Chapter III

PERCEPTIONS OF THE SUCCESSIVE GOVERNMENTS ON SRILANKAN TAMIL AND TIBETAN REFUGEES:

Sri Lankan Tamil Refugees: Background

In Sri Lanka the state, through a gradual process beginning in 1956, acquired a Sinhala-Buddhist bias. The original violent communal conflict of 1956 was limited mainly to a part of the Eastern Province and erupted as sequel to the enactment of the official language Act which made Sinhalese the only official language of Sri Lanka. Political representatives of the Tamils organised protests against this measure, which was considered discriminatory, and the Sinhalese retaliated. Tamils feared the prospect of Sri Lanka turning into a Sinhalese Buddhist state as a threat to their existence and the distinctiveness of their culture. On the other hand, Tamils entertaining plans of separatism or autonomy bring to the Sinhalese mind fears of getting integrated with the over 50 million ethnic Tamils living across the narrow stretch of sea separating the Island from Tamil Nadu in Southern India. In this context, when Tamils, who fled from violence in 1983 and in years thereafter, went particularly to Tamil Nadu, the presence of Tamil refugees numbering more than 2,20,000, there became a problem both for India and Sri Lanka. Half of the Sri Lankan refugees in India were sent back following the conclusion of the Indo-Sri Lankan Agreement in July 1987 and subsequently through the good offices of the UNHCR.
Sri Lankan Tamil Refugees in Tamil Nadu:

Existence of large numbers of Sri Lankan Tamils in Tamil Nadu naturally spelt problems to India which had to house, feed, care for them and provide security. To the Sri Lankan government, it meant working out a suitable relationship with its proximate neighbour that would not cause misunderstanding, embarrassment and unwholesome international relations. Also, the Sri Lankan government feared the refugee Tamils getting together with the Tamil Nadu Tamils as a threat. The Sri Lankan refugees who entered India, by their quantity alone, posed a formidable problem to Tamil Nadu and the Indian government. The Sri Lankan Tamil refugees came to India – to the state of Tamil Nadu – in two waves. The first exodus – of refugees commenced on 24 July 1983 and continued till 29 July 1987. During this period, 1,34,053 refugees arrived in India. Following the India-Sri Lanka Accord of 1987, refugees began to return to Sri Lanka. Between 24 December 1987 and 31 August 1989, 25,585 camp and non-camp refugees returned to Sri Lanka by chartered ships. Remaining refugees either returned to Sri Lanka without government assistance or continued to stay in Tamil Nadu either with their relatives or by their own means. The second Eelam war triggered a fresh exodus of refugees. After 25 August 1989, 1,22,000 refugees came to Tamil Nadu. Many of these were destitutes and were accommodated in refugee camps. An estimate shows that since 1990 approximately 1,20,000 1,16,000 Sri Lankan Tamils have been living
in Southern India in refugee camps run by the Government of India, while another 80,000 were living outside the camps. The Sri Lankan Tamil refugees in Tamil Nadu could be categorized into three categories: (1) Those in the Refugee camps: According to the Policy Note for 1994 – 95, issued by the Tamil Nadu Government, 68,543 refugees were accommodated in 122 refugee camps located in different parts of the state; (2) Refugees, who have been identified as belonging to militant groups, 1,629 militant refugees are stationed in five special camps in the State; (3) Refugees who maintain themselves, outside the camps. Following Rajiv Gandhi’s assassination (May, 1991), the Tamil Nadu government asked these refugees to register themselves with the nearest police station. By July 1991, 26,363 refugees registered themselves with the Police. Soon afterwards, the police wanted to apprehend those who had not registered, which resulted in the arrest of 1,800 refugees under the Foreigners Act.

Sri Lankan Tamil Refugees and Indian Politics:

The refugee phenomenon is the offshoot of the Sri Lankan Government’s savage attacks on Sri Lankan Tamil Population. The Sri Lankan Tamils are highly politicized and the refugees became reservoir for recruitment into Tamil militant groups. The competitive nature of Tamil Nadu politics, with the two Dravidian parties vying with one another in championing the Sri Lankan Tamil cause and New

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Delhi’s policy of arming the Tamil militants naturally resulted in the Government turning a ‘Nelson’s eye’ to the atrocities committed by the Tamil militants. Whether it was the bomb blast in the Meenambakkam airport, the conversion of Tamil Nadu coast into sanctuary – supply base for the war machine or intra-militant violent clashes – the Tamil militants had their way and became a law unto themselves. It was only in March 1990 that Tamil Nadu refused asylum to 1,638 Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (TELO), Eelam National Democratic Liberation Front (ENDLF) and Eelam People’s Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) cadres who were dispatched to Malkangiri in Orissa state. Later only the ENDLF members remained in a militants’ camp. All trained by Indian security forces, they could dismantle and assemble a gun in seconds. The dastardly assassination of Rajiv Gandhi in May 1991, allegedly by a suicide squad of the LTTE, swung the pendulum to the other extreme. Tamil Nadu is yet to recover from the catharsis, the Sri Lankan Tamils, obviously, overnight became unwelcome in Tamil Nadu as well as in India as a whole.

A decrease in refugees in Tamil Nadu afterwards was owing to the implementation by the governments of India and Sri Lanka from the beginning of 1992, of their bilateral agreement on repatriation. Accordingly at end of May 1992 itself over 23,000 persons returned to Sri Lanka.\(^\text{2}\) However, the repatriation scheme did not operate

\(^{2}\) Ibid, p. 197.
smoothly or uninterruptedly. Yet it was resumed on 13 August 1993 after almost one year. Allegations were made that repatriations was not of a voluntary nature and conditions in Sri Lanka were not conducive for the return of refugees. T.N.Gopalan in “A Report on the conditions of the Sri Lankan Tamil refugees in Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka” in November 1993 presented a somewhat contrary view about repatriation: but it appears to be more emotionally informed and hence relatively partisan.³ Between March 1991 and September 1993, out of 1.2 lakhs of refugees in Tamil Nadu Camps, 36,000 were sent back.⁴ Refugees ‘once cared for, well protected’ and for whose children places were reserved in higher educational institutions, suddenly became unwanted guests’, were suspected harassed and even persecuted after Rajiv Gandhi’s assassination in 1991. Additionally, special camps with sub-jail conditions were designed to make the refugees’ life difficult⁵. However, conditions of reception by the host even earlier had soured when the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) confronted in 1987 the Indian Peace Keeping Forces (IPKF). Refugees’ boats had been seized in 1990 so as to dissuade their influx into India and conditions in camps were allowed to deteriorate in order to coax refugees to leave. But remarkably there still was no violence against the Sri Lankan Tamil refugees even after Rajiv Gandhi’s assassination unlike the scenario vis-à-vis the Sikhs after

³ Ibid, p. 198.
⁴ Ibid, p. 198.
⁵ Ibid, p. 199.
Indira Gandhi's murder. After August 1993, about 69,000 Tamils returned from Tamil Nadu following a limited improvement in human rights and a lull in fighting in Sri Lanka in early 1993 which promised that "... Peace was close at hand".

