INTRODUCTION
THE REFUGEE PROBLEM: COMPREHENDING THE CRISIS AND ITS ENORMITY

The problem of refugees is a human tragedy. The sheer magnitude and enormity of the problem can neither be winked at, nor buried by transforming it into mere statistical figures. It is pertinent to note that every figure here represents a life; disrupted, jarred and denied the right of leading a normal fulfilling life. They represent lives, which have been compelled due to trying circumstances, to flee and seek refuge and succour away from their home in distant alien lands. Away from their native surroundings they are forced to live a life of uncertainty and dislocation, often suffering from psycho-emotional problems and anxious about their economic future.

The spatial spread and intensity of the problem is growing at an alarming rate. If effective and urgent steps need to be taken to combat and solve the growing problem of refugee flows as it poses a grave potential danger to the international order that threatens to be overwhelmed and destabilised. The social pressure and fiscal strain on the recipient countries are such that many States – including many developed economies – have started taking harsh restrictive measures to block and curtail the entry of refugees into their country.

It would be pertinent here to distinguish between the different type of migrations and movements of people. Many different push and pull factors are involved in the decision of people to leave their homes and settle in distant alien lands such factors invariably result in different types or nature of such movements. Some of these migrations are of a purely temporary nature, while others tend to be prolonged or long-term, and some are even permanent. Quite often people migrate due to economic hardships, trying to seek better economic opportunities. Such migrations are usually of voluntary nature, motivated primarily by an aspiration or a desire for a good life.
Sometimes migration or mass movements are fallout of emergency conditions. These large exoduses occur due to emergencies like, natural disasters, earthquakes, floods, storms, cyclones famines, etc. In instances of emergency conditions, people even cross national frontiers to seek relief. These exodus usually need massive humanitarian assistance like, food, clothing, shelter and medical facilities. One salient feature of such an exodus is that, people return home once the calamity is over and conducive conditions for rehabilitation are created for their return. However, their condition and the response and assistance provided by the international community is substantially and qualitatively different from the situation in which refugees find themselves in.

Refugee flows are an outcome of people having ‘well founded fear’ of persecution and their unwillingness to seek the protection of their state of residence. Their fate and predicament are enmeshed in other socio-political process in the society.

WHO IS A REFUGEE?

There is major controversy around the application or use of the term ‘refugee’. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) defines a ‘refugee’ as a:

any person who is outside the country of his nationality because he has or had well founded fears of persecution by reason of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion and is unable or because of such fears unwilling to avail himself of the protection of the country of his nationality.\footnote{United Nations Convention on Status of Refugees 1951}

An important component of the definition of a refugee is that the person must have been forced to leave the country of his or her nationality. This must not be an easy option available to a person who is being persecution. There are a large number of people who are facing such conditions that would justify their protection under the Geneva Convention, yet are unable or unwilling to cross the national borders. Many such people may have been even forced to abandon their homes and flee within the

\footnote{United Nations Convention on Status of Refugees 1951}
country of their nationality. Such 'internally displaced persons' too are in need of not only the humanitarian assistance but also of the protection and facilities extended to refugees by the international community. Such persons are deemed to be in greater need, since they have not been able to escape persecution by the State. However, efforts to expand the scope and meaning of the term 'refugee' have failed. Nevertheless, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has been asked to extend facilities under the doctrine of 'good office', to such internally displaced people. Thus, there is an urgent need for solving the plight of these internally displaced people.

Another key to the definition of a refugee is that they should have well founded fears. Thus, many countries under different pretexts have denied extending facilities as enshrined in the Geneva Convention to the refugees. Some States have argued that civil strife, internal disturbance or other such conditions are not sufficient conditions to justify extending refugee status to non-combatants. Some of the European Union States have rejected the asylum plea of people who have transited through neutral countries arguing that such refuge seekers did not have 'well-founded fear' for their lives in these neutral countries. These harsh and restrictive actions are symptomatic of the social pressure and economic strain on the recipient countries due to the presence of refugees. In many host countries the presence of refugees has given rise to xenophobic and extremist political formations. Refugees have had to face violent and brutal attacks by such groups. It is thus pertinent to evolve an effective solution to these refugee flows.

