

MULTI-ETHNICITY OF BHUTAN AND NEPAL-BHUTAN RELATIONS

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There is a dearth of material not only on Nepal-Bhutan relations but also on the history, polity, culture, economy of Bhutan and whatever little is available is confined only on the refugee issue. As Nepal-Bhutan relations expands into trade and tourism areas it is imperative that Nepal's nodal government agencies such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation, Finance, Commerce and academic and private sector institutions such as the Tribhuvan University and the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industries build expertise in order to take stock of the major events taking place within Bhutan. A country that is so close to our own in terms of geography, religion, culture and language cannot be ignored both for our own national interest and for the sake of regional cooperation in South Asia.

The *Lhotsampas* in southern Bhutan have faced untold misery without any fault of theirs and may continue to be the victims of a delicate geo-strategic environment. Either living abroad in third countries or inside the refugee camps in eastern Nepal, they have a right to return to their rightful motherland. This researcher's personal conviction is that one day they will become an important and a critically strategic factor in Bhutan's political transformation. This work is essentially dedicated to the one hundred thousand Bhutanese refugees and their children who have endured two decades of suffering and hardship.

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ABSTRACT

Nepal and Bhutan, although close geographically, religiously and culturally have had a difficult relationship mainly due to the issue of Bhutanese refugees which erupted since 1991. Failure to repatriate the 1,04,000 *Lhotsampas* to their rightful motherland has much to do with the unsympathetic attitude borne out of insecurity of the Druk regime, political instability, lack of a clear strategy and mishandling by Nepal and India's indifference to the suffering of the refugees. The democratic movement initiated by the ethnic Nepalese in Southern Bhutan was not successful in the early 90s but Bhutan has been going through gradual political transformation with the first ever elections in which at least two political parties were allowed to participate held in 2008. However, the majority of the *Lhotsampas* have called these elections a sham whereas the situation has also been marked by some degree of violence spearheaded by CPB (Maoists). Without the democratic mainstream, the extreme polarity is likely to get further sharpened in due course of time which will not be in the interest of either the Wangchuk dynasty or New Delhi which enjoys special relations with Bhutan. Indo-Bhutan relations is the only bilateral relations in its neighbourhood that New Delhi can boast of having been steady, warm and hassle-free. But this has also to do with the uninterrupted export of hydro-electricity to the power hungry states of India and Bhutan's refusal to establish diplomatic relations with China and the U.S.

The *Lhotsampas* were brought to Bhutan initially for building monasteries, tea plantation and construction of roads with the approval of the various incumbent monarchs. Most of them started to settle in Bhutan. Simply to say that they are foreigners, forcibly confiscating their property and compelling them leave the country is an abuse of human rights. The U.S. resettlement program has

certainly helped ease tensions between Nepal and Bhutan but we need to comprehend that this is not a permanent solution. There is also the concern of *Lhotsampas* that are still living in southern Bhutan; their predicament and future remains an area of grave anxiety in the context of violent movements in other areas of India's Northeast involving Nepali speakers.

Nepal and Bhutan have no other bilateral issues to settle other than the refugee problem. The bilateral relations were formally established in 1983. While King Jigme and Late King Birendra both have visited each other's country under the aegis of SAARC, there has been no head of state-level visit after 2006. From the Bhutan side, the Queen Mother and the Prime Minister visited Nepal in 2011. The two countries are close culturally, through the Buddhist religious affinity and in the modern day through daily fights and commercial inter-changes. There is a dire need to erect a durable foundation for cementing of the relations in all spheres. Alongside, a strong focus on trade, investment and tourism between the two countries will create a backbone for the relations. Through the aegis of SAARC, UN, BIMST-EC and other international and regional frameworks, Nepal and Bhutan are already working towards enhancing their relations which needs to be nurtured at all levels.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background:

The word "Bhutan" is derived from the addition of two words Bhot + Anta (where Tibet ends) and also from words Bhu + Utthan (highlands). Nestled in the Himalayas, it is typically similar to the topography of Nepal with mountains, hills and the plains. Ethnic Nepalese (*Lhotsampas*) with whom this study primarily deals with have been living mainly in the plains, agriculture being their main occupation and Hinduism their religion. The *Lhotsampas* speak Nepali and generally do not marry with people of other ethnic groups in Bhutan viz. Khengs, Sarchops or Ngalongs.

According to its National Statistics Bureau, Bhutan lists its population as 695,822 (2010).¹ However, the CIA Factbook in 2003 estimated the population being as large as 2,327,849.² One explanation for this discrepancy is an inflated population number the Bhutanese government supplied to the United Nations in the early 1970s in order to gain entry. The UN had a cut off population of one million at that time.

Officially, the government stated the national population of ethnic Nepalese in the late 1980s was 28 percent.³ Lhotshampas are generally Hindus but also include the Tamangs and the Gurungs that are largely Buddhists. Unofficial estimates mark the Nepali speaking population as large as 40 percent of the total population as ethnic Nepalese are seen everywhere, not only in the South but increasingly in Thimpu and Paro.

Historically Bhutan has had several names such as *Lho Mon* (southern land of darkness), *Lho Tsendenjong* (southern land of the *Tsenden* cypress), *Lhomen Khazhi* (southern land of four approaches) and *Lho Men Jong* (southern land of medicinal herbs). The prevalent use of "South" in all these former names of the country is a testimony to its geographical positioning in the South of Tibet, signifying its cultural and religious similarity with Tibet.

¹ Bhutan National Statistics Bureau. "Statistical Yearbook of Bhutan: 2011". Vol. 12. (2011): 124-25

² United States Library of CIA. *Population of Bhutan*. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bt.html>. 12 Mar. 2011.

³ Bhutan National Statistics Bureau. "Statistical Yearbook of Bhutan: 1985", Vol. 5. (1985): 45-46.

Bhutan has always remained a nation of immigrants. There is no clan or race that can proclaim itself as a genuine “Bhutani”. Ngalongs, Khengs, Sarchops and Lhotsampas compose of almost the entire population with 72 percent Lamaist Buddhists and 28 percent Hindus.

Ngalongs (or Ngalops), Khengs and Sarchops are regarded as “Drugpas”. The Ngalongs are people who have migrated from Tibet that according to legends could be as early as the 9th century. They are commonly referred as ‘Drugpas’ in Bhutan and are mainly the inhabitants of the northern and western areas of the country. The Sarchops might have migrated from Assam-Burma and are the biggest ethnic group, the most powerful elite and comprise of the richest traders. The aboriginal tribe of the ‘Monpa’ that practice the shamanistic ‘Bon’ religion are the original inhabitants of the country. There are some indigenous tribal peoples too who are linguistically and culturally akin to the people of Assam, Sikkim and Darjelling which include Lepchas and Drokpas. Prior to the massive exodus of ethnic Nepalese out of the country beginning in the early 1990s, the Ngalops, Sarchops and the tribal groups together comprised of 72 percent of the population as mentioned above. The rest 28 percent was constituted of ethnic Nepalese migrated to Bhutan at varying intervals of history.

The Sarchops traditionally follow the Nyingmapa rather than the official Drukpa Kagyu form of Tibetan Buddhism. In modern times, with improved transportation and communications, there has been intermarriage between these ‘Bhote’ groups. Sarchops mainly came in from Assam and from Burma in the first millennium. In the early 1970s, intermarriage between the Lhotshampas and mainstream Bhutanese society was encouraged by the government under King Dorji but the *Lhotsampas* rarely married outside their religious or ethnic group. A drugpa marrying a Lhotsampa was also given 10 thousand Nu. and there are families who have benefitted from this state policy. However, most *Lhotsampas* term the Drugpas as ‘Bhotes’ and call them dirty, indolent and beef eating that were some of the reasons behind the slow integration of the ethnic Nepalese into the Bhutani mainstream. The policy followed by King Jigme Singhe Wangchuk was contrary to his forefathers as he increasingly began viewing Nepalese as a threat to the monarchy and the national security. Several factors could have contributed to this but the overthrow of the Chogyal regime in Sikkim in which the Nepalese played a pivotal role and the pro-democracy movement comprising mostly of the *Lhotsampas* in 1990 were the two main causes. One can easily gauge the insecurity emanating from the population imbalance because the

Nepali speaking people are in almost all professions including army, politics, economy and agriculture.

Schism between Sarchops and Ngalongs and among ethnic Nepalese and the rest of the population was already rife by the early 1980s coinciding with the anti-Nepalese campaign in Assam and other parts of India's North-East.

Bhutan hosts about 10 thousand Tibetan refugees who fled Tibet after 1959 but the government's policy towards these refugees coming in from Tibet is different with that of Nepal. Whereas in Nepal, a sizeable number of Tibetans have set-up businesses such as carpet weaving, handicraft and hotel/lodges/restaurants and are more or less accommodated in the Nepali society; in Bhutan they have been treated as a burden. In 1979, the government decided to expel them to India those who refused citizenship of Bhutan. About 3,100 refugees were thus expelled to India whereas 4,200 Tibetans received Bhutani citizenship.⁴ Therefore, it can be seen that Thimpu is sensitive about any drastic changes to its population.

Initially, Khengs too did not enjoy cordial relations with the other ethnic groups. The language of the Sarchops (Sangla) differs from that of the Ngalongs. The language of the Ngalongs (Dzongkha) has been named the official language of the kingdom, as they are not only ruling elite but also the predominant group in politics, administration, army and business of the country. In fact, Khengs have been traced as having been living in Bhutan even before the Ngalongs.

Most Lhotsampas had been living in Bhutan from at least a hundred years but the conflicting issues of religion, culture and language were used to thwart pro-democracy protests. This was at a time when Nepal had just embarked on the road to multi-party democracy and constitutional monarchy after the successful culmination of pro-democracy movement in 1990. The Bhutan state was astute enough to use the pretext of these protests to twist the situation in his favor and strain relations of the Nepalese with the rest of the Bhutani society. The protests mainly organized and comprising of the ethnic Nepalese helped the state in proclaiming that they were 'outsiders' and gave it a good rallying case to unite all the other ethnic communities of Bhutan against the Lhotsampas. As the Sarchops, Khengs and Ngalongs joined hands against the Lhotsampas, the

⁴ Savada, A.D., *Ethnic Groups in Bhutan: A Country Study*. Washington: The Library of Congress. Retrieved on Oct. 26, 2010. <http://countrystudies.us/bhutan/19.htm>

Royal Bhutanese Army was used to forcibly confiscate their legal papers, burn their houses, loot their cash and jewelry and forcibly push them out of the country. This led to one of the worst humanitarian cataclysms in the history of South Asia.

Among the identified research variables in this study, the relationship between the ruling Sarchop, Khengs and other clans with the ethnic Nepalese have been presented in order to clarify the later stages of development in the politics of Bhutan. The dominant position of India vis-à-vis Bhutan as regards to its foreign policy, its successful harnessing of water resources for power generation and the likelihood of further expulsion of Lhotsampas from Bhutan in the context of the repatriation drive orchestrated by western countries have been placed in analytical categories in the perspective of Nepal Bhutan relations for the future.

Realism has been a dominant theory in international relations for decades and this is the stream of thought that this research also takes cue from. Statism under this school believes that nation states are the main actors in international relations and that international politics is merely a struggle between self-interested states. Taking this as a basis, this research pre-supposes that Bhutan acted in its enlightened national interest although its 'interest' was primarily defined as the interest of the ruling elite and the rest of the Drugpa society minus the Lhotsampas. Self-help realists have always believed that no other nation state can be relied to help guarantee any other state's survival and this is exactly applicable to India's relations with Bhutan which is also guided by India's own national interests i.e. of fulfilling its energy needs through unhindered and uncomplicated process, guaranteeing security from China via Bhutan, ensuring that no external force crosses over to Bhutan to influence the internal dynamics at play in the Northeastern regions which is harboring a myriad of insurgencies and also that Bhutan supports all its positions in the regional and international arenas.

Fewer than 20 of the 180 sovereign states in the world can be said to be ethnically and nationally homogenous, all other states are multi-ethnic. Bhutan is definitely a multi-ethnic country owing to the large presence of Hindu Nepalese who had migrated to Bhutan in the course of centuries. "Lhotsampas have traced their history of migration to Bhutan to 1624 A.D., the year the then King of Gorkha, Ram Shah, had dispatched some Nepalese artisan/agriculturist families under the leadership of Bishnu Thapa Magar on the request of Shabdrung Nawang Namgyal, the Dharma

Raja of Bhutan, as a gesture of goodwill and cooperation between the two states."⁵ Therefore, multi-culturalism ranging from the advocacy of equal respect to the various cultures in a society, to a policy of promoting the maintenance of cultural diversity is also discussed in the course of this research because Bhutan after 1990 ceased to respect the culture practiced by the Lhotsampas. The regime was very well aware of the growing intimacy, interaction and communication between different ethnic groups and the Drugpa people learning to speak Nepali. Interactions of cultures provide opportunities for the cultural differences to communicate and interact to create multiculturalism which was also the case as of Bhutan. This was discouraged in the wake of an upsurge of Nepali nationalism which would have been against the monarchy similar to Sikkim. The Nepali speaking people of Bhutan therefore were victimized due to several factors mainly the insecurity of the Bhutanese regime in political, economic, demographic and cultural realms.

1.2 Statement of the Problem:

Nepal-Bhutan relations despite age-old contact and friendship between the people of the two countries has neither been adequately studied and evaluated nor stressed for its importance and strategic significance in the overall ambit of foreign policy and conduct of international relations. The two countries, both landlocked, in the same geographical landmass and more importantly in between two Asian giants face similar challenges emanating from external and internal sources. Under the aegis of SAARC and the BIMST-EC they visualize a regional order where both can remain in harmony with others in the neighborhood, engage in beneficial economic engagements and project an independent international image of their own. Lately there have been discussions of boosting tourism, trade and other economic interaction between the two. The specific identification and the causative factors leading of the refugee impasse' cannot be ascertained like in other pure sciences but as per the research carried out by this researcher and interviews conducted, the foremost issue to be identified was on the origin of the Lhotsampas in Bhutan on which considerable disagreement persists among academics and historians. A review of various studies and analyses of their origin has been done and on the social, political, legal, cultural, religious, economic aspects pertaining to the refugee crisis and Nepal-Bhutan relations. This

⁵ Rizal, Tek Nath. *Bhutan: The Other side of the Shangri-La*. Kathmandu: Human Rights Council of Bhutan, 2004. p. 5

researcher has examined the historiography and politics of the refugee exodus and a prognosis on the linkage between these issues and Nepal-Bhutan relations for the future.

In addition, the crux of the research has been in finding out the multi-ethnic composition of the Bhutani society and the role of the Lhotsampas in the modernization of Bhutan. This is fundamental to Nepal-Bhutan relations because since ethnic Nepalese have been a part and parcel of the society, Nepal-Bhutan bilateral relations is so close. Yet, not much has been done to further this relations. The research delves in detail of the predicament of almost all South Asian countries in having to host a large number of refugees and whether or not a regional legal and policy framework is possible under the auspices of SAARC? A detailed account of the refugee status in all SAARC countries is laid out which will prove useful in understanding the constraints for organizations such as SAARC with a limited political and legal mandate to seek a solution.

The research also examines the role of the remaining Lhotsampas in Bhutan and the relationship between them and the ruling establishment and whether or not the ethnic Nepalese have been able to maintain their cultural and social customs? What will be the implication to the larger ethnic Nepali community of methodical state initiative(s) to dilute the Hindu culture and ethos and promote only Mahayana Buddhism in Bhutan? The historically known discrimination against the religious minorities and injustice to the people living in the Southern areas of the country have been identified as a contributing factor to the people's movement and the refugee exodus of 1991 and the subsequent stalemates in finding a durable solution.

The research delves into the latest initiative on the part of the U.S and a few other countries to re-settle the Bhutanese refugees to the third-countries and see whether or not this will impact on a) the democratic struggle of the Lhotsampas in their country, b) influence the plight of the ethnic Nepalese that are still living inside Bhutan and c) overall strategic balance vis-à-vis India and China as regards to these re-settled refugees in America and elsewhere.

A significant portion of the research has been conducted on the overall ambit of Nepal-Bhutan relations and seeing how this has developed over the decades, Bhutan's relations with India and China, Bhutan's success in developing hydro-resources and the new problem of the Maoist movement in the country. India's dependence of power supply from Bhutan has compelled India

to adopt a protectionist policy towards Thimpu regime as there is clear bias in favour of Bhutan over Nepal. Nepal could have also utilized its hydro-resources but this research has shown that while irrigation, flood control and some of the rivers being international boundary lines are serious questions for Nepal, these are not for Bhutan. It is because of the bestowing of key resources such as hydro to India that there is dependency of India on Bhutan's stability. This in turn has had an impact of the resolving of the refugee issue because Delhi prefers the status quo. This research explores into the often-neglected aspects of key relationship between Nepal and Bhutan addressing vital issues such as trade and investment which bind the friendship together. For the management of Nepal-Bhutan relations for the future, a comprehensive overview of the past mis-judgments of Nepal in dealing with Bhutan has been done with special focus on the lack of inter-ministry coordination within Nepal government, lack of a broad national consensus on the issue and over-indulgence on political issues rather than on bilateral trade, tourism, investment and hydro-power.

1.3 Objectives of the Study:

The study focuses on two concrete issues:- the multi-ethnicity of Bhutan and refugee crisis and Nepal-Bhutan relations in its totality which despite being geographically close has not fully developed as envisaged by the leadership and the peoples of the two countries. The researcher has endeavored to cover both the specific and general objectives on the subject matter because they are linked very closely. The Lhotsampas having been an important ingredient of the Bhutani society for so long compose of a major ethnic group of the country thereby a strong binding factor in the bilateral relations.

Specific objective of this research is analysis of the multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-linguistic feature of the Bhutani society. The state desired to showcase a single ethnic characteristic of the country in the early 90s but this research has determined that the sizeable number of Lhotsampas make Bhutan a multi-ethnic country. The ethnic Nepalese that were and are living in Bhutan have contributed a lot to the economic development and social up-liftment of the country so much so that even major roads, hydro-power dams of the country were constructed by them. But this reality is seldom appreciated by the ruling elite. Those Lhotsampas that were vocal in support of a multi-party democracy and constitutional monarchy were forcibly told to

leave in 1990. Therefore without delving into the multi-ethnic identity of the country, the concrete contribution of ethnic Nepalese in various sectors of the Bhutanese society and polity; the bilateral official relations between Nepal and Bhutan cannot be properly analyzed. This study examines measures such as the Green Belt Proposal, Driglam Namza Code of Conduct and the Citizenship Act to go deeper into the causes of the people's movement and the weaknesses on the part of the Bhutanese democratic political parties of having not been successful to make an impact in Bhutan unlike in Nepal.

In addition, analysis of the historical overview of the formal/informal relations both at the governmental and people's levels of the two countries has been carried out with diagnosis of the existing and potential of trade, investment and tourism between the two countries. The research has evaluated the negative influence of the refugee entangle and weighs the possible scope for a healthy growth of bilateral relations beyond the refugee issue.

