CHAPTER-I

AN INTRODUCTION

Refugee

When I was born  
my mother said  
you are a refugee.  
Our tent on the roadside  
Smoked in the snow.

On your forehead  
between your eyebrows  
there is an R embossed  
my teacher said.

I scratched and scrubbed,  
on my forehead I found  
a brash of red pain.

I have three tongues  
the one that sings  
is my mother tongue.

The R on my forehead  
between my English and Hindi  
the Tibetan tongue reads:  
RANGZEN

- Tenzin Tsundue  
(http://www.friendsoftibet.org/tenzin/).

The present study is an exploration of the situation of the education of Tibetan refugees in India and the interrelationship between issues of education, culture, ethnic identity and opportunity in exile. The central theme of this study is that education, economic opportunities and perceptions of ethnic identity of refugees in the host country are closely related with the experience of refugeeism and the entire gamut of pre-migrational and post-migrational experiences.
The Context of Refugeeism

The 1951 UN Convention on the Status of Refugees defines a refugee as a person who “owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country” (Stein 2001:2). The refugee category is defined by “trauma and stress, persecution and danger, losses and isolation, uprooting and change of the refugee experience” (Stein 2001:2). Refugees, in brief, may be regarded as a special group of people who are forcibly torn and uprooted from their native milieu and are transplanted to a different environment due to circumstances beyond their control. Solutions to their problems are seen in terms of facilitating their repatriation, local integration or resettlement in a third country. At times, however, they are forced to stay in semi-permanent refugee camps for protracted periods of time. Refugee camps have been referred to as “similar to barracks, asylums, schools and prisons, but reducible to none of these modern apparatuses” (Lippert 1999:309).

Refugees are usually seen as ‘homogenous’ and the constructs of these groups are usually- ‘stereotypical’ and ‘monolithic’. Differences, however, abound amongst them in terms of country of origin, ethnicity, race, religion, culture, language, gender class, disability, socio-economic and educational background prior to and after migration etc (Stein 2001:5).

Refugees are different from immigrants and other ethnic minorities in a country. Immigrants voluntarily move to another country in search of greener pastures, to improve their economic position. Refugees, on the other hand, are forced to leave their native countries against their will. Refugees also cannot be categorized into either ‘voluntary’ or ‘involuntary’ migrants as they are, “affected by unique factors such as the trauma of political violence”(Ogbu cited in http://cc.joensuu.fi/sosio/annetn.htm).

Refugees, however, also share similarities with other ethnic minorities. This is mainly with regard to having a subordinate position in society and a culture different from the mainstream host society. Their inherent status and treatment in a host country is, however, far more complex, with specific geo-political and socio-cultural contexts.
governing the same. This differential context that governs the life of refugees becomes apparent from the following lines by Hannah Arendt, who wrote on the condition of refugees after the end of World War II (see box).

"The first loss which the rightless suffered was the loss of their homes and this meant the loss of the entire social texture into which they were born and in which they established for themselves a distinct place in the world...." "What is unprecedented is not the loss of a home but the impossibility of finding a new one. Suddenly, there was no place on earth where migrants could go without the severest restrictions, no country where they would be assimilated, no territory where they could found a new community of their own. This, moreover, had next to nothing to do with any material problem of overpopulation; it was a problem not of space but of political organization" (Arendt cited in Xenos 1993: 427).

The problem of refugees in our time, is therefore, said to be “a symptom of the uprootedness or homelessness of the modern age”, where “space is not really geographical but rather political” (Xenos 1993: 427).

**The International Refugee Regime and the ‘Refugee’:** The term refugee was originally coined in the west to specify French Protestants who fled from the forced conversion policy of the French state in the late-seventeenth century. It was not until the end of the eighteenth century, following the American Revolution, that ‘refugee’ began to be used to refer to human beings that “leave their country in times of distress” (Lippert 1999:302).

The refugee problem was acknowledged as having international dimensions and requiring global cooperation in 1921-22 in the aftermath of the First World War, the break up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Russian Revolution. However, the real movement to protect refugees began only with the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which proclaimed basic rights for all human beings irrespective of their nationality or citizenship. It was recognized that refugees are not simply “victims of human rights violations”. They also represent a distinct group of individuals who are “without the protection of a national state” (Gorlick and Khan 341:97). The international system of refugee law (see annexure: 1.1 for details) was adopted to replace the protection, which is normally provided by and is the responsibility of national governments for their citizens (Gorlick and Khan 341:97).
The 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees, in particular, lays down general guidelines for the protection of refugees. The interpretation of these guidelines, however, remains the prerogative of individual states because there is no authoritative sanctioning body to impose a particular interpretation of the language of the Convention. The problem of refugees is thus, a complicated problem with the “question of sovereignty at its core” (Xenos 1993:422). While more than 189 states have ratified or adhered to at least one of the international human rights treaties (see details in annexure: 1.1), there are also many countries, including India, which despite hosting many refugee groups, has not acceded to the 1951 Convention. This means that the host government’s protection as well as grant of welfare measures, including education, is dependent upon the individual state’s policies.

What needs to be recognized is that a global refugee problem exists today, with the world total in 2001 being 14,544,000 (USCR 2001:1). Armed conflicts in countries like Afghanistan, Angola, Algeria, Azerbaijan, Burundi, Colombia, Guatemala, Lebanon, Liberia, Myanmar, Iraq, Turkey, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Zaire etc have created millions of refugees. The situation and treatment of these and other groups of refugees in different countries of the world is determined by differing geopolitical contexts which effects their protection and welfare including education and life chances in exile and needs to be highlighted.

