**PREFACE**

One of the biggest political and human tragedies of the Twentieth century has arisen in the shape of more than nineteen million refugees and displaced persons in the World today. This century is referred to by many as the century of the up-rooted and the homeless men. It has been marked by a seemingly unending number of mass flights of people fleeing their native lands, seeking a new life in foreign countries. The refugee problem today is a central issue of hot discussions in all international forums. The impact of this problem is felt world wide and its influence on international politics is increasingly becoming more pronounced. There are few areas of international law of such current importance where the law and institutions are so undeveloped and where the enormous pressures for growth are producing developments at such speed.

International refugee law is not a law of the past but very much the response to the problems of the present. It is that part of Public International Law which deals with the legal aspects of international protection, seeking permanent solution for the problems of refugees by facilitating their voluntary repatriation or their assimilation within new national communities. From an academic point of view, this can be considered to be a specialised branch falling within the broader scope of the international law of human rights, as well as of international humanitarian law. The thrust of refugee law is to define and protect the rights of refugees. It is based on the principle - declared in the
Preamble of the United Nations Charter which reaffirms "faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, ... to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom". The protection of refugees is also founded in human rights. The 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees reflects this in its preamble by citing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948 as a source document. As with most international legal principles, the sources of refugee law lie in - treaty law, customary law, state judicial decisions, juristic works, decisions or determinations of the organs of international institutions or of international conferences. All these sources constitute an international legal regime for the refugees. Of course, the 1951 Convention and the Protocol of 1967 remain the principal international instruments benefitting refugees, and the definition which they offer has been expressly adopted in a variety of regional arrangements aimed at further improving the situation of recognised refugees.

However, the international refugee situation is fast assuming an unprecedented emerging dimension. In 1990, there were about 15 million refugees the world over. Today there are more than 19 million and the number is growing fast. Asylum and local integration or third country resettlement which provided durable solutions to millions of refugees in the last four decades is no longer feasible for many people today. This is largely because of the fact that the overwhelming majority of the world's refugees are found in the developing countries which are not able to tackle this problem because of their own population pressure and economic difficulties to assume this extra-burden. A study of the international
aspects of refugee problems establishes the need for strengthening and developing international law relating to refugees. The experience of recent years indicates that in the uncertain and troubled conditions of the modern world, refugee problems may be among the most important and serious problems facing the international community in the coming decade.

The present study therefore has been chosen by the researcher on the present international practice of humanitarian assistance for refugees by the United Nations and other international institutions under the provisions of international law. The primary objective of this research work is to make an analytical study of the overall international assistance programme, identifying areas of practice that seem to call for improvement from the perspective of both refugees and the receiving countries. However, because of the vastness of the subject and the importance of focusing mainly on current problems, this study concentrates specially on the Indian practice of the international refugee law against the backdrop of present international standards.

Chapter-I is an introduction to the nature and intensity of the present international refugee problem.

Chapter-II aims at drawing a conceptual discussion on the refugee determination process by providing an evolution of the refugee definition under various international instruments.

Chapter-III deals with the current international assistance programme for refugees along with an exclusive study on the role of the various UN agencies and non-governmental organizations in this field.
Chapter-IV examines the Indian attitude towards international refugee law, whereas, Chapter-V wholly concentrates on the humanitarian assistance for refugees in India with special reference to Tibetans, Chakmas, Sri Lankan Tamils and other refugees.

In Chapter-VI certain conclusions have been drawn on the basis of the entire discussion and a set of recommendations has been proposed.

The major concern in this study is not with the internal refugees but with the international refugees who have moved from one State to another. The methodology followed here is chiefly analytical. For this purpose the study mainly depends on primary sources such as UN documents and various international conventions. Besides, the study also makes use of various secondary sources, especially scholarly writings published in leading international and national periodicals, journals, newspapers and reports.