Linguistic and religious affinities made Tamil Nadu familiar to Tamil refugees ever since they fled, mostly later from North and East of Sri Lanka. Hence the burden of bearing the refugees influx strained principally Tamil Nadu. The Centre reimbursed the costs of the state but even then there was resentment as to why Tamil Nadu alone had to shoulder the problem of refugee accommodation. Of about 68,000 refugees in Tamil Nadu, one-third obtained assistance from the Indian government and about 90 percent of the refugees in camps confessed that they fled to Tamil Nadu through fear of Sri Lankan security forces. And more than 10 percent of the arrivals had suffered the loss of a family member or more.

India was host to refugees from countries such as Afghanistan, Iran and Burma and had allowed UNHCR to have a small office and assist some of them in a limited way. Nevertheless, India was not a signatory to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention. This restricted UNHCR from "exercising its full assistance and protective mandate in regard to the 210,000 Sri Lanka in Tamil Nadu...." The only help taken by India from UNHCR following Tibetan (1959) and Bangladeshi (1951) crises

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6  Ibid, p. 199.
7  Ibid, 9. 200.
and arrival of refugees was financial. But in a surprise move in July 1992 India signed a Memorandum of Understanding with UNHCR. This made UNHCR to get involved in repatriating Sri Lankan refugees. Indeed, India had even dispatched a ship to Sri Lanka in Sept 1983 for collecting about 1000 up country Tamil people from camps in Colombo after the July ethnic riots.

_**Sri Lankan Tamil Refugees and Militancy (LTTE) vis-a-vis Security implications of the Refugees:**_

To a country like India, the refugees were a financial burden and an added administrative chore. But more seriously, in addition to genuine asylum seekers fleeing in fright, with India showing a concern for the affected Tamil people of Sri Lanka during Premiership of Indira Gandhi, the Tamil militant presence in Tamil Nadu also increased. This brought in its wake grave problems. After July 1983 all the principal Tamil militant groups operated from Madras receiving from the government both covert and overt support. Clearly, both the central and the state governments were not only supplying aid them but also assisting Sri Lankan Tamil guerrillas with training. Indira Gandhi ".... helped Tamil secessionist groups to the maximum extent possible." Later no doubt, her successor" Rajiv Gandhi declared that Eelam was against India's interests and cracked down on Tamil militants groups in India. But already in Tamil Nadu, militant Tamil groups, especially LTTE found a patron in M. G. Ramachandran, Chief

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8 Ibid, P. 204.
10 Ibid, p. 204.
Minister who at one time donated Rs 30 million (Indian) to the Tigers and also a lesser sum to Eelam Revolutionary Organization of Students (EROS). Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi did not completely cut off support but distanced himself from Tamil militants as he played peacemaker in Sri Lankan ethnic conflict. He organised negotiations between Sri Lankan government and Tamil militant groups in July 1985 in Thimphu, (Bhutan). But they failed and Indian mediation tried again in April and December 1986 too failed likewise. Rajiv Gandhi gave almost eviction notice to them in Tamil Nadu. The Tiger leadership then shifted to Jaffna Peninsula in Sri Lanka in January 1987 and has since continued fighting Sri Lankan Government except during uneasy peace intervals that followed Indo-Sri Lankan Agreement of 29 July 1987 and the lull during a period of secret but fruitless discussions between 1989 and 1990. Prof. S. D. Muni, South Asian expert, has given a detailed picture of ethnic violence of July 1983 and the outflow of victims directly affected India. As he says victims of violence were not only Sri Lankan Tamils but also estate workers of Indian origin. The government in India then could not “remain a silent spectator”. Apart from “affecting the Indian nationals and the Indian establishments” in Sri Lanka, “India’s regional concern as well as its ideological sensitivities, including threats to internal stability and order in its own southern state of

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12 Ibid, p. 205.
Tamil Nadu all “weighed more heavily on India’s policy-making”\textsuperscript{13}. In such a situation no wonder Tamil militants were able to exploit to advantage their stay in India when they found that India’s concern brought strains between India and Sri Lanka and empathy towards Tamils. However, the activities of the Tamil Militant groups who had a free run of Tamil Nadu clearly till 1987 and especially of the LTTE among the refugees there spelt dangers to the state government of Tamil Nadu and also to the Indian government. When it thus became evident that India and Tamil Nadu were exhibiting concern over the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka, refugees who had sought sanctuary discerned that there was also active sympathy towards them. In such an embittered mood many refugees saw in the Tamil militant groups their saviours and often there grew a symbiotic relationship between refugees and militants. Whenever the militant posed either law and order problems or even worse, severe threat to peace and security in Tamil Nadu or India elsewhere, the relationship that had developed and prevailed between refugees and militants caused greater difficulties. It was not a surprise then that repatriation of Sri Lankan refugees occurred in 1987 and 1992, the first movement being after Indo-Sri Lankan Agreement. Then the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi on 21 May 1991 prompted India to repatriate refugees again more than ever before. Before UNHCR’s entry, India repatriated 23, 126 refugees between 20 January and 15 May 1992. Even though its mandate was very limited, yet “the UNHCR presence deterred any

forcible repatriation". That out of 2,938 refugees screened by UNHCR only 90 withdrew applications for repatriation leads one to believe that a number of refugees went back voluntarily and the complaint of coercion was exaggerated.

Armed robberies in Tamil Nadu and rising crimes were blamed by Chief Minister Ms. Jayalalitha on the Sri Lankan Tamil refugees. In April 1994 two major highway robberies, one near Sri–Perumbudur off Madras and the other near Madurai, caused panic among local inhabitants. Ms. Jayalalitha ascribed to the unemployed Sri Lankan Tamil youth the introduction of certain new crimes such as robberies and drug trafficking into the state. Sri Lankan Tamils countered "that barring some members of the militant outfits who go about on motor cycles and indulge in chain snatching, most of the refugees are law abiding". Chief Minister Jayalalitha acknowledged the validity of their reasoning adding that Sri Lankan Tamils were up to crime for sheer survival. Nevertheless she felt that providing sustenance to refugees was neither Tamil Nadu's nor the Indian Government's responsibility but that of Sri Lanka. Tamil refugees alleged, in turn, that since Rajiv Gandhi's assassination in 1991, anti-Sri Lankan Tamil feeling had escalated in Tamil Nadu and India and that Sri Lankan Tamil refugees had been made into scapegoats. Yet it was

15 Ibid, p. 207.
16 Ibid, p. 207.
evident from a report from India in Daily News of 11 April 1994 that “Lankan Tamils have not been angels” and “… technology of crime in Tamil Nadu has been upgraded” since Sri Lankan Tamils had poured in after 1993. Additionally it was alleged that “drug-trafficking and passport law violations have also been their contribution to Tamil Nadu’s changing crime culture”. In 1983 when violence erupted in Sri Lanka, reaction in Tamil Nadu was spontaneous. Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran appealed for a week’s mourning and a State bandh. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi reinforced this show of sympathy and protest against treatment of Tamils in Sri Lanka by ordering central government establishments too to close for the bandh. The real difficulty within Tamil Nadu and India arose when inter-party rivalries were exploited by leaders like Karunanidhi, Chief of DMK in an endeavour to sympathize with the refugees flooding into Tamil Nadu and to demonstrate disapproval of the events in Sri Lanka. As Prof. S. D. Muni depicts the scene, the presence in Tamil Nadu of refugees “activated the Tamil social constituency in India and many Tamil public figures, media organizations and even local politicians started sympathizing with them”.