ADDRESSING THE PROBLEM: IN SEARCH OF ELUSIVE SOLUTIONS

At this juncture, it is essential to understand that there cannot be an effective solution to the problem of refugees unless the phenomenon is studied in detail and analysed minutely. This analysis has to keep in mind all the factors and aspects involved.
Unfortunately, the problem with the study of refugees is that it tends to get enmeshed with the emergency efforts and assistance. Thus, it often ignores an in-depth study of the causes and factors responsible. This study while trying to rectify such a lacuna would attempt to study in detail the causes and factors involved in causing refugee flows. It would also try and offer suitable viable solutions to the problem.

Towards the end of solving refugee problem, it is important to understand that refugees are by definition product of violent conflicts, such conflicts inflicts on certain sections of the populace, 'well-founded fears' – owing to their beliefs, affiliation, etc. – and force them to seek refuge in alien lands. Therefore, in order to solve the refugee problem an effort would have to be made to solve conflicts, especially violent conflicts. Until violent conflicts are not solved, refugee-producing conditions will persist. Therefore, this study would not only analyse and try to understand violent conflicts, but would also attempt at developing solutions or alternatives to violent conflicts so that the plight of a large number of people is mitigated to an extent.

It is worthwhile to note that, not all refugee flows are similar. Some are short-term refugee flows while others are long-term, and prolonged. In the case of short-term refugee flow, the refugees usually repatriate to their homes as soon as conducive conditions are created. The challenge in such situations lies in providing quick humanitarian assistance and logistic support for repatriation and rehabilitation. On the other hand in long-term flows finding and implementing solutions is extremely arduous and complex. The group fleeing is usually opposed to the ruling regime, which may have become well-entrenched. So refugees refuse to return due to fear of persecution. In such case unless the conflict itself is solved repatriation is not possible.

Conflicts that have their genesis in ethnic or identity assertion, tend to be more long drawn and protracted. A distinctive feature of such conflicts is that, there is a
tendency to consider the entire group to be responsible for the conflict, who are hence, labelled as enemies. This tends to make the entire group vulnerable to violence and persecution. The aim or goal of such an assertion is usually to get control within the State or at least change the equation of control exercised by the State. This invariably leads to substantive coercive response by the State. The fallout is a heightened intensity of violence and the consequent effect on the society and on the lives of people and larger and longer refugee flows. Hence, the study would initially attempt to understand conflict and violence and thereafter understand those conflicts where ethnicity or identity consolidation or aggregation and assertion play a significant role.

The refugee problem in African State are some of the longest and largest ones. One of the main causal factors is ethnic conflict. Hence, for effective response and solution to such problems it is essential to study the inter-relation between ethnic conflict and refugees in Africa. In order to develop suitable alternatives the study compares the conflict and refugee problems of Rwanda and Burundi.

Burundi and Rwanda have been selected as suitable cases for studying the inter-relation between ethnicity and refugees. By comparing the similarities and contrasting the differences between them the phenomenon becomes more clear and the result more reliable. They have many similarities like both are land-locked, have small areas with similar terrain of mountains, high plateaux and deep valleys and a high population density (about 250 persons per sq. km). They have similar demographic profile of about 84 per cent Hutus, 15 per cent Tutsis and 1 per cent Taws. They have had a protracted ethnic conflict between Tutsis and Hutus. This is despite the fact that these two countries are centuries old kingdoms. In this regard, they are unique in Africa; unlike most of Africa which was partitioned during the colonial era. This meant that in both these societies, a minority of Tutsis could control a majority of Hutus, using well-
developed methods of control and domination. The colonial intervention initiated a series of processes that have, culminated in creating an unstable polity. The post-independence era saw the employment of ethnic identity to achieve political ends. This ultimately led to mass killings witnessed by both the countries and the massive refugee flows.