The general objective is analysis of the variables of the several refugee crises in South Asian countries such as India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh and evaluating the consequences of not framing a regional mechanism in dealing with refugee situations in the SAARC region. Religious, cultural and linguistic fault-lines leading to mass exodus of people in and around the region has complicated the South Asian security dynamics.

The third-country re-settlement option offered by the U.S. and some western countries has definitely given a new life for the refugees as well as help in dissemination of the democratic cause to a wider audience. Analysis on why this offer could have been given to the refugees despite of the fact that the U.S. does not even have diplomatic relations with Bhutan has been thoroughly elaborated in the course of this research. Indo-Bhutan relations in the realm of the overall context of Nepal's inability to repatriate the refugees has also been done by carefully analyzing Bhutan's hydro-exports and India's dependency on energy supplies from Bhutan.

1.4 Research Methodology:

This study is based on analytical and empirical methods. Primary method of research in this dissertation was to analyze the facts and other specifics of the various ethnic groups in Bhutan, the languages spoken and the relations with one ethnic group with another. A critical scrutiny of

the consequence of the people's uprising in 1990 and government resistance leading to the refugee flight, and an exploratory research on the rarely written subject of Nepal's economic and political ties with Bhutan is embodied in this research. This study also has the researcher's own experiences in 1999 as a Research and Documentation Officer at the Institute of Foreign Affairs (IFA) under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) of the Nepal Government with direction to visit and stay in the refugee camps in eastern Nepal for three months and make policy recommendations to the IFA/MoFA on the joint verification of refugees.

Qualitative research methods such as in-depth interviews with foreign policy experts and senior Nepali officials who have dealt with Bhutan in the past, participant observation as regards to refugees in Jhapa and Morang and analyzing Treaties and Agreements have been done. Primary method of research is analysis of the facts and other specifics of the various ethnic groups in Bhutan, the languages spoken and the relations with one ethnic group with another. A critical scrutiny of the consequence of the people's uprising in 1990 and government resistance leading to the refugee flight, King Jigme's abdication in Dec. 2006, general elections of March 2008, and an exploratory research on Nepal's economic and political ties with Bhutan is done in this research.

The primary source of research were books, reports, web articles, documents and dispatches, meetings/seminars and formal and informal interviews and interactions with some senior diplomats closely associated with the refugee issue. The secondary sources of study were newspaper clippings, findings and reports of various INGOs, journals and web articles of refugee activists. A comprehensive review was done of various studies and analyses of the origin of the Lhotsampas on the social, political, legal, cultural, religious, economic aspects pertaining to the refugee crisis and Nepal-Bhutan relations. This research has examined the historiography and politics of the refugee exodus and a prognosis on the linkage between these issues and Nepal-Bhutan relations for the future.

1.5 Limitation of the Study:

There are two noteworthy limitations of this research. First is the over-reliance on the narratives of the refugees and the official Nepal Government viewpoint over the issue of refugee impasse'. This liability is clear at the outset because it is based on Nepal's interests and not that of Bhutan's.

Second, the scarcity of books and relevant data on the Lhotsampa population within Bhutan and the restrictive nature of Bhutan's polity in which information is not easily attained has been a drawback. Nepal's political and economic relations with Bhutan made it mandatory to outline a more futuristic outlook over the issue so that the study is useful to policy makers. This study has not covered the issues raised and discussed in each round of ministerial level meetings held between the two countries since the onset of the problem. The other limitation has to do with the extent to which this researcher has strategized on the implications of the third-country re-settlement program of the U.S. and some countries on their calculated long-term interests in the sub-region. This is only a theorized proposition.

The time period of the study is upto June 2012.

1.6 Justification of the Study:

There has very little written on the background and nature of the refugee crisis along with the third country re-settlement process coupled with the current delicate political situation of Bhutan. Additionally, there has been no work done on the bilateral relations between Nepal and Bhutan. Available literature on the history of Bhutan, Lhotsampas or on the ethnic composition and cultural diversity do not give a precise and uniform picture either. The current state of inadequate knowledge about the structure and society of Bhutan and its decision making apparatus together with the palace-centered politics thus clearly warrants further investigations, and it was against this background that the present study was undertaken.

1.7 Organization of the Study:

The dissertation is chaptered into 9 chapters, starting with the "Introduction" as Chapter 1, followed by eight other chapters.

Chapter 2 is Review of Literature.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 covers a brief history of Bhutan from the era of Guru Padmasambhava and Sabdruk Nagawang Namgyal who arrived from Tibet during the 17th century. The Treaty of Sinchula and the onset of British dominance. The chapter includes reign of various Kings of the Wangchuk dynasty in chronological order and the stages of laws and enactments under King Jigme Singhe. The chapter also contains status of refugees and internally displaced persons in other SAARC countries and an analysis on the prospects of a regional solution to these crises under the aegis of a multi-lateral forum such as the SAARC.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 deals with the history of people from Nepal into Bhutan which has been recorded as back as 1620 A.D. It covers the Gorkha conquests beyond the current boundaries of Mechi and Mahakali when at one point Nepal shared a border with Bhutan. It also traces and elaborates on the emigration of Nepalese mainly from eastern Nepal under British Indian auspices for tea cultivation in the early 20th century. The causative factors for the growing schism between the Lhotsampas and the rest of the other ethnic groups in the kingdom have been covered in this chapter.

Chapter 5

This chapter is about the Causes and Background of the Refugee Crisis such as the Citizenship Act of 1985, Driglam Namza Code of Conduct which is essentially a drive for 'one nation, one people', Marriage Act of 1977 that prohibited Lhotsampas from marrying the people from the Drug-pa community, the 1988 Census that revealed that there were one hundred thousand 'illegal settlers' in the kingdom and the Green Belt Proposal. The chapter contains detailed analysis on the refugee inflow and Nepal's response as well as the series of track one and track two dialogues between Nepal and Bhutan on the issue of repatriation. The chapter is also on the conflicting opinions and suggested approaches suggested by various political parties and groups within Nepal. This chapter also deals with the refugee issue under the new King of Bhutan. There was much anticipation that the young king would drastically alter the policy vis-à-vis the Lhotsampas which is discussed in detail in this chapter.

Chapter 6

Chapter VI covers The Third Country Re-settlement Option. This offer has provided opportunity for more than 60 thousand refugees who were living in the camps in eastern Nepal to settle in the U.S., Australia, Canada, New Zealand, etc. It also analyzes in detail the 2008 elections and the threat posed by the Bhutanese Maoists in the kingdom.

Chapter 7

This chapter is about Bhutan's foreign relations. Bhutan has residential embassies only in a limited number of countries. The chapter covers Bhutan's relations with India, U.S. and China.

Chapter 8

Chapter VIII covers Nepal-Bhutan relations in its totality from the historical, political and cultural aspects to areas such as trade and investment. It also offers suggestive measures for the future development of the bilateral relations.

Chapter 9

This chapter is the last chapter. It elucidates the main findings and conclusion of the study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Only a few books and literature is available on the subject of Bhutanese refugees while there is hardly any material on the subject of Nepal-Bhutan relations. Those that are available are mainly on the kingdom's religious, cultural and ethnic composition, its flora and fauna or propaganda material published by the government. A brief review of some of the works relevant for the present research has been done below highlighting notable findings.

Deben Sharma, *Lhops (Doya) of Bhutan: An Ethnographic Account*, New Delhi: Akansha Publishing House, New Delhi, 2005. p. 261

The author focuses entirely on a community called 'Doyas' that live in remote corner in the hills under Dorokha sub-division of Samchi district. Doyas have mixed physical features although they are predominantly Mongoloid. They live in environmentally friendly houses built with locally available wood, bamboo and leaves. Doyas speak a distinct language known as Lhokpu. The modern education and occupations are exposing the illiterate Doyas to new ideas and positions in the larger society outside their own community. Health and sanitation are very poor. They live under unhygienic conditions because of poverty. The basic structure of Doya social organization is based on matri-lineality. There are four geographically distinct village administrative units for Doyas. A strong tendency of intra-territorial marriage relations observed among the Doyas land property is inherited through the female. Brother also has important roles and responsibilities towards his sisters and her children. A consanguine group comprises of descendant daughters, their children and husband. Son takes resident at his wife's household after marriage. The Doyas are a group of pre-literate people in Bhutan making barely 0.13 percent of the total population. They are advancing to newer technologies but they still have a strong cultural, social and religious bondage with their surroundings.

Although this volume is an interesting read, the author approaches the centuries-old traditions of this community from two perspectives only: the history of the region of Samchi and the hurdles in the assimilation of the Doyas vis-à-vis various other ethnic groups. The book only touches upon the culture and religion of the Lhotsampas in a cursory manner.

A.C. Sinha, *Bhutan: Ethnic Identity and National Dilemma*, New Delhi: Reliance Publishing House. 1991. p. 264

The author describes earliest phase of the Bhutanese history as wrapped in mystery. In course of time various monks, priests, reformers and missionaries made a number of innovations as per their training, experience and demands of the time. The traditional societies such as Bhutan do not necessarily maintain distinctions between society, polity and religion. By 1950 Bhutan was set for emerging as a distinct polity. It had made good-bye to theocracy as such, Lamaist political culture and the clergy continue to be inseparable in the formal Bhutanese political system. The Drugpa identity emerged around the Drugpa sect of Lamaism. The King is head of both the state and the religion and Lamaism is state religion. Monk hierarchy is above all laws. The ruling elite deliberately decided to undo the centuries old policy of isolation and proceeded as if in a hurdle race to catch up with other nations. The present rulers in Bhutan are engaged in a historic task of nation building. Bhutan is the only Lamaist Kingdom in the world.

The most significant revelation in the book is the author's perception that Bhutanese administration kept a strict watch on the course of democratic movements in Sikkim and Nepal as Bhutanese Nepalese have natural allies in these regions for their cause. It is also disclosed that the Bhutanese ruler was utterly surprised when the democratic fever caught up in Sikkim and the 334 years old Namgyal rule came to an end in 1975. However, the author does not elaborate on the cross-border relations of the Lhotsampas and the Nepali speaking people in the Northeast of India, a gap that is the biggest weakness of the book.

Dorji Wangmo, *Of Rainbows and Clouds: The Memoirs of Yab Ugyen Dorji*, Bhutan: Dorji Wangmo Publisher, 1997. P. 230

This is a memoir of Yab Ugyen Dorji, the maternal grand-father of the present King of Bhutan, authored by the queen mother. It provides an interesting picture of the way of life in Bhutan in this century and the life and times of Yab Ugyen who was involved in the very first phase of industrialization in the country. The book, which is full of photos and illustrations, give a glimpse of the many facets of Bhutan's history and culture from life in the monastic retreats and remote villages, to the temporal world of dzongs and royal palaces. The memoir starts by informing the readers that the two families of the last mind and speech incarnations of Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, the founder of Bhutan were united in a marriage and that Yab Ugyen was a child of the union. But even saints are not separated from tragedy when Shabdrung's uncle is assassinated in 1949; the book for the first time gives an authentic version of the assassination which has remained a mere speculation in the country's history. There is a candid account of how Yab Ugyen was forced to flee to Gangtok and Kalimpong for well over a decade because of insecurity back home. The book also chronicles the royal wedding of 1988 in which King Jigme married 4 daughters of Yab Ugyen Dorji. It is natural that after this event and his family ties with the royal family, Dorji's life changed suddenly and from a carpenter and owner of lodges, he became a powerful person in Bhutan.

The later part of the book illustrates Ugyen's struggles as he grows from a fledging shopkeeper to a successful merchant. Although the book is written in a manner to project all the positive aspects of Bhutan's society and polity, the glaring indifference to people of other religions especially Hinduism that has existed in the kingdom from centuries is the limitation of the book.

Jaiwanti Dimri, *The Drugpa Mystique: Bhutan in the 21st Century*, New Delhi: Authors Press, 2004. p. 188

This book gives a first hand account of the miraculous overt and occult phenomena, the personal and social nuances, modes and modalities of behaviours, the rituals, customs, beliefs, conventions, legends and social-cultural-religious life in Bhutan. For instance, it gives several accounts and legends of Guru Rimpoche and Guru Padmasambhava who have had a great deal of influence in the cultural and religious life of every Bhutani especially those following the Buddhist religion. It describes in detail the Chortens, Manis and Dhars, the interface of religion and life, drugpa songs and dances, religious mask dances of the country, thrung, thrung karmos, aitho maitho (rhododendron) and the practice of circumbating the land in 13 days. Buddhism propagated by Guru Padmasambhava was adaptable to incorporate in its fold the local religious deities and Gods and Goddesses. The elements of Tantrism introduced into it are often describes as a mixture of Shiva worship and magic. It accrues significance to the yogic practices and incantations addressed to the female shaktis. Next to Guru Padmasambhava is the fearless and compassionate Bodhisattva known as Chenerzig or Alokiteswara, the God of infinite mercy. His eleven heads and a thousand arms symbolize his numerous manifestations. Alokiteswara appears in various manifestations in six worlds: Dev Loka, Asura Loka, Pashu Loka, Naraka Loka, Preta Loka, Manushya Loka.

Although the author mentions the nuances of Bhutani society such as the compulsory training in Driglam Namza and Driglam Choesum (without which employment in government service is forbidden), there is absolutely no mention of the trouble for the ethnic Nepalese to wear the gho and kira and practice the national language which is very different from Nepali. But in the book itself, it has been mentioned that cassettes of Nepali songs are quite popular in Bhutan and it is available in shops and households, even played in buses. Such divergence in argument is the main flaw of the book.

Gopal Pokharel, Anjan Shakya and Ballav Dahal (Eds.), *Different Dimensions of Bhutanese Refugees Problem: Its Implications and Lasting Solutions*, Kathmandu: Institute of Foreign Affairs, 2007. p. 96

This is a compilation of papers presented at a seminar organized by the IFA. The papers included are:- “Durable Solution for Resolving Bhutanese Refugee Problem by Prakash A. Raj, “Different Dimensions of Bhutanese Refugee Problem: Its Implications and Lasting Solutions” by K.P. Oli, “Repatriation or Expatriation? Refugee Rigmarole on the Last Shangri-La” by Dhruva Joshi and “Genesis of the Bhutanese Crisis, Creation of the Refugee Problem and Possible Resolution” by Dr. DNS Dhakal. It also has addresses of Sahana Pradhan, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Gyan Chandra Acharya, Foreign Secretary and Abraham Abraham, Country Representative of the UNHCR illustrating the various dimensions of the refugee crisis.

The Foreign Secretary says the Bhutanese government has always appeared with an unclear vision and policy so the refugee remained unresolved till date. Nepal has received a number of offers for resettlement of the refugees however, “we don’t say that it is a durable solution but definitely it is an interim solution,” he says. Mr. Acharya further says that the “basic aim of the Nepal government is repatriation of the refugees with safety and dignity, but if voluntarily the refugees wish for the third country resettlement, Nepal will not come in between.” The trouble with this assertion is that in the course of a more comprehensive research on the refugee crisis, it is seen that not Bhutan but Nepal does not seem to have a clear vision. Bhutan has succeeded in shelving the issue for more than two decades.

The paper of DNS Dhakal, a detailed description is given on the genesis of the crisis, the background the eviction of the Lhotsampas and the situation in Southern Bhutan prior and after the exodus. It is a good paper in which the author gives a first hand account inside Bhutan in those days. He says that the government had meticulously planned the expulsion process: areas were carefully chosen for eviction bearing in mind possible reaction from the Nepali community across the border, particularly those in Darjelling and Sikkim. These expulsions have reduced the Lhotsampa population remaining in Bhutan to about 26 percent of the country’s total; those areas

closest to the tribal populations in Assam underwent the highest proportion of evictions. Among the castes: Bahuns accounted for 28 percent, Chettris 17 percent, Rais 14 percent, Gurungs 9 percent and others 32 percent. But despite the desire to return, the author does not state the enormous amount of appeal that third-country settlement option has had on the refugee population in Jhapa and Morang. Why and how do refugee leaders and the democratic political parties foresee their movement in the context of most of the refugees going abroad has hardly been highlighted in the course of his argument. In addition, there is hardly any paper by representatives of other major political parties such as the Nepali Congress, UCPN (Maoists) and the Madhesi parties in the book, which is also another drawback of the book.

Tashi Choden, "Indo-Bhutan Relations: Recent Trends". *Comprehensive Security in South Asia*. Eds. Dev Raj Dahal and Nishchal Nath Pandey. New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 2006. (pp 171-195).

Bhutan has been known to be adopting a self-isolationist policy up until the second half of the 20th century, and the preservation and promotion of a strong sense of identity, which has ensured social cohesion and unity. The author argues that this has resulted in Bhutan being spared from the conflicts and turmoil and from being colonized by the British. However, the Bhutanese have historically been sensitive to issues of security, with frequent disturbances occurring from internal warring factions prior to the unification and establishment of the monarchy in 1907. External threat was present during the 17th and 18th centuries with several attempts at invasion from the Tibetans; 19th century Bhutan saw the loss of the Assam and Bengal Duars to British India. As such, preserving its sovereign independence and territorial integrity has always been a matter of great importance for Bhutan, according to the author. The geo-political scene in the entire Himalayan region and the Indian sub-continent underwent great change following the proclamation of the People's Republic of China in 1949 and the takeover of Tibet by the PLA in 1950. These events plus the presence of Chinese troops near Bhutan's border, China's annexation of Bhutanese enclaves in Tibet, and the perceived threat from China, all led Bhutan to re-evaluate its traditional policy of isolation; the need to develop its lines of communications

with India became an urgent necessity. The paper's main contestation is the need felt by the rulers to pursue extremely close relations with India but shy

Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuk, *Treasures of the Thunder Dragon: A Portrait of Bhutan*, New Delhi: Penguin, 2006. p. 211

Written by the Queen Mother of Bhutan, this book describes the various developmental measures undertaken by the monarchy. It also gives a vivid description of the religious, culture, ethnic and linguistic practices prevailing in the country. One of the major attributes of the economic success of Bhutan is its harnessing of water resources for electricity. Since the 60s, a highway has connected the town of Phuentsoling in southwest Bhutan, bordering the plains of Bengal, to the higher valleys of Paro and the capital Thimpu, western Bhutan- a distance of 184 kms. which can be comfortably covered in six hours.

The author illustrates in detail how under the Kings especially the third King (also known as the Father of Modern Bhutan), the first motorable road was built, which changed the lives of an average Bhutani, modern education was made available to the people for the first time and a number of technical assistance programmes in cooperation with India and other countries were started, to develop agriculture, hydroelectric power and a modern system of administration. He also instituted a national assembly composed of representatives of the people from all across Bhutan and set up ministries, a high court, a currency and banking and postal systems. In 1971, Bhutan joined the United Nations. On the other hand, the book is silent on how Bhutan will be viewed as a modern independent nation of the 21st century without diplomatic ties with the world's only superpower (the U.S.) and China which is an immediate neighbor.