So far as security aspect was concerned, Tamil militant groups indulged in orgies of mutual annihilation, which compounded the already bad law and order problem faced by Tamil Nadu authorities

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owing to the influx of refugees. Even two militant leaders, Uma Maheswaran (PLOTE) and V. Prabhakaran (LTTE) had a "shoot out in Pondy Bazar in May 1982, in Madras before the real influx of refugee. Then on 2 August 1985, a bomb meant for an Air Lankan plane was planted and exploded at the Meenambakkam airport in Madras. It killed 24 Sri Lankans and 6 Indians and damaged the airport badly. This showed how dangerous to Tamil Nadu could be the refugee militant activity of a small group, Tamil Eelam Army (TEA). Militant groups in Tamil Nadu covered by "the patronage extended to them by RAW and other central intelligence agencies behave as if they were a law unto themselves". On 1 Nov 1986, Deepavali, day of rejoicing to Hindus, following a minor dispute, a member of the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) opened fire at Choolaimedu in Madras killing a lawyer and injuries several persons from Tamil Nadu. A leading newspaper, the Hindu editorially commented on this outrage cataloguing some of the violence committed earlier by refugee militants: Hospitality has been repaid with 'terrorist machine gunning in the streets of Madras...' and the government was asked to protect its citizens through enforcing law and order combined with political action. To aggravate the situation, on the same day '... Cadres of another Sri Lanka Tamil militant organization (PLOTE) had descended upon a Thanjavur village to back up their threat ...' The Hindu emphasized that these were not isolated incidents. There were earlier

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21 Ibid, p. 211.
22 Ibid, p. 211.
23 Ibid, p. 211.
the shoot out between two leaders of militant organizations on 19 May 1982 and Meenambakkam airport blast and then ".... The massacre of August 1984 (30 innocent people were killed), the clash between local incidents and armed militants in Vedaranyam in December 1985 and the shooting incident at Saligramam (Madras suburb) in may 1986"24. Murder and mayhem wore out the patience of the hosts whose law and order situation and security were in dire peril because of refugee militants. Moreover, India was to host the SAARC summit in Bangalore from 15 to 17 Nov. 1986. Both the State and Central Governments were aware that militants could "attempt to cause physical harm to President Jayawardene"25 of Sri Lanka.

The severe danger, the presence and movement of armed refugee militants, posed to Tamil Nadu and India was sharply summarized by Thomas Abraham, a former Indian High Commissioner to Sri Lanka. He complimented the police and Chief Minister on having “acted to prevent the conversion of Tamil Nadu into another Lebanon”26. Of course, Indian official stance was that there were “no militants or training camps in Tamil Nadu....” The police operation “had unearthed a large cache of arms and the militants were picked up from their camps...27. It was indeed an embarrassment then for the Indian government, caused by the presence of armed militants harboured as refugees. Even the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi could

24 Ibid, p. 211.
25 Ibid, p. 211.
26 Ibid, p. 212.
27 Ibid, p. 212.
have been prevented if the LTTE had been curbed in south Asia\textsuperscript{28}. The LTTE is suspected of working towards the creation of sympathy in South India for its separatist scheme which could and in a more grandiose separatist Pan-Dravidian greater Eelam movement there\textsuperscript{29}. The LTTE especially is thought of aspiring to establishing connections with countries hostile to India, particularly for procuring and smuggling weapons into India and Jaffna in Sri Lanka and for establishing safe heavens for escape and sanctuary, in the event of detection and danger. Already allegations of drug peddling by refugees and militants had been made. Further, the killing of the EPRLF leader Padmanabha and others on 19 June 1990, caused fear and insecurity among the ordinary citizens, and such terror could again be aroused among citizens\textsuperscript{30}. While the threat and danger to Tamil Nadu and India because of refugee militants must be recognized and action should be taken to avert them, yet Indian policy towards the genuine refugees could be “more humanitarian and less political”\textsuperscript{31}. Indian Policy towards Sri Lankan refugees was magnanimous until the time of Rajiv Gandhi’s assassination. There is occasional tussle between Tamil Nadu which wants the ban on the LTTE continued and the Central Government of India which is at times slow on doing it.

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid, p. 213.
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid, p. 215.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid, p. 215.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid, p. 215.
Sri Lankan Tamil Refugees and Policy Perceptions of the Government of India:

So far as official stand of Government of India is concerned, it is a humanitarian approach towards Sri Lankan refugees which was reflected in debates in Parliament from time to time. Replying to a Parliamentary question on “the number of Sri Lankan refugees in India and expenditure for their maintenance”, Mr. Subodh Kant, Minister of State for Home Affairs said in Parliament on 25th Feb, 1991, “up to 31st 1990, 1,21,790 Sri Lankan refugees arrived in India and an amount of Rs 13.47 crores have been spent on providing relief facilities and accommodation to these refugees.32 Answering to a member question relating to repatriation of Sri Lankan refugees, Madhavsihn Solanki, Minister of External Affairs said in Parliament on 27th Feb 1992: “During the visit of the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister to Delhi from 5th to 7th January 1992, the Sri Lankan Government conveyed that it was in a position to take back Sri Lankan refugees presently in India. It was then decided to commence the reverse flow of refugees to Sri Lanka from amongst those who are residents in refugee camps in India, based on their willingness, to return. In consultation and agreement with the Sri Lankan authorities, the reverse movement of refugees commenced from 20th of January 1992. Between 20th of January and 21st of February, 1992 35038 Sri Lankan refugees have been repatriated to Sri Lanka.33

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33 India, Lok Sabha, Debates, SQ. No. 51, 27th Feb 1991.
Answering to another Parliamentary question on amount given by the Centre to Tamil Nadu and Orissa for providing relief to Sri Lankan refugees, Mr. M.M. Jacob Minister of State for Home Affairs said in Parliament on 8th July 1992: "An amount of Rs 72.00 crores has been released by the Government of India so far to the state Govts. of Tamil Nadu and Orissa for providing relief facilities and accommodation for the Sri Lankan refugees. P. M. Sayeed Minister of State for Home Affairs informed Parliament on 26th August 1993 over a question "Whether some of them have expressed their desire to settle in India permanently", as the refugees were Sri Lankan citizens, they were required to be sent back to Sri Lanka in due course. There was no question of their settling down permanently in India. However, some refugees had filed writ petitions in the Madras High Court for grant of Indian Citizenship and consequent rehabilitation assistance. The petitions were being opposed by the Government. Government of India informed Parliament over a Parliamentary question on expenditure for Sri Lankan refugees on 16th December 1993 that from July 1983 to Oct 1993 an expenditure of Rs. 89.77 crores was incurred on providing relief facilities and accommodation to Sri Lankan refugees.

