SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

"Let us be refugees who can ... rock the dance floor, analyze political systems, speak the American tongue and above all be a true Tibetan with heart which has its virtues and priorities intact. So let’s face and accept what globalization has to offer and in return spread our ethics and thus teach the world the Art of Peace preventing a Third World War, after all a well mixed salad is worth tucking in" (Tenzin Dechen, T.S, 2006:9).

This study is an exploration of the situation of education of Tibetan refugees in India. It has sought to identify and analyze the interlinkages between education, culture, ethnic identity and opportunity in the context of Tibetan refugees in India. This chapter briefly summarizes the foregoing discussion and places it within the framework that has guided it.

Education of Tibetan Refugees

The pre-migration situation of education of Tibetan refugees in Tibet has been divided into two time-periods in this study: the period before 1959 and the period after it. The post-migration period refers to the period after the flight to India in 1959 of the Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of the Tibetans.

Education in Tibet, until the early twentieth century, was largely religious and monastic in nature. Secular education was largely non-existent, inspite of the 13th Dalai Lama’s attempts to introduce it. The occupation of Tibet by the Chinese Government took place in 1949. Following this, the Chinese introduced a secular system of education in Tibet. Chinese government schools replaced traditional Tibetan schools amidst resentment from the monks, nobility and common people as the idea of such an education was considered a ‘foreign’ one. It was also feared that it would ‘destroy’ people’s belief in their own culture. Despite resentment, however, the period after the flight of the Dalai Lama in 1959 saw large-scale expansion of secular education and decline of the traditional centers of monastic learning in Tibet.

China’s policy of education towards the Tibetans in present-day Tibet or TAR (Tibet Autonomous Region) seems to make limited provision of secondary school education facilities to Tibetan children. Most children fail to gain access to education
beyond the primary level. The reason for this is that: Tibetan primary schools for Tibetan children have Tibetan as the medium of instruction. Chinese language is taught in these schools for two years—in grades three and four. At the end of the primary education, both Chinese and Tibetan students are required to take an entrance examination in Chinese to get into Chinese-language secondary schools. Most Tibetan children, it seems, fail to clear these exams. The education system is, thus, said to be severely restricting their opportunities for secondary and higher education, thus “effectively streaming out” Tibetan children (http://www.Tibet.com/govt/edu.html; Lafitte, 1999; Clothey 2005; TCHRD report 2004)

Tibetan language also seems to be marginalized by the Chinese education system, inline with what is referred to as China’s ‘assimilationist policy’. It is taught only at the primary level. There seems to be “little incentive for students to concentrate on Tibetan” because Chinese language gets them admission to secondary school as well as colleges and gets them jobs in the government (Thinley 2004:22; Lafitte 1999:14).

Looking at the pre-migration experiences of refugee children throws light on the causes of their being sent by their parents to residential Tibetan schools in India for their school education. One of the reasons for their flight to India seems to be the desire of Tibetan parents to provide ‘good’ education to their children that includes preserving their traditional Tibetan language, culture and identity. Infact, in many cases parents have been found to have secretly smuggled their children to study in Tibetan schools in India.

On arriving to India, the Tibetan Government in Exile was established by the Dalai Lama for representing the interests and welfare of Tibetan refugees. The Tibetan Government in Exile sought to establish a system of education for Tibetan children. One of the major tasks before the refugee leadership was to nurture the ‘seeds of future Tibet’ who would provide the leadership of the country on their expected return to Tibet. Education was seen as the means to ensure this goal in exile. This education system was to be guided by The Dalai Lama’s vision of providing a ‘balanced education’ i.e. both ‘traditional’ (religious, spiritual) and ‘modern’ (scientific, technical). The Government of India extended its support to the educational endeavours of the Tibetan community.

A system of “secular” schools providing “secular” education to children from all classes and backgrounds was established. Monasteries providing monastic education to
monks and nuns were set up along with many Tibetan institutes for the preservation of Tibetan language, religion and culture. Different kinds of Tibetan schools were established by Central Tibetan Schools Association (CTSA), an autonomous body under the Government of India; by the Department of Education, Central Tibetan Administration in exile and by autonomous organizations like, Tibetan Children’s Village etc. Tibetan children have also been attending Non-Tibetan schools (Indian public schools, Christian Missionary schools etc) in the country.

