The problem of refugees and the security implications (internal security, economic burden, politics of vote banks, foreign policy vis-à-vis the refugee problems) of their movements are going to stay with India. This is because of India’s location, economic opportunities, size, free democratic secular set up, soft attitude, appeasement policy, national interests in foreign policy vis-à-vis the refugees as bargaining card. Here we have a curious mix of our ethnic affinities with refugees as well as our own interest, reinforced by a long tradition of generosity towards the foreigners/guests; international obligations being one of the major power-players in the world. Finally India knows that the state formation in South Asia or its other neighbouring states has not yet been stabilized and the states and nation-building processes continue to generate turmoil and displacement. Consequently, the conflicts that produced the refugee movements in the recent years (ex. Tamil refugees/Chakmas) have not only not been resolved, but have been persisting and even reintensified. The conflict between the Drukpas and the Nepalis in Bhutan seems to have stabilized at a lower level of intensity. As a result, the refugees continue to flow to India, and at present they number about 30,000-40,000. The Bhutanese government continues to assert that these are not Bhutanese refugees and most of them have been lured to the refugee camps from among the Nepalis living in India or Nepal, either through the temptation of UNHCR doles or through sheer coercion, by the
Recently United Liberation volunteers of Arunachal and United People's volunteers of Arunachal, both devoid of ideology have been working for the ouster of the Chakmas and Hajongs, which alarm poor insecure Chakmas. Tension has been prevailing in Western Aizwal after the Bru National Union (BNU), a socio-cultural organization of Reangs in Mizoram, demanded eight years ago the setting up of an autonomous district council in Mizoram, to the West of Tlawng river, along the Bangladesh border. The Mizos living in the Western region of Mizoram were irked by the demand as the Reangs constituted less than 30 percent of the population. From the outset, the National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT), an outlawed militant organization of tribal people, has been hostile to the Reang refugees. The NLFT mounted a series of attacks on the camps and killed 13 Reangs. The situation has turned tense as a section of the Reang youth floated an underground outfit, the Bru National Liberation Front (BNLF) to resist NLFT attacks and press the demand for an autonomous district council.

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**Foreigners or the Refugee Issue in Tripura:**

The Left Front Committees of Tripura in their report to the study group in 1955-96 stated that "the population of Tripura, once a tribal majority state was 6.38 lakh in 1951 and it went upto 27-75 lakh in 1991 due to large scale migration of the people from erstwhile
East Pakistan. The tribal population was now 31% of the total population only. This rapid increase in the population, coupled with economic backwardness, has led to disparity between the tribals and non-tribals causing ethnic problems and insurgency.\textsuperscript{73}

**Foreigners or the Refugee Issue in Tamil Nadu:**

The flow of refugees to Tamil Nadu has to be viewed against the backdrop of the continuing fratricidal strife in Sri Lanka, New Delhi's policy towards Sri Lanka and the humanitarian and security dimensions of the problem. Geographical continuity and ethnic affinities underscore the reality that India especially Tamil Nadu cannot insulate itself from the political developments in Sri Lanka. The Sri Lankan refugees are highly politicized and the refugees are the waters in which the militant fish thrive. Initially the competitive nature of Tamil Nadu politics with two major Dravidian Political parties (AIADMK and DMK) vying with each other in supporting the Tamil cause and New Delhi's policy of arming the Tamil Militants during the first Eelam war resulted in the state becoming the sanctuary and support base of the LTTE. Earlier in Tamil Nadu, the militant group of Tamil refugees especially the LTTE found a patron in AIADMK leader and Chief Minister Mr. M.G.Ramachandran who at one time had donated Rs 30 million to the Tigers. He even had