Refugeeism, Culture and Identity

Studies on refugee groups suggest that they regard the issue of preservation of their native culture and identity in the host country as an important component of their adaptation. The need for acculturation and integration as against assimilation with the host society is regarded as important. This consideration becomes important in the context of refugees as they are uprooted from their homeland and are transported to alien lands. As a result, they are often said to experience a “constantly challenged identity”, perpetually required to mediate between a “scattered historical inheritance and a heterogeneous present” (Chambers 1994:6). Simone Weil’s notion of rootedness helps in the understanding of the problem of refugeeism, the loss of ‘roots’ and the need to seek the preservation of these ‘roots’ in exile (see box).
"To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul. It is one of the hardest to define. A human being has roots by virtue of his real, active, and natural participation in the life of a community, which preserves in living shape certain particular treasures of the past and certain particular expectations for the future. This participation is a natural one, in the sense that, it is automatically brought about by place, conditions of birth, profession and social surroundings. Every human being needs to have multiple roots. It is necessary for him to draw well-nigh the whole of his moral, intellectual and spiritual life by way of the environment of which he forms a natural part" (Weil cited in Xenos 1993:425).

Seeking to re-root their lives alongwith preserving their culture and identity in an alien country also emerges as a difficult task. This includes, amongst other things, the changed realities of their situation in the new country and the tensions between their traditional value system and that in exile. Liisa Malkki’s research on migrant and refugee populations is important, as she regards as erroneous, work on immigrant cultures that conceptualize the process of relocation and reconstruction as a “smooth journey of people who neatly pack their roots and ‘transplant’ them later in an orderly manner in a new society” (Malkki cited by Rayaprol 2001:166). Such a representation, she observes, is problematic as it, “glosses over the fact that immigration constitutes an epistemological crises of great magnitude involving changes in legal and political status, ruptures in families, struggles for economic mobility, and the tensions between older social and cultural values and the norms and values of the new society” (Malkki cited in Rayaprol 2001:166). The attempt to balance tradition and modernity for survival in exile produces several dilemmas and tensions in the identities of the young and the old order. These tensions have been referred to as, “tensions between ‘unity’ and ‘tradition’ on the one hand, and ‘diversity’ and ‘translation’ on the other” (Julian 2004:9).

Hebdige’s contention in the context of Caribbean music and cultural identity also throws light on the changing realities and lives of refugees in alien lands, “... the roots themselves are in a state of constant flux and change. The roots don’t stay in one place. They change shape. They change colour. And they grow” (Hebdige cited in Rayaprol 2001:166). Group pasts, because of these changes, become difficult to reproduce in daily
life and refugee groups seem torn between nostalgia for the past and the present realities of acculturation in their life.

Studies on ethnic groups, culture and identity are also useful in studying refugeeism. There are two major theoretical approaches on ethnic identity: the 'Primordialist approach' and the 'Optional-Situational approach'. The Primordialist approach conceives of ethnic identity as "rooted in similarities in physical appearance as well as common culture that may include a shared language, religion, and a sense of common origin and history and perception of shared life chances" (Lal cited in Lee 2001:50). Ethnic identity is understood to be something eternal that persists through change.

In contrast, the 'Optional-Situational approach', which is more useful in studying refugee groups, conceives of ethnic identity as, "an ongoing process" in which individuals or groups see themselves, and define themselves with respect to others, in different ways. Among the factors that influence how individuals construct their identities at any point in time is included the "situation" that the actor confronts including his or her goals, the "constraints" inherent in the activities and collective definitions of others, as well as the "positive and negative value he or she assumes a particular identity will confer". Ethnic identity, although subject to constraints, is regarded as "fluid, situational, changeable and self-interested" (Lal cited in Lee 2001:50). It is understood as "socially constructed" and arrived at through processes of interaction. This approach also fits with Burger and Luckman's concept of "social construction of reality" which describes the process by which people create their own version of what is real via interaction with each other" (Lee 2001:51). Classical theories that employ the Optional-Situational approach to ethnic identity are: (Barth 1969; Swidler 1986; Nagel 1994) along with contemporary theories by (Phinney 1990; Stephan 1991; Stoller 1996; Erdmans 1995 and Field 1994) (cited in Lee 2001:53).

Globalization and Changing Identities: The process of globalization in the world has been seen as further 'hybridizing' identities. Identity and globalization have been identified as the "twin organizing polarities of contemporary social analyses"(Giddens cited in Amin 1997:123). The ambivalence of identity under post-modernity, related to processes of globalization has been dwelt upon. It is stated, "our
Globalization has been defined as, not just an “out there” phenomenon that refers only to the emergence of large-scale world systems, but to an “in here” phenomenon, affecting even intimacies of personal identity. Globalization is seen as invading local contexts of action creating “new forms of local cultural identity and self expression” (Giddens cited in Amin 1997:123). It is seen in terms of the “interconnectedness, multiplicity and hybridization of social life at every level spatial and organizational” (Amin 1997:123).

In this context, Appadurai’s reference to the five dimensions of global cultural flows “Ethnoscapes, Mediascapes, Technoscapes, Financescapes and Ideoscapes” becomes relevant. He uses the term “scapes” to stress on the fact that “different streams or flows along with cultural material may be seen to be moving across national boundaries, being in ‘fundamental disjuncture’ from one another”. He further, looks at the “configuration of cultural forms in today’s world as fundamentally fractal, i.e. as possessing no Euclidean boundaries, structures or regularities”. These cultural forms, along with being “fully fractal”, are also seen as overlapping. These landscapes are the building blocks of what he calls “imagined worlds” which are “multiple worlds constituted by historically situated imaginations of persons and groups spread across the globe” (Appadurai 2003:31).

The possible consequences of globalization on cultural identities are said to be, “erosion, strengthening and the emergence of new identities or new ethnicities” (Hall cited in Gillespie 1995:17). In this changed world scenario, therefore, the world resembles a ‘global village’ and forms of culture and identities are increasingly being regarded as global, homogeneous, Macdonaldized/westernized entities (though subject to local influences).

