contingent gathered together in packs, traversed through the back field next to the market, walked past the metro stations, and crossed the streets together until they reached their homes. One woman from Shimla, as pictured below, would make sure to hold her children's hands while crossing the streets. Going through the streets in the dark with them, following this group back to their temporary homes, highlighted the community aspect of the market experience, affirming the importance of community-based mechanisms in protecting women and children against potential vulnerabilities.

Picture 3: Tibetan woman crossing road with children

Safety was an issue not only in the marketplace itself, but also in other places where traders' work took them. One such place was Ludhiana, the Punjabi garment district where traders would go prior to the advent of the season to purchase their stock for the season. One female vendor in Lal Quila described the risks entailed in this two-week long trip. She explained how scary it was for them to arrive at Ludhiana- in the early morning hours- after a long overnight journey on the bus-and have to find rooms in the dark while carrying around all this cash that they've brought to buy their merchandise for the season. To cope against these fears and vulnerabilities, these women often sought out groups to travel with, finding that they felt comfort and safety in numbers.

LEADERSHIP & GENDER

Just as safety is a gendered issue, leadership at the market is also a gendered matter. One of the first immediate observations that stuck out as a researcher during the first field visit to the market in Gurgaon was there were no women on the five-person leadership team. When asked if there have been women who have previously served in the market association board, the leaders answered that there were two that they knew of. For a market with a seventeen-year old history to only have two women leaders (per the knowledge of the leaders) is clearly a great indictment on the leadership disparity between the two genders. Later visits to the other three markets would reveal that Gurgaon's unequal gender representation in leadership was not an anomaly, but rather a pattern. It was clear from the get-go that men, with the exception of a few female leaders, were the ones dominating these spaces of governance.

Given that an uneven distribution of leadership across genders is a pertinent issue not only in the markets, but also in the broader Tibetan community, the survey, in addition to more qualitative research, sought to understand these gendered gaps in leadership. The first question asked responders, both male and female, if they have ever held positions in the market associations. Survey participants who answered that they have never held any positions in the market associations were then asked what their reasons for not engaging in these leadership positions were.

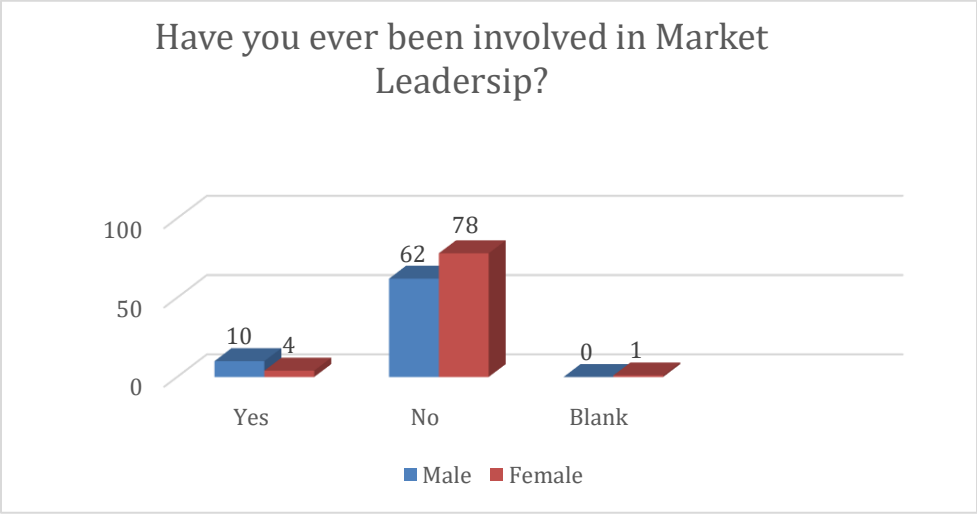


Figure 2: Involvement in Market Leadership

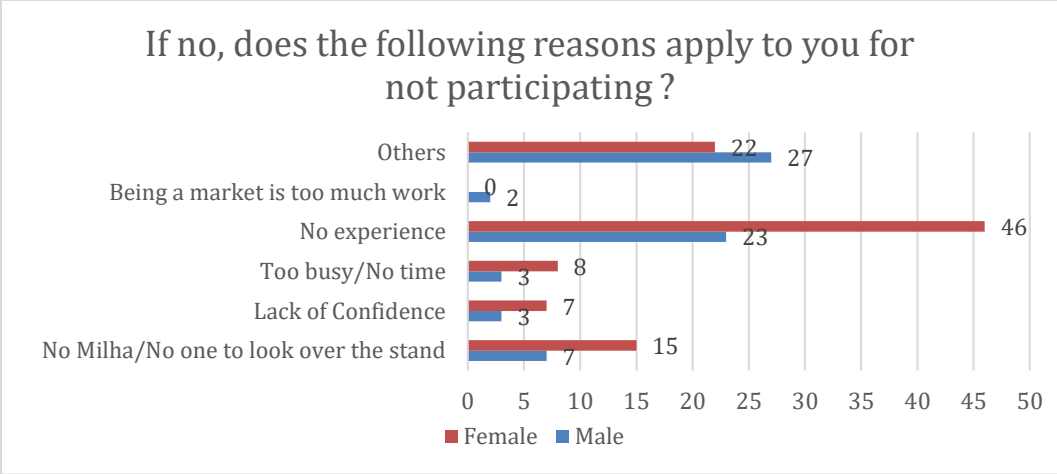


Figure 3: Reasons for not participating in market leadership

According to the first graph above, of the 85 women surveyed, only 6 women had participated in their markets' leadership. Based on casual conversations with some of the women surveyed, there seems to be an overlap between those who held positions in the market association and those who had experiences leading other organizations like the Tibetan Women's Association. Given that gender inequity in leadership positions is a pertinent issue across the Tibetan community, a research project that explores what factors compel or impede Tibetan women from participating in leadership positions may be a topic worth exploring in the future if such a project doesn't already exist.

Having said that, the numbers for men who served as leaders were also not very high. According to the graph, only 10 out of the 72 men surveyed had served in their market associations. The low numbers for men can possibly be attributed to the fact that in any given market, only a small percentage of its vendors, usually five, can even take up these positions to begin with. Moreover, it is common for the same leaders to serve their positions for multiple terms because market members often re-vote for the same leaders, hence not as many different people serve as leaders. Of those who do serve however, it is clear that men by and large dominate these spaces.