The Government of India’s treatment to Tibetan refugees in the field of education needs special mention as Tibetan refugees are the only refugees in India who have been permitted “to establish culturally specific Tibetan schools where Tibetan culture, Buddhism and the Tibetan language are taught” (UNHCR document 1998:8). The Government of India has provided special status to Tibetan refugees, by setting up special CTSA schools, as mentioned above, that preserve the refugee groups’ unique language, culture and identity. Higher education is also available to Tibetan students in India in the Indian universities and at a few Tibetan institutes. The Government of India also offers 15-degree level and 5 Diploma level scholarships to Tibetan children to pursue higher studies in Science, Arts, Engineering and Medicine.

There is an absence of adequate research on the issue of Tibetan refugees, their education and aspects of culture, identity and opportunity. This study is based upon a devised framework and seeks to address this issue. The framework used in the study is a model incorporated from different studies. The main elements of the model are a) the perspective of ‘immigrant adaptation’ (Goldlust and Richmond 1974) being determined by a combination of pre-migration circumstances and post-migration situation and that of ‘group circumstances’ along with ‘institutional structures’ (Brint 1998) that are seen as effecting education. Schools are seen as important sites of identity construction with the ‘school culture’ (Thapan 2006) consisting of the ‘explicit’ and ‘implicit curriculum’ (Nowak 1978) and have been used to study Tibetan school experiences. An important aspect that has emerged, based on these perspectives, is that differences exist amongst Tibetan students in India on the basis of the type of school attended (Tibetan or non-Tibetan). The study looks at both Tibetan and non-Tibetan schools as major sites of identity-construction. The distinction between “Options” (skills that help get jobs) and
“Ligatures” (bonds between people) in education (Dahrendorf 1993) has been incorporated as it highlights effects of education and the opportunities it provides. It has been used to look at educational policy of the refugee community and its effects upon the youth’s chances of higher education and occupational opportunity. Identities are seen as ‘socially constructed’ and ‘fluid’ (Lee 2001) rather than eternal and unchanging. In this context, Appadurai who refers to the globalized world influenced by the mass media that enables refugees to transcend boundaries and live in “imagined worlds” (Appadurai 1997) has been incorporated.

The study is based upon in-depth interviews with thirty Tibetan youth pursuing graduation in Delhi University. To capture the diversity of their lived experiences and perspectives, these students were chosen from different regional and educational backgrounds. Twenty-one residents of the Tibetan Youth Hostel, Delhi and nine non-residents were interviewed. Nine students in the study were born outside India; twenty-one of them were born in India. Fifteen of the students had been educated in Tibetan schools and fifteen had been educated in non-Tibetan schools.

Identity and Sites of Construction: Tibetan Schools and Youth Hostel

Education, with a focus on schools is seen, as one of the important sites of construction of Tibetan identities in India, as mentioned above. The study throws light on the differences between Tibetan and non-Tibetan schools. Different experiences of Tibetan students who studied in Tibetan schools and non-Tibetan schools have been explored.

The physical environment and school culture of Tibetan schools throw light on the refugee group’s attempt to teach children important values and elements of Tibetan identity through the medium of education. The schools are largely located in hill-stations in India in states like Himachal Pradesh, Uttaranchal, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Karnataka etc. Symbols and elements of Tibetan identity can be seen in the physical environment and ambience of the schools with rooftops decorated with traditional and colourful Tibetan prayer-flags-a traditional symbol of auspiciousness- that can also be seen flying from roof-tops of all Tibetan establishments. The mission of Tibetan schools in India is clearly stated to be to preserve and promote the ancient Tibetan culture,
language and heritage along with providing quality education to children. The schools therefore strive to achieve this mission with the help of ‘explicit’ and ‘implicit curriculum’ (Nowak 1978). The ‘Explicit Curriculum’ (i.e. textbooks and subjects) and the ‘Implicit Curriculum’ (i.e. pedagogical approaches and co-curricular activities) combine to create a school ethos that has a strong emphasis on Tibetan Buddhism and Tibetan nationalism. There is an overwhelming presence of Tibetan staff, teachers, foster ‘home mothers’ and students in the residential schools. Students are divided into groups of 30 and live together in small homes with an amala (home-mother) and, sometimes a pala (home-father, if the home-mother is married). Respondents in the study referred to fond memories of living together with other children in these homes. They observed that household chores would be divided amongst the children and the foster-parents, so that a sense of living in a Tibetan family could be felt especially in case of orphan, destitute children and those who had come from Tibet etc at a very young age. They referred to older children taking care of the younger ones. The homes were said to be located within the school campus (or a small distance away from the schools) with children often coming down to the homes for lunch. A temple was also said to be located, usually within the school-campus where students could go to burn incense, offer traditional Tibetan butter-lamps and pray to Tibetan Buddhist gods.