Based on the assumption that the lived realities of refugees are also subject to influence by the overarching effects of globalization, the lives and identities of refugee groups in a globalized world, also needs to be explored. In a world in which both points of departure and arrival are in a cultural flux, the search for points of reference as critical life-chances are made, can be very difficult. It is in this atmosphere that the invention of tradition (and of ethnicity, kinship and other identity-markers, while important can
become slippery, as the search for certainties is regularly frustrated by the fluidities of transnational communication. Group pasts and culture may become increasingly parts of exhibits and less of what Bourdieu would have called a “habitus” (a tacit realm of reproducible practices and dispositions).

For refugees, the experience of refugeeism in a globalized world may, thus be interpreted as an epistemological crises with the process of identity construction being malleable, subject to continuous change and varied along lines of gender, age, ethnicity, class, religion and language within a single refugee group. Influences on education, identity and opportunity in a diversified, global scenario, in context of the situation of refugees, further need to be looked at.

**Education and Refugeeism**

Studies on refugee groups indicate that satisfying the most basic of human needs, such as shelter and income are the most urgent priorities for refugees and their support organizations. After these needs are met, the priority of education emerges (Hannah 1999: 154). The vulnerability of refugee children as compared to adult refugees and the importance of education as a tool for survival have been referred to, in research studies on refugeeism (Kaprielian-Churchill 1996:357). It is widely accepted that education can play a key role in helping refugee children, adolescents and adults adjust to life in exile. Education is regarded as a “powerful tool in the process of adaptation and social integration” of refugees. It is regarded as the “basis for personal development” as it helps “improve their chances to contribute to society through participation in the labour market”. Education is also seen as helpful in the process of “rebuilding their lives in a new environment” (http://www.refugeenet.org/education/).

There are two main kinds of studies on the adaptation of refugees and migrants in host countries. Studies based on the ‘culture-conflict’ model believe that the integration of two cultural worlds leads to problems in adjustment for the individual. These studies suggest that refugee children are, in particular, likely to suffer from ‘fractured identities’ – the result of a clash of native and host cultures, with the school, more often than not, reinforcing the gap between the outlooks of the child in school and her parents. Refugee parents, as compared to their children are said to be generally reluctant to give up their
native identity and culture which in many instances, is on the brink of extinction and which, quite often was the main reason behind their persecution and escape from their native country. While the child is likely to become increasingly conversant with the language, cultures and ways of life of the host country, their parents may want their children to do both: adapt to the host society as well as “preserve their native language, religion and important customs from their heritage” (Gaitan 1994: 146). Refugee children are therefore said to face a dilemma. This dilemma is whether to conform to the host society’s culture and ways of life so as to climb up the occupational ladder or to adhere to their parents desire to not only gain occupational mobility but also preserve and cherish (to the extent possible) their own cultural values and language (Kaprielian-Churchill 1996:358).

In contrast, there are studies based upon the view that the meeting of two cultural worlds may also lead to a ‘bicultural resolution’- whereby the two cultures are synthesized by mediating and flexible individuals with skills that enable them to function adaptively in a variety of contexts (Phinney et al. 2001:505).

To produce such individuals having a “bicultural or integrated identity” and to address these conflicting issues of culture, language, identity and opportunity, the school is visualized as the ‘prime socializing agent’ for refugee children. The school is seen as playing an important role in enabling children to not only become a meaningful part of the host country, but also to help them “to maintain a hold over their native culture and language through programmes of multicultural education implemented in pluralistic classrooms” (Kaprielian-Churchill 1996:358). The teacher’s role, in this context, is visualized as a “cultural broker” or “bicultural actor” (Gay 1993: 293) who enables crossing of cultural boundaries and bridging of cultural gaps between the host country and refugee children.

The fact that cultural identity, as the self, which can only be conceived in relation to the other, is constantly undergoing changes, especially in the context of a refugee child in school who constantly receives mixed messages from her socio-cultural environment, therefore, seems important (Kaprielian-Churchill 1996:358). Cultural identity in the context of refugeeism, is as much a matter of “becoming” as “being”, as while being rooted in history, it also undergoes constant transformation, subject to the “the continuous
play of history, culture and power” (Hall cited in Jodhka 2001:27). The socio-cultural environment and ethos of the home, the school, community and life in the host society, thus, appears to have consequences upon the individual identities of refugee children and their educational performance. As they grow up, these may continue to influence and direct their sense of individual identities as well as their aspirations and opportunities in exile. The vulnerability of children pulled between two distinct cultural and linguistic systems therefore needs to be recognized along with the ability of the education in the host country, to either reinforce or minimize these differences.

For refugees, it seems important, therefore, to receive an education that enables them to adapt to the host country and acquire educational and occupational mobility as well as to preserve native language and culture. Due to this reason, refugee groups can often be seen to seek the goal of integration as against assimilation in the host country, as mentioned before. Education is looked at as a major tool to bridge these tensions and to preserve refugee language, culture and identity along with providing necessary skills and qualifications.

The distinction between the life-chances of “Options” and “Ligatures” as categorized by Dahrendorf can be useful in analyzing education, opportunities and outcomes, in terms of what they may mean to refugees in the host country. “Options” in education are defined as “the range of choices (or primary goods) that people receive as a result of their education, the wider the range of options, the greater are the life-chances that individuals are deemed to possess” (Dahrendorf cited in Corson 1993:39). “Ligatures”, on the other hand, are said to be “bonds between people that they establish as a result of their membership in society or participation in that society’s education”. Most western education systems are said to be strong in providing options as life-chances to students as against ligatures. As a result, important benefits provided by ligatures are missed out i.e. “support, structure and motivation, a sense of respect and continuity” (Dahrendorf cited in Corson 1993:39).