Obstacles to Women's Entry into Leadership:

What made discussions about women's leadership with market workers especially frustrating and contradictory was that in conversations with men and women, both genders

would often emphasize how women nowadays are more *jonpo* or capable than their counterparts. They would go so far as to say that families often prefer to have girls rather than boys because girls simply work harder- in schools, at homes, and even in the marketplaces. In other words, women are more useful. So if both men and women are universally praising the potential of women and their abilities, even so far as to elevating their potential over that of men's, that then begs the question of why doesn't their potential, their *jonpo*-ness, translate into a more equal representation in spaces of leadership. What factors account for the lack of significant progress in this area, especially considering that there are no institutional rules that bar women, both young and old, from presiding over these leadership positions?

Family Obligations:

One factor that accounts for this disparity in leadership is that the responsibilities of care work disproportionately fall on women. Whereas men can take it for granted that the women in their lives will assume the responsibilities that come with raising a home- cooking, cleaning, looking after kids, etc. and can therefore pursue community-related work, Tibetan women can't operate under the same assumptions. This especially comes to the foreground when women marry off into their husband's families and are obliged to follow the norms and responsibilities expected of a wife. Compounded by the responsibilities of childcare, women simply have no leisure time to devote to the public arena, to community work. One woman in Gurgaon mentioned how being a *nama* and being obligated to their in-laws create some restrictions for women when pursuing outside work. They commented on how it is common for in-laws to make comments such as *why bother with outside work when there's already so much household work.*

Contrasting the experiences of other women who marry into their husbands' households, one woman in Gurgaon commented on how she had more freedom to do as she pleased *because* she didn't marry off into her husband's household, but that her husband instead married into hers. She therefore didn't have to deal with as many expectations and pressures that other women face when marrying into other families. And because of her specific familial context, she had freer reign to engage in work outside of her family. She reflected positively on her time working at her local TWA chapter, commenting on how it was fulfilling and beneficial because it increased her exposure and worldview, a worldview that would have been more limited had she stuck to the confines of her domestic space.

Leisure Time or the Lack Thereof:

Being a market leader entails a lot of additional work. Responsibilities include coming to the market area two months prior to the start of the season. During these months of preparation, leaders make sure everything is set up properly for the start of the season. This includes networking with local officials, handling all the paperwork, and securing the necessary permits. And this is just the work that needs to be done *before* the season even starts. During the season, leaders organize weekly market meetings and special events such as Nobel Peace Prize Day, continue to deal with local authorities, make necessary announcements, and deal with the Tibetan Refugee Traders Association. It is practically a full-time job to the point that these leaders barely have time to tend to their stands- they instead confer these responsibilities to their spouses.

So when you consider all the responsibilities that working in these associations entails, and you're a woman who is the primary caretaker of her household, what is the chance that you will leave your home, two months earlier than you have to, in order to burden yourself with more work? Probably not very likely. Simply put, more time put in housework means less leisure time, which means the less likely it is that someone will commit to volunteer work that he or she doesn't have the time and energy for.

Based on informal observations and discussions, it seems that of the women who do take up leadership positions in these associations, they tend to be either on the older side with children who are already all grown up or they tend to be younger women aren't married with children and who don't have all the burdens that come with marrying into other families. It can then possibly be hypothesized that the cultural structures that shape kinship dynamics within the Tibetan community is therefore an attributing factor to the gender-disparity in market leadership. Considering that these socially-rooted practices are difficult to transform, the question that then arises is- how can we increase women's participation in leadership while accounting for these cultural variables?

Are Tibetan Women more *Rang-che-zin?*

When asked why there weren't that many women leaders in the market associations, the Gurgaon market leaders responded that women were simply more *rang-che-zin* than men. In other words, that women care more about themselves- *their* homes, *their* kids, *their* families- rather than servicing to *chi-dhon,* to community. To an outsider with a different value system, a woman who manages all the responsibilities that support

and maintain the structure of the home may seem anything but *rang-che-zin.* Instead, the outsider would probably judge these acts to be acts of service in their own right- one that is not judged and recognized in the public domain like the acts of services carried out by market leaders, but which exists within the private domain of the home.

So how do we square these different understandings of selfishness? According to the leaders in Gurgaon, women don't tend to the community because they are more selfish because they care more about serving their families than their communities. One way to interpret their understanding of selfishness is that the domain of relationships that a woman is bound to- *her* kids, *her* husband, *her* parents- these relationalities make these acts inherently selfish because they involve the self- they *affect* the self. Whereas labor on behalf of *chi dhon,* because it exists outside of these networks of kin, is more selfless work.

So if we were to accept the leaders' claim that women are more *rang-che-zin,* the question of *why* arises. Are they naturally built this way? Or has society conditioned women to assume more of the mental, emotional, and physical tolls of care work? Discussions with women from the market and a basic understanding of gender relations certainly suggest it is the latter. The market leaders who ascribed to women the label of *rang-che-zin* seem to imply that these were natural qualities that belong to women, as though it were a choice. Yet, if society has created a set of *culturalized and gendered* conditions that determine a distribution of care work that disadvantages women, can we then fault a woman for concerning herself more with family work than community work, when those are the cultural expectations she was raised in and continues to operate within?

The question of who gets to participate in service then becomes a material and cultural question. Becoming an active "selfless" member of the public community can be interpreted as an act of privilege because it establishes that one, the individual has leisure time, and two, for that individual to have leisure time, it must mean that someone else is filling in the gap of care work that would have to be set aside for that person to commit to public service. And who gets to activate those privileges? Men. Men in these markets can head to their market locations two months prior to the start of the season because they can take it for granted that their wives or their mothers will tend to the domestic matter. They can safely assume that their kids or their ailing elderly parents will be taken care of.

Being a leader, being out in the public is therefore privileged work. It brings dignity. Honor. A sense of purpose. Like the woman who worked at TWA before suggested, it can expand someone's exposure and worldview. Essentially, engaging in the

public sphere affords a lot of opportunities for growth. And it's an advantage that men more so than women are reaping. This is to be said without taking anything away from the dignity and value of care work. Unfortunately, care is a form of labor that goes far too unrecognized and undervalued, because simply put, it's unseen. Public, community work on the other hand, because it is performed for the public, is *seen* and therefore recognized and elevated over the work that women silently do inside the walls of their homes. If we accept that care work is unselfish labor because it involves caring for other people, women then seem anything but *rang-che-zin.*

Is Leadership even a Fair Indicator of Empowerment?