\textsuperscript{73} The Pioneer, 12 August, 1998.
appealed for a week’s mourning and a state bandh for the Tamils\textsuperscript{74}. After assassination of Rajiv Gandhi (21\textsuperscript{st} May 1991) by LTTE, the Sri Lankan refugees obviously became unwelcome in Tamil Nadu. Spurred by security considerations, AIADMK Government headed by Jayalalitha withdrew facilities for higher education, and movement of refugees from the camps was monitored. The repatriation of the refugees commenced in January 1992. However, AIADMK Chief and Chief Minister J. Jayalalitha told the \textit{Hindu} Newspaper in February 1992 even after assassination of Rajiv Gandhi: “As long as the genocide continues in Sri Lanka, and Tamil Youth are rounded up and killed, refugees will be pouring into India. We cannot turn them back because it is our duty to provide them relief and rehabilitation”\textsuperscript{75}. Following the criticism that India was pressurizing them to leave, the UNHCR was permitted to have a token presence in Tamil Nadu to monitor the repatriation by memorandum of understanding (1992) signed by UNHCR and Govt. of India\textsuperscript{76}.

The USCR in its report (1991) noted “India has accorded a welcome to Tamil asylum seekers that is as generous as to any refugee groups in Asia”. Yet another group of political parties like, MDMK and DMK alleged on Nov 22, 1995 that Indian navy and Coast Guard had been preventing refugees from crossing over. Former AIADMK Minister and an expert on Sri Lankan Tamil affairs, Mr. Ramachandran

\textsuperscript{74} S. D. Muni and Lok Raj Baral, Refugees and Regional Security in South Asia (Delhi, 1996), p. 106.
\textsuperscript{75} Frontline, 14 February, 1992.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid.
pointed out to yet another factor which was that the refugees themselves would not want to come to India now. Their experience, after Rajiv Gandhi's assassination has not been good at all. "If the Indian Govt. is indifferent, the Tamil Nadu Govt. is hostile", he said. Ms. Jayalalitha in a statement in the state Assembly said on November 8, 1995 that her Government would not accept the killing of innocent Tamils. When the DMK Govt. under Mr. Karunanidhi came to power in 1996, he has been more sensitive to the humanitarian aspects of the refugee situation. The Government has removed the ban on higher education since 1996-97 and irksome restrictions on movement of refugees have been relaxed. On 20 August 1996, Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi said, "It is not that we are inviting them over here, but when they come here, seeking refugee, we cannot turn them back. It is our burden and duty to take care of them ....".

The DMK leader and Chief Minister Kurananidhi's sympathetic attitude towards Sri Lankan Tamil refugees is well-known. He regrets and voices concern over the issue of Sri Lankan Tamils and refugees. It reflects the apprehension of the state Govt. about the growing build up of Tamil refugees, many of whom are being lodged in camps following the periodic arrival of Tamil refugees at Rameswaram. The worry is due to the Govt.'s helplessness to solve the problem in the context of the known "hands off" policy pursued by successive

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77 Hindustan Times, 23 November 1995.
78 Ibid.
Governments at the Centre on the ethnic issue. There are now already 70,000 refugees accommodated in 125 camps, while 27,500 others registered are living outside the camps. Besides, the three special camps where the LTTE militants are lodged, the unregistered refugees account for a little over 10,000 and keeping a watch over them and their movements pose a problem, according to the law and order authorities. Mr. Karunanidhi attributes the reason for the resumption of refugee influx to the highly insecure conditions that now prevail in Sri Lanka, acute shortage of rice and other essentials as well as LTTE's frantic attempt to compulsory conscript Tamil Youth. Most of the Sri Lankan Tamils who seek refuge in Tamil Nadu are those whose families have either lost a member or a close kin or property. Only when the ethnic war ends will the flow of refugees come to a stop. On the other hand, the Tamil Nadu Government is dismayed by the fact that the LTTE militants are sneaking into the state in the garb of refugees to get fuel and drug supply and Tamil youths in enlistment of LTTE to Sri Lanka. Although since the first exodus of refugees into Tamil Nadu began in July 1983 which led to a sympathy wave, it tapered off following the killing of Rajiv Gandhi by LTTE squads (21 May 1991). Shortly after the tragedy, it was the then Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao who asserted at Sri Perumbudur that the Tamil refugees would have to go back. Taking this cue, AIADMK Government tried to send back through chartered Ships 29,102 refugees in 1992, 6,926 in 1993, 813 in 1994 and 10,912 in 1995.