While eager to acquire a degree of socio-cultural adaptation and economic standing in the host community, the wish to also preserve core cultural values and identity is likely to lead to dilemmas as to whether to prize “ligatures” or “options” as life-chances. When manifested in classroom behavior of teachers as also students, this
may affect educational performance. For instance, prioritization of ligatures, may lead to educational practices that desire to preserve native culture, language and identity as against (or even at the cost of) options, with the latter encouraging practices which promote education in the language of the host country to generate job opportunities for students in exile.

A study by Delpit (1997) on the education of Black Americans in America becomes important in this context of refugeeism and education. Delpit’s views on minority communities, that pride in one’s language and culture is important, along with learning the language and cultural “codes” of the “mainstream”, so as to acquire the language and skills required for occupational mobility, are also applicable in case of refugees. Delpit’s contention of the necessity of crossing over of boundaries (from minority to mainstream culture) being important to acquire upward mobility, along with cherishing one’s culture, seems to be important in the context of refugeeism and issues of culture, opportunity and education (Delpit 1997: 593).

Interlinkages between education, identity and opportunity for refugee groups, therefore, constitute an important component of their adaptation and acculturation in the host country. These issues also seem to influence the future life chances of refugees in the host country. Capacities for negotiating between the two socio-cultural worlds of their native and host lands also seem to influence their ethnic and individual identities.

What needs to be recognized is that there is a diversity of refugee experiences depending upon the specific geo-political and socio-cultural contexts of different refugee groups, as mentioned before, which also needs to be taken into consideration. Limited research is available on these issues and they need to be further explored. The Tibetan experience is useful in this context in identifying the linkages between education, identity and opportunity that refugee groups tend to be faced with, in their efforts for physical and socio-cultural survival in alien lands.

**Tibetan Refugees in India:**

India, since independence from British rule, has played host to some of the largest refugee movements of the present century. The partition of India in 1947 resulted in the movement of approximately 1.2 million people into India from Pakistan. The early
seventies were characterized by an influx of approximately more than ten million refugees from former East Pakistan into Indian territory. The 1980s witnessed an influx of Sri Lankan Tamils into India approximately 66,498 of which are still in refugee camps in southern India (Raj 1999:84).

There is, however, no legal framework or mechanism designed exclusively for refugees in India. India has not yet ratified or acceded to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, as mentioned earlier, and its legal obligation to protect refugees is traced mainly in customary international law and Indian laws (see details in annexure: 2.1). In the absence of a legal framework, India's policy towards refugees has been one of contrasts. Differential and preferential treatment of refugees is said to be based on their "country of origin" and India's "broader foreign policy interests" (Raj 1999:84). The Government of India is said to be providing assistance and recognition to Tibetans, Sri Lankans and Chakmas from Bangladesh, yet has refused to recognize Afghans, Iranians, Iraqis, Sudanese and other groups, although it has allowed them to remain in the country for protracted periods of time. The Government of India has allowed the UNHCR to provide protection to these refugees, adopting "a laissez faire approach unless and until it is necessary to intervene" (Raj 1999:84).

The Tibetan refugees form one of the largest refugee groups in South Asia. The first batch of Tibetan refugees, numbering 85,000 crossed over into India on March 31st, 1959, led by their spiritual leader, The Dalai Lama. At the end of 2001, there were estimated to be a total of 110,000 Tibetan refugees in India (http://www.unhcr.org/home. RSDCOI/3f51f90821.html). An estimated 2,500 are also estimated to be fleeing every year into the country (http://www.tibet.ca/wtarchive/1993/7/14-2_1.html).

The Dalai Lama heads a Government in Exile in Dharamsala, India and although leader of just one of Tibetan Buddhism's several branches, his spiritual status and public profile cause him to be widely revered by ordinary Tibetans. He has spoken in many international venues, including the United States Congress, the European Parliament, etc. The Dalai Lama has (since 1987) been pushing for a peaceful resolution to the question of independence advocating 'real autonomy' based on his "Middle Way" approach. Chinese officials, on the other hand, accuse the exiled spiritual leader of "trying to split the country" and of "playing politics with religion" (Hindustan Times, Delhi, July
The Dalai Lama has had widespread support over the past 40 years, but has never gained official recognition for the Government of Tibet in Exile. He however seems to “continue to command the charisma and holiness which he held in Tibet, though with a lesser display than before” (Saklani 1984:145).

The office of Tibet is the official agency of The Dalai Lama that currently has offices in thirteen countries based in the cities of: New York, London, Paris, Brussels, Budapest, Geneva, Moscow, Tokyo, Taipei, Canberra, Pretoria, New Delhi and Kathmandu. These offices represent the Tibetan Government in Exile while providing services to the Tibetan community in these regions “in order to preserve the unique cultural and spiritual heritage of Tibet and to assist Tibetans in their struggle as refugees” (www.tibetoffice.org/en).

The Tibetan refugees have been regarded as a refugee group that has been given ‘special treatment’ by the Government of India, not available to several other refugee groups in the country. They have been allowed to engage in “gainful employment” and “freedom of movement”, mainly due to India’s socio-cultural and religious relations with Tibet and foreign policy considerations (Raj 1999; Norbu 2001). A comprehensive rehabilitation package also seems to have been provided to them. Tibetan refugees have been given agricultural land and provided with other infrastructures like roads, water supply, educational and medical facilities, helped in establishing cottage industries etc. They have also been issued ration cards by the various state governments. Upto 1992, an expenditure of Rs.161.6 million was apparently incurred on Tibetan refugees (Saha, 1999:72) (Details in chapter two). Their special treatment at the hands of the host country government has helped in the community’s socio-economic adaptation and also given them the freedom to preserve their ‘Tibetanness’ in exile. These initiatives of the host country have been analyzed in the study.