Replying to a Parliamentary question on "whether the UNHCR was willing to set up additional transit camps and to arrange ships to
repatriate the Sri Lankan refugees”, P.M. Sayeed Minister of State for Home Affairs said in Parliament on 8th Dec 1993 that as the Sri Lankan refugees staying in Camps in Tamil Nadu were being repatriated, the question of setting up additional transit camps did not arise. To facilitate early repatriation of refugees willing to go back home, the UNHCR did not indicate its willingness to offer logistic support for transportation of such refugees but it was not considered necessary as the Government on its own could arrange for the necessary transportation.37 Home Minister S.B. Chavan said in Parliament on 12th May 1994 relating to a question “whether the Government are considering the question of granting Indian Citizenship rights to certain categories of refugees”, that so far as refugees from Sri Lanka were concerned, as they were Sri Lankan nationals, there was no question of granting them Indian citizenship.38

In regard to the Sri Lankan refugees’ repatriation question, Government of India said in Parliament on 22nd Dec 1994 that repatriation was an on-going process and would commence as and when adequate number of willing refugees were available and conditions became favourable.39 It showed the Government never repatriated Sri Lankan refugees forcibly as was alleged in 1992. Union Home Minister informed Parliament on 23rd March 1995 that from July 1983 to Feb 1995, an amount of Rs. 108.34 crores had been

37 India, Rajya Sabha, Debates, USQ. No. 736, 8th December 1993.
38 India, Lok Sabha, Debates, SQ.No. 677, 12-5-94.
39 India, Lok Sabha, Debates, USQ. No. 2438, 22nd Dec 1994.
incurred on providing relief facilities and accommodation to Sri Lankan refugees. Annual Report. (1997-98), Home Ministry, GOI mentioned: "In the wake of ethnic violence in Sri Lanka, 1,34,053 refugees had crossed over to India between July 1983 and November 1987. Of these 46,101 refugees returned to Sri Lanka. In the Second phase of ethnic violence, 1,22,241 refugees arrived in India between August 1989 and April 1991. Thus, the total number of Sri Lankan refugees in India as on 19th January 1992 was 2,10,193. Of these, 1,13,772 refugees were staying in Camps in Tamil Nadu and Orissa. 96,421 refugees were staying outside the camps. On humanitarian considerations, the refugees were granted temporary stay facilities in the hope that once ground conditions in Sri Lanka improve, they would return to their homeland. With the improvement in the ground conditions in Sri Lanka, the process of repatriation of refugees commenced with effect from 20th January 1992. The repatriation process could not be resumed after March 1995 because of the lack of sufficient number of refugees willing to be repatriated and due to disturbed conditions in Sri Lanka.

Tibetan Refugees: Background

The flow of extra-regional Tibetan refugees into India from Tibet, has been the result of communist China's military action in Tibet during the fifties. The Tibetan struggle for autonomy and the Chinese actions to suppress that struggle have continued since then and so

40 India, Lok Sabha, Debates, USQ. No. 1414, 23rd March 1995.
also the flow of refugees. The intensity of this flow has varied, depending upon the intensity of conflict in Tibet, which has most serious in 1959, when the Dalai Lama, the religious and political leader of the Tibetans, with thousands of his followers, came to India for asylum. Subsequently, Tibetan refugees had come to India during the second half of the sixties when the cultural revolution in China caused extensive disturbances. Since 1988 – 89, Tibet’s struggle for autonomy has picked up momentum again generating more refugees.

Position and Status of Tibetan Refugees in Context of Sino-Indian Relations:

The Government of the State Mysore (now Karnataka) was first to reply affirmatively to New Delhi’s request for land on which to settle the refugees. An agreement was reached between the State and Central Government (in consultation with the Dalai Lama’s representatives) to settle 3000 refugees on a 3000 acre tract of land in Karnataka. In June 1962 Bhutan granted enough land to settle about 3000 refugees with funds from the Indian Government, in two separate settlements. Two critical aspects of India’s policy towards Tibetan refugees are – (1) the liberal ‘non-assimilative’ framework as reflected in the separate settlements, and (2) the broad ‘delegated’ authority of the Tibetan settlements in India. Such a benevolent policy ensures Tibetan cultural identity and social autonomy in a sea of host population. The creation of separate settlements for Tibetans meant in effect maintaining social and cultural boundaries from the host
society. This in turn means that the integration between the refugees and the host population is limited to economic transactions in the market. It may be surprising but true that Tibetan refugees have provided considerable job opportunities to many members of the host settlement. A Ladakhi intellectual resents the fact that six important monastic institutions in Ladakhi are controlled by Tibetan refugee priests and also that Tibetan refugees in the area have not learned Ladakhi. Dr. Subba in his book, Flight and Adaptation: Tibetan Refugees in the Darjeeling Sikkim Himalaya, (1990) attacks the Indian government policy which grants cultural autonomy to Tibetan refugees, and passionately predicts that Tibetan refugee determination to preserve their culture and their resistance to learn local languages will engender conflict with host population. Both Subha and Stobdan talk of pending ethnic conflict in the Himalayas as a result of Tibetan refugees' economic and cultural dominance.