The Tibetan national flag is hoisted in the schools and the Tibetan national anthem sung in morning assemblies along with the Indian national anthem. This is an important fact as the Tibetan flag seems to have been seen and the Tibetan national anthem heard, for the very first time only in India, by students who had come from Tibet. The reason for this is that display of these symbols of Tibetan nationalism in exile is apparently ‘banned’ in Tibet. Tibetan is the medium of instruction in primary school (till class five), with it being taught as a separate subject in middle and high school. While English is taught in Tibetan schools (as the medium of instruction from 6th grade onwards), most of the communication between teachers and students and amongst students themselves, it seems, continues to be mostly in Tibetan. A certain kind of peer-pressure to speak in Tibetan also seems to exist in Tibetan schools with students who try to speak in English being ‘teased’.
Structured textbooks on history and culture inform students about aspects of traditional culture and way of life of Tibet. Tibetan folk literature, published with illustrations to make students appreciate their rich cultural heritage, is also provided. While books prescribed by NCERT are used for teaching Civics and Geography in TCV schools, for History the schools use their own textbooks in Tibetan history. These books talk about early beginnings of the Tibetan empire, relations between China and Tibet, the Chinese invasion and the Simla Conference, role of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama and the finding of the fourteenth Dalai Lama. They talk about the refugees’ flight to India, the Dalai Lama’s ‘Middle-Path’ approach for ‘real autonomy’ for Tibet and their hopes for return to ‘free Tibet’.

Prayer sessions in temples located on campus and also as a routine activity in the homes and school lay emphasis on tradition, Tibetan Buddhist religion and universal values like compassion etc. While in the initial years only religious monks or lamas taught Tibetan language in Tibetan schools, now both monks and lay teachers teach Tibetan. Though modern pedagogical methods have been introduced for teaching other subjects, the teaching of Tibetan language, it seems, is still largely done with the help of traditional pedagogic methods like lecturing, mantra-reciting and rote-learning.

School projects like ‘Tibet month’ consisting of discussions, debates, elocution and exhibitions being put up by students, dressed in traditional clothes, showcasing different aspects of traditional Tibetan life, are held every year. These seem to bring alive to students the refugee community’s shared memory and nostalgia of a historic, glorious past. Respondents in the study described these projects as reminding them of their ‘Tibetanness’ every year. The schools also commemorate important days in the Tibetan calendar, like Losar or New Year- with three days of festivities; birthday of the Dalai Lama- with traditional, cultural programmes and Tibetan Uprising Day with peaceful protest marches (accompanied by community-members in Tibetan settlements) and sloganeering exhorting China to ‘leave Tibet’ etc. Other activities, for example, photo-exhibitions organized by the Gu-Chu-Sum (an organization of ex-political prisoners from Tibet) are also held in Tibetan schools all over the country. Photographs of Tibetan protestors being tortured by the Chinese authorities in Tibet, of monasteries being destroyed etc are displayed that strengthen feelings of group loyalty and national
consciousness amongst them. Teachers are known to tell students ‘to study hard’ and ‘struggle for the freedom of Tibet’ which gives a sense of a ‘we-feeling’ to students, of belonging to the same ethnic group sharing a similar life and destiny as refugees in India.