In the literature of development, empowerment is a tricky term to navigate. Scholars and researchers have devised different, oftentimes complex models to calculate a woman's level of empowerment. Social science has sought to figure out quantifiable and scientific methods to definitively arrive at a conclusion of empowerment, as though it were some final point- a destination that a person arrives at. This research project has averted a more scientific and exact method for a more qualitative and discussion-based analysis of the term empowerment as it pertains to the Tibetan women entrepreneurs in the winter market.

One question that was of interest in this project is how entrepreneurship enables women to engage in leadership and whether leadership is a reliable indicator for empowerment. Based on observations, formal and informal interviews with subjects, and surveys conducted across the four markets, one can deduce that in the specific case of women in *guntsong,* engaging in these economic spaces alone did not translate to assuming leadership roles in the market associations. Although working in the market space didn't directly lead to more engagement in leadership roles, it has helped women become more comfortable and confident in tasks such as speaking to customers and handling trips to and from Ludhiana, whereas before, these new experiences may have intimidated them.

It is also important to note that the survey defined leadership in the more limited and constrictive terms of leadership positions in the market association. Perhaps the research could have explored a broader idea of leadership, one that doesn't just recognize public roles but other more collective efforts that women might be contributing to. Unfortunately, the scope of the research did not include such an expansive term for leadership and thus didn't seek to explore more flexible notions of leadership that may have revealed more women-led contributions.

While leadership may be used as an indicator of empowerment, it in and of itself may not be a reliable indicator of said empowerment- however one may define it. The brief research conducted across the markets certainly showed gender disparities in leadership, yet to the many women we had spoken to about the status of women in Tibetan society, they didn't see themselves as any less empowered. In fact, they viewed women as in fact more *jon-po*, more *wang-chenpo* than men. In the discussion of empowerment, how women see themselves certainly matters as much, if not more, than how others see them.

In the discussion of empowerment, one woman's comment in particular stood out. Jigme, from Dharamsala, who is a mother of a six-year old and a five-year old, said,

> *"We're in this circle, see things as fine, but from the government circle, they say there's not a lot of women. They have different ideas. We hear, see things as the same. We see empowerment. Maybe if I was in that environment [CTA], I'd feel different. First of all, as a mother, I think about my family. Acha who is in TWA, she has time, kids are older. Whereas me, I have younger kids. It doesn't cross my mind to take more outside responsibilities. It's not that no one is letting me, it's that I choose not to take it. Maybe if I were to work in the government, I might feel different but here, in this context, with business, I don't see any particular issue."*

Jigme's comment is important and illustrative in that it suggests a keen internal awareness of her own positionality as a woman and how that lines up with or against how external bodies like the CTA perceive women like her. In this statement, she is asserting her agency. Essentially, that it's not because no one lets her take up these leadership positions, but that she is choosing *not* to. In other words, she is directly stating that although *you* may not see us empowered, we in fact *are.*

The brief research conducted across the four markets certainly shows a lack of equity between men and women leaders in the market associations. And in this specific market context, the research suggests that entrepreneurship alone might not enable leadership because leading requires a set of skills that entrepreneurship alone might not cultivate. Perhaps then, only leadership experience begets more leadership. Considering that 46 women listed *no experience* as one of the reasons for not getting involved in the market associations, the question that arises then is how do we bridge that gap and encourage women to get their foot in the door.

So is leadership an apt indicator of empowerment or the lack thereof? It may not be. It is nevertheless still an important gap to bridge in the *guntsong* market and into the

wider folds of the Tibetan community. And in discussing empowerment as it pertains to this specific social, cultural, and economic niche, it raises important questions of what the term *empowerment* even means. Is empowerment even a useful or empowering term? How do we decide on proper indicators to establish whether a community of women is or isn't empowered? While this research focused on the question of leadership, many researchers have delved into other indicators. Can these assessments be carried out in a way that isn't reductive and doesn't lean into cultural biases? And finally, can such assessments and categories of empowered or disempowered fully flesh out the full complexities in the lived and embodied experiences of women?

One Woman's Story:

Tenzin Wangmo was a middle-aged vendor from Delhi who had been working in Gurgaon since 2006. Upon talking with Wangmo, her confidence, self-assurance, and gregariousness immediately stood out. She didn't shy away from speaking her mind, unlike the many other women who were hesitant to respond to an outsider interested in hearing about their experiences. And she spoke loudly and clearly, never once filtering her thoughts. So it wasn't surprising to then learn that Wangmo was voted as a market leader a few years back and had also been involved in her local TWA chapter. Asides from the winter business, Wangmo and her husband also sold see-pen wholesale throughout the year. Women during the group conversation seemed to follow her lead and her comfort, eventually warming up and comfortably answering the questions they were asked.

Wangmo spoke about how important it was for women to work beyond the conventional roles that were expected of them. Remarking on her relationship with her in-laws, she emphasized how "you can't just stay like a nama," lamenting women who give "their power, everything…to their husband's family." Amongst her family of in-laws, Wangmo was the one to initiate the sweater business. She and her husband had also started a see-pen business. In a proud and matter-of-fact manner, she beamed, "For someone like me, what's happened in my situation is, that they're [in-laws] dependent on me, the wife. That's how it is." Wangmo's comments demonstrated just how indispensable she had become to her household and how she had cleverly navigated the systems that women had to work against. Wangmo also added that while her case is more exceptional, that "this is how other women should be as well." Work then becomes a means of empowerment for women- a way of taking ownership-a way to assert some control and power.

When asked why there is such a large disparity in leadership between men and women, Wangmo explained how shy women can be. Commenting on the one woman who had left the group interview early on because she felt uncomfortable answering questions, Wangmo added, "This is how it is. They're [women] capable. Everyone is capable. But they [don't come out to the public] because they're too shy. Like in the case with this acha that just left, she was that shy. Actually, right now, there's not much to just answering some questions. If there were a lot of people, I understand getting shy about it. But we create this thought in our mind that we're scared. In my case, I myself, to be honest am also a little scared. I don't know how to talk and communicate well. But I just do it anyway...Like this, you have to motivate yourself, in your mind. I myself have to motivate myself." Adding to these words, she even joked how women don't even go to the bathroom by themselves, often needing to tag along with a partner. Echoing

Wangmo's words, another woman Tsering said, "women are more shy, even if they're capable, they say they are not. This is common. Not having lo-ko."