The large and complex education system (with 85 schools and enrollment of 23,600 students) that the Government of India has established for Tibetans is bringing out a new generation of Tibetans who have become the engine of and advocates for social change in the refugee society. So far security implications of Tibetan refugee presence in India are concerned, the Tibetan refugee problem must be situated within the context of Sino-Indian relations in which the issue figures as an obstacle to China and a bargaining point for India. It

\[\text{Ibid, p. 85.}\]
\[\text{Ibid, p. 86.}\]
needs to be explained why China considers the Tibet issue a live, sensitive and important one even after more than four decades of takeover. Secondly, it is essential to demonstrate the ways in which New Delhi has used the Tibet card as an instrument to regulate its relations with Beijing\textsuperscript{43}. To those academics who seek authority and authenticity from Mao Tse Tung to explain the significance of any topic reference should be made to the fifth volume of Mao's selected works where in occur the Chairman's special instructions to PLA units crossing into Tibet in 1950. Moreover, Mao's theory of non-antagonistic contradictions was occasioned by the revolt in Eastern Tibet in 1957. The bitterest Chinese critique of Nehru "The Revolution in Tibet and Philosophy of Nehru" was directly occasioned by the Lhasa uprising in 1959 and the alleged Indian involvement in it. There are a number of reasons why the Chinese leaders considered Tibet so important. The takeover of Tibet cannot be explained in terms of either historical claims or ideological motives. Tibet's historical relations with imperial China were similar to those of Korea, Vietnam and other states in Central and South East Asia Nor have the ideological principles much to do with the "liberation" of Tibet, even though Maoist ideologues emphasize such motives. The KMT strategists described Tibet as the backdoor to China". Maoist strategists have described it as China's North-West "fortress" against social imperialism and revisionism (former Soviet Union)\textsuperscript{44}. Whenever

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid, p. 87.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid, p. 89.
communist China feels strategically vulnerable in Tibet, it makes moves towards New Delhi. It’s strategic vulnerability in Tibet increases in direct proportion to its perception of India allying, formally or informally, with a great power hostile to China at a given period of time. China does not usually perceive threats to its occupation of Tibet from India acting on its own. Chinese threat perceptions increase whenever it suspects India of acting in concert with other powers. This hypothesis can be substantiated by relating it to the major turning points in sino-Indian relations. In the early 1950s China feared the USA could act in concert with India on Tibet and managed to diffuse the situation by posing as India’s political and ideological ally in pursuit of Nehru’s pan-Asianism. In the late 1950s, it suspected Indian and US involvement in Tibet cause. This in a sense led to the Sino-Indian war of 1962. In the early 1970s, China saw the Soviet Union backing India in the Bangladesh war and Sikkim’s merger. This time China did not strike at India because the Soviet Union was more committed to India than in the early 1960s. The Chinese Prime Minister, Mr. Lipeng, visited India in 1991. The invitation be it noted, was extended in 1988, but Mr. Li did not come until China perceived a threat to Tibet after President George Bush’s meeting with the Dalai Lama. As in the early 1950s and the 1960s, Beijing once again suspected the USA and India of ganging up against “China’s Tibet”. Like Zhou Enlai in the 1950s Mr. Li skillfully stroked the Indian ego by the promise of India and China together playing a great role in

world affairs under Indian auspices. He made no concrete concessions to India on either the border or the Kashmir disputes. Once again Tibet figured largely in their talks. In fact Mr. Li reiterated China's position on negotiations with the Dalai Lama during his press conference, much to the surprise of Indians. But Indian officials and academics pretend to play down the Tibet card in public even when it is one of India's most powerful bargaining points. On the border dispute, India may have a legal case, but the territory remains under Chinese occupation. China has in the past aided insurgency in Nagaland and the Naxalite movement in India. It supports the Pakistani stand on Kashmir and refuses to recognize Sikkim's merger with India. Indeed, one way to view the Sino-Indian relations is as a political game played between the two nations because their fundamental contradiction is not resolved. While China has several cards, India has only one, i.e. Tibet. There is no denying the fact that New Delhi has used the Tibetan card whenever politics of Sino-Indian relations demanded it. In order to deflect and diffuse the security threat or danger resulting from the Chinese People's Liberation Army occupation of Tibet since 1950, New Delhi sacrificed the historical status of Tibet at the altar of Sino-Indian friendship as reflected in the 1954 treaty. For four or five years, an euphoric Sino-Indian friendship trumpeted: Hindi-Chini Bhai-Bhai. Then, fearing a Sino-Pakistan military coordination during the Bangladesh war (1971), New Delhi tried to reassure Beijing that "Tibet is part of China" which was

46 Ibid, p. 92.
repeated almost daily like a mantra during the early 1970s. But now China demands much more than this mantra for settlement of the much-vexed border dispute. According to reliable sources, Beijing had conveyed the message to New Delhi that China would recognize the Mac Mohan Line if India “stops supporting the separatists”, viz, the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan refugees in India. In this sense one way to politically understand: Rajiv Gandhi’s assurances to the Chinese leaders during his State visit to China in December 1988 that the Dalai Lama and his associates would not be allowed to indulge in political activities against China were resented by the Tibetans. Tibetans’ demonstrations against the Chinese Premier Li Peng, during his visit to India in December 1991 were treated harshly and there have been instances of clashes between the Tibetan refugees and local inhabitants, especially the April 1994 incident in Dharamsala (Himachal Pradesh), is in a context in which the Tibet card perceived to be has reached its latest usage47. These developments have may have intended to convey the message to China that Indians do not support the Dalai Lama’s political activities in India. This message is not entirely lost to China. While India continues to use the Tibet card in her relations with China, she has to be mindful of the fact that now the Dalai lama has acquired an international stature and that the Tibet issue has been internationalized to an extent that it is difficult to control.

Debates on the Tibetan Refugees in Parliament:

Recently policy and perception of Government of India reflected during debates over Tibetan refugees towards Tibetan refugees or Tibet in Parliament are concerned, Home Ministry of Government of India briefs Parliament from time to time on issues like non-repatriation as well as rehabilitation assistance. Replying to a parliamentary question relating to Indian citizenship of Tibetan refugees., Mr. P.M. Sayeed Minister of State for Home Affairs, said in Parliament on 10th March 1993 that the Tibetan refugees had already been provided with rehabilitation assistance and about 82 Tibetan refugees had applied for Indian citizenship so far, out of them 77 persons had been granted Indian citizenship48. On 26 August 1993 a question relating to citizenship of Tibetans, the Minister said in Parliament that the Tibetans who had migrated to India after March, 1959 had been allowed to stay on in India as Tibetan refugees and were treated as foreigners. However, those Tibetan refugees who had been married to Indian nationals were considered for grant of Indian Citizenship under the citizenship Act, 1955 if they so applied.49

48 India, Rajya Sabha, Debates, USQ No 1875, 10.3.93.
49 India, Lok Sabha, Debates, USQ No 4548, 26.8.93.
Replying to a parliamentary question on “whether the Government are considering the question of granting Indian citizenship rights to certain categories of refugees”, Home Minister S.B. Chavan said in Parliament on 12th May 1994: “As regards the Tibetan refugees, those who moved to India after March 1959, following the Chinese occupation of Tibet and the Dalai Lama’s flight into India, they are allowed to continue to stay in India as Tibetan refugees and treated as foreigners subject to registration and grant of residential permits. The Tibetan refugees who migrated to India earlier than March 1959, and have been since then ordinarily resident in India are considered for grant of Indian citizenship on individual merits”50.

On another occasion on 11th March 1993, Government of India also informed Parliament that the Tibetan refugees had been given asylum in India and were free to live as long as they like or till an amicable settlement with China51.