To children in these schools, the ‘school culture’ which consists of observance of ‘rituals’ (like morning assembly etc) and ‘ceremonies’ (commemoration of Tibetan Uprising Day etc) combine to create a picture of Tibet as a sacred ‘homeland’ in their imagination. The influence of residential school life with students living together for years, away from their own families (particularly in case of students from Tibet), seemed to result in deep bonds that developed amongst students. This bond was reflected in the desire of respondents to go back the schools to teach after college, as they wanted to ‘contribute to its welfare in some way’ because these schools had ‘given them so much’. Life in Tibetan residential schools thus emerges as life similar to “Total Institutions” (Goffman, 1961), as elaborated upon in the forth chapter, with a routinized set of activities, values and school culture far removed from that of non-Tibetan schools.

In contrast, non-Tibetan schools (i.e. Indian public schools and Christian missionary schools) seem to have a physical environment and school culture that is multicultural, Anglo-Indian or Indian. The values emphasized by these schools seem to be more universalistic in nature, with importance laid primarily on quality education producing good Indian citizens.

The language of instruction in all these schools that respondents in the study studied in, was said to be English. The staff, teachers and students of the schools were largely Indian with English and Hindi being the languages largely spoken alongwith local, regional dialects. Only some non-Tibetan schools in the northeast regions of India were said to teach Tibetan as second language due to the presence of a significant number of Tibetans settled in these regions. Respondents from non-Tibetan schools in the study, referred to “Christian” and/or “Indian” prayers or both being sung in the morning assembly. In the Christian missionary schools, the presence of school chapels’ and the school choir singing Christian hymns was referred to, with some respondents actively participating in them. Most of these residential schools, it seems, did not allow students wearing religious talismans and students were also not allowed to make their prayer-altars in their rooms. Respondents said that they were very fluent in their Christian
prayers but familiar with only basic *mantras* of their own religion as they were not taught these in their schools, unlike students from Tibetan schools, nor did they have any practice in reciting them. The textbooks, pedagogy, school badge, monogram, school prayer/school song, uniform, school holidays etc of these schools also throw light on the Christian or Indian school ethos unlike the Tibetan school culture and ethos of Tibetan schools. The Indian public schools that respondents went to were also said to reflect a largely Indian or a multicultural school ethos. In contrast to Tibetan schools, cultural programmes in these schools mostly consisted of western and Indian dance competitions with holidays and other occasions in school being celebrated according to the Indian calendar. School songs, prayers, holidays celebrated etc all throw light on this aspect. Discipline in these schools, was, it seems, more strict, in comparison to Tibetan schools where students felt that they were amongst their ‘own people’ and were treated with less strictness. Respondents from non-Tibetan schools, however, reiterated that their schools and their teachers were ‘better’ in terms of quality of education provided than those in Tibetan schools (except for the TCV schools, which they felt were better than most of the other Tibetan schools like CTS etc).

In case of respondents from Tibetan schools, a sense of ‘Tibetanness’ seems to have been nurtured with a structured Tibetan ‘school culture’ that defines and ‘teaches’ Tibetanness. Stories heard from school staff, parents etc and personal experiences of border crossings (in case of those from Tibet) reinforced nationalistic feelings.

In contrast, in case of respondents from non-Tibetan schools, where school culture was multicultural, Anglo-Indian or Indian, the family and community have also been seen as acting as major sites of identity-construction. A sense of ‘Tibetanness’ seems to have been fostered by family socialization and influence of the Tibetan and host (Indian) community, in the absence of schools performing this role. For instance, some respondents who stayed with their family during their schooling referred to being encouraged by their parents, to participate in peaceful processions and protest marches for the cause of Tibet on Tibet Uprising Day etc. Those respondents whose parents held posts in the Tibetan Government in Exile or in major Tibetan associations, it seems, were more particular that their children participate in such occasions. All the students from non-Tibetan schools in the study accepted that unlike students from Tibetan schools, they
had very limited (or nil) Tibetan language skills and limited knowledge about their culture and religion due to the nature of their schooling. They said that, whatever limited knowledge they had about ‘these things’ was due to their parents and because of participating in local community gatherings held on certain days like Losar, Tibet Uprising Day etc.