Tibetan refugees generally tend to be seen as a uniform category of a homogenous group of people. Intra-group differences, however, also exist amongst them that need to be recognized, especially as it has implications on their educational experiences in India. These diversities have been explored to discern the linkages with education, aspirations, opportunities and life-chances in exile.
Culture and Identity: the situation of socio-cultural adaptation of the Tibetan refugees has been seen largely as a ‘success in exile’ on account of the organized leadership it has had in the form of The Dalai Lama headed Tibetan Government in Exile in India. This leadership has sought to make several policies and take initiatives to preserve Tibetan culture and identity in exile based on the desire for a future ‘return to Tibet’. The assistance of the host country, India as well as the support from the International community has also, it seems, helped the Tibetans in their endeavour. Studies refer to specific attempts of the Tibetan leadership to create a Tibetan identity in exile by reviving the “pure Tibetan tradition” based upon a sense of cultural uniqueness and importance of preserving Tibetan culture, language and identity - partially in order to cohere with western expectations (Anand 2000; Korom 1997; Gelleck 2001; Proust 2003).

Exile has also led to a remarkable growth in popularity of Tibetan Buddhism throughout the world, outside the closed environs of Tibet. It is observed that “wherever Tibetans have settled, even in small numbers, they have established their own institutions, Buddhist societies, monasteries or meditation centers” (Saklani 1984: 154). Such institutions can be found in the U.K, U.S.A, Switzerland, Netherlands, and South Africa, New Zealand etc apart from different parts of India, Bhutan and Nepal where the refugees have settled in bulk and where naturally the number of such institutions is larger.

The remarkable attempts of the Tibetan refugee community to recreate traditional ‘Tibet’ in India have been mentioned by a number of scholars (Saklani 1984; Anand 2000) etc. In Tibetan refugee settlements, the refugees are said to have built chorten (stupa), gompas (monasteries) or temples. One can still see the ritual of circumambulating these religious monuments, rosaries and prayer-wheels being turned, mantras being chanted, especially by elderly people. Everywhere in India, wherever Tibetans live, one can see the tharchok or prayer-flags in different colors, embossed with Buddhist prayers, flying aloft on trees, poles, houses and hill-tops. They are also symbolic of the undying continuity of Tibetan traditions, even in exile. Some of the Tibetan refugees have continued the traditional practice of painting religious scrolls (Thangkas) and writing religious books (Buddhist classics and commentaries) by hand.
Most of the rituals connected with birth, death and marriage, which were an integral part of the religious life in Tibet continue to be followed in exile. Butter/oil lamps and incense are burnt in monasteries, temples, stupas and in private altars (at times replaced by electric bulbs due to economic reasons). Gifts are given to lamas and monasteries and alms are distributed to the poor. At times, other traditional acts of compassion are also performed, like releasing of caged birds or throwing into the water live fish caught in a fisherman’s net, in order to avert evil influences. In India, the Dalai Lama also delivers the Kalachakra1 sermons, (called Kukhoer Wangchen or ‘Wheel of Time’ in Tibetan) (Saklani 1984:147).

It is noted that, “From a sociological perspective, the Tibetan refugees have been able to recreate a nucleus of the old order and additionally through their strong initiative have also developed satellite monastic societies” (Saklani 1984:148). Studies also refer to the “limited acculturation” being successful as opposed to “assimilation” of the Tibetan refugee community into the host society. The community has been seen as successfully negotiating versions of mainstream culture, primarily “forces of popular Indian culture, including Bollywood, that are in turn, always in negotiation with globalized western culture”, without being overwhelmed by the former. While being influenced, to a certain extent, by what is regarded as ‘popular Indian culture’, they are still seen as having a “separate and distinct identity, having largely avoided the process of ‘sanskritisation’ that affects most minority groups in India” (Anand 2000:276).

The relative success in resisting assimilation into the host society has been attributed to their refugee status, which symbolizes continued allegiance to Tibet. The retention of refugee status, rather than taking up citizenship status of the host country, is apparently seen as a very patriotic act, especially since their refugee status severely restricts the right of Tibetans to own immovable property. The maintenance of refugee status has also been rationalized in terms of its “compatibility with traditional principles” (Anand 2000:276).

Christiaan Klieger’s analyses of Tibetan nationalism as a modern manifestation of ‘patron-client dyad’ is important in this context as it argues that refugees have been able

---

1 Kalachakra is one of the most elaborate Tibeto-Buddhist rituals and is delivered by the Dalai Lama only a few times during his life-time, six being the customary maximum (Saklani 1984:147).
to “retain their status” by converting the whole exile community as belonging to the “client” category (Klieger cited in Anand 2000:276). A growing network of aid agencies, monastic missions abroad and western tourists operate out of Dharamsala. This, along with the capacity of Tibetans to carve out their own economic niche with spill-over effects for the local community (example being the seasonal Lhasa markets, a common sight in Indian cities and their contribution to tourism and economy) it seems, has helped Tibetans to avoid assimilation into the local community (Anand 2000: 276).

Community and identity of all refugee groups in an asylum country are, however, open-ended phenomena subject to constant change, as mentioned above. The case of the Tibetan refugee community becomes interesting, as despite almost five decades of life in exile, studies largely refer to the ‘successful adaptation’, ‘limited acculturation’ along with socio-economic ‘success’ of the community that is seen as having retained a distinct Tibetan identity.

In this regard, studies that throw light on the socio-cultural changes taking place in the lives of the Tibetan refugee community in India, especially the youth, despite the attempts at cultural preservation, needs to be mentioned (Goldstein-Kyaga 1993; Saklani 1984; Erapeni 2004). It is observed that notions of community and identity amongst Tibetans have witnessed considerable changes after decades of exile in India. The generation of educated Tibetan refugees born and brought up in India, are said to be facing the dilemma, as to whether to stick to their traditional identity as stateless refugees or to opt for naturalization to get access to professional medical and engineering colleges in India (Tsering and Sinclair 1999:16) or to emigrate to the west (Mullin 1985:100). This is seen as posing a sharp contrast to belief in the credo “next year in Lhasa”, a sentiment “taught” to Tibetan refugee children in schools, thus defeating the very purpose of education in exile i.e. preservation of Tibetan-ness (Labiesse 1995:12).