Not every woman can be like Tenzin Wangmo- savvy, outspoken, and skilful at adapting to and circumventing the societal and familial constraints women are situated within. It is however society's responsibility to create conditions that nurture and cultivate those traits embodied by women like Tenzin Wangmo. The question that then naturally arises is how can society, organizations, and families nurture these qualities in women so that they confidently and defiantly emerge in public spaces. Essentially, how do we create a society where someone like Tenzin Wangmo is not an exceptional case, but a representational one.

INTERSECTION BETWEEN GENDER & NATIONALISM

Perhaps the first thing anyone notices when visiting a Tibetan market are the colorful prayer flags that hang across the market grounds. A shopper perhaps also notices a large framed photo of His Holiness that sits atop a shrine or a Tibetan national flag that is hoisted at the entrance to the market. The *lungta,* the flag, the photos of HHDL- these are all ethnic and cultural markers that the markets use to present to its shoppers some form of Tibetanness. Though these cultural props give the markets an "ethnic" flair, these markets do not in fact sell Tibetan cultural items- instead they sell the usual "Western" clothes that customers know they can find anywhere else. The ethnic props like the *lungta* however offer shoppers a distinct and unique retail experience- a reason to go to the Tibetan market as opposed to any other store- shop around and maybe enjoy some momos in the market's canteen. Local people in the neighborhood even refer to these markets as the *Tibit* or *Tibiti* market, illustrating just how primary of a role ethnicity plays in shaping this market landscape and in marketing it towards its Indian clientele. Ask any local auto *wallah* to take you to the *Tibiti* market and they'll know exactly where to go.

Picture 4: Raised prayer flags at entrance to Gurgaon's Tibetan Market

Picture 5: Tibetan National Flag and shrine next to a vendor

Now as customers wander through the market, going from stall to stall, they will likely also notice another detail- that none of the men in the market are wearing *chupas* but all the women are, including the non-Tibetan *milas*. Whereas the *lungta*, the Tibetan national flag, the photos of His Holiness have no gendered applications, *chupas* on the other hand certainly do. This pattern isn't designed by individual choice, but rather by market rules which dictate that every woman, including *milas,* must wear chupas. Men on the other hand don't have to comply with these rules, but they do follow other dress codes. It is worthy to note here that in this specific market space, gender supersedes ethnicity as the prime determinant of who wears a *chupa.* In the markets, the responsibility of who performs culture, via the *chupa,* falls disproportionately on women to the extent that even if a *mila* isn't Tibetan, so long as she is a woman, she must wear a *chupa.* It does help that a majority of the female *milas* are from the Himalayan regions and can therefore, to the untrained eye of an Indian shopper, easily pass off as Tibetans.

The *chupas* like the prayer flags and the shrine of HHDL serve to express to its customers a *Tibetanness* that is cohesive and which expresses a singular, unique culture. These vendors are selling culture just as much as they are selling clothes and sweaters- or it could also be said that they are selling culture in order to sell clothes and sweaters. Fashion here is not only to be admired at- it also serves as a vehicle for communication,

often sparking conversations between curious customers and vendors about Tibetan culture. Tsomo, a 55-year old vendor from Bandaras remarked how her female customers sometimes ask about *chupas*-how to wear them and style them. Tsomo added how she often shows her customers pictures on her phone of different chupa styles and how to adorn them with the proper, matching jewelry. She added that these women "appreciate it and pay a lot of attention." The female interviewees expressed how Indian customers are especially intrigued by the *pang-dhen* and what it symbolizes culturally.

When asked whether they were bothered or frustrated that the market enforced different dress codes for men and women, the women interviewees in Gurgaon denied that it did. In fact, Tsomo commented how women look more *see-jee-tsa-wo* and *yeen-to-ka-po* when wearing chupas compared to when dressing in regular Western clothes. In other words, women appeared more dignified in *chupas.* The only complaint Tsomo and the other women addressed was that *chupas* can be a bit cumbersome during hot weathers but that otherwise it simplified their wardrobe and lessened their packing load. Besides, they added, men have their own dress codes that they have to follow.

These specific gendered dress codes are certainly not unique to this market landscape. The CTA itself has different gendered expectations and rules on who does and doesn't have to wear chupa. And the CTA, just like the *guntsong* economy, does enforce other dress protocols that men must abide by. Clearly, something as seemingly benign as wearing a *chupa* does play an important symbolic role in the Tibetan community-from circles such as the *guntsong* markets to administrative governing bodies like the CTA. However, its uneven application reveals how women face a disproportionate amount of burden and expectations when it comes to performing and preserving culture. Moreover, it reveals just how important a role dress plays- even politically- in the specific refugee and exilic context of the Tibetan community in India and other parts of the diaspora.

INDIAN COMMUNITY AS A POINT OF RELATIONALITY

Fundamental to the very existence and survival of this sweater trade is the business partnerships built and maintained across generations between the Tibetan traders and the *lalas,* the merchants from whom traders loan their goods from. In his research on the sweater trade, anthropologist Timm Lau explores how commodities such as sweaters mediate social relationships such as those between Tibetans and Indians. He recounts witnessing many wedding invitations exchanged between the lalas and their traders, invitations to Eid that lalas would extend to Tibetans, and a *raksha-bandhan* ceremony conducted between a Tibetan man and an Indian woman that signified the new familial, sibling bond formed between the two. Contrasting these more positive relations between Indians and Tibetans however were also underlying attitudes of mistrust by Tibetans towards Indians. Lau highlights the fraught nature of these relations by detailing the stereotypes and moral evaluations Tibetans would often deploy when speaking about Indians. Commons refrains included: Indians were "bad" and "rude and stingy customers" and "so tight-fisted, they never give you what you ask for on the market."[5] This stereotyping and othering of Indians, Lau argues, function as a "backdrop for the construction of Tibetan diasporic identity." Moreover, they serve as a strategic and protective response to the cultural threat that Tibetans' exilic situation engenders.