The Tibetan Youth Hostel was found to be another important site of identity-construction of Tibetan youth in the city of Delhi. The hostel was set up to protect Tibetan youth identity in the city from erosion. It was felt that in Indian colleges, ‘Tibetan related education’ is not available, due to which during college Tibetan students totally “forget” what they had learnt in school. To address this problem, the hostel has tried to foster Tibetanness by enabling Tibetan youth to stay together, to speak in their native language, celebrate festivals/occasions together, attend protest marches etc. There is a prayer-room inside the building where once a week, students conduct prayers for the well being of the Dalai Lama. Activities like workshops, film-screenings on Tibet issues etc are organized which inform and encourage the youth to contribute to Tibet’s cause. All the residents who were interviewed said that they had participated in such programmes and demonstrations, as they saw their participation in terms of their individual contribution ‘for Tibet’. Residents also referred to a sense of unity that exists amongst them, when they participate together. They referred to the feeling of ‘comfort’ and ‘security’ that they felt while staying together in the hostel, as most of them were students from residential Tibetan schools and were used to staying in the protected, Tibetan environments of their schools. One of the reasons given for staying in the hostel was the fact that they were not used to living with others and their language problems (lack of fluency in Hindi and English) also made it difficult for them to interact with Indians. The importance of the hostel as a site of identity-construction becomes specially important in cases of the minority of residents from non-Tibetan schools who referred to their stay in the hostel enabling them to ‘become more Tibetan’ than before. They referred to increase in their knowledge of aspects of Tibetan culture, better Tibetan language skills (as residents largely speak in Tibetan in the hostel) and even ‘feelings for Tibet’, which, seemingly had not existed in them before, due to participating in activities conducted by the hostel students union, like prayers, protest marches etc.
In case of non-residents who were staying in college hostels, rented accommodation etc, it was found that these places also act as sites of influence on their identities. Such students largely comprised of students from non-Tibetan schools. A major reason given for staying outside the hostel was their multicultural schooling, mixed or Indian peer-group/friends and socialization at home, on account of which they found it easier and more comfortable in staying amongst the Indian community. In contrast with respondents from Tibetan schools, they were less interested/motivated in participating in protest marches as some of them had never done so in the past, staying in residential schools, away from the Tibetan community. Lack of available information and company (as was available to students in the youth hostel) was also one of the reasons stated for their not being able to participate in such occasions.

The Tibetan Youth Congress (TYC) also emerges as an important site of identity-construction for the Tibetan youth. It is a youth organization displaying a more ‘militant nationalism’ than the Dalai Lama and it seeks ‘rangzen’ or “complete independence” of Tibet rather than “real autonomy”. Most of the respondents in the study supported the organization’s objective of fighting for Tibet’s freedom. They, however, did not support the ‘militant’ means it advocates, at times, alongwith its peaceful activities. Respondents staying in the Tibetan Youth Hostel largely seemed to attend its protest marches, as they felt motivated to go with most of the residents also going in groups to participate, as transport arrangements were made by RTYC and hostel authorities and because they saw this as a way of contributing for the cause of Tibet’s freedom. In contrast, non-residents, it seems, preferred to stay away, as mentioned above.

The Tibetan community and parents have also emerged as other important sites of construction of Tibetan youth identities. The role of parents emerges as particularly important in case of students from non-Tibetan schools, as mentioned above. Respondents mentioned that their parents had sent them to non-Tibetan schools because of the higher quality of education provided in these schools as compared to Tibetan schools (except TCV schools). Their parents, however, had also wanted them to ‘be Tibetan’ in terms of having knowledge about Tibetan culture and religion, seemingly making efforts to ensure that their children did not become totally alienated from their ethno-religious heritage.
Parents’ efforts to foster Tibetanness amongst their children by teaching aspects of Tibetan language, culture and religion not taught to them in their schools; taking their children to monasteries with them to offer prayers; encouraging them to participate in protest marches and even participating in cultural programmes on the occasion of the Dalai Lama’s birthday as ex-students of Tibetan schools, is significant. In this regard, the views of a minority of students from non-Tibetan schools staying in the Tibetan youth hostel become important. This is because of their contention that they had been sent by their parents/guardian to stay in the hostel, so that they would know more about Tibetan identity and culture.