Answering to a member question on “whether the Tibetan refugees have been issued ration cards and photo-identity cards, and whether they have the right to exercise their franchise and to contest elections in India, Mohd. Maqbool Dar, Minister of State for Home Affairs said in Parliament on 17 December 1996:

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50 India, Lok Sabha, Debates, SQ No 677, 12.5.1994.
51 India, Lok Sabha, Debates, USQ No 2401, 11.3.1993.
“Tibetan refugees have been issued ration cards by various State Governments. However, they have not been issued photo-identity cards by Election Commission of India as they are not Indian citizens. Right to exercise their franchise and contest of elections are concerned, they have no right to do so.”

Replying to a parliamentary question on “whether any efforts have been made to negotiate the issue of Dalai Lama in our bilateral talks with China, Mohd. Maqbool Dar Minister of State for Home Affairs said in Parliament on 10th December 1996: “The Dalai Lama is in India as a revered religious figure. India regards Tibet as an autonomous region of China. There is no change in India’s Policy on Tibet which is well-known” This policy of government of India reflected on 12 March 2000 a group of Tibetan women held a demonstration at Parliament Street, New Delhi and burnt the effigy of the Chinese President along with 41 pieces of red cloth, 60 women demonstrators were detained by Delhi Police under section 65 of the Delhi Police Act 1978 and were subsequently released, (as Parliament was informed by Minister of State for Home Affairs, Mr. Vidyasagar Rao, on 3rd May 2000) It showed that India does not allow anti-Chinese activities in India, and she only allows the Dalai Lama

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52 India, Lok Sabha, Debates, US Q No. 3550, 17th December 1996.
53 India, Lok Sabha, Debates, USQ NO.2533, 10th December 1996.
54 India, Rajya Sabha, Debates, USQ NO. 3990, 3rd May 2000.
as religious leader and his associates to stay in India on humanitarian grounds.

The presence of Tibetan refugees in India may continue to be there, but their political fate and prospects of repatriation are closely linked to the changing dynamics of the Tibetan question and the Sino-Indian relations. Once India recognized Tibet as an autonomous region of China much before in 1954 (Indo-Sino Treaty- Panch sheel declaration), it did not really allow Tibetan refugees to undertake political activities against China. On the other hand, India continues to have serious border disputes with China after the latter militarily occupied Indian territory in the 1962 Sino-Indian War. This is of immediate concern and formidable national interest. “There is no change in India’s policy on Tibet which is well-known. There is no proposal under the consideration of the Government to repatriate them to their homeland. They are free to live as long as they like or till an amicable settlement with China”55.

**India’s Tibetan Policy**

Yet there would a different approach on Tibetan refugees issue vis-à-vis Sino-Indian relations be required, as N.Ram (editor of Frontline) and Dr. Subramanian Swamy’s (Former Union Minister and a long time China expert) critical analysis

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over the above issue their articles published in Frontline, September 15, 2000. After five-day visit to Tibet, in his article “Tibet—A Reality Check”, published in Frontline September 15, 2000, editor of Frontline, Mr. N. Ram said: “As early as 1959, The Dalai Lama, acting against Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru’s specific advice, sought, unsuccessfully, to get the United Nations to intervene in Tibet”. He also referred to Dr. Subramanian Swamy who pointed out in an accompanying analysis, “Independent India’s policy has inherited from the British Raj a kind of ambivalence if not duplicity on Tibet, and paid a heavy price for this in bilateral relations with China. Indians must get themselves debriefed and their minds purged of the British duplicity on Tibet, which was to keep Tibet’s status nebulous in everyone’s minds by concocting a feudal concept of suzerainty... The purging of the imperialist perfidy is the responsibility of the Indian government”.

According to N. Ram it is not a secret that the Communist Party of China as well as the Chinese State are intolerant of any separatist agenda, activity and politics. So are the dominant political parties and governments of other countries, including the neighbouring Indian Union and the far-away United States of America. If the Dalai Lama were not an extremist, not a separatist, and not a revanchist in his political agenda but a
genuine upholder of the 'middle path', he would have no problem working within Tibet's regional autonomy framework and space. But time does not appear to be on the side of Tibet's former "god-king". The implications of the findings of this reality check for India's policy on Tibet and for the future of Sino-Indian relations are clear. India must resolve in its own mind and policy the costly ambivalence of accepting Tibet as a part of China, accepting the Chinese State's sovereignty over Tibet, but behaving as though Tibet were some kind of buffer region, if not a country, and laying equal emphasis on autonomy and sovereignty in all official pronouncements, as though this somehow qualifies the recognition of Chinese sovereignty over Tibet. With respect to the Dalai Lama and the political community among the more than 120,000 Tibetan refugees in India also, the policy of successive Indian governments, including the present BJP led government, has been seriously flawed. The Dalai Lama and his followers run a "Tibetan government in exile"-in Dharmasala, put out a considerable amount of propaganda material, and maintain links with some Indian political parties and leaders such as George Fernandes, the present Defense Minister of India. This militates against the formal official stance that while India has given asylum to "His Holiness" as a religious leader, it will not allow him and his
followers to engage in "political activities" of any kind from Indian soil. Under the circumstances, the Chinese government has reacted with notable, perhaps studied, moderation to the Indian government's inability or unwillingness to put an end to the Dalai Lama's virulently anti-Chinese, separatist, and revanchist political activities in India. The larger political implications for India of countenancing separatist activities directed against the sovereignty and unity of a neighbouring country, in this case a big neighbour, are quite disturbing. The wise future course for India's policy on China's Tibet will be to rein in the Dalai Lama, expel the Dharmasala-based government of Tibet in exile from Indian soil, and do its best to promote the return of the Dalai lama, many of his followers and thousands of Tibetan refugees to their homeland on a voluntary, and abandon the pipe-dream of separating Tibet from China.