Using Indians as a "backdrop" for constructing Tibetan diasporic identity as Lau describes also surfaced at the market when discussing gender. When talking about gender, it was common to hear people bring up sexism in the Indian community as a counterpoint to what they perceived to be a more gender-progressive Tibetan community. When commenting on how nowadays in the Tibetan community, "it's considered better to have a girl, because they can help out, whereas with guys, there's a chance that they go bad," unprompted, Wangmo follows up that comment by adding, "Whereas in Indian society, it's the opposite. I think this is very good." She then proceeded by citing infanticide and dowry as evidence of the gender discrimination in the Indian community. In this dialogue, Wangmo is essentially deploying the stereotypical sexist problems- the infanticide and dowry issues- within the Indian community as a way of not only making a commentary on

[5] Lau, "Tibetan Fears and Indian Foes," 83-84.

the Indian situation but in essence to assert- *we're not like them over there- things are better here.*

Just as Lau's research highlighted the seemingly contradictory dynamics of trust and distrust between Indians and Tibetans, conversations with the market women about gender issues in the Indian community also followed this pattern. Conflicting Tibetans' stereotypical portrayals of Indians as sexist were comments Tibetans would make about how Indians "are more respectful towards women" and "give women a certain amount of consideration." These comments were raised during a discussion about how when it came to dealing with *lalas*, whether it be to return some clothes the traders had bought or to buy new stock for the season, the women traders were better equipped to handle these situations. They explained this by asserting that the women were better at handling social situations- they were more patient and better at sweet-talking than their husbands. Moreover, *lalas* were more receptive and respectful towards the women than to their husbands. According to these women, on the one hand, Indian culture and society can be unfairly discriminatory towards women, yet on the other hand, Indian men were also more respectful and considerate towards women.

Making comparisons based on generalized stereotypes between different ethnic, national, and religious groups is a common human instinct. It is an easy trap to fall into. And it is certainly bound to happen in the context where Tibetans live fairly insular lives insulated from the broader Indian community. Yet, these comparisons that celebrate the supposedly more progressive Tibetan community can often mask the deeply existing flaws of the community and obstruct the path to more meaningful changes. And it is important that the Tibetan community, just like any other, must both celebrate the meaningful changes made in gender equity over generations and also constantly look inward and reflect in order to create sustainable pathways for more meaningful changes.

GENDERED LABOR:

Upon visiting the markets for the first time in Gurgaon, one of the first things that stood out was the way in which the distribution of labor in the market was organized and gendered. In the Gurgaon market, it was common to see men gather around in small corners of the market with their heads crouched towards their phones to play games or they would be gathered in the canteen with their friends to drink tea or just chat idly to pass the long work hours. Meanwhile, their wives would dutifully preside over their stands, handling customers or managing the *milas.*

To assess if other labor in the market was gendered in any way, a survey was designed and conducted that asked respondents which member in the family was responsible for which task. These tasks included: going to Ludhiana (or Delhi) to purchase the merchandise, dealing with lalas, deciding how much money to borrow, selling products, cooking meals to bring to work, choosing and hiring the *mila*, deciding how much *mila* is paid, finding housing, looking over the night duty, setting up & breaking down the market stalls in the beginning and end of the season, child care, and attending weekly meetings.

The graph below is a visual representation of the survey results. It is important here to note that this visual representation is an amalgamation of all four markets combined and thus may not reflect differences (if there are any) between the markets in how their distribution of labor is gendered and if they do differ, the extent to which they do. It is also important to note that although all four markets were surveyed, most of the conversations and therefore analysis on gender and labor were based on observations and interviews with people in Gurgaon- there is a likely chance that these markets may differ from each other in subtle ways. For the purpose of this particular report, only the amalgamated numbers were taken into account.

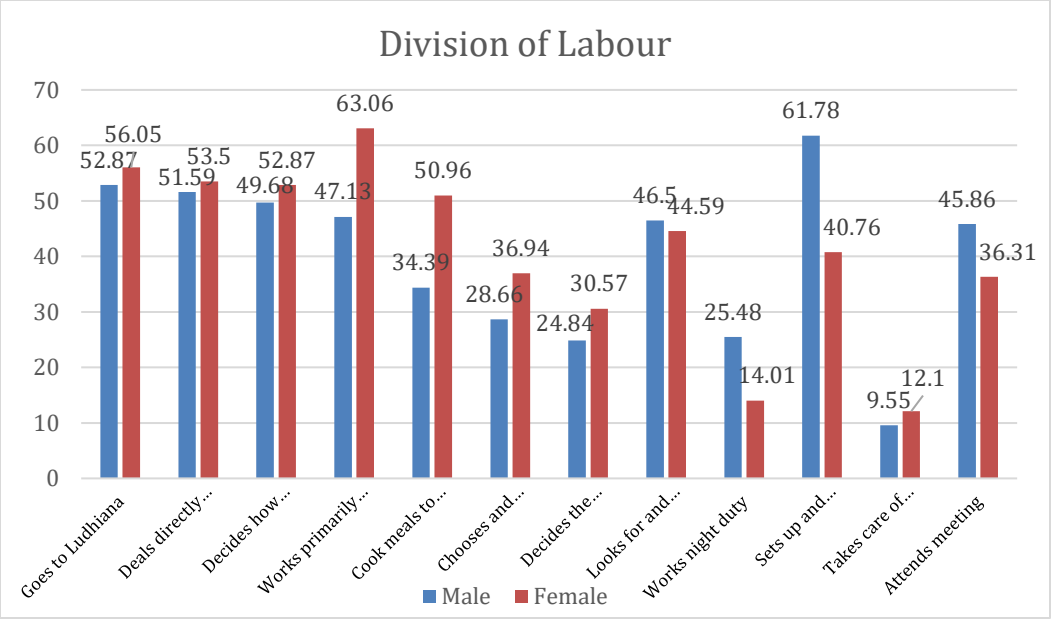


Figure 2: Division of Labor

SELLING

One clear category of labor that women primarily handled the responsibility of was in the category of selling. According to the graph above, in 57% of the families surveyed, women primarily handle the sales work whereas in the other 43%, men primarily handle the sales work. In addressing this gendered difference, Wangmo commented, "Women just seem to be better at selling. When it comes to talking to Indian customers, husbands get easily discouraged, and then just leave and give all the responsibilities to the wife. It is like this, in most cases. They don't have the habit of sitting down, they don't have it." When asked where the men go when the women are dutifully tending to their stands, one of the interviewee subjects laughed and in jest answered, "they stay in the canteen, drink tea, and play games."