The author elaborates how she herself has traveled across the rugged terrain of the country and met with commoners of all walks. She also mentions how under the “able” leadership of the monarch, her country has witnessed progress in socio-economic, cultural, educational and health sectors. There is a lot of revelation on how old monuments and monasteries have been renovated

and how the government has been able to promote eco tourism by the virtue of which Bhutan has been successful in disseminating itself as the “last Shangri-la” in the world. This book also overlooks the contributions of Lhotsampas in the economic development of Bhutan.

Naoko C. Kojo, *Bhutan: Power Exports and Dutch Disease*, Thimpu: Centre for Bhutan Studies, 2005. p. 171.

While power exports has brought significant benefits to Bhutan, there are concerns that it may not be an unmitigated blessing. Despite large inflows of foreign capital, Bhutan’s macroeconomic indicators suggest that inflation has so far been modest and under control. Over time, however, *Ngultrum* has appreciated steadily against the Indian Rupee, eroding Bhutan’s export competitiveness with India. The World Bank’s 2000 *Country Assistance Strategy for Bhutan* views this as a sign of Dutch disease caused by increased power exports to India, and suggests that additional power exports and aid inflows, including the World Bank’s financial assistance, may undermine the country’s growth prospects as real appreciation would discourage production and investment in the tradable sector.

This book is one of its kind because it gives a negative viewpoint on Bhutan government’s over-reliance on its hydro sector by virtue of which it is earning substantial foreign revenue but in the long run, it is terminating other sectors such as herbs and carpet. This is perhaps the first work to assess the presence of a “Dutch disease” in the Bhutanese economy but falls short of suggesting what other exportable commodity could Bhutan have to sustain its economy.

Tek Nath Rizal, *Ethnic Cleansing and Political Repression in Bhutan*, Kathmandu: Human Rights Council of Bhutan Publisher, 2004. p. 116

This book is authored by the senior most figure of the Bhutanese democratic struggle who was imprisoned for many years for his beliefs. The authors explicitly mentions that Bhutan is a nation of immigrants who arrived from all directions at different points of history. It is a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-cultural and multi-linguistic country. The government is intolerant

of the diversity and multi-cultural character of its society. Bhutanese refugees are the product and victims of this ploy and ill-conceived policies of the government. Bhutan's population of about 7,50,000 which includes 1,35,000 refugees living inside the refugee camps in eastern Nepal and India.

The Northerners require to obtain a pass to enter into the Nepali settlements. It is the Druk government that created the refugee problem; it is their legal, moral and political responsibility therefore to take back refugees with dignity. Although the author says that Nepal and Bhutan alone cannot solve the problem of the refugees, the author falls short of recommending practical measures to involve India in this tri-lateral tangle.

CHAPTER 3

BRIEF HISTORY OF BHUTAN

Bhutan, a tiny Kingdom in between India and China, nestled in between the Himalayas has been hidden from the outside world from centuries. For long, Bhutan did not have roads, schools or hospitals and it removed a ban on cable-television and internet only in 1999. It still has no traffic lights. Only recently due to the refugee crisis and because of the exposure to the international media has it come to some extent to the understanding of western countries. It is opening up to the world cautiously so as to preserve its culture and religion. One of the hallmarks of its eco-friendly development efforts is 70 percent forest cover that needs to be maintained at all times. Because of this, there is greenery all around. But the reverse side of this policy is that Bhutan has to import timber from India.

Although, still unfamiliar and negligible in the Asian realm of affairs, Bhutan definitely is situated in a meaningful geo-strategic location which is why British-India along with the successive Indian governments after independence in 1947 adopted an extremely close and even confidential approach towards this country. The closeness between British India and Bhutan and between independent India and Bhutan has made it difficult for the Bhutanese leadership to beyond the directions set by foreign power as regards to its foreign and domestic policies. However, with the ebb and flow of time, this orthodox Buddhist state is also going through major transformation in lieu of the massive wave of globalization and information technology. Bhutan has opened itself to tourists although cautiously. Internet and television are made accessible to the public and a massive plan for economic development through an unique framework of the Gross National Happiness (GNH) is also underway. The hydropower potential of the country is being tapped for the benefit of not only the Bhutanese but more so for power hungry states of bordering India by virtue of which Bhutan annually receives millions of dollars as revenue. But, there is one issue that has been upsetting Wangchuk dynasty's otherwise hassle-free absolute monarchy from the last 10 years. More than one hundred thousand Bhutanese of Nepalese origin had demanded an end to his authoritarian rule and the establishment of multi-party democracy in the country which was ruthlessly crushed and the Bhutanese authorities had forcefully evicted these people

out of Bhutan. Since 1991 they live in sheltered huts in 7 refugee camp in eastern Nepal. There are other issues as well. The United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), a separatist organization that wants separation of Assam from India is openly carrying out activities from its hideouts from Bhutanese territory much to the dismay of the Indian government. These rebels were eliminated through a joint military operation of the two countries but controversies remain on how these insurgents set-up hide-outs deep inside Bhutan. There is also a monument erected near Thimpu in remembrance of all those killed during the operations.

The ethnic Nepalese compose a critical segment of the demographic balance of Bhutan. Since the other ethnic groups were not capable of working hard and were not proficient agriculturalist, it was because of the Nepalese that the plains of south Bhutan were tilled. The British employed Nepalese for the tea estates in Assam. King Jigme Dorji permitted Nepalese to settle in large numbers. Even till today, Lhotsampas remember King Jigme Dorji, the grand father of the present King with great admiration. It was because of the Lhotsampas that massive construction of roads, buildings and hydro electric project sites were undertaken. No precise evidence is available on when the Nepalese started entering Bhutan as historians are divided over the exact time period. A chronological listing of the reigns of each King of the present Wangchuk dynasty is done in the subsequent pages.

The earliest surviving records of Bhutan's history show that Tibetan influence already existed from the 6th century. King Songtsen Gampo, who ruled Tibet from 627 to 649 AD, was responsible for the construction of Bhutan's oldest surviving Buddhist temples, the Kyichu Lhakhang in Paro and the Jambay Lhakhang in Bumthang. Settlement in Bhutan by people of Tibetan origin happened by this time. Most of the basic statistics of Bhutan cannot be ascertained and researchers do not usually rely on the specifics provided by the GOB due to gross inconsistency and discrepancies. But some of the principal facts and figures of the kingdom is as follows:

3.1 Basic Statistics

People population : 6,97,395¹

¹ Note: Bhutan govt. keeps on altering its population statistics. 'Himalayan Kingdom' published in 1979 said that the population was 12 hundred thousand but 13 years later, the govt. said that the population was only 6

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| Age distrib. (%) | : less than 15-30.2; 65+ 5.5 |
| Population density | : 38.1 per sq.mi |
| Urban | : 31% |
| Ethnic groups | : Ngalong, Kheng, Sarchop, Lhotsampa ² |
| Principal Language | : Dzongha (Official), Tibetan, Nepali. |
| Religions | : Lamaist Buddhists 75%, Hindu 25% |
| Geography Area | : 18,147, sq. mi. |
| Neighbours | : India and West (Sikkim) and South, China's Tibet of the North |
| Capital | : Thimpu (pop. 83,000) |
| Head of State | : King Jigme Keshar Namgyal Wangchuk; b. Feb. 21, 1980; |
| In Office | : Dec. 14, 2006 |
| Local Divisions | : 18 districts |
| Industries | : Cement, wood products |
| Chief crops | : Rice, corn, citrus |
| Other resources | : Hydropower, timber |
| Arable land | : 2% |
| Labor force | : 93% Agric., 5% services |
| Monetary Unit | : Ngultrum (44=1\$), Indian rupee also used |
| Per Capita GDP | : 5,200 \$ |
| GDP Growth | : 21.4 % |

hundred thousand. The world Resources 1998/99 publication of UNDP, UNEP, WRI and the WB has stated that the pop. of Bhutan was 734,000 in 1950 and 1.9 million in 1998. World Development Report on the other hand has the 1998/99 pop. of Bhutan as 736,000 indicating an increase of only 2 thousand in 49 years! World Almanac (2010) states the population as 691, 141.

² Note: Bhutan has always remained a nation of immigrants. There is no clan or race that can assert itself and proclaim as a genuine Bhutani. Ngalongs, Khengs and Sarchops are known as the 'Drugpas'. Kgengs and Sarchops too did not enjoy cordial relations with the ruling Ngalongs until King Jigme turned them against Lhotsampas (people of the south or Nepalese) during the mass eviction of 1990. Nepalese were conscripted to be a threat for all the Bhotias. But, even the language of the Sarchops (Sangla) differs than that of the Nglongs. These two groups are separate even from the drugpa karynd sect of Buddhism of the Ngalongs. Nevertheless, Dzongkha, language of the Nglongs has been given priority and is named the official language of Bhutan and King's efforts to bring these two clans closer to his domination have been largely successful. In fact, Khengs have been traced as have been living in Bhutan before the Ngalongs entered the territory in the 11th century B.C. Many refugees claim their forefathers to have been living in Bhutan from '5 hundred years' but such stories too cannot be trusted.

| | |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------|
| National Budget | : (FY 2011) = 13.7 million \$ |
| Partners | : India -94% |
| Civil Aviation | : 1 Airport |
| Radios | : 19 per 1,000 pop |
| Telephone | : 27,500 lines |
| Literacy | : 55.6 % |
| Physicians | : 1 per 8,000 pop |
| Infant Mortality | : 51.9 per 1,000 births |
| Hospital beds | : 1 per 825 persons |
| Major Organizations | : SAARC, U.N. (IBRD, IMF, WHO, FAO) |

3.2. History of Fables and Legends:

Bhutan, like Nepal was fragmented into several tiny Kingdoms before Sabdruk Nagawang Namgyal, a Buddhist monk from Tibet arrived in Bhutan during the 17th century A.D and through his meditative powers (as the legend goes) unified the country into one. Namgyal, a saintly hermit used to meditate from his early childhood days and was supposed to be named the incarnation of the Pema Karpa but the then ruler of Tibet appointed somebody else as the manifestation and Namgyal fled from Tibet and went wherever his intuitive conscience instructed him. This type of selection procedure is applied even till today and the most famous of them is the 14th Dalai Lama currently in exile in India.

However, it is mostly the descendants of Namgyal that the Wangchuks superseded and therefore, the successive heirs of Namgyal had to face several assassination attempts along with imprisonment and captivity. Amazingly, only one of the remaining heirs of Namgyal is alive and is currently living in Kulu Manali that suspect to be under the protection of the Government of India. Nonetheless, schools in Bhutan still teach about Namgyal and his brave deeds and he is kept with high reference and respect by the government.

Not a great deal is known about Bhutan's primitive history which is why it is easy for the government to twist and turn historical facts according to changing times and according to where

it suits its designs and objectives. The mountain ranges in the North and the dense forests of the mid-hills contributed to the inaccessibility. The country was completely isolated and little was known about its ethnicity, polity and economy to the outside world. "Until the beginning of the last century very few travelers had penetrated the country, apart from Tibetan monks, a few holy men up from the Indian plains, a trickle of hardy India traders and the Portugese Jesuits - Cacella and Cabral, in the early 17th century; and from the late 18th century onwards official missions from British India. All travelled on foot or with mules and ponies."³ Proselytizing is banned in Bhutan, although a lot of Lhotsampas in the south have converted to Christianity. It has been known that many re-settled refugees have also converted while in the U.S.

Buddhism was introduced in Bhutan by Guru Padmasambhava probably during the 8th century A.D. It must be noted that there are 4 major Tibetan schools of Buddhism:- Kagyu, Nyingma, Sakya and Gelugpa. It is the Kagyu sect of Buddhism that is dominant in the country. But there are also the sub-sects. In the 12th century, two Kagyuppa sub-sects from Tibet, the Drugpa Kagyuppa and the Lhopa Kagyuppa established their dominance in Bhutan. Guru Padmasambhava also known locally as 'Guru Rinpoche', or 'the precious master' originally came from Swat in Pakistan. He was invited to Bhutan in 746 A.D. He is said to have possessed supernatural powers that included the skill to fly on a tiger. According to a popular legend, he landed in a cave on a steep cliff that is now called 'Tiger's Nest' - a famous tourist site in Bhutan. It is said that upon his arrival that there was a great sound like thunder that sounded like the roar of dragons. Bhutan's name, Drukyul, means, 'Land of the Thunder Dragon'.

The gap between the era of Guru Rinpoche, Sabdruk Namgyal and the establishment of hereditary monarchy of the Wangchuk dynasty is sketchy as there were various local rulers called Penlops or Druk Desis acting like Kings ruling over a specific area of the country. Primitive and uncivilized, the people obeyed their orders. Fights between rival Penlops was common.

³ Collister, Peter. *Bhutan and the British*, Delhi: Serinda Publications, 1987.

3.3 Treaty of Sinchula and British Dominance:

Only as lately as 1771 A.D., Warren Hastings of the East India Company glanced at the location of this country with a mission of opening up trade routes to Tibet. Bhutan was closer to Tibet and acted as its satellite, which obviously was not liked by the British that had already conquered most parts of the region. The Duar War (1864–1865) lasted only five months and resulted in Bhutan's defeat. Under the terms of the Treaty of Sinchula signed on November 11, 1865, Bhutan ceded territories in the Assam and Bengal Duars. The cost of the war was heavy as the Treaty accepted British domination over the entire territory of Bhutan. The contents of this Treaty were very much like the British India-Sikkim Treaty. In essence it became a protectorate of the British Empire.

After establishing *de facto* control of the country, the British saw that two individuals Paro Penlop and Tongsa Penlop had considerable influence over the people of Bhutan. This is very much like the British fondness of Jung Bahadur in Nepal as he was able to assert his authority over the Nepali court of the time as well as serve British interests. This way, the British would not have to worry about day-to-day administration of the Himalayan country. In a similar fashion, Tongsa Penlop Ugyen Wangchuk was seen to be astute with an innate desire to establish friendly relations with British India. He even spoke to Tibetan authorities on behalf of the British to prepare a workable trade route between British India and Tibet. To repay this debt, the British indirectly supported Wangchuk to become King of Bhutan in 1907. Some academics feel that "the English did not want to incite and scare the Tibetan ruler and thereby the Chinese by formally annexing Bhutan".⁴ This is also the same approach that they took over Nepal. It was much easier, cost effective and strategically beneficial for the British to establish a puppet regime than to directly try and control the rugged, inhospitable often inaccessible countries of Nepal and Bhutan. While Jung Bahadur Rana and Tongsa Penlop would rule their subjects with an iron grip, they would also make certain that Chinese overtures across the Himalayas be neutralized.

What was the status of Bhutan when the British were ruling India and most parts of the sub-continent? The answer is difficult but Bhutanese do try to assert that they have indeed been a

⁴ Kohli, Manorama and Kapileswor Lav. *India and Bhutan*. New Delhi: Vedic Books., 1974.

sovereign country throughout their history. But whilst probing deeper into the status of the country, one is astounded to find that their status was no greater than many of the princely states of India. The following interesting paragraph will elucidate the issue:-

"The 'Maharaja of Bhutan' used to be accorded a salute of 15 guns, as accorded to the Maharaja of Sikkim. This was no arcane triviality but a very real issue at the time. A delicate relationship had been built-up between Britain, known as the Paramount Power and the Indian Princes who still ruled over half of the sub-continent. Their states came in all shapes and sizes and numbered 565 in all, varying from Hyderabad with over 80,000 sq. miles to tiny ones with less than a sq. mile. Consequently, they were divided by the British, who had treaty arrangements with all of them and permanent residents in the larger ones, into 3 divisions. The first division included all the 'salute states of which two were accorded 21 guns, 6 had 19, 13 had 17, 17 had 15 guns. 30 states were saluted with 13 guns and 11 had 6. The rulers of these states were referred to as 'Maharajas' except to those with only 11 or 9 guns referred to as 'Rajas'.⁵

This establishes the fact that for the British the status of Nepal and Bhutan were markedly different.

Several writers both from Bhutan, India and from the west have also tried to hypothesize that monarchy was established by a consensus through a referendum comprising of all the priests, clergymen and noblemen. On the contrary, some eminent writers on Bhutanese affairs state that "The then internal and external environment was so much guided and controlled by the British that nobody could have been overthrown without an active support from them."⁶ However, the role of this tiny hilly kingdom in the global political theatre was very much insignificant. Hence, the British representative residing in Sikkim used to look after Bhutan also, displaying albeit obliquely the negligible part of Bhutan in the British realm of affairs within India.

After the monarchy was established, the British concluded a separate treaty popularly known as the 'Punakha Treaty' which accepted British guidance to the latter to look after foreign relations of Bhutan. The British also required brave Bhotia men in their army and this treaty naturally served as an aid. All this guide us to a logical conclusion that Bhutan was not fully independent during the British Raj in India as claimed by the government of Bhutan. This argument is supported by

⁵ Collister, op.cit., p. 157.

⁶ Stern, C. and DNS Dhakal. *Bhutan: A Movement in Exile*. New Delhi: Nirala Publishers. 1994.

the fact that the Kings of Bhutan used to come to Calcutta to present their submission during the visits of Royal family members from London. Nepali rulers on the other hand only used to invite the British viceroys for hunting explorations in the terai.

3.4.1 King Ugyen Wangchuk - 1st King of Bhutan: (1907-1926)

The first King Attempted to convert Bhutan from a primitive country of tribals to a modern nation. He appointed Kaji Ugyen Dorji as an administrator of Southern Bhutan responsible for collecting land tax revenue from farmers. Dorji, on the other hand acted more of a king himself than as a chief executive officer setting up a wayward system of monarchy inside a monarchy. The tax revenue never reached the palace instead, the Dorji family luxuriated in the money conferred by the poor peasants.

3.4.2. King Jigme Wangchuk - 2nd King of Bhutan (1926-1952):

Under him, Bhutan remained in complete isolation. Domestically too, he did little to take his forbidden and inaccessible country to modernity. In 1947, Bhutan participated in the Asian relations Conference in New Delhi. The Treaty of perpetual peace and friendship between the government of Independent India and Bhutan was signed in Darjeeling in August 1949. Bhutan agreed to be guided by the advice of India in regard to its foreign relations, according to this Treaty.

3.4.3 King Jigme Dorji Wangchuk: (1952-1972)

He studied in a Jesuit run school of Darjeeling and had a fair idea of the outside world. Under his reign, large numbers of Nepalese began settlement in Southern Bhutan as he wanted them to settle and till the barren fields of the area. He announced the conferring of Bhutan's citizenship to all his subjects residing in southern Bhutan. Many refugees in Jhapa even till today possess the *Kasho* given to their forefathers by this King. He established a High court and reorganized the judicial system. He also formed a national council Shogdu that was supposed to act as a parliament of

Bhutan. During his reign, Bhutan National Congress (BNC), a party comprising of leaders like Dal Bahadur Chhetri, D. B. Gurung, Til Bahadur Gurung and Dambar Singh Sunwar demanded democracy in their country taking inspiration from the Nepali revolution to oust the Ranas. This party indeed started a movement that gained momentum and even received serious attention in the Indian media of those days. A delegation was sent to meet Prime Minister Nehru seeking his help to end despotism of hundreds of years inside their country.