Delving into history, the political record of the past 50 years, and security affairs, Dr. Subramanian Swamy, economist, long time China expert and former Cabinet Minister has argued over the Tibetan refugees, the Dalai Lama and Sino-Indian relations by strongly recommending that India should abandon its "ambivalent policy" on Tibet and the Dalai Lama, and abandon all "misperceptions and misplaced adventurism" on the critical question. He contended that unless the Indian
government acts sincerely to get its mind “purged” of British colonial “duplicity on Tibet”, remove “India’s blind spot on Tibet”, and reassure China through meaningful actions that it accepts Tibet as an integral part of China, Sino-Indian relations cannot become close, friendly and warm. He explained broadly the presence of the Dalai Lama, the thousands of Tibetan refugees and problems and prospects of the Sino-Indian relations in his article “Sino-Indian Relations Through the Tibet Prism” published in Frontline (largest selling national magazine), September 15, 2000) by hinting that the Naga-Mizo-Manipur problem, for example, became easier to manage during the 1978-84 period because of the initiatives taken then to improve relations with China. Dr. Swamy’s central argument in this excellent study is that the fulcrum of a redesigned Indian foreign policy is Sino-Indian relations. The strategic importance of engaging China in a constructive, if not cooperative, relationship has however not dawned on Indian leaders in government for a number of reasons, mostly miscalculations and misperceptions. Now is the time to remove these cobwebs and recognize the importance to India of China, and see it with clarity. The question before the nation is not whether or not it can dare to annoy China. The crucial query instead is what should be India’s policy towards China: friendship or an adversarial relationship?
Since 1978 when the Janata Party government initiated the process of normalization, there has emerged a growing and now an overwhelming consensus in the country that India should befriend China, irrespective of what had happened in the past. More important, there are sound strategic reasons for this. First, it is the unanimous opinion of India's defense chiefs that defending the country against a joint China-Pakistan attack is nearly impossible for the armed forces at the present level of equipment and manpower, a reality that will remain so in the foreseeable future. Therefore, India should strive, for its security's sake, to separate China and Pakistan, however onerous and difficult the task may be. Second, given China's geo-strategic location, it could cause India enormous problems in Kashmir, the Uttar Pradesh border, Sikkim and Assam. Furthermore, in combination with Pakistan, such problems will have a multiplier effect for India. Indira Gandhi understood this strategic fact, especially in the context of the then All-Assam Students Union (AASU) agitation in Assam.

Dr. Swamy said, "nor is rivalry the reason, since there are hardly any international issues on which India and China have irresolvable fundamental conflict of interests. Therefore, it is that 'something else' that irritates and disrupts India's relations with China from time to time. That some thing else is India's Hindu
ambivalence and lack of transparency in dealings with China on Tibet and in China’s case its ‘middle kingdom’ pride in not bluntly articulating with India its concerns on Tibet. It is essential in India’s strategic interest to befriend China and pay the price for it. That means that according to my understanding of the situation, squarely resolving the contradictions between India’s legitimate concerns in Tibet and its commitment enshrined in the 1954 treaty recognizing Chinese sovereignty over Tibet. If its commitment is made transparent, consistent and demonstrable, the main hurdle in its relations with China will go. For this to happen, Indians must get themselves debriefed and their minds purged of the British duplicity on Tibet, which was to keep Tibet’s status nebulous in everyone’s mind by concocting a feudal concept of suzerainty. This made Tibet neither independent nor a part of China, that meant being a trishanku state. This purging of the imperialist perfidy is the responsibility of the Indian government. It can not be done by any other institution in Indian society. However, the present government has been hamstrung by the pro-independent Tibet and Taiwan lobbies within the government. As recently as 17 December 1998, Defense Minister George Fernandes penned a Forward to a Penguin edition of deceased journalist D.R. Manekar’s book, The Guilty Men of 1962. In it, Frenandes tried
to promote his commitment to the anti-Chinese, pro-Tibetan independence lobby and called the book a "masterpiece" which "should have been made compulsory reading in every high school and college in India and in all the national languages". Fernandes added: "The well-fostered myth that the danger to India's security comes from Pakistan has now been exploded, and a new realism of India's threat perception has begun to take root in its place". That new realism, of course, was to perceive China as a danger to India. The crux of my thesis, thus, is that 'Sino-Indian relations can never become a close, friendly and warm partnership unless India's blind spot on Tibet is removed and China is reassured'. Dr. Swamy said his advocacy therefore is that India has to digest and internalize the view that the shortest political route to Lhasa is via Beijing and not across the Himalayas. The Dalai Lama, therefore, is welcome to stay in India as a spiritual leader, but not as the head of a government in 'exile'. Thus, the status of Tibet and India's perception of it, has been one of the destabilizing factors in Sino-Indian relations. Publicly, the Indian government regards Tibet as an integral part of China. But in popular parlance and in many of its actions, it does not behave as if Tibet were a part of China. For example, the Indian government raised in the 1980s a highly paid special service unit, a 8000 strong commando group of Tibetans, who
woke up every morning in the special camps with cries of "Long live the Dalai Lama". We shall liberate Tibet." The treatment extended to the Dalai Lama also reveals this ambivalence in India's attitude towards Tibet. The government says that India has only extended asylum to the Dalai Lama, because his life would be in danger if he returns to Tibet. But the Bureau of the Dalai Lama is quite active in New Delhi propagating the thesis that Tibet is an Independent country. If the Indian government sincerely believes that Tibet is a part of China, then the activities of the Bureau of the Dalai Lama should be considered no less repugnant than the activities of the Khalistan government and of Jagjit Singh Chauhan in the United Kingdom. If India's intentions on the Tibetan question are honourable, then it is necessary for transparent diplomacy that these intentions be understood as such. Alternatively, if India considers Tibet to be an Independent country and wants to liberate it, then an entirely different course is called for in its diplomacy and military strategy. Today India is getting the worst of both positions. It accepts Tibet as a part of China, and yet it allows the seeds of doubt to germinate in the mind of its giant neighbour about its intentions. Sino-Indian relations thus suffer.

On November 18, 1950, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru wrote to his colleague, Sardar Patel: "We cannot save Tibet, as
we should have liked to do, and our every attempt to save it might well bring greater trouble to it. It would be unfair to Tibet for us to bring this trouble upon her without having the capacity to help her effectively. It may be possible, however, that we might be able to help Tibet to retain a large measure of her autonomy”. Then Nehru added the following, the significance of which is relevant even today: “It must be remembered that neither the UK, nor the USA, nor indeed any other power is particularly interested in Tibet or in the future of that country. What they interested in is, embarrassing China”. In the period 1977-78, the Janata Party government also reconsidered the question of Tibet in the light of the support given to Tibetan Independence by two Janata Party Ministers, Raj Narain and George Fernandes. And after a thorough analysis of the question, Foreign Minister A. B. Vajpayee (who used to support vociferously Tibetan independence) stated in the Lok Sabha (of Parliament) on behalf of the Morarji Desai-led government (on March 8, 1979): “we regard Tibet as a region of China. We would be happy if the Dalai Lama and the Tibetans go back (to Tibet) if they think that conditions are suitable to them”. In other words, New Delhi would neither ask the Dalai Lama to leave, nor ask him to stay: The decision was the Dalai Lama’s.
He said: "While the Indian government position is categorical in nature, with no room for a second interpretation, there is, nevertheless, enough indication that Indian politicians in private have taken a stand inconsistent with the stated Government position. For example, as the Janata Party government's Minister in waiting for Soviet Prime Minister Alexei Kosygin in 1979, just four days after the Foreign Minister's reiteration on the floor of Parliament, George Fernandes argued with the visiting Soviet Leader that the USSR should declare its support for an independent Tibet. The discussion between Kosygin and Fernandes also shows that when Indira Gandhi was in power prior to 1977, she had privately told the Russians one thing and Parliament another thing (namely that Tibet is a part of China). In March 1983 while speaking on the foreign affairs debate, I pointedly asked the question: Does the government of India regard Tibet as a part of China or not? The then Foreign Minister P. V. Narashimha Rao in his reply stated on March 31, 1983 that the Congress (I) government did indeed regard Tibet as part of China.