Influence of the Tibetan community on the lives of students can be felt, particularly at times of collective congregations like protest marches against the Chinese Government on Tibet Uprising Day, birthday of the Dalai Lama etc when these seem to impart a ‘we-feeling’ and a shared sense of identity amongst them. Respondents who were brought up in Tibetan settlements in Dehradun, Karnataka etc referred to the involvement of the entire community in celebrating Tibetan festivals like *Losar*, going for Tibetan processions etc. In contrast, those who grew up away from such Tibetan settlements/areas in residential non-Tibetan school hostels or with their parents in non-Tibetan localities had had limited interaction with the Tibetan community and therefore limited influence of the latter on their lives.

The attitude of the host community and life-experiences in exile also seem to have had an influence on Tibetan youth identities. Respondents from non-Tibetan schools, as compared with those from Tibetan schools, seemed to have largely friendly relations with the Indian community. This is because they had been to the same Indian public or Christian missionary schools as them, and were used to having them as their peer-group. These respondents saw themselves as ‘different’ from respondents from Tibetan schools, who they felt were ‘too Tibetan’, interacting only with Tibetans. In contrast, they felt that they could mingle and socialize with ‘anyone’ and were ‘more open’. While, some students from non-Tibetan schools also felt ‘discriminated’ by the Indian community, a majority felt ‘more comfortable’ with them as compared to their counterparts from Tibetan schools, who they felt ‘uncomfortable’ being with.
Those from Tibetan schools, on the other hand, preferred to socialize only with Tibetan friends from Tibetan schools, as they were used to interacting largely with them in school (only a few of these schools have a minority of around 10% Indian students enrolled). Most of these respondents felt that they had been "teased" or "harassed" by Indians in their school and college. Their language problems, they felt, also made it difficult for them to socialize with Indians. Influence of both the Tibetan and the Indian host community, can therefore be seen as informing aspects of Tibetanness of Tibetan youth in India.

**Elements of Tibetan Youth Identity**

The above-mentioned sites of identity-construction have been seen as giving rise to diversities in terms of life experiences and perspectives of 'being Tibetan' and Tibetanness amongst the Tibetan youth. The study, however, also suggests that, despite the various intra-group differences amongst the Tibetan youth in terms of nature of school etc, there are, in most cases, certain common elements, that may constitute a unified, cohesive pan-Tibetan identity in exile. That despite differences, there is a sense of being a part of common Tibetan ethnicity and past history due to the experience of refugeeism amongst them.

These common elements of Tibetanness and Tibetan youth identity are: a realization of the uniqueness of their culture, language and need for its preservation; the importance of having universal values like compassion etc and the influence of Tibetan Buddhist religion. It also consists of reverence for and allegiance to the leadership of the Dalai Lama and contributing towards Tibet's cause in various ways (supporting marriage within the community; participating in protest marches; teaching in Tibetan schools etc). These common elements need to be recognized alongwith the fact that there is no monolithic, uniform definition of Tibetanness or Tibetan identity for Tibetan youth.

An important fact that also needs to be recognized is that the influence of globalization has contributed to a 'westernized' way of life of Tibetan youth in India, influenced primarily by the mass media and popular urban youth culture. These elements, therefore, also seem to shape Tibetan youth identities. This can be seen in terms of choice of apparel, food, music, television, movies (see annexure 12.1) of the youth in Delhi.
While there are concerns amongst the Tibetan leadership, of the youth ‘losing’ their identities in exile, respondents in the study disagreed with this view and felt that they can be ‘westernized’ along with ‘being Tibetan’, at the same time. A diversity of meanings of ‘being Tibetan’ and Tibetanness has therefore, been called for, rather than a single, uniform strand.

The identities of the young have been explored in the study, thus, largely in terms of a continuous dialogue between the past, their present and the future. Notions of home, nation, culture and ethnic identity of Tibetan youth refugees as a result emerge not as fixed, static, monolithic concepts bounded by physical territory but as fluid, diverse entities. Educated Tibetan refugee youth in the study emerge as wanting to be diverse, dialogic entities who are, at one level, proud of their Tibetanness and understand the importance of ‘preserving’ it and yet at another level, also wish to become a part of the ‘new world’ and the popular, ‘westernized’ urban youth culture. These diverse strands of Tibetanness and ‘being Tibetan’, thus, seem to constitute Tibetan refugee youth identity in exile, based upon past and present experiences of refugeeism, as against a uniform, homogeneous Tibetan identity and needs to be further researched in future.