While there was a discernible gendered separation in regards to who sold the items, this difference was especially apparent in Gurgaon more so than in other markets- a detail that the above graph doesn't illustrate. This could perhaps be explained by the fact that the families in Gurgaon, compared to the other markets, tended to have a higher number of *milas*. It was not uncommon for some families to have as many as four *milas*- these families usually had two stands that they owned- perhaps suggesting that families in Gurgaon were

more prosperous than families in other markets. This could explain why men in Gurgaon could afford to take it a bit easier, to leave their stands and entrust those responsibilities to their wives. Whereas in the other markets, if most families only have one or two *milas,* and say they owned multiple stands, then both the husband and the wife are more likely to take on equal responsibilities working the stands.

While these differences could be explained by a matter of economics, it was also the case that women were simply better at selling than men. Lobsang, a middle-aged woman from the South, confidently owned how good she was at selling- at dealing with customers, flattering them when she had to, and at hyping up her products- essentially every trait necessary for a salesperson to sell well. She acknowledged how customers prefer talking to women because whereas the women were more flattering and took effort to woo their customers, men were more direct. Reiterating this sentiment, Wangmo said, "When it comes to talking to Indian customers, husbands they get easily discouraged, and then just leave and just give all the responsibilities to the wife. It is like this, in most cases. They don't have the habit of sitting down, they don't have it."

And according to Wangmo, because it is mostly the women who assume the job of selling, they are also the ones more attuned to what sells and what doesn't- what their customers like and don't like- therefore they will be more likely to go to the *lalas* to purchase their stock simply because they know better what to buy. On this, Wangmo stated, "Also because it's mainly women who sit in the stalls and sell the items, so when we go to buy the things, the husband doesn't know what to buy. What will sell, what designs work, it depends on the buyer. When the husband goes, then they come back with things that don't sell." She laughed, "So there is some difference in that. So with this, then it becomes necessary for the woman herself to go." This became a funny point of topic to the interviewees who joked and laughed at how even Indian customers have noticed the absence of the men at the stalls. They joked, "Even Indians customers say this, where are your husbands? It's all women. So we cover them."

Women also brought up how they are better at dealing with *lalas* because "if we want to exchange stuff, [with] husband it is hard to do, but we insist, we keep talking, we can change their mind, they soften up" echoing the aforementioned comments about how Indian men tend to be more considerate and attentive towards women than to men.

OTHER GENDERED ROLES:

According to the graph above, other aspects of labor in the market that also delineated across gender patterns included working the night duty, setting up and breaking down the stalls in the beginning and end of the season, cooking the meals to bring to the market, and attending the market meetings. Working the night duty entailed that a group guard the market during the course of the night to ensure that all the belongings in the market were safely protected. Whereas Gurgaon, Noida, and Dwarka had some sort of assigned system that rotated which family's turn it was to take over night duty, the Lal Quila market pooled money from the community to pay for outsiders to guard the market. Due to safety reasons, this labor was typically taken up by the man in the family. In cases where there were no husbands or other male relatives in their family, the women would proceed to take up that responsibility. The men in the family were also more likely to take on more physically tolling jobs like setting up and breaking down the stalls and likely also be assisted by their *milas.* As far as cooking meals goes, the survey unsurprisingly reflected broader societal patterns of women being the ones in their households who primarily cooked meals for their families. In the survey, in approximately 60% of families, women were the primary cooks whereas in the remaining 40% of families, men were the primary cooks in their homes. Another slight, but not too major of a difference was in the category of who attended the meetings- in this area, the men outnumbered the women by about 10%.

While this detail wasn't included in the survey design, another topic that came up that had noticeable gender demarcations was in the area of conflict resolution. Some of the women in Gurgaon mentioned how when conflicts escalated with some of the Indian customers or when a fight was about to break out, women took it upon themselves to deescalate the situation. They explained how in these situations, they sent the guy away because confrontations were more likely to boil when men confronted other men whereas when a woman inserted herself into the situation, the situation would simmer due to their calmer and softer approach. This kind of comment echoed the oft-repeated trops of women as *soft* and *gentle* compared to men who are more hostile and aggressive.

Labor & Empowerment as Community: The Reassertion of Settlement Life

Creating and sustaining this marketplace requires a lot of labor- both visible and invisible. As discussed before, working on the market's associations itself entails a lot of on-the-ground work. While the season doesn't officially start until late October, market leaders travel to their sites as early as August to ensure that all the necessary preparation is

handled so that the market commences smoothly. During these two months of preparation, they work to secure space for the market, acquire the necessary permits, assign stand locations to all of the market members, set up their makeshift offices, and ensure that all the market stalls are fully set up. Just days before the season kickstarts, they even organize rituals to inspire *sonam* or good luck for the season. As for the rest of the families, prior to the start of the season, they purchase all of their merchandise for the season, find *milas*, secure housing, etc. as aforementioned in the survey above.

And during special occasions like the Dalai Lama's birthday, even more additional labor is required of the market members. In the lead-up to the event in December, market members set up festive tents, invite local officials to attend the event, prepare beverages and sweets for the celebration, set up the event's entertainment, and prepare dance routines. In the rare and exceptional cases where a large fire breaks out at the market, like the recent outbreaks in Maharashtra or the 2016 fire at Lal Quila, a lot of collective effort and labor is mobilized to recover from the damages caused by these disasters. This involves delegating market members to organize outreach and fundraising efforts, correspond with other market associations for funds, and rebuild the market from the ground up. In other words-even in the most ordinary circumstances, there is a lot of work that goes into making this market happen- and even more so when exceptional incidents call for such exceptional effort.

During a conversation at the Gurgaon market with an older grandmother from Ladakh, the grandmother shared how her son had just started the sweater business three years ago. She credited her son for handling all the business-related work and in a self-deprecating manner that undermined and devalued her own labor and contributions to this work space, she repeated multiple times in different ways how she herself had no *rigpa* for this business. She commented how she and her husband wouldn't be able to do this business on their own because they only really had experience in agricultural and nomadic work. Although unknowingly, in mentioning how she helps out at the market by holding on to the money and cooking meals to bring to work- she brought to attention *her* labor, *her* value in this space. Not only that, she also took care of her son's child. She was often seen walking the baby around the market in a stroller, feeding the baby- in other words giving it care. In the eyes of the grandmother, her work wasn't valuable- in fact she made light of these contributions. Yet, it arguably was- it was very important. One could say that the grandmother's care work was indispensable to the functioning of the market. The son relied on his mother to take care of his kid, to cook home-cooked meals, to look after the

money so that he could do his own job smoothly. Although all of these components may seem unimportant and unrelated- they are nonetheless crucial in making this business work. This example of the Ladakhi grandmother isn't unique and singular. In fact, there are many others like her who chip in every which way they can- and who are testaments to the familial and communal nature of this economic work.