King Jigme Dorji was determined not to yield to BNC's demands. It may be because of this that prompted the King to move closer to India. Prime Minister Nehru visited Bhutan in 1958 along with his daughter Indira Gandhi. Both countries erected a firm foundation for the bilateral relationship to grow and flower in the future. This visit is taken in high regard by all Bhutanese and the portrait of Pandit Nehru and his daughter Indira can be seen even in museums and monasteries alongside the Shabdrub and Guru Rimpoche.

Exactly at the same time as this historic event, China invaded Tibet and that move compelled the King to move closer to India fearing the same fate as that of the Dalai Lama. Without doubt, the King did his best to develop his country economically. The First Five-year plan (1961-66) was initiated with ample resources coming in from India. He was also awarded the Padma Bibhusan by the Government of India.

But, the King's noble intention to drive his country out of wilderness was not popular amongst the orthodox monks and priests that had for long been influential in various power structures of state machinery. Prime Minister Jigme Palden Dorji was assassinated on April 5, 1964. They also plotted a coup against the King, which was led by a person named Chakha Tangbi. The coup failed. One of the rebels fled to Kathmandu and opened a casino. This incident can be termed as the first instance in the modern period of some linkage between Nepal and Bhutan. There are these days one resort in Hattiban, Lalitpur which is run by a Bhutanese businessman.

King Jigme Dorji after firmly positioning himself on the seat of power established the judiciary in 1968 along with acquiring membership of the UN in 1971. He even incorporated an unusual procedure of appointing and continuing the 'the head of state'. According to this, the King has to

ratify his tenure once every 5 years, the failure to do so makes the Crown Prince the King automatically.

He had his first heart attack at the age of 20. He died while on a visit to Nairobi, Kenya at the age of 44.

3.4.4. King Jigme Singhe Wangchuk (1972 - abdication 2006) :

King Jigme Dorji was long an unhappy man personally due to his queen constantly giving birth to daughters. But the heir to the throne had to be a son. The Queen carried out numerous fasts and other religious activities but to no avail. At last she pleaded before Halesi Mahadev of Khotang district in Nepal. King Jigme was born on Nov. 11, 1955. During the 3rd SAARC Summit held in Kathmandu in 1987, the hosts were suddenly informed of the King of Bhutan wishing for a worship of the temple. A VIP room in Biratnagar airport was hastily built and a helicopter trip was arranged for the King and his entourage. The visit to Halesi Mahadev is a testimony of the close bond of religious relations between the two countries.

King Jigme inherited the throne during a period of international and regional transformation. The U.S.-China détente', creation of Bangladesh, annexation of Sikkim - all happened during the first few years of his taking over as King but he remained steadfast on the validity and strategic significance of his country's close relations with India. This was to be his guiding principle throughout the reign.

King Jigme's biggest contribution has been the close relations that he pursued with India on hydro-resources by virtue of which Bhutan earns handsome revenue that has taken its per capita GDP to US \$ 5,200. Detailed discussion on this issue has been done in the subsequent chapters notably on the contribution of the hydro-sector which he harnessed with the assistance of India.

The other facet of King Jigme's reign has been Bhutan's membership with the SAARC and BIMST-EC and establishing diplomatic relations with 23 countries. He also wanted to establish wide contacts with the outside world during the initial days of his reign but realized quickly of the

enormous influence and overt and covert control of India in Bhutanese matters which would be suicidal to overlook. He invited a Chinese representative for his coronation but Delhi was unhappy about it. He became increasingly cautious in opening his country to the Permanent 5 countries of the UNSC stating that he did not wish to get bogged down in Cold War rivalry. Instead Bhutan under him slowly started to cultivate relations with countries like Thailand, Sri Lanka, Japan, Kuwait and other countries during the later years of his reign.

Some of the King's policies on preserving forests, wildlife and promoting quality tourism has started to reap positive results for the country. Conservation is an area where most foreigners that visit the country have appreciated his vision. "Bhutan is more green today than it was at the beginning of Bhutan's developmental process some 50 years ago and has a forest cover of 72 percent, with almost 50 percent of the country declared as protected areas that host an array of flora and fauna, including some of the rarest and threatened species in the world."⁷ Also in the area of roads and infrastructure development, the country has seen rapid progress. Until his reign Bhutan was air-locked but thanks to the Druk Air, the country has direct air connections to Bangkok, Kathmandu, Kolkata, Bagdogra, Singapore and Delhi.

However, it was also in his reign that relations with the Lhotsampas that was nurtured by his forefathers especially his father King Jigme Dorji started to deteriorate due to the restrictive and prejudiced policies on dress, culture, language and opening up the society. Most certainly he remained an absolute monarch but his ability to impress foreign dignitaries, media handling, his personal directives to send young bureaucrats to study in world renowned universities, and the state sponsorship of Buddhist culture and artifact were obviously the major hallmarks of his tenure on office. The GNH concept is slowly getting international attention.

The very first decision the new King made was to publicize his country as 'a Druk-Yul'. Let us remind ourselves with the truth mentioned earlier that published by the Planning Commission of Bhutan, it was categorically mentioned that since the need of projecting the country as a *Shangri-La* was important, 'Gho' and 'Kira' had to be declared as the national dress while 'dzonkha' as the

⁷ Wangchuk, Ashi Kezang Choden. *Address to Kyoto Earth Hall of Fame Prize Distribution Ceremony*. Retrieved Feb. 13, 2011, from http://www.raonline.ch/pages/bt/visin/bt_royalfam01e.html

official language in spite of different languages spoken even by the various sects of the drugpa community themselves. Analyzing deeply into the fears and anxieties of the King, it can be gauged his deep suspicion and resentment of the ethnic Nepalese in the south, quadrupling in number, energetic and getting rich and taking over powerful positions of the country especially in finance and industry. His coterie, all of whom have been from the elite Drukpa community must have influenced the King's mind of the perils of having Nepalese population getting into virtually all areas of statecraft and becoming the dominant populace of the south adjoining Assam where the Nepalese Diaspora is one of the restive and politically charged. Due to the anti-Chogyal agitation in neighbouring Sikkim and the Gorkhaland movement in adjoining Darjelling areas, the King's fears were being sharpened each passing year.

The 'Driglam Namzha', Green Belt Porposal of 1990 and the Citizenship Act of 1988 became the basis of the peoples' movement of 1990 and the subsequent developments that followed leading to the mass exodus of the Nepalese out of the country. This made the King totally unpopular not only among the Nepalese but the international press, civil society and the human rights community. It became a scar on Bhutan's face. Thus, his reign has been a mixed one for the history of Bhutan. King Jigme has now abdicated in favour of his son but it is evident that King Jigme still remains to be the most influential person in the kingdom.

3.4.5 King Jigme Khesar Wangchuk (2006-)

Born in 1980 from his father's third wife, Jigme Khesar is today the youngest reigning King in the world. He has had excellent exposure to the outside world through education at Phillips Academy, Massachusetts and M.Phil in Magdalen College, Oxford where he completed the foreign service program. He also led Bhutan in the 60th anniversary celebrations of Thai King Bhumibol Adulyadej held in Bangkok from June 12-13, 2006. The Thai press called him 'prince charming'. As a young boy, he has had personal interaction with the Indian leadership through visits to Delhi and Kolkata and meetings with the top leadership of India. The King is popular in Bhutan, even among Lhotsampas.

In his very first address to his subjects, the new King said "throughout my reign I will never rule you as a King. I will protect you as a parent, care for you as a brother and serve you as a son. I shall give you everything and keep nothing; I shall live such a life as a good human being that you may find it worthy to serve as an example for your children; I have no personal goals other than to fulfill your hopes and aspirations. I shall always serve you, day and night, in the spirit of kindness, justice and equality."⁸ This rare statement shows that the new King is not only progressive but due to the enormous outside exposure also has a vision for his people and perhaps realizes that in today's modern time, a people centred approach is sustainable than a regime backed by brute force alone.

His first trips abroad have been to India and to Bangladesh where he was the Guest of Honour at the 40th Anniversary of Independence and the National Day of Bangladesh.⁹ He has also been travelling extensively within his own country. The King married Jetsun Pema, a commoner, on October 13, 2011.

There are indications that he would like to take a slightly different course as regards to democratization and opening up in terms of taking the new generation along. Twitter and facebook accounts of Bhutanese youth are all praise for the new King. Girls are crazy about the "King Charming". However, as regards to the ethnic problem in his kingdom, there are grim chances that he will alter the policies of his father. He stated after taking over from his father that the responsibility of this generation for Bhutanese was to ensure the success of democracy. He has also travelled extensively around the country to meet locals. Apart from these, it is still early to analyze the behaviour and thinking pattern of the new King vis-à-vis the refugees in the camps and the Nepalese still living inside the kingdom. It is also true that the younger Lhotsampas who were born after the 1990 are more akin to accept the reality of the country and move along the path set by their King. There is little evidence to suggest that the younger Lhotsampas do not love the monarchy.

⁸ Note: Coronation Address to the Nation (2008, November 6).

⁹ His Majesty Arrives in Bangladesh (2011, March 24) Retrieved from <http://www.bbs.com.bt/bbs/?p=4411>.

3.5 Comparative Assessments of Refugees in South Asia:

Nepal is not the only country in South Asia facing the massive refugee influx. Almost each country of the South Asian region has been hosting refugees from the neighborhood whereas some of these countries are also refugee generating countries. India for example has the largest number of refugees in the region. "There are over 50,000 Jumma refugees from the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh sheltered in Tripura State of India, over 70,000 Sri Lankan Tamil refugees living in Tamilnadu and about 121,143 Tibetan refugees. They are under the protection of the Government of India. Besides the Sri Lankan, Jumma and the Tibetan refugees, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) provides protection to 22,000 refugees consisting of the Afghans, Iranians, Somalis, Burmese, Sudanese refugees reside in Delhi."¹⁰ In addition, Afghans in Pakistan, Tibetans and Bhutanese in Nepal, internally displaced Nepalese in India, Bangladeshis in India - all these have created a dreadful situation for the region. This has negatively impacted on the economy and security of South Asia besides creating friction in the bilateral relations between nation states. Despite of the creation of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in 1985, its member states have not brought the issue of refugees in the formal SAARC agenda. Therefore, it is prudent to analyze the Bhutanese refugee issue in the overall ambit of refugee condition in South Asia as both Bhutan and Nepal are not only founding members of SAARC but also share an open border with India and are influenced by the same geo-political variables and undercurrents that prevail in the entire region.

The UNHCR definition of refugees states that "[they] are people who flee their country because of a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group. A refugee either cannot return home or is afraid to do so".¹¹ While presence of refugees is a major issue in South Asia, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) has developed into another set of trouble for at least some of the South Asian countries like Nepal.

¹⁰ *Country Report on the Refugee Situation*. New Delhi: South Asia Human Rights Documentation Centre, 2009. Retrieved from > http://www.hrdc.net/sahrdc/resources/country_report.htm<.

¹¹ Note: UNHCR is a website that presents plight of refugees worldwide. www.unhcr.org

The refugee scene in the whole of South Asia is poignant, pertinent and problematic hence the sorry plight of the hundred thousand Lhotsampas needs to be seen in the larger context of the refugee situation in the region. The largest migration of South Asians occurred in 1947, accompanying the partition of India into two nations - India and Pakistan on the basis of religion. In the nine months between August 1947 and the spring of the following year, by unofficial counts, at least 18 million people were forced to flee their homes and become refugees; at least a million were killed in communal violence.¹² In the later years, the trouble of the growing millions of refugees in South Asia swallowed resources of their host countries as well as those of the UNHCR. All South Asian countries are today grappling with refugees of one or the other kind and suffer from the twin challenges of overpopulation and extreme poverty. Refugees who have been dispossessed but are today slowly returning to their homeland-as in Afghanistan are inevitably in need of assistance but their own country or the U.N do not have sufficient resources.

With multifarious causes of refugee origination not mitigated, South Asia today hosts one of the world's largest numbers of refugees. This phenomenon has created the following problems [*either to the refugee generating or the refugee hosting country*] and pose as one of the greatest sources of non-traditional threat to security in the region:

- Economic burden
- Political complexities
- Diplomatic pressures and embarrassment
- Legal challenges
- Environmental degradation
- Sociological and psychological impact
- Rise in drug abuse/prostitution/unemployment/petty crimes

¹² French, Patrik. *Liberty or Death: India's Journey to Independence and Division*. London: Harper and Collins Publishers, 1997. p. 45. See also Sarkar, Sumit. *Modern India 1885-1947*. New Delhi: Macmillan India, 1983. pp 89-90.

- Rise in tension among various ethnic and religious groups
- Adverse affect on law and order

"[Therefore] with the expansion of the concept of security, refugees today are regarded as a source of non-military threat to national security. While scholars and policy makers have devoted time and resources to the study of refugees *per se*, not much work has been done on the implications of the presence of the refugees on the security of the state that hosts them."¹³ This is further accentuated by the wicked fact that the "state" in South Asia and its "authority" has not yet solidified itself and both the "state" and "nation-building processes" continue to generate turmoil and displacement. Therefore, while proper analysis of the links of insecurity and refugee inflows inside South Asian states needs to be properly carried out, it has to be understood also that the refugees themselves are products of conflict and insecurity situations and their presence further exacerbate conflict, tension and insecurity.

The actual security implication of the refugee movements need to be assessed *apropos* to the refugee generating [home state], the refugee receiving [the host state], and external aspects of home and the host states' security. "The home state, by driving its citizens out, exposes itself to international criticism and embarrassment, pressures and even intervention for atrocities on its own people. Whereas, the security implications of the refugees in the host country are far-reaching and multi-dimensional evident both in relations to internal and external security."¹⁴ This trend is witnessed in a four-way traffic of the refugees i.e. movement within the region; movement from the region; movement into the region; and movement within the country of domicile.

Refugees are recognized world over as one of the primary causes of war, famine, insurgency or inter-state warfare. Everywhere in South Asia and even beyond, when simmering discontents are largely left ignored, disgruntlement leads to resentment and these are capable of leading to protracted socio-political or ideological conflict. These days, ethnicity represents a powerful

¹³ Chandran, Suba. "Refugees in South Asia: Security Threat or a Security Tool?". *Missing Boundaries*. Eds. P.R Chari, Mallika Joseph, Suba Chandran. New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 2003. p. 151.

¹⁴ Baral, L.R. "The Case of Nepal". *Refugees and Regional Security in South Asia*. Eds. S.D. Muni & L.R. Baral. Colombo: RCSS. 1996. p. 181.

source of conflict in any modern state and ethnic Nepalese can be taken as a good example of this because of their presence throughout the Northeast Indian states, Bhutan, West Bengal and Nepal.

In fact, conflicts involving refugees can sometimes even outweigh the significance of other conventionally emphasized social conflicts, such as class conflicts. The people's war in Nepal for instance initiated by the Nepali Maoists is taken as a cue by the Bhutanese Maoists to try and resist the processes of sub-ordination and repression by the Bhutani regime. The communist ideology traditionally defined in the Marxist-Leninist format has been used by the Bhutanese Maoists to generate ethnic consciousness among the Lhotsampas.

Conflict in the present globalizing environment has manifested itself primarily at the national level in the form of ethnic strife, tribal warfare, civil wars, group genocides, guerrilla movements, and terrorist activity. It has been a particularly salient feature in the politics of developing and transitional countries. This cycle of mutual impact—involving proliferating actors at the national, supra-national, and non-governmental levels—has generated a burgeoning research interest in the concept of human security as a tool for understanding the essence of modern conflict and untangling its root causes. Bhutan has seldom taken the human security angle to its national security seriously and always regarded that the Lhotsampas as foreigners or anti-nationals. But the free movement of people across national borders such as in this case makes as much economic sense as that of goods, services and capital. As the bulk of South Asian migration and indeed international migration flows are driven by the search for economic security and freedom, regulatory regimes remain restrictive and national in character. This asymmetry perpetuates illegality and discrimination despite the economic benefits derived from migration by both sending and receiving countries.

No matter how much the Bhutan regime denies or tries to negate, history of mankind is the history of migration. People have since time immemorial re-settled into distance lands in search of security, economic prosperity and livelihood for themselves and their children. Additionally, the history of mankind is also repeatedly interspersed with mass expulsions of people forced to flee from famine, wars, revolutions and natural disasters. Early examples of the movement of people around the world in considerable number include the expulsion of the Jews and the Moors from Spain in the late 15th century, the flights from religious persecutions to the New World in the

16th and the 17th centuries and the exodus of the émigrés in the French revolution. The 20th century witnessed the greatest of refugee flows than at any point of history. The partition of India, breakup of the Ottoman Empire, creation of Israel and Bangladesh, civil wars in Sudan and Nigeria, independence of Algeria, westward surge of the Polish after World War II, Paraguayans settling in Argentina, Ugandans in However, until the 20th century there was little or no methodical attempt to help refugees for either repatriating them to the place of origin or for their re-settlement. Clearly, it seems that the refugee problem is older than the concept and the definition of the refugees. After the First World War, international organizations were created to give assistance and finally in 1921 the League of Nations appointed Fridtjof Nansen its high commissioner for refugee work. Later the International Labor Organization and the Nansen International Office for Refugees took charge. Nansen effected repatriation wherever possible by even arranging 'Nansen Passports' which gave the holder the right to move around freely. But the Second World War further displaced civilian populations in huge numbers. At the War's end the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) had the responsibility of caring some 8 million "displaced persons". With the end of UNRRA, the UN created the International Refugee Organization to carry on its work. Since 1951, the office of the UNHCR has coordinated international activities and worked for independent solutions. Despite its best efforts, there are approximately 22 million refugees in the world today.

In the last 50 years, there has been an increase in awareness in both scholarship as well as pedagogy to the complexities of the movements of people, caused by varied reasons ranging from "forced booting out" by oppressive regimes to ethnic or political violence and colossal natural calamity as well as economic chaos. Economic globalization and the end of the Cold War meant to be "a liberal humane place, with liquid nationalism" have furthermore led to the steady rise in cross-border flows since 1990. With a host of intra-state conflicts centering around ethnicity, separatism and religion; mass exodus of people living in make-shift huts have become a stark reality of the New World Order. According to the World refugee Survey, 2003 published by the U.S. Committee for Refugees, "Afghanistan, Palestine, Myanmar, Sudan, Angola, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Vietnam, Somalia, and Iraq are the top ten principal sources of refugees". Just when this paper was being written, the magnitude of the humanitarian crisis in the Greater Darfur region of Sudan, where a violent conflict has been raging since early 2003 has

resulted in thousands of people dead as a direct or indirect consequence of the on-going conflict. About 2 million people - a third of the entire population of the Darfur region - are badly affected. 1,000,000 people have been displaced within Sudan and approximately 200,000 people have fled across the border into Chad. Serious violations of human rights have been reported by the UN and human rights organizations and observers warn that the humanitarian situation may only get worse¹⁵.