The younger generations of Tibetans born and brought up in India are said to have, due to frequent contacts with Indian and western ideologies, been ‘influenced’ with their tastes, lifestyles and outlook being “totally different from the older generation” (Erapeni 2004:75). Diehl’s ethnography, in this regard, refers to changes taking place amongst Tibetan youth and tensions due to the exiles’ focus on cultural preservation leading to new and different notions of “Tibetan-ness” (cited in
At the same time, attention has been drawn to Tibetan youth brought up in exile who are said to have both a “deeply-felt responsibility to preserve their Tibetanness” as well as a “practical need to adapt to their host cultures and take full advantage of the opportunities available to them in exile” (Caylay cited by Diehl 1995:21). It is observed that the Tibetan leadership “extols the virtues of being prepared to return to Tibet at a moment’s notice” (Grunfeld 1987:196). The refugee youth, on the other hand, are seen as desiring to adapt and acquire educational and occupational mobility in the host country. At the same time, they are also said to be concerned about the preservation of their native language and culture in exile.

Changes taking place amongst Tibetan youth, despite attempts at cultural preservation in exile, therefore, needs to be recognized. The links between refugeeism, education, identities and life chances, needs to be further explored in context of Tibetan youth in exile due to limited research on this area of study.

**Education in India:** Studies reflect on the fact that for the Tibetan Government in Exile, the establishment of a system of education for Tibetan refugee children was a “duty which far transcended the need merely to help keep body and soul together: a duty to nurture a whole civilization in exile” (http://iisd.ca/50commdb/desc/d46.htm). This “duty” called for the framing of an educational set-up in which schools would lay emphasis on the teaching of Tibetan language, religion and culture and also provide for modern and “secular” education (Kumar 1996:41). The welfare and education of children (details given in third chapter) it seems, was a major area concern for the Dalai Lama and assisted by the Government of India as well as international voluntary organizations, an entire system of special ‘Tibetan’ schools were established in exile to ensure realization of this objective.

Education of Tibetan refugee students has been regarded as a primary survival strategy envisioned to safeguard traditional ways of life, culture and language, alongwith providing modern and scientific knowledge and skills required to build a future ‘free Tibet’. Integration of the ‘tradition’ and modern’ in education are also said to have given
rise to dilemmas related to issues of culture, identity and opportunity, which has implications for the education of Tibetan refugees in India. There are references to serious concerns amongst the Tibetan leadership of the younger generations of Tibetans ‘losing’ their Tibetan identity in exile due to increasing effects of ‘westernization’ on their lives (Gyatso 1993:15) (TCV report 1999:3).

Policies are said to have been specially implemented by the Tibetan Government in Exile to arrest this ‘loss’ and to protect Tibetan language and culture. The policy of ‘Tibetanization of Education’ (1984) is a major step in this direction. This has meant use of the mother tongue- Tibetan as medium of instruction in all Tibetan schools uptill the 5th grade (with it being taught as a second language from 6th grade till 12th). Dilemmas, however, seem to have arisen with some educationists recognizing the harm done with rapid transfer to English as the medium of instruction in secondary schools, while others calling for still further augmentation of the ‘Tibetanization programme’ to protect Tibetan language from its erosion in exile (Sangpo 1997: 17).

Despite this attempt to preserve Tibetan language, concerns have deepened amongst the Tibetan leadership with a further ‘loss’ of Tibetan language, culture and identity having said to have taken place amongst Tibetan youth in today’s world. A policy shift can be seen to address these mounting concerns. The latest policy ‘Basic Education Policy for Tibetans in Exile’ (2004) of the exile government focuses on revitalization and promotion of Tibetan as the medium of instruction for all classes in Tibetan schools. English is to be introduced as a second language only from classes four onwards (DOE, CTA report 2004:63) (Chashar et al. 2005:13).

There are also concerns amongst the Tibetan leadership and scholars about rising levels of unemployment amongst the Tibetan youth in India. The new policy refers to and seeks to address “the growing problem of unemployment in the Tibetan society” (DOE, CTA report 2004:63). One of the reasons for this problem is said to be the lack of fluent English and Hindi language skills students receive from Tibetan schools. Fluent Tibetan language skills provided in Tibetan schools, it seems, only enables them to get jobs within the Tibetan administration that has limited vacancies (Tsering 2004).

As discussed above, a vision to balance the traditional and the modern in their education system have largely shaped educational policies of Tibetan refugees in India.
Yet, there are changes that have emerged in the notions of culture, identity and opportunity at the level of the leadership, as also at the level of educated Tibetan youth as a result of education and life experiences of refugeeism in India that need to be explored. The study has looked at these changes from the perspective of Tibetan youth educated in India as well as Tibetan and Indian policy makers and teachers.

There have been a limited number of studies delving into the inter-relationship between education, identity and opportunity of Tibetan refugees in India (Nowak 1978; Saklani 1984; Goldstein-Kyaga 1993). Certain limitations can also be said to exist in these studies. Saklani’s study (1984) refers to the education of Tibetan children in Indian public schools in hill stations of the country but does not throw light on Tibetan schools. In contrast, Nowak’s research (1978) is a detailed account of Tibetan schools but does not look at non-Tibetan schools where Tibetan children also study in India. This study attempts to fill these gaps and present a complete picture by interviewing respondents from multiple school backgrounds to throw light upon the range of their different experiences in school, their aspirations for educational and occupational mobility and their perspectives on Tibetanness and Tibetan youth identity.