The testimonial of this Ladakhi grandmother also raises important questions about labor and how we talk about labor. What counts as work? And how do we define work? And in defining work and in setting boundaries around this term, who do we make visible and invisible? Society often doesn't acknowledge labor that women and the elderly- someone like the Ladakhi grandmother contribute to society, to a workplace like these winter markets. Because they aren't formal wage-earners, the labor they perform- such as cooking food for their families and taking care after children- aren't valued in economic terms. Yet, as analysis of these market operations demonstrate, these forms of care work are instrumental in making everything else work- they make other kinds of work possible. Perhaps the value of this work is made all the more visible because the family and the work are so clearly enmeshed with one another- that how they affect each other becomes all the more obvious. That these markets bring together families all together in one space is also what makes this particular space such a rich source of research. While the market inhabits its own particular, niche space with its own unique ways and customs, it could also be interpreted as a representation and microcosm of the larger Tibetan society- of its mores, its values, and ideals, not excluding its gendered cultural values.

Community as Empowerment:

It is no surprise then that in their database of all 178 markets in India, the Tibetan Refugee Traders Association (TRTA), the umbrella organization that oversees all the markets in India, categorizes ownership not in terms of individuals, but in terms of families recording in their catalogue the number of families in each market. Not insignificant, this information underscores how entrepreneurship in this particular space is not an individually sought out enterprise, but one rooted in the family, in the community. A visitor can immediately sense this spirit of camaraderie and community as soon as one steps foot into the market. This spirit can be observed in the husbands and wives who work together while chatting and socializing, in families who sit together to eat the lunches they've packed from home in their tiffin boxes, in the grandparents that travel far from their settlements, who like the Ladakhi *momola* come to help out their children by looking after their children's children. It's a landscape that is certainly shaped by a collective effort. These markets are

especially teeming with energy when school-aged children come to the markets to either help or burden their already-burdened parents. In essence, without the family as the centerpiece of this landscape, there is no community and no business. In bringing families together in this seasonal community, it is as though these migrational communities have recreated their settlement life- bringing their home lives to the marketspace. Work and home bleed into one another- they merge and submerge into each other to the point that they're indistinguishable.

This notion that the market *is* family work and an extension of the domestic sphere was echoed by one of the market leaders. When challenged on how he would square his assertion that women were more *rang-che-zin* with the fact that women carry out these economic responsibilities outside of their homes in these marketplaces, the leader responded, "Well the market *is* family work." To this market leader, the fact that women worked in the markets didn't contradict his argument that women were more *rang-che-zin*- it simply reinforced how the economic space and the domestic are so intermingled with one another that they are essentially one in the same. One could even hypothesize that the reason women are so heavily represented in this economy is because the market *is* family work, and that because Tibetan society is by nature such a communal one, it is therefore not unlikely that women become important participants in this economic landscape.

The notion of kin and who counts as kin in these markets seemed to go beyond traditional notions of family as bloodline. This was particularly resonant in Gurgaon where a large majority of the same families have been there since the market's inception in 2002. And because market rules dictate that no outsiders are allowed to rent market stalls, market members are all well familiar with each other. When I related this thought that there seems to be a real sense of community in Gurgaon to one of the association leaders, he responded by sharing how here in the market, if anyone is in need of blood, "you don't have to ask, they will help." This familial, communal spirit shared amongst the market communities was also apparent in a market like Lal Quila which had collectively experienced the tragic 2016 fire incident. In conversations with leaders there, they commented on how this misfortune brought their members who have already shared a long history even closer together.

So in discussing the confounding and sometimes-maligned term that is empowerment, a more appropriate approach might be to refocus the question of empowerment away from an isolated individual approach and towards a more family,

collective-centered approach. To advocate otherwise for a version of empowerment that elevates the individual over the family in the name of women's empowerment is in some ways to ignore and sever the deep-rooted cultural habits and values of these communities. This isn't to argue that culture itself excuses gender inequity in any way, but is simply taking into account the fact that while these values and all values in general are in fact culturally and socially constructed across time and generations, they nonetheless still carry significant meaning to the identities of these women. The responsibility of advocates and leaders then becomes: how do we prescribe and use a language of empowerment of women that is rooted in the family and community such that responsibilities and rights are distributed equally and made accessible to everyone.

RECOMMENDATIONS

On Safety:

WED can conduct more thorough safety audits in markets across India using strategies and workshops similar to the mapping exercise done in Noida as described above. These safety audits can be a helpful jumping-start point in identifying areas that women and men viewed as unsafe. Given the market associations' connections with local authorities, it is important that market associations use their local connections to advocate for establishment of more street lights in areas that are poorly lit. WED, on behalf of CTA, can initiate this outreach with the associations.

Establishing more convenient and hygienic bathrooms for women is also important. The bathroom in Noida, where the attack had occurred, is an approximate two or three-minute walk from the market gate. Creating a bathroom at a closer location can reduce the risk of attacks from outside intruders. WED could initiate this outreach with Noida market leaders. Increasing access to feminine hygiene products are also part of women's safety. Perhaps WED could establish a program for establishing more accessible products for women.

WED should also establish the Local Committees they have established in settlements and government offices in these markets. These committees could be used as forums and resources for women to raise any concerns. WED, with its new Tibetan Women Helpline program, can initiate educational outreach to markets across India.

Another recommendation that WED and the associations can collaborate on is a formalized ride share program. While groups already informally travel together to and from home, a program where people pool together money on group auto rides could help lessen risks that come with traveling at night.

Female leadership:

When socialized practices create a set of disproportionate burdens of care work between men and women and present just a few models of female leadership, what reasonable and practical steps can an organization like WED then initiate to create dents in these gendered gaps? First and foremost, it is important to note that for WED to effectively engage women in leadership, it is imperative that WED collaborate more closely with TRTA and the local market associations. To get their cooperation and support, it is

important that the leaders of TRTA and market associations understand why it is important to bring more women into the leadership so that they don't disregard any efforts by WED as extraneous and overburdening on their limited time and resources.