**Aspirations and Dilemmas**

The Tibetan leadership can be seen as a pro-active participant in the refugee community’s development in exile. It has been actively collaborating with the host country and international support groups in setting up an education system that seeks to prevent assimilation, rather than becoming dependant upon the system of the host country.

The Tibetan refugee community is keen to preserve their native culture, language, and identities as Tibetan. It has sought to achieve this goal by trying to “nurture a whole civilization in exile”, with the help of Tibetan schools, as mentioned in the introduction (http://iisd.ca/50commdb/desc/d46.htm). This “duty” has called for the integration of the twin goals of tradition and modernity in the education system that seems to have given rise to several dilemmas related to issues of language, culture, identity and opportunity. These dilemmas have implications on the education and future life chances of Tibetan refugees in India.
The Tibetan leadership in exile has sought to acquire a degree of socio-cultural adaptation and economic standing in the host community. At the same time, it has also wished to preserve its core cultural values and identity through the system of education in exile. These twin goals seem to have lead to dilemmas as to whether to prize “Ligatures” or “Options” in education or in other words, an education system that builds ‘bonds between people’ or provides skills and qualifications to get jobs in the exile community (Dahrendorf cited in Corson 1993:39).

Viewing within the framework of ‘options’ and ‘ligatures’ in case of Tibetans in India, there are, therefore, aspirations for jobs as well as for preservation of culture, language and traditional Tibetan identity. This is reflected in interviews with respondents. Interviews throw light on differential experiences of Tibetan children in school education in exile, as mentioned above. Tibetan schools prepare students more in terms of preservation of Tibetan language, culture and identity and strengthen community-bonds. They seem to prepare students less in terms of providing them with language skills (English and Hindi) that would help them seek higher education and to get jobs in the host community. Students from these schools are, as a result, often forced to compete amongst themselves to seek the limited jobs available within the Tibetan Government in Exile. Life within these residential schools, with limited interaction with the host community seems to make it difficult for these students to stay outside the community with ‘others’.

Non-Tibetan schools, on the other hand, prepare students more in terms of language skills (English and Hindi) that help in seeking higher education and jobs in the exile community. These students, on account of their prolonged interaction with Indian friends and teachers in school, find it more comfortable to interact with the host community. They, however, lack knowledge of Tibetan language or aspects of Tibetan religion and culture, as they were not taught the same in their schools.

The Government in Exile’s concern for preservation of Tibetan language and identity can be seen in its educational policies. Until 1984, the three-language policy of teaching Tibetan, English and Hindi, with English as medium of instruction was followed. A perceived decline of traditional Tibetan language led to a shift in policy with the introduction of the policy of ‘Tibetanization of Education’ (1984). The medium of
instruction in the junior classes (classes 1-5) was switched to Tibetan from English. The medium in instruction from class 6 onwards, however, continued to be English, with Tibetan as second language.

Concerns of a further ‘decline’ in the Tibetan school education with Tibetan youth drifting away from their traditional language, culture and identity has led to the formulation of the latest policy of ‘Basic Education Policy of Tibetans in Exile’ (2004). This policy emphasizes the preservation of traditional language in exile as a ‘bigger goal’ as against preparing students to get jobs in exile. It seeks to gradually convert the medium of instruction in all classes in all Tibetan schools to Tibetan, with English being taught as a second language from class four onwards.

Contradictions between the official viewpoint of the Tibetan Government in Exile and that of the younger generation on educational policies have been found to exist. While the youth uphold the Dalai Lama’s leadership, situational considerations require them to take root in their host community, learn its language and ways of life to benefit from available life chances in exile. They seem to find it difficult to do both. This is because their schooling in Tibetan schools lays emphasis on Tibetan language, but limits their English and Hindi (speaking) linguistic abilities and adversely affects higher education and employment opportunities in India and abroad.