There are through various routes that security can be threatened by refugees or by migratory movements - when refugees or migrants work against the regime of their home country, when they pose social, economic or cultural threat to the host country, or even when the host country uses them as instruments to threaten the home country.¹⁶ Nowadays, grave humanitarian consequences of the failure of state capacity to protect and assist its own citizens can also lead to outside intervention. There is a growing tendency to link "sovereignty" with "responsibility."¹⁷ In this context, there is no shortage of those refugees that believe that the only viable means of being repatriated to Bhutan is through an armed insurrection because the Druk regime will never permit them to go back. They feel that the fear in the Bhutanese leadership psyche' is deep-rooted and for their own survival as a monolithic, centralized and Drukpa centric cultural space will be destroyed by the Nepalese who are Hindus. Although untrue and hypothetical, it is a fact that the Nepalese are better educated and sensitized over their human rights than their fellow Sarchops or Khengs inside Bhutan. Nepali language is becoming more and more popular even among Drugpa community. Almost everyone in Thimpu and Paro speaks Nepali, even as it is not taught in schools and colleges. It is an irony that whereas in Nepal, janjaati groups have been clamoring for recognition of their own languages other than Nepali, areas in the Northeast of India, Sikkim, Darjelling and Bhutan has seen upsurge of Nepali language usage.

A major problem in our region is that a maximum number of refugees in South Asia have been absorbed inside the region itself. Therefore, although the host and the generating country are

¹⁵ European Union. *EU Humanitarian Aid for Greater Darfur-Sudan*. Retrieved May 2, 2010. <http://europa-eu-un.org>

¹⁶ Zimmermann, W. "Migrants and Refugees: A Threat to Security?". *Threatened Peoples-Threatened Borders*. Eds. M. Teitelbaum & Myron Weiner. New York: Universal Book Traders, p. 90.

¹⁷ International Development Research Centre. *The Responsibility to Protect: Report of The International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty*. 2001. p. 23.

different, they are indeed members of the SAARC.¹⁸ Yet the refugee management process in the region is not uniform and there have been shifts in terms of policy framework and strategy to mitigate its adverse impacts on the society, its polity, economy and the environment. Three factors-humanitarian, economic responsibility and national security-largely shape state's attitudes in either accepting or declining the refugees. However all South Asian countries adopt haphazard and *ad hoc* policies on this intricate issue. The realization that refugees are people, they need family support and reunion and that they too need freedom, seldom dawns in the outlook of the refugee generating countries and the end result is delay and separation, and a useless life in pitiable conditions behind barbed wire.

Generally, a comparable illustration can be cited of the impact of refugees in individual South Asian states i.e. effect on the economy (*which even otherwise faces difficulty in sustaining its own populace*), a negative bearing on the law and order situation of these countries (*which even without these refugees is prone to violence and perpetual disturbance*), impact on the overall political situation of these countries (*which remains murky and unstable*), and the general pressure on the fragile environment that sends off-shoots to the region as a whole.¹⁹ Whereas identical consequences of the general impact of the refugees inside South Asian countries has been a hallmark, it occasionally leads also to strained bilateral relations affecting overall regional accord and harmony.²⁰ With easy availability of small arms, landmines and explosives to fuel armed movements by refugees, the presence of large scale "idle minds" in one's territory always produce unease rather than sympathy among governments of the host countries.

3.5.1 Case of India:

According to one estimate, some 3, 45,000 refugees were living in India alone that includes: 1,44,000 from Sri Lanka, 110,000 from TAR - China, 52,000 from Myanmar, 15,000 from Bhutan, 12,000 from Afghanistan and 5,000 to 20,000 from Bangladesh, and nearly 300 from other countries. Additionally, refugees from Chin state in Myanmar have been fleeing to Mizoram in India since 1988. In early 2003, their number in Mizoram rose to 50,000. These Chin refugees

¹⁸ Note: The Tibetan refugees originate from TAR, China. China is also an Observer of SAARC.

¹⁹ Note: The environmental condition within the region is such that Sundarban refugees could be the only people in the world displaced solely due to environmental degradation.

²⁰ Pandey, Nishchal N. "Security in South Asia: A Future Perspective". *Future of South Asia: A New Generational Perspective*. Kathmandu: IFA/FES. 2004. p. 23.

face the danger of being either expelled or arrested unlike those from Sri Lanka or Tibet Autonomous Region, whom India protects as refugees.²¹ There is no official record of illegal immigrants from Bangladesh into India²² but the 2001 Census recorded that there were 30, 84, 826 illegal Bangladeshis in India.

Being the largest country in the region, the second most populous nation in the world with porous border and also being a democracy, India has had to receive the inflow of refugees from any given conflict situation around its vicinity. Its free and an open polity and media inspire political activists fighting for democracy to live in various cities and struggle for their cause. Others from poverty stricken places are enthused to take-up low wage jobs in Indian cities. However, there is always a sizeable section in India that is opposed to welcoming refugees from outside worrying unemployment, scarce resources, poor law and order situation in Indian states which is further complicated by refugees from other countries.

Tamil refugees from Sri Lanka began fleeing to India in 1983 when violence broke out between the majority Sinhalese and the minority Tamils. Although, many of the refugees have been repatriated over the years, at present 61,000 are living in 103 government run camps in Tamil Nadu. An additional 20,000 refugees live outside the camp. Since the outbreak of hostilities in Sri Lanka, several lakh Muslim Tamils have fled the island. As of mid-1999, approximately 66,000 were housed in 133 refugee camps in south India, another 40,000 lived outside the Indian camps, and more than 200,000 Tamils have sought refuge in America, Canada and other western countries. Following the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, the refugees have restrictions on their freedom of movement and are treated with some degree of suspicion by local police. The refugee camps have been moved away from the coastal areas to isolated interior regions so as to prevent contact amongst refugees between different camps.

With the end of the war and the comprehensive elimination of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the security situation in Sri Lanka has improved considerably. Tourism is up and

²¹ Note: Chin refugees come under “*Government of India’s Foreigners Act-1946*” which makes no distinction between illegal immigrants and refugees.

²² “The Bangla Bogey”. *The Times of India* July 29. 2004.

the economy too is growing. Several thousands of refugees have returned accounting to nearly 15 percent. But, the refugees are not convinced that the peace will hold. Plus there is fear of the LTTE which still recruits child soldiers and since most of their homes lie in high security zones occupied by the Sri Lankan Army, returning back does possess certain degree of nervousness among these refugees.²³

Seasonal economic migrants, criss-cross the Indo-Nepal open border regularly from both sides. Today there is a large number of Nepalese settlers from the far-western development region of Nepal in India, the official numbers of them being unknown. Human trafficking mainly the trafficking of Nepalese girls for prostitution in major Indian towns such as Mumbai and Delhi is yet another pestering problem for both India and Nepal.

3.5.2 Case of Pakistan:

Pakistan has certainly been a generous host to the Afghan refugees for much of the 3 decades. During its war with the then Soviet Union (1979-89), one-third of Afghanistan's people fled the country, with Pakistan and Iran sheltering a combined peak of more than 6 million refugees. By early 2000, 2 million Afghan refugees still remained in Pakistan and about 1.4 million in Iran. It was cited in a recently conducted survey that in Peshawar - a city of 1 million people 35 miles from the border in the northwest of Pakistan, there were four times more Afghans than Pakistanis; another 40,000 Afghans live in refugee camps south of the city. Nevertheless, since the defeat of the Taliban, the U.N. plans to help at least 1 million Afghans return. More than two million Afghans who fled from Taliban oppression to neighboring Iran and Pakistan have already been repatriated.²⁴ In the mid-90s, Pakistan became increasingly hostile to those fleeing from Afghanistan because of sociological, environmental, political, and more importantly financial reasons. After 9/11, Pakistan also had to keep a closer vigil on extremist elements especially in the bordering towns and villages with a substantial Afghani refugee population.²⁵ There are about 2 hundred thousand who fled to Pakistan during the U.S. led bombing campaign in 2001. While

²³ *Sri Lankan Refugees in India: Hesitant to Return* Retrieved Dec. 6, 2009, from www.refintl.org

²⁴ source >www.irinnews.org< Retrieved March 12, 2011.

²⁵ "President Musharraf says Terror will be Crushed", *Dawn* 14 Aug. 2004

the western countries accuse Pakistan of sheltering terrorist elements of Afghanistan, Pakistan has been unable to gear its security forces to effectively tackle the problem of Afghan refugees.

However, the real problem is that even after they return home; lack of education, dearth of financial resources, lack of safety, and the slow pace of reconstruction of their country make it difficult for Afghans to earn their daily living. Afghanistan has been particularly unfortunate to harbor one of the largest numbers of illiterate populace owing to the long-standing conflict and *warlordism* hence, generates refugees unintentionally. Most of them land up in neighboring Pakistan.

3.5.3 Case of Nepal:

Other than the Bhutanese refugees which this study is primarily concentrated, an estimated 20,000 Tibetan refugees also live in Nepal. They arrived between 1959 and 1989. At the end of 1989, Nepal stopped registering Tibetan refugees. Of the remaining registered refugees, some 12,000 live in Kathmandu's Bouddha or in Pokhara, Baglung, and other places. China considers these refugees as illegal immigrants, sometimes also as 'miscreants'. It has been a consistent policy of Nepal that Tibet is an integral part of China. Sino-Nepal relations in political, economic and cultural spheres has grown from heights to heights since diplomatic relations was established in 1955. Occasionally, Nepal faces criticism from the U.S and some European countries as regards to its Tibetan refugee policy. For instance, expressing her dismay that the Government of Nepal deported 18 Tibetan refugees who fled on April, 2003 Senator Feinstein from California announced her intention to withdraw her sponsorship of legislation she had introduced to grant duty-free status to Nepalese garments in the United States. Nepal's Foreign Secretary Madhuraman Acharya during his visit to Washington on July 2003 discussed on the bill granting duty-free and quota-free access for Nepalese garments in the American market with Under Secretary of State Marc Grossman and Assistant Secretary of State Christina B. Rocca. He also met a number of Senators and Congressmen of Nepal's interest to lobby for the bill.

The Bhutanese and Tibetan refugees have entered Nepali territory from India and China. Ironically, even though both these countries are the most populous countries in the world, Nepal does not have border fences with either one of them. Nepal has never thought of the imperative to

regulate its porous borders with TAR and with Indian states of U.P., Bihar, West Bengal, Sikkim and Uttarakhand. However, security sensitivities of both the neighbors have grown manifold from within Nepal. Whereas, Chinese officials occasionally warn us of increasing anti-China activity from within Nepal, main perpetrators of bomb blasts and other nefarious activities in India have been regularly caught inside Nepal. Despite of these serious accusations, Nepali policy makers have seldom ventured out of the narrow prism of upholding the country's age-old policy of maintaining the porous and open border with both its neighbors.

3.5.4 Case of Bangladesh:

Bangladesh has had a lion's share of the refugee problem in South Asia. A country which once every other year faces the wrath of mother-nature in the feature of flood, torrent and drought also has to take care of the diverse challenges emanating from the refugees' crux. About 250,000 Rohingya fled to Bangladesh in late 1991 and early 1992. Many of these 250,000 Burmese that first came have been repatriated back to Myanmar. By the end of 2003, fewer than 20,000 remain. But, there is a strained relation between local inhabitants and the Rohingya.²⁶ These Rohingyas haven't received recognition as refugees from the Bangladeshi government and are considered to be illegal economic immigrants in search of work. In spite of the appalling conditions, the refugees prefer living in the slum than going back to Myanmar.

In the mid-1980s, Muslim settlers' appropriation of land belonging to ethnic minorities in Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) region had caused some 64,000 Chakma, to flee to India and more than 60,000 others to become internally displaced. In December 1997, the government signed a peace accord that ended a 25-year conflict which paved the way for the repatriation of the entire refugees. Despite provisions in the accord for the "rehabilitation" of both the refugees and the internally displaced, the situation of the more than 60,000 Chakma who had become internally displaced during the previous three decades remained unresolved at the end of 2001.

3.6 Internally Displaced Persons:

²⁶ Note: Refugee International is a site that contains refugee situations from around the world www.refugeesinternational.org

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are the single largest population at risk in the world. An estimated 20 to 25 million persons have been forcibly displaced within the territories of over 50 countries due to violent conflicts and resulting human rights violations (conflict-induced) or by natural disasters or development projects (development-induced). With around 13 million, Africa has more IDPs than the rest of the world put together but South Asia is not far behind. Today we have around 90 percent of the world's refugees in least developed countries. We have countries like Nepal that receive about 101 refugees for every one dollar of GDP.

"Unlike refugees, IDPs are not covered by any kind of international conventions or protocols. What is available is only the "*Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*" that identifies specific needs of internally displaced persons and their rights and guarantees relevant to the protection of persons from forced displacement and their protection and assistance during displacement as well as during return or resettlement and reintegration. As the title suggests, these Principles are only for "guidance" and therefore not obligatory. Definitely, IDPs fall within the ambit of international humanitarian law and the national law of the state concerned. However, these legal provisions cannot be properly enforced due to the lack of any legal instrument for IDPs." ²⁷

An estimated 157,000 persons of various ethnicities were displaced in several states in Northeast India, a geographically and politically isolated area that is home to many tribal groups. Once sparsely populated, Northeast India's population has swelled with the arrival of millions of ethnic Bengali Hindus and Muslims from Bangladesh and from India's West Bengal State in recent decades. Population growth has led to competition for land and jobs, and has also given rise to tension among various minority ethnic groups. Those tensions gave rise to ethnic and politically based insurgencies causing widespread displacement. More than 500,000 people are today internally displaced in India from Kashmir to the Northeast. Another issue in the Northeast is the large presence of Nepali speaking population from Sikkim, Darjelling, Kurseong, Kalimpong, Tripura, Meghalaya and Assam who are asserting their rights within the Indian union. In the year 2011, the West Bengal government signed a tripartite agreement on the Darjeeling hills between

²⁷ Manoharan, N. *Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) : An Overview*. Retrieved on January 16, 2007, from >www.ipcs.org<

the Gorkha Janamukti Morcha (GJM) and the West Bengal and central governments. At the core of the pact is the formation of a new autonomous, elected Gorkha Territorial Administration (GTA), a hill council armed with more powers than its predecessor Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC) formed in the late 1980s. It is evident from this agreement that migratory population gradually increases in its influence and then starts emphasizing its rights. Displacement has also occurred within Sri Lanka at various periods of history. Since 1983 the number has increased manifold. During the earlier JVP movement too, there was significant presence of IDPs. The IDPs unlike the refugees belong to all three ethnic groups - Tamil, Sinhalese and Muslim. Displacement of the majority Sinhala population has been in Tamil majority areas.

In Bangladesh, it is estimated that in the direct aftermath of the general elections of 2002, an estimated 5,000 to 20,000 Bangladeshi Hindus and other minorities fled to India to escape Bangladesh's post-election violence against the minorities. An unknown number of Hindus, roughly as many as 200,000 became internally displaced.

In Nepal, during the Maoist insurgency, people from rural areas migrated to cities like Kathmandu, Nepalgunj, Biratnagar and Pokhara to save themselves and their family from violence. Especially the people from the mid-west of Nepal owing to food shortages, economic bedlam and unpredictable security situation sold off/abandoned their property in their villages and to re-settled in other areas. As a direct consequence, property prices in major cities soared up. People fleeing the conflict and insecurity have [generally] tended to move among urban and economic migrants, amid continued urbanization and traditional migration patterns from rural areas to urban centers, or emigration to India.²⁸ The government even formed a nine-member task force recently led by the then Vice-Chairman of the National Planning Commission, Dr. Shankar Sharma to carry out a detailed study, and submit a report for providing relief to internally

²⁸Note: The population of 12 municipalities of Nepal grew by 5.2% over the last two years, compared to 3.6% between 1991 and 2001, according to a survey gathered by an UNDP-Rural-Urban Partnership Programme conducted in 12 municipalities in 2002. This represents an increase of 80,000 rural-urban migrants in the last two years.

displaced persons (IDPs).²⁹ Although no one knows the exact figures, it had been estimated that more than 100,000 people have been internally displaced in Nepal owing to the Maoist insurgency. But these IDPs remain largely unrecognized; receiving little assistance to cope with their displacement. Young people in particular have been uprooted from the countryside by the effects of war. Moving to cities, with families in rural areas or migrating to India, conditions for IDPs vary greatly. Displaced children in cities appear to be some of the worst affected.³⁰

The situation slightly improved after the peace process initiated in 2006 but the crisis in the terai region introduced another set of IDPs within Nepal, primarily the hill people living in the plains. Due to the schism between Madhesis and the Pahade communities, even government officials, businesspersons and locals fled the terai districts and came to relatively safer places such as Chitwan, Kathmandu and Dharan. Districts such as Saptari, Siraha, Mahottari and parts of Dhanusa witnessed massive violence against the *pahade* community from 2007-2008.

States of South Asia unable and at times even unwilling to effectively handle their own IDPs are neither adept nor willing to divert sufficient resources to rise upto the challenge emanating from the refugee influx in their countries from diverse quarters. Foremost is good and hassle-free relations with countries in the periphery and secondly but more crucial is to maintain tight vigil in the borders so that unwanted people don't misuse and criss-cross at will. None of the South Asian countries have yet devised a refugee policy. India especially has had continuous problems with almost all countries in the neighborhood at times even accusing these countries of not putting their house in order leading to refugee influx in various Indian cities. However when it comes to the Indian labor migrants crossing over to countries such as Nepal and Bhutan, it maintains that they are permitted by the treaty with these countries to enter and work. Hence, drafting a common understanding in South Asia as regards to the refugees is a daunting task nevertheless it is a thought whose time has come.

3.7 Refugees and the Role of SAARC:

²⁹ "Sharma Commission takes Shape." *The Kathmandu Post* 9 August 2004.

³⁰ Note: Relief web contains information on refugee rehabilitation initiatives (www.reliefweb.int).

The strategy adopted till now by refugee hosting states in South Asia has been to try and engage the home state in negotiations to resolve the refugee impasse'. However, most of the time, bilateral negotiations are tedious, laborious and complex processes that take years even decades to reach to an amicable and an honorable arrangement. The refugees themselves are seldom represented in these negotiations. South Asia needs to focus on ways to prevent refugee flows by either political or economic means rather than pondering on what to do once the refugees are already settled in their respective territories. However preventive measures are not likely to succeed without regional mechanisms. "South Asian practices towards refugees and asylum seekers of various types have on the whole been generous and accommodating despite of the absence of a legal framework dealing with refugees. Nevertheless, its absence results in arbitrary, ad hoc and discretionary decision-making which undermines fair and unilateral refugee protection."³¹

It would hence be useful if SAARC would be formally involved in this process and not bilateralism rather a regional structure in order to deal with this humanitarian cataclysm in a comprehensive manner would prove useful. Although, SAARC does not permit "bilateral and contentious issues" to be brought into its agenda, what has to be understood is that almost all South Asian countries are affected in one way or the other by the presence of refugees/illegal immigrants and would collectively benefit by their regional organization getting involved into this issue. People have historically moved to places where there is safety and economic opportunity. Managing the refugee crises therefore has much to do with effectively managing the overall state of regional security. SAARC has recently formed the South Asian Forum bringing together the civil society and businesspersons with similar aspiration to make it like the ASEAN Regional Forum. However, the ARF openly discusses and deliberates on security related cruxes in the South East Asia region and gives policy recommendations to the ASEAN heads of states/governments. Entrusting ARF to bring out concrete suggestions to mitigate problems related to bilateral misunderstandings will be a step in the right direction.