One step that WED could encourage market leaders to take is to reserve two spots in their team for women. While this itself does not address the gaps in care work and the corresponding lack of time it creates for women, it could help enlist young women who aren't as burdened with childcare or elderly care duties to lead market associations. And moreover, it could encourage older women whose children are already grown and who therefore have more expendable time to devote time to leadership.

The next question that then arises is even with reserved spots for women, will women even want to consistently take part in leadership? One set of issues that some of the women in Gurgaon expressed was that women tend to be shyer and reserved than the men. Given that people often presume that leaders must fit the stereotypical bill of assertive, loud, and brash, a set of leadership workshops and training would be helpful for women to realize that leadership styles can take many forms. A workshop that helps women realize their own unique set of traits and skills and how that correspondingly aligns with skills required to lead these associations could potentially create deep psychic shifts amongst participants and engender a growing sense of their identities as a leader. It could help them realize being shy and reserved does not mean that one cannot then be a leader. As part of this workshop, WED could also include training in public speaking to help women grow more comfortable in speaking in front of crowds. And it could also help them realize the different ways in life they are already leading- essentially helping them to realize a more expansive idea of leadership. In other words, these training and workshops would demystify leadership and help inculcate in women confidence to be leaders themselves.

Another large barrier that inhibits women from engaging in leadership is that they are only seeing men lead. They thus implicitly and subconsciously arrive at the message that leadership is a space for men, not women. When women see other women lead however, that inspires a sense of *I could also do this.* It is therefore important to provide women with role models whom they can relate to and be inspired from. For an older woman to see another older woman lead with confidence and for a young twenty-something year old who has only just started this business to see another young woman take up a leadership mantle could make a significant difference. Establishing workshops that create a culture where women feel confident to lead and inspire other women could then go a long way in generating constant cycles of women leaders. Another potential strategy that market

associations can implement is that they provide to women who might be interested in leading the market boards. What they could do is have women shadow them around- to show them that the job may not be as intimidating as they might have first perceived it to be. Overhauling deeply-seated cultural and socialized barriers that prevent women from assuming leadership roles is obviously not an easy task. The above recommendations are simply just a start. If WED can create formalized infrastructures to incentivize market leaders to invest in their female market members, these efforts could go a long way in helping women realize their leadership potential and could also potentially help bring in fresh perspectives into the market leadership.

FINAL REMARKS

The issues highlighted in this paper- from safety issues to gaps in leadership- are not unique to this market landscape. In fact, they simply mirror the broader issues affecting the Tibetan exile population in India. Isolating a specific niche community like those in this itinerant trade is a helpful exercise because it underscores both the specificity and the universality of Tibetan life in India. While this paper focuses largely on women's issues, it is important to note that there are many issues that affect both genders equally. That includes problems with securing market locations, decreasing business revenues, accidental fire outbreaks that force vendors to start from zero again. Gender is an important question and deserves to be examined constructively. Yet, the largest concern that people in the markets have is an economic one. How to repay their loans to their lalas. How to make enough money that they can survive on for the rest of the year. How to provide for their elderly parents and their children. The challenges are endless. To constantly prod at groups and communities that they need to do more on the question of women while failing to support them economically can only take the community so far. While this question falls beyond this paper's purview, I hope that CTA can find creative approaches to financially support this vital Tibetan trade. Because without a vibrant economy, what good does equal representation do if the larger economic questions persist unaddressed.

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Annexure 1.

Survey Questions to Ask:

Name: _____

Date: _____

Age: _____

Market: _____

Settlement: _____

Gender: _____

A. BACKGROUND

1) How many people are in your household?

- ❑ Less than 3
- ❑ 3-5
- ❑ 6-8
- ❑ Above 8

2) Who comes/works with you to the market?

- ❑ Spouse
- ❑ Kids
- ❑ Mi-La/helper
- ❑ Relatives
- ❑ Others

3) How many stalls do you own at this market?

- ❑ 1

- ❑ 2
- ❑ 3
- ❑ More than 3

4) Do you have children that you bring to the market?

- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No

5) How long have you been working in WSS?

- ❑ Less than 1 year
- ❑ 1-3 years
- ❑ 4-7 years
- ❑ 8-10 years
- ❑ 11-20 years
- ❑ More than 20

6) Is this business owned solely by you and your family or with others?

- ❑ Sole Proprietorship
- ❑ Partnership

1) If a partnership, what is the total number of partners you have?

- ❑ 1
- ❑ 2
- ❑ 3
- ❑ More than 3

2) How many people are currently working for your business?

- ❑ 1
- ❑ 2
- ❑ 3

3) Did the current owner/s of this enterprise…

- ❑ Start this business from scratch?
- ❑ Buy or acquire this business?
- ❑ Take ownership of this business from parents or relatives?

B. LEADERSHIP

1) Have you ever been involved in market leadership?

- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No

2) If no, do the following reasons apply to you for not participating?

- ❑ No mi-cha/no one to look over the stand
- ❑ Lack of confidence
- ❑ Too busy/No time
- ❑ No experience
- ❑ Being a market leader is too much work
- ❑ Other _____

C. SAFETY

1) Do you feel safe at the marketplace?

- ❑ Yes

- ❑ No

2) At night hours, when returning home, do you face safety issues while returning back home?

   - ❑ Yes
   - ❑ No

3) In your opinion, what are the main safety issues at the market?

   - ❑ Harassment from locals
   - ❑ Not enough lights on the streets
   - ❑ No accessible transportation
   - ❑ Harassment from customers

D. DIVISION OF LABOR/DECISION MAKING:

For the following questions, answer according to who performs these particular roles in the market? The choices being:

Decision/Work	**Only Me**	**Me & Spouse**	**Me & Relative**	**Only spouse**	**Other Relatives**	**Mila**
Goes to Ludhiana to choose merchandise to be sold at the market.						
Deals directly with lala/merchant to borrow money						
Decides how much money to borrow.						
Works primarily selling the products						

Cooks meals to bring to work						
Chooses & hires the mi-la/helper						
How much the mi-la/helper is paid						
Looks for and decides on housing						
Night duty						
Setting up & breaking down the stall in the beginning & end of season						
If you bring children, who takes care of them.						
Who goes to the weekly meetings						