80 National Herald, 4 April, 1999.
This led to complaints of overt and covert attempts to coerce the refugees to go back in gross violation of the repatriation norms agreed upon between the Government of India and the UNHCR (1992). All these things apart, obviously the influx of refugees into Tamil Nadu from Sri Lanka is bound to upset the economic balance of the State as well as add to the burden of India.

In an interview taken to *Times of India* (dated 11/6/2000) relating to the refugees problem and Sri Lankan Issue, Murasoli Maran, DMK leader and Union Minister of Industry and Commerce said on 10 June 2000: "The influx of refugees increased and 1000 more of them have come in the recent past. There are already about 70,000 people in the refugee camps, and many more have mixed with the people. We have been spending Rs. 30 crores annually on them for the past 20 years. Ideally, the condition in Sri Lanka should improve so that the refugees can go back. There are also some militant refugees. In other words, it's a problem for Tamil Nadu. For instance, they are fed three meals a day but there are those (Indians) who are starving. It has also created the gun-drug culture. I'm not accusing the refugees....but we're concerned."82

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81 Ibid.
leaders of dissident Nepalis. India has been taking a cautious or neutral policy toward Bhutanese refugees in India and Nepal by not even recognizing Bhutanese refugees in India. Every time about one lakh Bhutanese refugees threaten to go to Bhutan via India and create a lot of problems in Eastern states, especially West Bengal. India is apprehensive of Mr. Subhas Ghishing's agenda of Greater Nepal. The obvious ethnic similarities of ethnic Nepali Bhutanese refugees raise the number game problem in West Bengal’s Darjeeling area, and impels the tendency to disown the Bhutanese refugees. Recently, in year 2000 Nepali Prime Minister visited India and asked India to solve the problem of Bhutanese refugees in Nepal. The ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka which is hoped to be resolved by following a fresh, bold approach by President Mrs. Chandrika Kumartunga's peace process (i.e., new Constitution to give more autonomy or devolution of power to Jaffna and a parliamentary election under the new Constitution) initiative. But it only got reintensified since beginning of May, 2000 onwards. LTTE captured central Jaffna, and in the intensified fight between Sri Lankan Army and LTTE between May and July, thousands of LTTE rebels and govt. troops have been killed. Thousands of Sri Lanka Tamils fled to Tamil Nadu, aggravating the friction between the two major competitive Dravidian parties in Tamil Nadu: DMK, which is in power now, and AIADMK the main opposition party. As a result of renewed hostilities in the on-going ethnic conflict, a fresh wave of refugee influx was feared that could overburden economic and undermine the law and order situation in
the state. Tamil Nadu politics is especially obsessed with ethnic and cultural affinities and vote banks. In general the Centre has been maintaining policy of banning the LTTE after Rajiv's assassination. This is also aimed at forestalling another influx of refugees. Escalation of the civil war in Sri Lanka delays the repatriation of refugees. Also India believes that as the ethnic conflict widens, and military operations like 'leap forward' are undertaken by Sri Lankan forces and counter operations are launched by LTTE, the exodus of refugees from that country will increase.