Although the formal SAARC process has not officially taken up the issue of refugees considering sensitivities of certain member states, civil society organizations and track-II levels in South Asia

³¹ Siwakoti, G.K. "Refugee Regime under SAARC: An Agenda for Action", *Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network* 2 April 2011. p. 3

have time and again taken up the issue and called upon the governments to be serious about the condition of refugees in the region. The People's SAARC, a network of non-government organizations and activists in the region held a seminar in Birtamod, Jhapa in 2010 and issued a statement calling upon the Bhutanese refugees to be repatriated and the formation of a South Asia Refugee Commission.³²

As SAARC moves to its 27th year of existence, it has to move away from pomp and ceremonies while focusing on some issues really affecting member states by offering tangible and concrete solutions. Surely, there are enough conventions and understandings reached but as heads of governments have also increasingly felt, the achievements of SAARC have been rather modest. Countering terrorism, customs union and common currency are some of such issues that can be the future goals of SAARC. But these goals cannot be achieved when there are lingering cruxes such as the issue of refugees in the region. Arranging for a regional mechanism for tackling the refugee problem could be one of the shorter term objectives.

³² "Seminar on the right to repatriation of Bhutanese Refugees: Sharing Testimonies by Bhutanese Refugees" *South Asia Alliance for Poverty Eradication* Retrieved from
>http://www.saape.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=76:seminar-on-the-right-to-repartition-of-bhutanese-refugees-sharing-testimonies-by-bhutanese-refugees&catid=13:press-release&Itemid=83<.

CHAPTER 4

HISTORY OF NEPALESE IN BHUTAN

4.1 The first Set of Arrivals:

No credible, consistent information or data is available on the actual year of arrival of Nepalese in Bhutan. One must look into the wider perspective of Nepalese settlement in the whole of Kurseong, Darjelling, Kalimpong, parts of Assam and also Sikkim to get a definite picture of the large inflow of Nepalese into the country. Only then, will we get nearer to the question that has always perplexed anthropologists and sociologists, who have collectively only made the issue more complex than easing the quest for an answer.

The first reports of people of Nepalese origin in Bhutan was around 1620, when Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal commissioned a few Newar craftsmen from the Kathmandu valley to make a silver stupa to contain the ashes of his father Tempa Nima. The Bhutanese consider Shabdrung as the unifier of modern Bhutan but his invitation to the craftsmen is a fact that is often overlooked. It is also interesting to note that there was so much closeness with Nepal that even the founder of Bhutan actually sought Nepal's help to construct a *stupa*. This makes it amply clear that the Nepali migration into Bhutan could have been encouraged and facilitated by the Shabdrung himself, probably realizing the deep religious and cultural relations with the Kathmandu valley. Tek Nath Rizal states that not Newari craftsmen but King Ram Shah of Gorkha had sent some Nepalese artisan/agriculturist families under the leadership of Bishnu Thapa Magar, on the request of the Shabdrung, who was known as the 'Dharma Raja' by the Nepalese. "The primary objective of these artisan/agriculturist families was to impart training to Bhutanese on the design and construction of forts, teaching better agricultural practices and arts and crafts. the oldest monasteries of Bhutan, Kichu in Paro valley and Jambay in Bumthang valley, were constructed with the help of artisans from Nepal."¹

¹ Rizal, Tek Nath *Ethnic Cleansing and Political Repression in Bhutan*. Kathmandu: Human Rights Council of Bhutan. 2004. p. 5.

There is also another historical fact that before the advent of the Wangchuk dynasty, one of the local Penlops Deb Judhir who had attacked the King of Cooch Behar maintained good relations with King Prithvi Narayan Shah. From around the same time, Dharmaraja of Bhutan has been considered as the patron of the Swambhunath. Newar merchants from Kathmandu valley had established their mining and minting businesses in Sikkim and prominent businesspersons like Mani Harsha Jyoti of Kathmandu used to travel to Lhasa frequently. It is likely that Newar businessmen who were already established in Sikkim and Lhasa may have had a strong foothold in Bhutan as well. There is a larger and a much older canvas of the history of Nepali migration into Bhutan, Sikkim and Assam. Today they are a part and parcel of the ethnic mosaic of these areas. Surely, the Nepalese may have continued their relations with their kith and kin within Nepal however, they are citizens of India as far as Northeastern states are concerned and they are bona fide citizens of Bhutan as far as the Lhotsampas and the refugee populations are concerned. Since Lhotsampas are very much like Nepalese by physical appearance and as they speak Nepali, they often enter Nepal via India stating that they are Nepali citizens. They meet their friends and relatives and easily return back. In the India-Bhutan border, they state that they are Bhutanese.

In this chapter, 'ethnic Nepalese' connotes to the links among the Nepalese who share one or more characteristics such as: culture, language, religion, a common race or colour and even a common historical origin. These unique features distinguishes the Nepalese whether in Southern Bhutan or in India's North-east from the rest of the other ethnicities, particularly within their shared political and physical environment. Apart from a few Newar craftsmen of Kathmandu who were invited by the Shabdrung in 1620, large scale arrival of Nepalese in Bhutan has to be looked through a wider angle of the historical development of the House of Gorkha.

4.2. Gorkha Conquests and Nepalese in the Northeast:

It is an evident fact to be noted that the Kingdom of the Gorkha was an expansionist power and King Prithvi Narayan Shah's forces went beyond the current borders of Mechi and Mahakali especially during the reign of Rana Bahadur Shah. In the east, the Nepalese swallowed the entire territory between the Mechi and the Teesta river while at one point, Bhutan also had certain territory of what is today parts of Sikkim. Hence, before Bhutan-British war of 1864-65, Bhutan and Nepal shared a common border. Due to this, there is a school of thought that Nepali

population settled in the areas of what are today - parts of West Bengal and Sikkim. Another important ingredient in this analysis is that even the current day Nepal still shares a border with Sikkim, depicting the close geographical relations with Northeast India which those days could have been used for cross-border migrations, cultural relations, marriages and inter-changes. In fact, international boundaries and legal borders were quite irrelevant during those days and people settled wherever they saw opportunities for daily subsistence and a better life.

The fate of the Himalayan states whether Sikkim, Bhutan or Nepal were similar in the 16th and 17th century. They were wary of the expansionist British even as relations with the Tibetan King represented hardly any element of balance or strategic stability. It is a historic fact that Bhutan at one point claimed parts of Tibet. "In December 1912, King Ugyen Wangchuk referred to the Bhutanese possessions around Mount Kailas in a letter to Charles- later Sir Charles Bell, the political officer in Sikkim. The Tibetan government was levying salt tax from the people living in the area, and the King contested its right to do so."²

In 1700, Sikkim was invaded by the Bhutanese with the help of the half-sister of the Chogyal, who had been denied the throne. The Bhutanese were driven away by the Tibetans, who restored the throne to the Chogyal. Relations with neighboring Nepal was full of ups and downs as well. Between 1717 and 1733, the Sikkim faced raids by the Nepalese in the west and Bhutanese in the east, culminating with the destruction of the capital Rabdentse by the Nepalese. Similar to the assistance sought by the Tibetan ruler against the invading Gorkha forces, Sikkim too requested for Chinese help and in 1791, China sent troops to support Sikkim and defend Tibet against the Gorkhas. Following Nepal's subsequent defeat, the Qing Dynasty established control over Sikkim. Sikkim and Bhutan having an almost open border for centuries, Nepalese who had crossed over to Sikkim migrated to Southern Bhutan. Much of the migration of Nepalese throughout the Northeast has been during the period of the expansion of the Gorkha kingdom but this settlement remained in the area even after the Treaty of Sugauli when Nepal's border got shrunk with Mechi river in the east and Mahakali in the west.

There is contestation among scholars on when exactly did Nepali speaking people from Nepal started arriving in Bhutan. For this, one must look into the migration trends of Nepalese in Assam,

² Bray, John (2012). Ladakhi and Bhutanese Enclaves in Tibet. *Journal of Bhutan Studies*. Vol. 26. p. 15.

Sikkim, Darjelling, and other areas of Northeast. Nepalese are also found in Burma, Thailand, Malaysia but these were mainly British Gorkha veteran's families who started living in those areas from the time of the two world wars. During the late 19th Century, contractors working for the Bhutanese government began to organize the settlement of Nepali-speaking people in uninhabited areas of southern Bhutan in order to open those areas up for cultivation. The south soon became the country's main supplier of food. By 1930, according to British colonial officials, much of the south was under cultivation by a population of Nepali origin that amounted to some 60,000 people.

Settlement in Bhutan of large numbers of people from Nepal happened for the first time in the early 20th century. This settlement was encouraged by the Bhutan House in Kalimpong for the purpose of collecting taxes for the government. In the 1930s, the Bhutan House settled 5,000 families of Nepali workers in Tsirang district alone. In the 1940s, the British Political Officer Sir Basil Gould was quoted as saying that when he warned Sir Raja Sonam Tobgye Dorji of Bhutan House of the potential danger of allowing so many ethnic Nepalese to settle in southern Bhutan, he replied that "since they were not registered subjects they could be evicted whenever the need arose."³

The next small groups of Nepalese emigrated primarily from eastern Nepal under British Indian auspices in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Treaty of Sinchula signed in 1865 made Bhutan - Britain relations 'special' in character and whichever form was the animosity between the British and the Himalayan kingdom ceased till the departure of the British from the sub-continent in 1947. The Treaty of 1865 was modified in 1910 by the treaty of Punakha in response to perceptively growing influence of the China in Tibet and the British wanted to stop Chinese expansion by keeping Bhutan, Sikkim and Nepal as buffers. By virtue of the treaty, Bhutan's foreign relations would be overseen by the British. The entire Duar from Sikkim to Arunachal Pradesh and Dalimkot region separating Sikkim from Bhutan was annexed by the British. How the British played their decisive role in assisting the first King of Bhutan to consolidate power has already been discussed at length in the first chapter.

³ Note: Bhutanese refugees in Wikipedia presents the full text of many essential information on the refugees living in eastern Nepal. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bhutanese_refugees)

Therefore, the onset of Nepalese immigration was largely opened with Bhutan's political development starting in 1865, and then with the advent of the Wangchuk dynasty in 1910. The British used Nepalese in the tea gardens of Darjelling and Assam and most likely the same Nepalese and their families could have been encouraged to settle in neighboring Southern Bhutan.

The name of Kazi Ugyen Dorji comes to limelight as the first person purposely encouraging and inviting the Nepalese to settle in southern Bhutan and cultivate the otherwise barren land. Lots of authors of the time have referred to Bhutan as bare and uncultivated where the head of the household would have four to five wives with four and five children each, densely forested, sparsely populated, etc. Being adaptable, energetic and brave, the Nepalese not only made southern Bhutan the main agricultural area but with the ebb and flow of time, also chose not to return back. Kazi Ugyen who had travelled widely to the neighboring areas of Sikkim, Darjelling and Kalimpong in order to meet Deputy Commissioner of Darjelling used to carry the Viceroy's letter to the Dalai Lama. The British nudged the Kazi to employ Nepalese for the settlement in the southern plains of Bhutan. This would also create a necessary buffer between Tibet and British territory in which loyal Nepalese Gorkhas would be settling at a very strategic and security sensitive area which would prove beneficial in the British scheme of things as well economically beneficial to the Bhutani society at large.

The British had made all possible efforts to cultivate the Kazi as he was related to the first King and made it sure that the Kazi also got administrative responsibilities as a consultant and advisor to the King. Thus he was made Chief of Ha. Since he was the principal administrator of the area, and "as an enlightened person closely observing the economic transformation brought about in Sikkim, Darjelling and Kalimpong sub-division through the help of industrious and hard-working Nepalese, Kazi was instrumental in inducting the Nepalese into the Ha valley and western Duars after seeing the similar experiences from Darjelling."⁴ Within no time, the Nepalese got themselves organized as cultivators in the southern terai after clearing the thick vegetation.

Charles A. Bell who was authorized to conduct a survey of Bhutan records names three persons Nandalal Chhetri, Lal Singh Gurung and Garjman Gurung as *thekedaars* controlling more than 2500 houses at the time in areas of southern Bhutan. Needless to mention that these names are

⁴ Sinha, A.C. *Bhutan: Ethnic Identity and National Dilemma*, New Delhi: Reliance Publishing House. 1999. p. 31.

very much Nepali names. "Garjaman Gurung and even had a Kasho (royal decree) from the Paro Penlop to settle Nepali people in settlements spread over to present day- Sarbhang, Chirang and Dagana districts. But the separate administration for the southern Bhutanese resulted into confinement of Nepali speaking population within prescribed areas. They were restricted from encroachment into areas in the north beyond an imaginary line. The northerners were required to obtain a pass to enter into the Nepali settlements. Therefore, the Nepali speaking population remained isolated from the mainstream of Bhutanese society and polity, and in the absence of interactions with other communities from other parts of the country, Nepali culture, tradition and rituals, similar to that of eastern Nepal from where they had originally migrated, were preserved in southern Bhutan and, over the years, the region acquired a distinct Nepali cultural identity."⁵ Only later, in the late 70s were Drugpas encouraged to marry Lhotsampas and the state used to even give 10 thousand Nu. to the newly wed couples. There are many families in the country in recent days who have inter-married across communities.

There could be three main reasons behind the arrival of Nepalese in Bhutan:- "First, ample availability of land in Bhutan in comparison to neighboring British India, second, tenants being allowed to clear off the jungles and cultivate, and third, no restrictions on alcohol production, consumption and its sale." ⁶

Writing in 1908 about his visit to Bhutan, John Claude White found the Nepalese "creeping along the foothills and now forming a considerable community extending the whole length of Bhutan where the outer hills join the plains of India."⁷ Even in the early 50s, there were already property disputes between agriculturalist Nepalese and the pastoralist Drugpas which also amply proves the point that Nepalese had settled in Bhutan, and as it happens with migrant community everywhere, they became prosperous, owned large tracts of land mainly in Samchi and Chirang and even went into business, bureaucracy, politics and the army. Very much like the Marwari population of Nepal, although they migrated from India, soon became a competitor to the traditional local Newari businessmen and traders. Captain C.J. Morris investigating on the

⁵ Rizal, op.cit., p. 7

⁶ Pokharel, Anil. "*Nepalma Bhutani Saranarthi haru: Karan, Bartaman Awastha ra Firtiko Sawal*". Ph.D. Dissertation. Tribhuvan University. Kirtipur. 2066 B.S.

⁷ White, John Claude. "The Arts and Crafts of Tibet and the Eastern Himalayas", *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, LVIII (1910): 583-594.

possibility of the Bhutanese recruits for the British Army in 1932 states that he found 1493 houses in eastern and 4,000 houses in western district of Bhutan with an estimate of a total 60 thousand Nepalese.⁸

4.3. The New Wave of Nepalese Settlers:

The third wave of the immigrants from Nepal and India continued to enter Bhutan with a spurt from the 1960s when Bhutan's first modern 5-year plan began, many arriving as construction workers. This was initiated after Indian Prime Minister Nehru's historic visit in 1958 to Bhutan with daughter Indira Gandhi who also accompanied him. Nehru is reported to have stated, "India and Bhutan are of the same Himalayan family". After his Bhutan visit, not only did Indian assistance with specific focus on infrastructure development get prominence but the first highway of Bhutan the *Thimpu-Phuntsholling* highway was also initiated. Due to the shortage of able construction workers in Bhutan, Nepalese workers were extensively employed on daily wage. The import of workers from India was inevitable; most Bhutanese did not do laborious jobs at all and were unwilling to take up the major infrastructure projects. Thus, many skilled and unskilled construction workers from India came to Bhutan, and most were of Nepali origin.

Not only this road, but the "inhospitable terrain of southern foothills gradually turned into agriculture, with terraced fields and orchards. They continued to develop the difficult foothills, paid heavy taxes in cash and kind to the state, and contributed free labor to the all-round development of the country without any hesitation."⁹

As part of the First Five Year Plan initiated with Indian assistance, Bhutan embarked on a path of modernization. But the cloud of uncertainty started appearing on the sky with the deterioration of Sino-Indian relations by 1962 making Bhutani territory and airspace vital for both Indian and Chinese forces. Since the battle was fought in the NEFA (Arunachal Pradesh) theatre, Bhutan's borders with Arunachal Pradesh further underscored the strategic importance of the country. "India had [in fact] taken a comprehensive view of India's defense in the Northeast including that of Bhutan after Nehru's visit. As part of the exercise, the first 175 km, jeep track linking Thimpu

⁸ Sinha, op.cit., p. 41.

⁹ Rizal, op.cit., p. 7

and Jaigaon in West Bengal was completed by 30 thousand Indian and Nepalese workers."¹⁰ Seeing the humiliating defeat of the Indian Army in the war, Bhutan government initially tried its level best to balance the two but there was gross confusion in the leadership of whether or not to totally come out of the Indian grip in the area of foreign affairs. While this uncertainty continued, the Nepalese workers hired by India for the construction of various roads did not return back and settled in southern Bhutan for good. Today, the situation in the Indo-Bhutan border is such that "the national highway no. 31 and the North-eastern frontier railway lines run parallel to the borderline between [the two countries] providing basic communication to all the southern districts of Bhutan."¹¹

Due to the cultural and religious system of Bhutan, it has been well established that whatever the current level of infrastructural development in the country, it could not have been accomplished without the active participation of the ethnic Nepalese. The women of Bhutan have long had the liberty to choose their own partners, they opt out of marriage and re-marry with ease, they have right to both maternal as well as paternal property. "Most of the men-folk smell of Arra (local wine) most of the day. [In fact] men and women are both alcoholic. Arra is consumed profusely by men, women, boys and girls of all ages and ranks.....it is an invariable part of the socio-religious and socio-cultural public discourse."¹² Whereas it is quite uncommon for traditional Nepali women from the Bahun and Chhetri groups to drink alcohol and till recently sticking with one partner was a norm. Lhotsampa economy was based on agriculture. Predominant crops included wheat, rice, oranges, lemons, sugar cane, peas, squash, soybeans, and especially lentils. Farm animals included buffalo, cows, and goats.

In this situation, it was the ethnic Nepalese that applied modern agricultural technique for cultivation, cleared the forests of the south and contributed to Bhutan's development.

4.4. National Policy to Balance other Ethnic Groups:

By the late 1970s the ethnically, culturally, and politically dominant Drukpa establishment had come to see the Nepali speakers' growing numbers and influence as a threat to Bhutan's cultural

¹⁰ Singh, Swaran. *China-South Asia: Issues, Equations, Policies*, New Delhi: Lancers Books. 2003. p. 256.

¹¹ Sharma, B. Deben, *Lhops (Doya) of Bhutan: An Ethnographic Account*, New Delhi: Akanshya Publishing House. 2005. p. 27.