This declaration however did not square with other developments. In March 1983, 70 Congress (I) members of Parliament signed a memorandum and sent it to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi asking her to give a Tibetan rebel delegation
‘Observer’ status at the conference of the Non-Aligned Movement. Would the Congress (I) MPs have dared to sign such a memorandum without some guidance from above? Dr. Swamy said, “some Indians are sentimental about the status of Tibet in China. There is the undercurrent of pan-Hinduism that is responsible for this sentiment. But do such people realize the national security consequence of such a sentiment? If India promotes Tibetan Independence, cannot China promote Kashmiri, Assamese, Naga and Punjab secession? Have not Tibetan governments from 1890 to 1950 laid claim to Sikkim, Bhutan and the whole of Arunachal Pradesh? Can India accept these consequential claims of an independent Tibet? The second question before India is that if it supports the Independence of Tibet, can Indian sustain it? Today China’s Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) has an area of 1.3 million square kilometres, one third the size of India. It has a population of under 2.5 million Tibetans. Even at the height of the 1959 Tibet rebellion, the US State Department spokesman said: “The United States never regarded Tibet as an Independent State”. The US is now in a strategic relationship with China. Thus it will never support Tibetan independence. The Soviet Union at the height of its China phobia (when Kosygin visited India in 1979), did not go beyond saying to Minister in waiting Fernandes that Tibet was
“in the exclusive sphere of India”, and Russia is today busy negotiating a strategic relationship with China. In my opinion, it is a futile, wasteful and harmful dream to talk of Tibet’s Independence. India should accept the reality of Tibet being part of China where Nehru was wrong was in not obtaining a settlement on the border while negotiating the 1954 India-China Treaty on Tibet. Nehru was also wrong when he yielded to pressure from the USSR (not the US, as popularly thought) in the late 1950s to train Khampas and Tibetans to ambush Chinese military convoys regularly inside Tibet. This showed the seeds of mistrust between China and India, leading to the useless war of 1962. The question thus remains whether the conditions are ripe for the return of the Dalai Lama. If the Indian government is genuinely committed to its stated policy of regarding Tibet as a part of China, then it should be constantly in search of opportunities whereby the Dalai Lama himself feels that the time has for him to return to Lhasa. The continued presence of the Dalai Lama in India serves as a festering reminder that all is not well between India and China. Until the question of the Dalai Lama is satisfactorily resolved, relations between India and China cannot be properly called normal. And the only satisfactory resolution of the Dalai Lama question is his safe return and survival in Tibet. Sino-Indian relations,
therefore, should not be derailed by our misconceptions and misplaced adventurism on Tibet.

"The day of our return (to Tibet) with a certain degree of freedom will definitely come. I will definitely achieve that within my lifetime. I think",56 this very recent statement of Dalai Lama to a news Magazine indicates the undeterred and firm resolve of the Tibetans to return to their homeland after remaining in exile for over forty years. The Dalai Lama, was quoted on 15 October 2000 in Budapest as saying he was ready to open talks with China about the future of Tibet any time, without conditions. The Hungarian Newspaper *Nepszabadsaq* quoted the Dalai Lama as saying during a visit to Hungary that his contacts with China, dropped in the 1980s might be restored. The Dalai Lama said "there are slightly positive signs now"57. He emphasized that he wanted not Independence58. The rapprochement in Sino-Indian relations brought by the visits of Heads of the Governments in the last 15 years has further sidelined the Tibetan question. Given Chinese belligerence, the relief to the Tibetan refugees even in terms of limited autonomy (far from what the Dalai Lama calls "genuine autonomy") seems to be far fetched at the

57 Asian Age, 15th October 2000.
58 Ibid.
moment. Meanwhile, an entire generation with the first hand memory of their homeland is fading away fast like a setting sun on the frozen horizon of Lhasa.

**Perceptions of the Tibetan Government in Exile Towards India:**

Perceptions of the Tibetan refugees and Tibetan Government in exile vis-à-vis the Government of India reflected in Mr. Tsewang C. Tethong, Minister for Information and International Affairs in Central Tibetan Administration, interviewed by Maneesh Pandey of the Times of India published on October 1, 2000. For Tibetans, India matters more than the West: Contrary to the idea that Tibetan Diaspora survives on dole from the West, it’s India’s invaluable support since 1959 – by way of aid and administrative policies - that has sustained it, said Mr. Tsewang C Tethong. “India’s role on Tibetan issue holds no parallel,” said Tsewang, who has been a witness to it. Tsewang had his schooling in Darjeeling and was about to start medical studies in Calcutta, when the mass influx of Tibetans into India started. This altered his life. Instead of becoming a physician, he became a volunteer tending to over 1,000 refugees in the first Tibetan camp at Missamiri Day School, Assam. “India’s generosity starts here,” said Tsewang. The camp, started by Government of India, sheltered 7,000 Tibetans later. In the beginning, they faced many hardships. More than 90 per cent were unskilled, uneducated and unfamiliar with Indian languages. They worked on the road camps in India - in
Himachal and north-eastern states, Tsewang recalled. The death rate was high. The Tibetans were not used to the tropical heat in India and TB was rampant in the camp. "We were losing five to six people every day," he said. But, the aid started pouring in from Karnataka, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal. More came from elsewhere. "And that 'acclimatized' us fully," he laughed. "For the homeless, nothing is more precious than shelter, which India provided. It meant much more than money or consolatory advises," Tsewang said. "Today, the generosity of the West towards Tibetans is much talked about. But compare the data: Of the 1.5 lakh Tibetan refugees scattered worldwide, 1.3 lakh are settled in India, and just over 13,000 are living in the West" Mr. Tsewang Said. Tibet can't repay its debt to India. "It was India which helped us fulfil Dalai Lama's twin wish to resettle the refugees and pursue their education in exile. From their first agricultural settlement in Bylakuppe, near Mysore in 1960, Tibetans today have over 35 settlement in India," said Tsewang. About education in exile', he said, over 80 Central Tibetan Schools run by the Indian government have made it possible for 85 to 90 per cent Tibetans children to enroll'. "Economically and socially too, we're stable. Agriculture, agro-industries, carpet weaving and exports have become the mainstay of our 70 per cent exile population in India," said the Minister. And even the future of Tibet depends on India, he pointed out. He reiterated Dalai Lama's point that better Sino-Indian ties would heavily influence the Tibetan cause. He urged India to take
the lead in advancing the Tibetan cause, raise it in bilateral meetings and work for a negotiable settlement.