**Rationale and Framework**

This study focuses on the context of education of Tibetan refugees in India and its inter-relationship with issues of culture, ethnic identity, economic opportunity and experiences of refugeeism. The study is important due to the presence of a significant number of Tibetan refugees in the world as also in India (approximately 110,000) and the absence of research on the subject of education of Tibetan refugees and its inter-relationship with issues of culture, identity and opportunity. The need for the study arises because of the fact that it provides a context within which a host country’s interventions along with a refugee community’s strategies on education can be seen as seeking to preserve native language and culture along with providing skills and qualifications in exile. The educational and occupational aspirations and identities of Tibetan youth, their perspectives on Tibetanness and official strategies and policies to preserve it, is also a new area of study and something that the study seeks to throw light upon. The study
explores these issues by looking at perceptions and experiences of the youth who have studied in different schools in India.

**An Integrated Model:** The education of Tibetan refugees in India will be looked at through an integrated framework that brings together aspects of models, perspectives and concepts from the work of a number of scholars. Goldlust and Richmond's model of 'immigrant adaptation' (1974) is particularly useful as it suggests that the educational situation of refugees in the host country is likely to be influenced by pre-migration circumstances and the post-migration situation in the host country. It draws attention to processes and factors that affect the adaptive processes of migrants. Pre-migration characteristics could include variables such as educational and technical training, prior urbanization, demographic characteristics, and motivation possessed by the migrant-refugee. In other words, these are what the "refugees bring with them as they move into the host society". Situational determinants, on the other hand, could be factors such as urbanization, industrialization, government policies (especially immigrant laws and policies), demography, pluralism, and stratification within the host society. All these factors can be seen to interact at the level of mutual adaptation, eventually leading to new social patterns (Goldlust and Richmond as cited in Pisarowicz and Tosher 1982:79).

Brint's model on schooling and inequality (1998) identifies 'group circumstances' along with 'institutional structures' as effecting educational outcomes of different groups in society. His perspective of human beings as active agents of change of their circumstances and as "constantly and actively developing adaptive strategies to improve their circumstances" has also informed the present study (Brint 1998:237). The study visualizes the refugee community as active participants, as against the often-popular view of them as passive recipients of welfare doles.

Nowak's notion of 'explicit' and 'implicit curriculum' has particular relevance for the study of the construction of Tibetan identity through the school (Nowak 1978). Thapan's perspective of looking at 'school culture', as "certain fundamental values and norms" and the "configuration of activities through which these are expressed" (Thapan 2006:54), has also been incorporated. Thapan's perspective of looking at certain school activities as "rituals" and "ceremonies" in the school has been seen as important as they help in the integration of the goals and values of the school that can then "become
internalized and experienced as a unity" (Bernstein cited in Thapan 2006:57). Nowak and Thapan’s work provide perspectives that have been incorporated, so as to understand school processes that determine values internalized by students and schools as one of the sites of identity construction.

Dahrendorf’s distinction between “Options” and “Ligatures” in education and resultant dilemmas provides a frame to analyze the links between educational policies and educational outcomes of Tibetan refugees in India (Dahrendorf cited in Corson 1993). Lee’s perspective (2001) of identities as “socially constructed” and “fluid” is particularly apt in the context of identity of educated refugee Tibetan youth. Lastly, Appadurai’s (1997) notion of “imagined worlds” draws attention to the potential of refugee groups, to transcend boundaries and live in within the context of globalization and influence of the mass media. The integrated model is presented in fig 1.1 (see below)
Fig: 1.1 Incorporated Model of Education of Tibetan Refugees in India

'Pre-migration Experiences'
'Group Circumstances':
Cultural resources, attitudes and experiences of schooling, motivational follow-through, socio-economic factors

'Post-migration Experiences'
'Institutional Structures':
Host government and refugee group's institutional structures, policies and international aid

Education in Exile:
'Explicit' and 'Implicit Curriculum' and 'School Culture' of Tibetan and Non-Tibetan Schools, Aspirations and available life chances or 'Options' and 'Ligatures'

Place of Birth
(Tibet or India)

Family

Elements of Tibetan Youth Identity
Cultural Uniqueness and Preservation, Universal Values, Tibetan Buddhism, Reverence for The Dalai Lama, Contributing to Tibet's cause (protest marches, marriage in community etc.)

Community
(Tibetan and Indian)

Place of Residence
(Tibetan Youth Hostel, Delhi etc.)

Tibetan Youth Congress

Sources: (Richmond and Goldlust 1974; Brint 1998; Nowak 1978; Thapan 2006; Dahrendorf cited in Corson, 1993; Appadurai 1997; Lee 2001).
Objectives

The present study focuses on the education of Tibetan refugees in India from a Sociological perspective. An attempt has been made to look at the education of Tibetan refugees in India using an integrated model that focuses on the interplay of pre-migration group circumstances and post-migration experiences. The integrated model will be used to explain, within a broad framework, the issues of culture, ethnic identity and opportunity related to the education of Tibetan refugees in the host country. More specifically the study will:

1) Analyze the education system for Tibetan refugees in India and explore the influence of pre-migration and post-migration factors on education keeping in mind intra-group diversities
2) Explore official policies and how they address issues related to education, identity and opportunity of Tibetan refugees in India by:
   • The Government of India
   • The Tibetan Government in Exile and autonomous organizations
3) Explore how schools construct Tibetan identity in Tibetan and Non-Tibetan schools in India
4) Explore the meanings and perceptions of Tibetan identity and ‘Tibetanness’ of Tibetan youth within two sites of identity-construction in exile – the schools and youth hostel
5) Explore youth’s aspirations, dilemmas and life chances in exile

Thus, the study will seek to broadly answer the following Research Questions:

• What is the situation of education of Tibetan refugees in India?
• How do policies of the Government of India and the Tibetan Government in Exile address the issue of education of Tibetan refugees?
• What are the perspectives and experiences of Tibetan youth on Tibetan identity?
Methodology

The study is exploratory and looks at the relationship between education, identity and opportunity of Tibetan refugees in India. Due to the complexity of the issue at hand, a combination of research methods were used for data-collection:

Secondary Data: In order to analyse, diverse information has been collated from-
1 a) Research studies b) Reports and policy documents c) Internet Websites
- To look at the diversities of the geo-political, socio-economic, educational condition of Tibetan refugees in Tibet and India in the pre and post-1959 period; to also analyze educational policies of the Indian and the Tibetan Government in Exile.