The Centre filed a petition in the Supreme Court over Chakma refugees living in Arunachal Pradesh, by saying that Arunachal Pradesh government is refusing to honour the decision of Supreme Court, NHRC, Parliament and the Centre on citizenship status to Chakmas. The Arunachal Pradesh Apang Administration, on its part, has been trying to convince the Centre that the Arunachal Pradesh had been losing tribal ethnic domination, as out of a population 8 lakhs, 2.5 lakh foreigners comprising Chakmas, Tibetans etc. In between Chakmas refugees are waiting for final Indian citizenship status to escape from torture, quit - Arunachal notices, removal from settlements by the Apang administration and AAPSU, to become responsible and stable Indians. The Chakma refugees have more or less the same problems in Mizoram where they demand an union territory for them, and in Tripura, as they are known as Jummas even though most of them from here had been repatriated to CHT of
Bangladesh. No doubt these Buddhist Chakma refugees and Hindu Hajongs need India’s protection for a settled and safe life. So long as Taliban militia regime continues to hold sway in the terrorist, drug-trafficking and smuggling Afghanistan, the refugee flows to India would continue. There are already more than 18,500 refugees including Hindus and Sikhs in India, though not recognized as such for material support by India. They stay under the non-refoulement policy as in Afghanistan ethnic cleansing has not stopped so far, and some of them recently have been supported by UNHCR in New Delhi. On Tibetan refugees, India has a two-way policy. First, the India government regards Tibet as an integral part of China and does not allow Tibetan refugees to indulge in anti-China activities in India. But in popular gestures and in many of its actions, it does not endorse this policy plank. Second, India considers the Dalai Lama as a reverend spiritual leader and his associates will be allowed to be in India as long as they like by following two important policies broadly: giving Tibetans liberal non-assimilative framework and broad delegated authority. But the future of the Tibetans also depends on Sino-Indian relations in changing scenarios. Other than these above mentioned Tibetans, Sri Lankan Tamils and Chakma refugees who are recognized by Government of India as refugees, there are Afghans and ethnic Nepali Bhutanese refugees (already mentioned), Chin-Burmese refugees, Iraqis, Iranians, Somalis, and many from other countries. There are only 2800 urban refugees including some Afghans, pro-democracy Burmese students, Iraqis, and Iranians and Bhutanese
have been supported by UNHCR in New Delhi, even though many complaint against it for arbitrary cancellation and refusal of refugee status recognition. Nevertheless, UNHCR has been creating an awareness of International refugee law and policy among the intelligentsia and institutions, especially Judicial courts of India and NHRC as India is not a signatory to 1951 UN convention on Refugees. India considers it to be one-sided and harmful to her security and economy. The UNHCR has had an impact on shaping the humanitarian attitude towards refugees in India. Finally it has been urging India to sign the 1951 Refugee Convention.