The youth in the study seemed to be concerned with the fact that making the mother tongue the medium of instruction rather than English language, to preserve language and culture, may adversely affect their future life chances in higher education and employment in exile. While many of them openly criticized the new education policy and its slant towards Tibetan language, some found it difficult to decide. A majority of the youth interviewed, however, expressed apprehensions about the new education policy that needs to be recognized. The ranks of the educated unemployed have also been rising over the years and the job opportunities at the Government in Exile are limited in nature. This is seen as a situation of crises by the youth. These problems, they believe, are likely to get further exacerbated with the implementation of the new education policy that clearly prioritizes ‘traditional’ education and language as against ‘modern’ education and language, thereby limiting the scope for occupational mobility and life-chances in exile.
The Tibetan administration in exile, on the other hand, mentions a lack of interest in traditional, religious education amongst Tibetan youth as a more important concern. There are concerns as to whether the Tibetan youth passing out from such schools will find jobs in the community as well as outside but these concerns have been left unresolved as the goal of cultural and linguistic preservation in exile has been considered more important. Officials interviewed referred to adequate employment opportunities for the youth who specialize in traditional, monastic higher education in exile. They claimed that, the “problem is not with traditional education but with modern education”. Those who study Tibetan religious and spiritual education were said to have better employment prospects in the Tibetan administration than “too many BA’s and MA’s who are jobless”. It was observed that Shastris from Sarnath, are considered “valuable”, and are “in much demand in the administration only because they are linked to Tibetan culture” (TO1, DOE, CTA, H.P, 2006).

While officials advocated a return to traditional, religious education, youth respondents and teachers referred to a lack of interest in traditional, monastic education and demand for secular education amongst the youth. A teacher noted, “All of the students won’t go off to Varanasi (to study Buddhist religion and philosophy) as their interests wont be there” (TT5, T.S, H.P, 2006).

The narratives of the youth as well as interviews with officials, teachers etc therefore, seem to suggest that the Tibetan education system in exile in India is one that leans largely towards the provision of ‘ligatures’ i.e. the preservation of traditional language, cultural heritage and community bonds. As ‘options’ or qualifications or skills, for instance, English language (as against Tibetan language) are required for getting suitable employment in exile, Tibetan students seem to be facing problems.

The educational policies of the Tibetan Government in Exile can be seen as “gravitating towards ‘tradition’, to restore their former purity, which are felt as being lost” (Hall cited in Julian 2004:9). Interviews with the younger generation, on the other hand, revealed that they accept that steps are required to preserve their language and culture but disagree on the means of the present policy to do so. A conflict, therefore, seems to exist amongst Tibetans in exile, with Tibetan schools leaning largely towards preservation of tradition resulting in problems for students. Difficulty in trying to
reconcile these two 'needs' seems to be creating palpable tensions between the old and the new order.

Thus, the difficulty in trying to reconcile individual needs and community needs can be seen. There are concerns of assimilation into the host society's socio-cultural milieu that is seen as defeating the very purpose of flight to India. Educational policies giving precedence to patriotic concerns as against pragmatic ones have therefore been formulated. A 'national' consideration of survival of the traditional Tibetan language, culture and identity is prioritized in the educational policies as against 'individual' educational and economic aspirations in exile. In the final go, it is not individual choice but the greater good of the community that seems to drive the educational policy of the refugee government in exile due to the need for preservation of Tibetanness in the host country.

Tibetan youth identity and educational and occupational aspirations in exile is therefore, to be understood as processes of negotiation and mediation and not as something given or fixed in time and space. As seen in the study, Tibetan youth in India, have diverse ways of defining and interpreting ways of 'being Tibetan' in their own lives. They are not passive, disempowered, recipients of diverse cultures in exile. They are actually straddling dialogic forms of Tibetan and/or 'mixed', multicultural identities, rather than living out one, uniform, monolithic way of 'being Tibetan'.

In conclusion, it can be said that identity and aspirations of all refugee groups (especially the youth) in an asylum country are open-ended phenomena, subject to multiple changes. To adapt to these changes, alongwith preserving culture and tradition and building an education system that balances 'ligatures' and 'options', is a problem specifically faced by refugee and diasporic communities the world over. There are no clear answers to this dilemma. In the final analysis, therefore, it is for the leadership of the refugee communities to try to be sensitive to and accommodate both needs, enabling preservation of native language, culture and identities as well as realization of educational and occupational life-chances in exile.