¹² Dimri, Jaiwanti, *The Drugpa Mystique: Bhutan in 21st Century*. New Delhi: Authorspress. 2004. p. 52.

identity and to their own privileged position. Increasingly, the government asserted that the majority of the Nepali speakers in Bhutan were illegal immigrants who threatened Bhutan's political, religious, and cultural identity. There was no attempt from the Lhotsampa community too to bridge the trust deficit with the government in Thimpu.

The government invoked these perceived threats as justification for a series of discriminatory measures aimed at the political, economic, and cultural exclusion of Bhutan's Nepali speakers. Some Lhotsampas too erroneously tried to follow the Nepali model of the people's movement of 1990 not realizing that the geo-political realities of the two countries was markedly different. Others just joined the band-wagon and protested.

An additional element to justify that the nation is multi-ethnic is that it has never been a monolithic state. "Bhutanese nation did not inherit a homogenous history. It has a diverse past of multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-linguistic and multi-religious identity. It's three main cultural, linguistic and religious groups represents a mosaic and not the 'melting pot'."¹³

Sarchops that practice Nyingmapa sect of Mahayana Buddhism and belong to the Tibeto-Burman ethnic group. They speak the Tsangla language and have for decades been exploited by the ruling Ngalongs as the royal family is from the Ngalong group. However, the total population of the Sarchops is much higher than that of the ruling Ngalongs. According to the 1981 census, Lhotsampas constituted 53 percent, the Sharchop comprised 30 percent and the Ngalong, the ruling class 17 percent. The ruling Ngalongs knew that this pattern of demographic asymmetry is not good and must have started planning ahead. At the outset they wanted to balance the risk posed by the Sarchops by encouraging the Lhotsampas and when the Lhotsampas grew in population, they began seeing them as a threat.

In this perspective, one can easily ascertain the official position of the Bhutan government to proclaim that the refugees in camps in eastern Nepal were 'recent settlers' or were never citizens of Bhutan. Bhutan has been harsh and stringent as regards to its citizenship policy. There is nothing wrong for a small country to be sensitive as regards to its demography and Nepali academics and media persons also need to be cognizant of the delicate situation of Bhutan.

¹³Chhetri, Rakesh. "Revivalist Drugpas and Fundamentalism". *The Kathmandu Post* 22 Jan. 1998

However, the royal government could have seen the enormous benefit of having the hard-working Lhotsampas in the south.

4.5. Nepalese in Northeast India in the Context of Refugee Crisis:

The Nepalese of Nepal, Northeast region in India and Lhotsampa community -all write in the Devnagari script, and their link language (Nepali) is mutually spoken. Both the Lhotsampas and other Nepali speaking people in Meghalaya, Assam, Tripura, Sikkim all the way to Nagaland are linked through ethnicity, language, religion and level of social and economic strata. But these ethnic Nepalese, differ greatly in terms of culture, language, and religion from the Ngalongs and Sharchops. Historically too, developments in Northeastern states have had a bearing on the psyche' of the Lhotsampas within Bhutan such as during the agitation against the Chogyal of Sikkim in the early 1970s when mostly the ethnic Nepalese were involved in the anti-monarchy agitation. This led to increased security and vigilance in southern Bhutan by Thimpu.

With these details as backgrounders, there is a need of a comprehensive analysis of the plight of the ethnic Nepalese not only in Bhutan but the entire Northeastern region of India which harbors one or the other type of a conflict on language, region, secessionist lines even till date. Most of the 7 sister states notably Assam, Nagaland, Meghalaya and Mizoram are having to witness violence and insurgencies whereas Arunachal Pradesh suffers from an un-ending saga of Sino-Indian claim over the territory. There is no authentic data on how many Nepali speaking people are living in the Northeast but some experts have claimed the figure to be nearly two million strong. Nepali has been recognized as one of the 23 official languages of India. The *lingua franca* of Sikkim is Nepali.

The anti-monarchy wave was started by the Nepalese in Sikkim ultimately leading to a situation whereby India annexed the entire state. The majority Nepalese were asserting their rights but the Chogyal was averse to giving more privileges to the Nepalese. The Chogyal had represented Sikkim during the coronation of Late King Birendra but he was overthrown soon afterwards. This event was taken with surprise and fear in both the Himalayan kingdoms of Bhutan and Nepal. The Thimpu regime was initially traumatized by the Indian action. The role of Nepali speaking people in the overthrow could have been the first instance on the stemming of a fear psychosis within the

Thimpu elite that if not handled with care and utmost caution, the fearless Nepali people could rise against the monarchy in Bhutan too.

In fact, Nepalese are asserting all over the North-east. Darjeeling and Assam are cases in point. "Anti-Nepali feeling in Northeast was first observed during the Assam movement. Although, the targets were the illegal migrants from Bangladesh, the Nepalese were also included in the anti-foreigner discourse. Allegations of Nepalese from Northeast India crossing over to side with the Lhotsamapas and of their leaders, fleeing to Assam, probably encouraged the targeting of Nepalese in Northeast in ethnic cleansing assertions and backlashes. They were largely caught in crossfire between Assamese anti-foreigner agitation and the Bodo Movement.....in Manipur, the sentiment took the form of a movement that in 1980 manifested itself in direct attacks on the Nepalese compelling many of them to relocate, in Meghalaya, the violence primarily targeted the Nepalese living in Shillong, Jowai and other parts of Meghalaya which had over 150,000 Nepalese"¹⁴ Whereas, in these states, the Nepali speaking people have been victimized for their hard work and taking away of jobs of locals, the situation is quite different in Darjelling.

The movement for a separate state gained serious momentum during the 1980s, when a violent agitation was carried out by Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) led by Subash Ghising. The agitation ultimately led to the establishment of a semi-autonomous body in 1988 called the Darjelling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC) to govern certain areas of Darjeeling district. However, most people in Darjelling remained unhappy. In 2008, a new party called the Gorkha Janmukti Morcha raised the demand for a separate state of Gorkhaland once again leading to a violent political movement, *bandhs*, firing and assassinations becoming the order of the day.

The craze of the India t.v. idol Prashant Tamang showed that Nepalese whether living in Bhutan or any of the state of the Northeast do tend to bandwagon for a common sense of *Nepaliness*. In June 2011, the Darjelling Hill Council has made it mandatory for all people to wear the traditional Nepali dress at least 3 days in a week. The birth anniversary of Poet Bhanubhakta is celebrated with fervor and enthusiasm all over Darjelling, Kurseong and Sikkim. There is a Bhanu Chowk in Darjelling. In Sikkim, the state government honours Nepali actresses, singers, photographers who have made it big in Bollywood. A few years ago, they felicitated Mrs. Mala Sinha for making all

¹⁴ Halder, Chiranjib "The Nepali influx in Northeast India", Article no. 2226. Retrieved from >www.ipcs.org.<

Nepalese living in India proud. But Nepal never used its leverage with the Nepali speaking people of India or Bhutan to bargain with India nor gave them any material or financial support to step up the ante' against India. Late Prof. Huntington's ethnic-linguistic-cultural band-wagon theory is useful to take note of in this context as the ethnic Nepalese in the entire sub-region of Nepal, North-East India, West Bengal and Bhutan are beginning to avow their common traits by various modes of symbolism which is being watched carefully not only by the Bhutanese government but also by the Indian authorities.

The Nepalese in Southern Bhutan therefore are not recent migrants rather have been living there for at least a century. The monarchy was quite comfortable with them till they remained loyal to the crown but the moment the wave of democracy swept after the fall of the Berlin wall and subsequent political changes in Nepal, there was anxiety of the possibility of a similar type of an uprising against the monarchy. There was also a growing apprehension of the Lhotsampas who are Hindus becoming a majority against the predominantly Buddhist nation. All this lead the way for the exodus of 1991.

4.6. Languages in Bhutan:-

The national language is Dzongkha, one of the 53 languages in the Tibetan family. The Dzongkha spoken mainly by the Ngalongs is the national language. Bumthangha which is the language of the Khengs and the Sarchopkha or Chhangla (Tshangla) are the second and the third most popular languages spoken by the people. Chhangla is the language of the Sarchops and a principle pre-Tibetan language of the country. Lhotshamkha or Nepali is spoken mainly in the south by ethnic Nepalese but nowadays it is understood by other communities as well. The Lhotsampas also speak English. While these are the major languages, one must not overlook the fact that there are innumerable dialects such as Tapadrapteng, Laya Lingtshi, Shanlingpa, Dangpakha, Miasangtenkha, Khengkho, etc. Experts have listed "24 languages currently spoken in Bhutan, all of them except Nepali are from the Tibeto-Burman family."¹⁵ An interesting fact to be kept at the back of the mind is that the ethnic Nepalese whether Brahmins, Chhetris, Gurungs, Rais, Magars or Newars - all speak Nepali in Bhutan and despite of the enormous caste and ethnicity based

¹⁵ "Bhutan: Demographic Profile, Medium Variant 1950–2100". *World Population Prospects: The 2010 Revision*. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, Population Projections and Estimates Section. http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/unpp/Panel_profiles.htm. Retrieved 2011-10-30

stress among the Nepalese in Nepal, the Lhotsampas and the Nepalese in the Northeast have no such tension among themselves. Nepali music is very popular and one can hear Nepali songs in taxis, shops, etc.

Nepali has from the last decade been dropped from the school curriculum, although before the eviction of the 90s, the government itself had sponsored the teaching of Nepali. This issue was one of the major issues of contention that led to the 1990 people's movement in Bhutan. The Lhotsampas view this move of removing their mother tongue from the school curriculum as a deliberate ploy to create an atmosphere of unease and discomfort for the Nepalese.

The minority languages comprise of Assamese (17 percent), Dzala (11 percent), Limbu (10 percent) and Kheng (8 percent). The literacy rate in Bhutan is 59.5 percent.

Language issue is an emotive and highly sensitive in the country as the government has invested in making the national language popular throughout the kingdom by means of various programs in schools and institutions of learning. The government understands the importance of promoting one language, one national dress, one identity in order to keep Bhutan a united country however, it has not done justice to the genuine aspirations, neglected traditions and rituals of other ethnic groups of the country. This holds especially true in the case of the ethnic Nepali population. How can a democracy in a multi-ethnic country function by promoting only one religion, culture and language?

4.7 Contentious Issues for Lhotsampas and the Mass Exodus of 1991:

The conflict between the ruling elite and the Lhotsampas can be broadly defined as the fear of extinction among the Bhotia community and the claims of discrimination among the Lhotsampas. Fear of extinction is common, especially in societies that are structured in lines of ethnicity and religion such as in the case of Bhutan. It is interesting why the majority Ngalongs, Sarchops and Khengs also fear extinction. They can be categorized as a majority race with a minority complex as they regard their relations with the Lhotsampas through the lenses of growing Nepali assertiveness within Bhutan, Sikkim, Darjelling and parts of Assam. The relationship of the Lhotsampas with the wider Nepali Diaspora living in Northeast India where about 2 million Nepalese share religious, cultural, linguistic commonalities, with the Nepalese in Nepal was an

enough reason for the Bhotias to feel apprehensive. Coupled with this factor is also the reality that there could be nearly 17 million Nepali language speakers in the whole region which is far greater than those that speak all of the Bhotia language combined. The fear was that they could be reduced to an insignificant entity in the face of combined strength of the Nepalese both inside and outside Bhutan and perceive a larger conspiracy to this end. This false construction is being considered by the Royal Bhutan government as an existential threat not only to the Drugpa community but also to the Buddhist religion and culture of the country. It is on this premise that various laws and regulations were enacted to discourage the ethnic Nepalese in the South which made the Lhotsampas suspicious.

There are views about the origins of this anxiety on the part of the royal government as an outcome of fundamental demographic, socio-religious, linguistic, cultural and also economic issues that have plagued the ruling elite. The Nepalese were gradually becoming wealthy and also started owning large tracts of land not only in the plains but also started purchasing property in other areas. Therefore the to and fro conflict of interest can be broadly structured into the a) issues of ethnic imbalance and b) the issues of economic disproportion.

The issue of ethnic imbalance comprises of history, religion, ethnic identity, tradition and language which was quite distinct among the two groups i.e. between the Lhotsampas and the Bhotias. The economic disproportion is a more recent phenomenon and comprises of education, land tenure, employment, demography, citizenship, etc. The phase of 1990-1991 was the peak of pro-democracy movements worldwide hence Bhutan too couldn't remain unscathed from this wind of change that was sweeping the entire world and indeed the sub-continent. The storm of 1990 can thus be summarized as an explosion of all these factors combined together with the wind of democratic change that was sweeping the South Asian region with Nepal re-introducing parliamentary democracy, Pakistan People's Party of Benazir Bhutto taking control of Pakistan ending years of military rule and the people of Bangladesh ousting Gen. Hussein Mohammad Ershad.

The Marriage Act of 1980 which barred a Bhutanese to marry a non-Bhutanese, the Driglam Namza Code of Conduct that made it mandatory for all citizens to wear the traditional dress of the Ngalongs - Gho and Kira and the 1988 Census which went on to reveal the presence of one

hundred thousand “illegal immigrants” in the kingdom were all designed to boot out the Lhotsampas out of the territory of Bhutan. Overlooking the multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-racial rubric of the country, these decisions were enacted to “strengthen nationalism” under the banner of "one nation one people" and perhaps also to divert the attention of the population from democracy and human rights to that of “preserving the last Shangri-la”.

Obviously, the Lhotsampas having been an important building block of the country and having contributed to the economic development of Bhutan were severely annoyed with the prejudiced decisions that were being taken without taking them into confidence. The disregard with which the state was blanketing language, culture and religious ethos on the Lhotsampas was being systematically disseminated by Nepali leaders and the end result was the people’s movement of September 1990. Lhotsampa leaders, top officials of Nepali origin and even soldiers were told to leave the land, their property, legal documents and money was confiscated by the Royal Bhutanese Army.

The refugees began arriving in Nepal and the then Nepal government in good faith and out of downright sympathy gave them entry into Nepali territory. Since then the issue of Bhutanese refugees has remained a very ticklish and a complicated issue between Nepal and Bhutan.

The Bhutan government has ever since 1991 casually blamed the Lhotsampas of voluntarily migrating out of the country and even pressurized the Nepali side for placing one of the four categories of verification under this strange provision. No refugee in the camps has ever claimed that he/she voluntarily migrated. They had to leave under duress and due to the inhuman treatment of the Bhutanese army. Rakesh Chhetri, a Lhotsampa scholar says, "Bhutanese are forced to accept the state and Buddhism as synonymous. The notion that a traditional Bhutanese Buddhist society will not revolt against the sacred religious-feudal autocracy was developed. Buddhist philosophy has been misinterpreted by the political machinery to perpetuate its rule and to glorify the king, as not only the manager of political affairs of the state but also the guardian of the Buddhist religion in the multi-cultural kingdom as well as in the immediate region of Sikkim and even in Nepal. The King of Bhutan was even actively involved in the controversy of the reincarnation of Karmapa in the Sikkimese Rumtek monastery." It has also been known that the 'Bhutan monastery' in Boudha area of Kathmandu has been erected and maintained through royal

patronage of Bhutan and even till today, the finances to run the monastery come from Bhutan. The ruling elite has now been trying its best to portray itself as the guardian of Buddhism in Bhutan just like the Saudi royalty is the guardian of the Mecca and Medina. This has an inherent political purpose which is to make sure that the people don't turn against Buddhism and thereby continue to revere the monarchy.

With the Nepalese following Hinduism, their reluctance to study Dzongkha, opposition to wear the *gho* and *kira* at all times saying that these are Bhotia dresses and coupled with their increasing influence in the national economy and social life, the regime sensed a grave threat to its own survival.

The people's movement of 1990 in which a large number of Lhotsampas participated to end the absolute monarchy of King Jigme was the last straw to break the relations between the monarchy and the Lhotsampas. Subsequently, the Bhutanese government adopted a discriminatory policy and began expelling thousands of citizens of Nepalese origin out of its territory. Bhutan's heartless action has also chilled the warm and cordial relations so happily existing between the two countries. Fifteen rounds of ministerial level talks along with a number of diplomatic exercises have till now failed to bring tangible results, while the one hundred thousand and more innocent lives were forced to live in make-shift huts without proper and elementary conditions of living for two decades. Social tension arising due to unemployment, prostitution, scuffles between refugees and non-refugees adjacent to the damage to the environment and to the tranquil atmosphere of Jhapa and Morang districts presented multi-faceted quandaries for Nepal. There was enormous pressure to the host government as the refugees were ethnic Nepalese, speaking the same language as of the people of Jhapa and Morang. Marriage between refugees and locals outside the camps made the problem even more complex.

On the other hand, Nepal's decision to accept the refugees in 4 categories helped the Bhutanese government to buy time and shelve the issue over the decades. Nevertheless, it has been a consistent Nepalese stand that Bhutanese refugees are the bonafide citizens of Bhutan and not that of Nepal. One interesting point that was made by the Nepali authorities during talks with their Bhutanese counterparts is that 'nowhere in the world have such a large number of people voluntarily migrated at the same time under a normal situation. By law these are stateless people

and if Bhutan refuses to take them back, it is a violation of UN Universal declaration of Human Rights.¹⁶

Nepal has time and again calling for the repatriation in a dignified manner however time has been in Bhutan's favour all along. After the third country re-settlement, Nepal has advocated for the repatriation of at least the remaining refugees to Bhutan which also has been ignored.

¹⁶ Note: The statement of the then Foreign Minister Prakash Chandra Lohani during the 7th round of bilateral talks between Nepal and Bhutan.

CHAPTER 5

THE GENESIS OF THE CRISIS

It has been elucidated at length on the preceding chapter that right at the beginning of the 1990s, the Bhutanese government adopted a discriminatory policy and expelled thousands of its citizens of Nepalese origin out of its territory. These *Lhotsampas* had been living in Bhutan for generations and had also acquired documents / permits related to citizenship / marriage / businesses in Bhutan. Moreover, most of them owned houses, land or other property that was confiscated by the authorities. This ethnic cleansing led to one of the worst humanitarian cataclysms in the history of South Asia.¹ Bhutan's heartless action also chilled the warm and cordial relations so happily existing with Nepal since centuries. A small Himalayan Kingdom's inherent desire to preserve its sovereignty, integrity and national culture is understandable but that does not necessitate banishing its own inhabitants to an unknown future. "Bhutan's denationalization of ethnic Nepali citizens rendered them stateless and thus breached the principle that no one should be arbitrarily deprived of nationality."² If Bhutan's royal regime was feeling threatened by the growing number of *Lhotsampas* in its plains there could have been other ways of dealing with the problem than ejecting people out and thereby facing massive international condemnation. Consequently, its international image plummeted due to its nonchalance and indifference to the refugee imbroglio. It has been seen as willfully dragging its feet and using the talks to deflect international criticism.

There were two major episodes responsible for the built-up of an environment of tension and pressure on both sides (*Lhotsampas* and the Thimpu government) ever since the beginning of the 1980s, which laid the foundation for an irreparable wound in their mutual relationship. These were the Citizenship Act of 1988 and the *Driglam Namza* Code of Conduct.