So far as the political parties' views on the refugee problems are concerned, there are two groups of political parties, which follow divergent policies towards refugees in India. There are major/national political parties such as Congress, BJP and Leftists that have refugee policy consistent with their political ideology or expediency. For example, BJP has a policy that a Hindu migrant to India is called refugee and other migrants called illegal migrants/infiltrators which sometimes discriminates between refugees. The party especially refers to continued overflows of Bangladeshi economic migrants to West Bengal and the North-Eastern States. Whereas the Congress Party and the Leftists – including CPM and CPI- have been pro-refugee/migrant since independence. But now their stands also have been changing due to a hue and cry on the foreigner issue in North-Eastern States and West Bengal particularly over Bangladeshi
economic migrants. But the refugee/migrant policies of these three slightly different ideological groups have been followed in India towards Chakmas, Tamils and Tibetans. There is, nonetheless, a fair degree of uniformity of treatment. There are smaller groups of political parties/regional parties, like JD, DMK, AIDMK, AGP, Arunachal Congress, AAPSU, AASU, SP, and many indigenous tribal bodies, which have parochial or local refugee/migrant policy. Of course, they have been facing problems in dealing with national refugee/migrant policy on the one hand, and the local population who do not want foreign nationals to compete with them for the scarce employment opportunity, natural resources, land and other benefits. Regional political parties build their strategies based on the aspirations and needs of the local population. They face problem when the national refugee policy is implemented overlooking local aspirations and needs. For example, DMK is the sympathizer of Tamil refugees, Tamils in Sri Lanka. India as a whole has banned LTTE, which is the largest terrorist group in the world and of course has sympathy with Sri Lankan Tamil refugees other than militant groups. So far as the economic burden and internal security and foreign policy vis-à-vis the refugee problem are concerned, India not being a signatory to 1951 Convention prefers to deal with refugee groups bilaterally with the refugee generating countries to solve the refugee problem. India selectively plays refugee issue bilaterally as a bargaining Card, particularly dealing with contentious issues. Our policy on Tibet and treatment of the Tibetan refugee in India vis-à-vis the Sino-Indian
relations are a case in point. China cannot overtly support Pakistan's Kashmir obsession because of its own Tibet problem. India to face similar problems, and so cannot support Tibet's struggle for self-determination or Tamils' aspirations for a separate homeland. But India, being a poverty-stricken country, is sometimes reluctant to give material support to all refugee groups, unless urged by strategic or ethnic compulsions. According to the Hindustan Times (dated May 1998) there have been 25 million foreign nationals, mostly economic migrants for last two decades whether or not India recognizes them as refugees. Of course she cannot afford to extend indiscriminate and adequate material support to all categories of refugees. So India has put most of them under the principle of non-refoulement so long as her sovereignty and security are not threatened by them. The refugees do create internal and external security problem as they need not have any allegiance to India's integrity, being foreigners. Burmese refugees allegedly got involved with separatist insurgent groups like NSCN, ULFA and drug-trafficking in India. LTTE killed Rajiv Gandhi. Fighting for a separate Eelam has many hard-core militant groups who recruit their cadres from the Tamil refugees in India and create a lot of security problems. They also have connections with secessionist movements in South Asia that are hostile to India. Occasionally the Bhutanese create problems in India because of Subhas Ghishing's Greater Nepal game-plan. All over India, Pakistan's Inter-services Intelligence (ISI) have been seeking every opportunity to support anti-national and disgruntled elements for promoting its own nefarious
agenda. It is possible that some poor refugees for their sheer survival might consent to be recruited by the ISI. The drug-trafficking Afghanistan regime is now sending its trained militants in the form of Afghan refugees particularly to Jammu and Kashmir to make them a part of Pakistan's Jihad enterprise in India. So India has been tackling the migrants including refugees very cautiously, especially in the insurgency-stricken North-Eastern region. In August 2000, in an interview, DMK leader Murasoli Maran said India has been spending 30 crore of rupees on Sri Lankan Tamil refugees annually, whereas the local people are starving in Tamil Nadu. Other than Tamil refugees, Tibetans and Chakmas are also looked after by India. So this economic burden on the poverty-stricken people of India has to be revised, or else India has to find some other alternatives.

The real answer to the refugee problem lies in working at the national level to resolve problems and crises that generate refugees. Petty party politics should not be allowed to exploit the misery of refugees for garnering votes. Pressure must be brought to bear on the concerned national governments to tackle the issues with individual refugee groups without sacrificing their national interests. Even though the Executive organ lacks national laws to deal with refugee problems, the other organs of the Government like the judiciary are active enough to ensure that the refugee groups in general are treated uniformly and fairly. A case in point is the Supreme Court's positive verdict on Indian citizenship status to Chakma refugees in 1996.
bringing all refugees under Article 21 of the Constitution so that a refugee's life should not be threatened. Predictably, this was opposed stiffly by regional groups like AAPSU. Also National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has created an awareness and a humanitarian approach towards refugees. This has had a great impact particularly on refugee maintenance and dealings by the national and state governments. India gradually allowed the UNHCR to be involved with Government agencies to rehabilitate or repatriate occasional cases of refugees in India. Consequently, the UNHCR now considers India as one of the best refugee host countries in the world. For example, even one of India's dearest leaders, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi was killed by Tamil refugees' armed wing (LTTE) under security compulsions, India repatriated some of the Tamil refugees to Sri Lanka, in 1992 and allowed UNHCR to be involved to check whether any force-repatriation of refugees did take place. So India's overall policy of rehabilitation, maintenance, protection to life and non-refoulement, have been uniform to all the refugees, including non-recognized refugees, barring some local or regional parochial policies of local and regional political parties, or barring some vote bank politics by some political parties. But of humanitarian refugee policy approach, should not at the same time be soft enough to allow some of refugees to pose a threat to the unity and integrity of India.