The above description does not mean that they do not have any differences. The dissimilarity lies in the fact that, in Burundi there was an intermediary princely class of **ganwa**, which was removed from the rest of the Tutsi community. This resulted in both the Tutsis and Hutus being treated on an equal footing, and inter-marriages were common. In Burundi the Tutsis managed to have political control after independence, while in Rwanda Hutus were able to gain political power.

**WHY STUDY THE REFUGEE PROBLEM: DELVING INTO OBJECTIVES**

Thus, the aim of the study is to observe and analyse two similar yet critically or crucially different societies, to understand the entire gamut of issues related to conflict, ethnicity and the problem of refugees. As has been argued, above efforts would be first made to understand conflict in its various dimensions especially why conflicts turn violent. Many different paradigms and understandings of conflict are discussed and analysed. Based on this a model would be developed for understanding conflicts in a deeper and comprehensive manner. Since the emphasis of the study is on those conflicts which have their genesis in ethnicity or identity assertion, thus efforts have therefore been made to offer a clear relief of the different aspects related to identity formation, aggregation, consolidation and assertion. Assertion by an ethnic group invariably and inevitably result in a reaction and counter-assertion. As the level of conflict heightens, group consolidation too rises leading to a spiral of violence.
The repercussion of violence on society are multiple. There are deaths, injuries and other forms of causality directly related to the occurrence of violence. Besides there are indirect repercussions like diseases, epidemics, malnutrition and starvation. Apart from such human loses there are economic loses like the destruction of crops, factories, infrastructure, etc. Violence results in other economic loses like disruption of trade, and production. At times these take years to recoup. This study while not negating the necessity or the gravity of these issues and the imperativeness to study them, so that a solution could be found, would due to constraints also focus on studying the refugee problem and offering viable solutions for it. The plight of refugees is a phenomenon that begs urgent attention. Unfortunately, this colossal problem has not been able to elicit sufficient attention from the international community as well as the academics; that it deserves. In comparison to the magnitude of the problem the efforts to understand and analyse have been few. Another feature of studies on refugees is that due to the exigencies of the crisis situation, deeper and detailed studies especially of the causal factors have not been done. This study will try to fill this lacuna by analysing the linkages between ethnicity, conflict and problem of refugees. However, it will not stop at that but would further attempt to evolve possible solutions to the problem of refugees.

In pursuance of this, two case studies – Rwanda and Burundi – have been selected so that by comparing them a broader picture and more relevant and reliable result can emerge. We shall compare and contrast the different variables influencing conflicts with respect to the socio-political and economic conditions of these two case studies. For this, conflict system in both the countries are analysed and compared since inception and their growth or development from genesis to the present especially with respect to identity and ethnic factors, are charted.
CHAPTERISATION: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

In the first chapter the study would analyse the relationship between the ethnicity and conflict. A detailed study of the various theoretical issues would be carried out and a model would be developed encompassing the different variables like ethnicity, conflict and refugee problem so that the linkage between them is brought out.

In the second chapter the study would use the model, which is developed in the first chapter to first analyse individually both the case studies from the inception of the conflict system to the current time and understand how ethnicity influenced the conflict system. Also a detailed study of how both the conflict systems evolved is carried out. Unless this is done it would not be possible to understand the later developments.

In the third and fourth chapter both the case studies have been individually taken up. Here we have studied as to how the conflict system moved from the latent to the manifest phase. We also enquire into the role and impact of ethnicity, which resulted in these massive refugee flows.

A comprehensive comparative analysis of the conflict system and their resultant refugee flows has been carried out in chapter five. It is through such a detailed comparison that the different aspects of the phenomenon are bought out.