Primary Data: primary data has been collected from-
2 (a) Indepth interviews: The major focus of the study is to explore the education of Tibetan refugees in India along with the interlinkages between culture, identity, opportunities and the perceptions of Tibetanness of youth. Hence in-depth interviews were conducted with Tibetan youth. A total of thirty youth: fifteen were boys and fifteen, girls were interviewed to explore the range of educational experiences of Tibetan youth from diverse backgrounds (of place of birth and residence, type of school etc); to look at the impact of these diversities on the youth’s aspirations for educational and occupational mobility and available life-chances and to look at their views on Tibetan educational policies in exile.

A select sample of Tibetan youth studying in Delhi University were chosen using the Snowball Random Sampling method from the Tibetan Youth Hostel, Rohini, New Delhi. A few non-residents who stayed in college hostels (Miranda House, Hansraj College and Lady Shri Ram College) and rented accommodation in north and south areas of Delhi were also selected. The schools attended a) Tibetan and b) Non-Tibetan were the main criteria selection of the sample. An attempt was also made to see that the chosen sample is representational of intra-group disparities in terms of region/location of settlement and place of birth, socio-economic background, gender etc. The sample comprises of twenty-one residents of the hostel and nine non-residents. Nine students in the study were born outside India while twenty-one were born in India. Fifteen of the students had been educated in Tibetan schools (TCV, CST, THF etc schools) and fifteen
had been educated in non-Tibetan schools (Christian missionary and Indian public schools) (see annexure: 6.1 for detailed profile of interviewed respondents).

(b) School magazines and a students’ journal brought out by the Tibetan Youth Hostel in Delhi, were looked at to analyze educational experiences of Tibetan respondents. Documents like, school calendars, school prospectus, school textbooks and school photographs, were looked at to throw light upon school culture. Photographs of special Tibetan occasions, such as Losar (Tibetan New Year), March 10th Tibetan Uprising Day etc were taken to provide a richer insight into the study.

(c) Open-ended interviews with officials and teachers were held to understand official perspectives on Tibetan youth identity and Tibetanness and to understand how the vision of integrating ‘traditional’ and ‘modern education’ has been translated into policy and its outcomes. Open-ended interviews were held with six officials of the Department of Education, Central Tibetan Administration, Himachal Pradesh. Three of the Indian non-teaching staff at CTSA, Delhi were also interviewed in this regard (see annexure: 7.1 for details of interviewed officials)

Interviews were held with seven middle, secondary and senior secondary school teachers (five Tibetan, two Indian teachers) of Upper TCV School, Dharamsala, H.P. Two of the non-teaching staff of the school were also interviewed (see annexure: 7.1 for details of interviewed officials).

(d) Informal discussions were held with an independent Tibetan youth poet-activist, Tenzin Tsundue, a much-admired figure amongst the youth in the community.

Chapterisation

1) The present chapter has provided a broad overview of available literature related to refugees, education, culture, ethnicity, identity and globalization. It has looked at available secondary literature on Tibetan refugees in India, their education, culture and ethnic identity. It has provided an amalgamated framework (incorporated from other studies) for understanding the issue alongwith stating the objectives of the study and the methodology used for data collection.

2) The second chapter outlines the geo-political status of Tibet and its early history. It looks at the conditions of flight, rehabilitation and resettlement of the Tibetans
in exile in India. It explores the socio-religious, economic conditions and intra-group diversities existing amongst Tibetans in Tibet prior to the 1959 uprising and after the flight to India.

3) The third chapter looks at education of Tibetans in Tibet prior to 1959 and in present-day Tibet or TAR (Tibet Autonomous Region). It explores the educational initiatives of the Indian Government and the Tibetan Government in Exile with a focus on: educational policies and programmes, specifically in the context of access, economic opportunity and identity. Issues like inherent dilemmas in the context of educational policies for Tibetan refugees and the prizing of culture vs. jobs have been explored from the perspectives of Tibetan officials at Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) Dharamsala (Himachal Pradesh), Indian officials at Central Tibetan Schools Association (CTSA) (Delhi), Tibetan teachers in a Tibetan school (Upper TCV School) in Dharamsala, H.P as well as Tibetan youth in Delhi.

4) The fourth chapter looks at the situation of education of Tibetan refugees in India. Access to school education and the categories of schools that cater to them has been looked at alongwith the social background of children enrolled in them. The chapter describes the curriculum, pedagogy, school culture and ethos etc in different schools (Tibetan and non-Tibetan) that Tibetan youth in the study were enrolled in. It presents the wide range of schooling experiences and intra-group disparities in education that emerge from interviews of respondents.

5) The fifth chapter focuses on popular perceptions of ‘being Tibetan’, ‘Tibetanness’ and Tibetan identity and those of the officials- Tibetan and Indian. The perceptions of educated Tibetan refugee youth upon their ‘Tibetanness’ and identities, educational and economic opportunities/life chances available to them and their own aspirations have been explored through in-depth interviews with them. Differences as well as similarities in the youth’s perceptions as compared to official Tibetan perceptions and as that reflected in secondary literature have been analyzed.

6) The last chapter is a summary and discussion of the study.