¹ Pandey, N.N. "Refugees in South Asia: Impact on Regional Security", eds. D. R Dahal and N.N. Pandey. *Comprehensive Security in South Asia*, New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 2006. 239-240.

² "The Need for Durable Solutions for Bhutanese Refugees in Nepal and India". *Human Rights Watch* (May, 2007), vol. 19 No. 7 c.

5.1 Citizenship Act - 1985

The previous Citizenship Act of 1958 had granted the Nepali speaking people full citizenship of the country. The Act defined Bhutanese citizenship in patri-lineal terms, and provided a framework for the process of naturalization. Initially, applicants other than wives of citizens were required to show a ten year residency, five years of service to the government, and ownership of agricultural land. The 1958 Act originally defined no procedural framework for immigration.

With the development of education, social services and the economy, *Lhotsampas* rose to occupy influential positions in the bureaucracy. But they had started in a humble way. Most of the elderly refugees still remember how they worked hard to building national roads and highways within the country after the visit of Indian Prime Minister Nehru in which he gave a lot of aid and financial support to Bhutan. Some of them were members of the National Assembly and even in the Royal Bhutan Army. However, during the 1980s, the *Lhotshampas* began to be seen as a threat to the political order and Drukpa culture. The *Durkpas* of the northwest (or the ruling elite) began to see themselves as an endangered species that would one day be swamped by the *Lhotsampas* of the south. In 1977 the act was amended but did not really affect the *Lhotsampas*. It merely introduced both substantive and procedural changes in the citizenship law, clarifying the role of the Ministry of Home.

However in 1985, the previous Citizenship Act was super-ceded and a new Act was enacted. Procedural safeguards for both naturalization and bonafide citizenship remained completely absent: applicants could be rejected for no reason at all, such decisions were final, and even bonafide Bhutanese citizens faced deprivation of citizenship for sedition or criticizing the King. Citizens were required to be speaking the national language. Census registry included "seven categories i.e. genuine Bhutanese, returned migrants, people absent during the census exercise, non-national women married to Bhutanese men, non-national men married to Bhutanese women, legally adopted cases, migrants and illegal settlers. These categories included even a genuine Bhutanese citizen of Nepali origin as an illegal immigrant because this entailed a provision to

establish one's credential through tax receipt dating back to 1954."³ This was not only arbitrary, but was also intentionally framed to push out maximum number of Nepali speaking people saying that they were 'immigrants.'

The second article of the Act provided citizenship to those whose parents were *both* Bhutanese citizens. This was contrary to the 1958 Act which required only that one's father to be Bhutanese. This provision impacted the Lhotsampas a great deal and added to their grievances against the regime.

In order to implement the Act, the first nationwide census was implemented from 1988. This development really shook the kingdom. It went on to reveal the presence of a "hundred thousand illegal migrants" in addition to 47, 200 acres of government land being occupied 'illegally.' The largest group within the country affected by the census were obviously the people of the south; this group, comprised 43 percent of the total population of Bhutan in 1988 if one is to include what Bhutan said were the "illegal aliens". It is uncertain to assess what would have happened to the Lhotsampas had they not organized the pro-democracy protests in 1990 in the event of these laws and regulations. It is doubtful whether they would still be told to leave. But since the movement turned violent, the Bhutanese security forces moved home to most of the Lhotshampas, forcing them to leave.

Just prior to the citizenship Act-1985, a separate law was enacted in 1980 after withholding the existing Marriage Act of 1977. A considerable number of *Lhotsampas* had married Nepalese men / women from Nepal or from Sikkim and Darjelling. A non-Bhutanese marrying a Bhutanese citizen was made compulsory to learn reading and writing the national language and wait for 20 years to obtain the citizenship paper. Till then, the government statistics had already revealed that a total of 10 thousand *Lhotsampas* had married non-Bhutanese. Therefore the Marriage Act was implemented to achieve socio-cultural integration through marriage between Lhotsampas and the Bhotia communities.

³ Pattanaik, Smruti. *Nepal-Bhutan Bilateral Talks and Repatriation of Bhutanese Refugee*. Retrieved January 12, 2010, from <http://www.idsa-india.org/an-jan9-11.html>

5.2 Driglam Namza Code of Conduct:

The “Driglam Namza” code of conduct was implemented to counter outside interference and strengthen the country’s identity. This code was enacted to ensure national integration. The government’s drive for “One Nation-One People” policy made all the southern Bhutanese liable to a fine or imprisonment if they ventured out in anything other than traditional costume; Nepali language was removed from the school curriculum. Many southern Bhutanese were fined and imprisoned for not complying with this order. By this time, one can easily gauge the introvert psyche of the Bhutanese ruling class, anxious as they were to the increasing population of the Lhotsampas. One must underscore that the Bhutanese leadership including its bureaucracy inside the Foreign Ministry are well educated with exposure to the western media and most of the prominent newspapers and newsmagazines that are published reaches them. They also usually refute negative or incorrect news which can serve as a good example for their Nepali counterparts.

The Driglam Namza made mandatory for citizens of all groups to wear the traditional *gho* for men and *kira* for women or pay fines. No *Lhotsampa* could bear this mainly because of 4 reasons. 1) Climate in Southern Bhutan is usually hot therefore a *bakhhu* was simply not an appropriate dress. 2) Being Hindus, they could not accept a Buddhist dress while performing religious rites like Bratabanda ceremony, weddings, and other Hindu rituals 3) Nepali language was being taught at schools in South Bhutan but was stopped after the implementation of this code which created a furor amongst the ethnic Nepalese 4) About 90 percent of the Lhotsampas did not know the national language and was impossible for them to converse in Dzongkha at public places. A few men even tried to experiment with the dress but were ridiculed by women because the *gho* is completely uncovered in the bottom. A lot of ethnic Nepalese even complained to the local authorities that the *gho* was simply not appropriate for them as the women were making fun of them and was unsuitable in the humid climate of Southern Bhutan. Moreover, the various *hare ram kirtan sanghs* were banned by the government after the implementation of this code of conduct. Even till today, there are only a few Hindu temples in the kingdom. The one in Thimpu is inside the Indian Military compound but the Indian Army permits Hindu Bhutanese to enter.

"May it be Driglam Namza or One Nation One People Policy, they [Bhutan government] clearly had the political objectives behind and were initiated politically with a view to binding the growing class of educated lot with complete obedience to the crown and the ruling elite."⁴ In fact, it can be seen clearly that ever since 1985, Bhutan had a clear roadmap i.e. to evict the Lhotsampas as they were becoming a threat to the ethnic balance of his kingdom. It merely used several laws and enactments and under various pretexts and forcefully managed to boot them out in 1991. It must also be underscored that the Lhotsampas were politically conscious compared to other ethnic groups which was especially disliked by the regime.

Today, the Gho and Kira is widely worn by Lhotsampas living in urban areas. They have also started to speak Dzongkha much like the Drugpas who speak Nepali. Thimpu looks like a city full of people wearing the same dress which attracts foreign visitors and makes the city unique. Probably nowhere in the world, taxi drivers are compulsorily asked to wear the national dress at all times. This has made them like good tourist guides but in the southern areas, the government has lately become lax in monitoring the usage of gho and kira among Lhotsampas currently living in the areas. This could be due to the stability and general improvement of law and order in the recent years. If this is true, this dress code is likely to be further relaxed for ethnic Nepalese. As trust grows between the state and the Lhotsampas, one could see progress in the front of Nepalese gaining more important positions, etc. Some younger Lhotsampas are not positive to what their kith and kin did in 1990. They even feel that situation has altered for the better as all 'culprits' are gone to Jhapa and there is peace and amity now under a young King who does not have any baggage of history.

5.3. 1988 Census and the Green Belt Proposal:

Another crucial issue that was also the cause for the outburst of discontent among the Lhotsampas was the 1988 census. It was the 1st census ever in the country's history. It went on to reveal the presence of a 'hundred thousand illegal economic migrants' in addition to 47, 200 acres of government land being occupied 'illegally'. Immigration laws were instantaneously enforced and

⁴ "Govt. Repression of Southern Bhutanese". Retrieved May 4, 2011, from <http://ahurabht.tripod.com/draft3.html>

all recent immigration was declared illegal. Launched to 'estimate the number of genuine citizens of the country and distribute the citizenship paper', the census takers were mostly from the *drug-pa* community which hiked controversy that the whole operation was in fact designed to prove that the Lhotsampas were illegal immigrants. The procedure of obtaining a citizenship certificate was consequently redefined so as to be given only after seeing the person's tax receipts prior that of 1958. In addition, Lhotsampas also had to obtain a certificate of origin from the place of birth. All this was not only tedious but was clearly designed to hinder them from obtaining citizenship of Bhutan. One needs to study the real intention of this census in the background of the Lhotsampas becoming 35 % of the total population according to another survey that was secretly done.

The 'Green Belt Proposal' of the government furthermore, impelled the Lhotsampas to a point of no return. Implemented supposedly to preserve a 2-km. area of Southern area of the country for 'environment protection', led to the furor of the entire population of the south against the regime. It seemed that the objective was to drive away the Lhotsampas from the south so that they would be compelled to mingle with the rest of the population in the north. One also needs to understand that the southern region gave the country more than half of the national income. Nearly all major industrial ventures of the government were [and still is] located in this area.

5.4. The Agitation Begins:

Against the citizenship act of 1985 and the census of 1988, two members of the then National Council Mr. Tek Nath Rizal and Mr. B.P. Bhandari submitted an appeal to the King. At that time a total of 16 *Lhotsampas* were members of the National Council totalling 156. Rizal was arrested on treason charges but released after he signed a confession document 3 days later. He escaped to Nepal and opened a '*People's Forum for Human Rights*' on July 7, 1989. This was a major development. It was in international news and for the first time, a negative news regarding the Bhutanese monarchy began appearing in the international news media.

However, it is an established fact that the ties between the royal families of Nepal and Bhutan was very strong at the time. Kathmandu was upset and embarrassed for the choice of Nepal as a

destination for Rizal. As a consequence, the then party-less Panchayat regime handed over Rizal along with friends Sushil Pokharel and Jogen Gajmer to the Bhutanese authorities on Nov.17th 1989.⁵

A poem written by Ratan Gajmer, a lecturer of the same college was read out. Its main catch-line was 'wake up and terminate the autocrats' for which, the police arrested Gajmer.

It ought be understood at this point the considerable influence among the Bhutanese youth of the Nepali People's Movement of April 1990 in which Late King Birendra had to succumb to the demands of re-establishing multi-party system and agreeing to become a constitutional monarch. They wanted to replicate the likes of the Nepali mass movement in Bhutan not knowing that the geo-strategic situation was markedly different. While India was supportive of the pro-democracy movement even going to the extent of deliberately allowing the trade and transit treaties to lapse with the Panchayat government of Nepal; it was not at all pleased with the eventuality of having a weakened monarchy in Bhutan.⁶ There was also the ethnic and linguistic factors at play while it was not the case in Nepal. Whereas the southern areas would mean the Madhesis in Nepal, it would imply the Nepalese in Bhutan and therefore the level of sympathy and kind of reaction of the Indian establishment was distinctly different.

Situation had already deteriorated inside Bhutan after Rizal had fled. Students of National Institute of Education in Samchi organized a demonstration against the royal regime. On Sep. 19th 1990 more than 50 thousand gathered in Chirang, Gelgpug and other areas of southern Bhutan demanding an end to absolute monarchy. The army opened fire at the demonstrators. Since the army numbers were not enough to control the situation, youth from the Drukpa community were asked to join the army in a battle, which was slowly turning to ethnic lines. After this incident the Bhutanese authorities randomly began evicting the people of Nepali origin out of Bhutan. In a few days, the Shangri-la had turned into a killing field and even some innocent

⁵ Chhetri, Rakesh, "Rizal and the Bhutanese Movement", *The Kathmandu Post*. 31 Dec. 1999.

⁶ Note: One of the principal reasons of unflinching Indian support to the Bhutanese royalty has been due the latter's cooperation with India in Bhutan's hydropower sector.

Lhotsampas who had not participated in the demonstrations were randomly told to leave the country.

One of the biggest drawbacks of the movement was it centering around southern districts alone while completely absent in important places like Paro and Thimpu. Gradually, a vigorous media campaign accusing the Lhotsampas having murdered 68 individuals, looted property worth millions and set fire to 960 private houses of the Drukpa community started to appear. Schools, hospitals and government offices in all the southern districts were vacated to harbor thousands of Drukpa soldiers.

According to one UNHCR survey, the Bhutanese army is one of the highest perpetrators of rape in the world. The Human Rights Watch Report published in September 2003 also underscores the same fact.⁷ The Report also exposed gender based violence in the camps inside Nepal.

Defending his government's decision to evict the *Lhotsampas*, the then Home Minister of Bhutan Jigme Thinley said, "A section of these people who have rejected everything that is Bhutanese [have] threatened to take over the country with the support of ethnic kin who comprise the most aggressive transnational migrant people in the region. The rich culture of the Great Wheel of Buddhism which once flourished in Sikkim, Tibet, Ladakh, Lahaul and Spiti is well on the path to extinction. Today, Bhutan, the last bastion of this rich cultural heritage, is in a state of siege."⁸ This statement of Thinley, one of the most trusted courtiers who went on to become the Prime Minister in the ensuing years is worthy of taking note in which he categorically tried to bend the democratic movement into an ethnic and cultural onslaught by the Lhotsampas. Neither Nepal nor the Lhotsampa leaders could aptly disseminate proper truths countering this allegation.

⁷ Human Rights Watch (2003). *Trapped by Inequality: Bhutanese Refugee Women in Nepal*, <http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/nepal0903full.pdf>

⁸ "Thinley says Lhotsampas are criminals", *The Kathmandu Post* 3 Sep. 1993.

Rizal was till recently kept in Chemgang central jail and the Amnesty International had declared Rizal as a 'prisoner of conscience'. Bhutan released him after much international condemnation and after some INGOs started calling him "Bhutan's Mandela".

The organization of the democratic movement was structurally weak and divided, it did not have any wherewithal of publicizing its democratic struggle. There was hardly anyone in India to support their cause and nor was there a coherent strategy to seek help from their kith and kin in Assam, although the regime relentlessly blamed them for doing just that. It was sporadic and a clear outburst of anger but could not be sustained. Hence, unlike the 1990 people's movement in neighboring Nepal, the democracy movement in Bhutan fizzled away in a few days. The Nepal government did not even issue a statement in favor of the Lhotsampas, in fact, embroiled in its own internal transition, the K.P. Bhattarai government perhaps did not even realize that the largest exodus of refugees in Nepal's history were on the way to the Nepal border.

In this period of great upheaval, an effective political platform 'Bhutan Peoples Party' was born on 1 June 1990. R.K. Budhathoki became its president. It decided to join hands with Rizal's PFHRB and carry out a joint effort to bring multi-party democracy in the Kingdom. Budhathoki was assassinated in Jhapa later on which was a big blow to the democracy movement. It was never found on who was behind the assassination.

5.5. Refugee Inflow:

The refugee inrush that had begun from June 1991 rose dramatically in the month of December. Refugees had taken shelter in Garganda in West Bengal before being forcibly kicked out by the West Bengal authorities presumably apprehensive of the incipient Gorkha movement. The West Bengal government even arranged trucks for transporting them to the Nepal border in Jhapa.

Fig. 1 Status of the Refugees in Various Camps (before third-country settlement)

| Beldangi 1 | |
|------------|--------|
| Family | 2,524 |
| Family | 1,348 |
| Male | 8,516 |
| Female | 8,071 |
| Total | 16,587 |

| Beldangi 2 | |
|------------|--------|
| Family | 3,358 |
| Huts | 3,641 |
| Male | 10,504 |
| Female | 10,222 |
| Total | 20726 |

| Beldangi 2 Bistar | |
|-------------------|--------|
| Family | 1,672 |
| Huts | 1,826 |
| Male | 5,378 |
| Female | 5,139 |
| Total | 10,517 |

| Saneschare (Morang) | |
|---------------------|--------|
| Family | 2,790 |
| Huts | 9,212 |
| Male | 9,623 |
| Female | 9,206 |
| Total | 18,829 |

| Timai | |
|--------|-------|
| Family | 1,366 |
| Huts | 1,380 |
| Male | 4,721 |
| Female | 4,470 |
| Total | 9,191 |

| Khudunabari | |
|-------------|--------|
| Family | 1,961 |
| Huts | 2,082 |
| Male | 6,101 |
| Female | 6,023 |
| Total | 12,124 |

| Goldhap | |
|---------|-------|
| Family | 1,348 |
| Huts | 1,413 |
| Male | 4,487 |
| Female | 4,156 |
| Total | 8,643 |

Source: Ministry of Home Affairs, Nepal Government (2009).

Among the 7 camps in eastern Nepal, the camp at Saneschare is very near to the Pathari bazaar near a highway while Beldangi 1, 2 and Bistar are proximal to a jungle. Timai, Goldhap and Khudunabari camps too are next to a forest intensifying the cutting of trees and thereby damaging the environment of the respective localities. Although the refugees are given food, kerosene, water and other daily necessities for free, they tend to sell the goods in black market and earn money. Because of this illegal trade, some of the refugees have modern gadgets like T.V. sets, VCRs, even laptops inside their huts. The UNHCR along with a dozen other INGOs have helped

the refugees in acquiring technical education and English language while other skill development programs to benefit the women and children have also been implemented. But, most refugees are unemployed and have nothing to do all day long. Some of them may have found menial labor jobs in the cities of Jhapa but by and large, the entire population is not engaged in anything productive.

The possibility of them being captivated by ULFA, BODO militants and Maoists always worried the Nepali security agencies but till date such a nexus has not been reported. However, there still are 40 thousand plus refugees and if any of these organizations succeed in using the refugees in any of their motives, the security condition of the country and the whole sub-region is going to change dramatically affecting not only us but also the sub-region.

Although daily essentials are given to them and there is barbed wire fencing, the overall security arrangement of the camps is in shambles. Anybody can enter and come out at any time of the day. Journalists, foreign correspondents on the contrary need permission from the Home Ministry. There is already an outcry of the local Nepali population for 24 hour cordoning of these camps to stop the refugees from coming out to the cities.

Unfortunately, Nepalese have begun marrying some of the refugees making the whole issue more and more complicated. One case study that this researcher carried out was that of a husband who works in a restaurant at half the wage as normally would be given to such workmen while returns to the camp in the evening for free food. His wife stays with him in the camp although she is not a refugee. Their two year old son can thus be called a Nepali, Bhutani or a refugee or even a stateless person.

The condition became so complex that Lok Nath Kadaria, a refugee even filed his nomination for the Lower House parliamentary elections from Jhapa constituency number 4 and pronounced the dire need for having at least one Bhutanese refugee inside the then Pratinidhi Sabha, Nepal's Lower House of parliament. Such cases have not only contaminated the refugee issue but even increased the risk of total assimilation of the refugees into the Nepali society. Christian mercenaries too are active in these camps and conversion from Hinduism to Christianity is common. If this country re-settlement is not opted by the remaining refugees and if Bhutan does

not accept them, there is a possibility of the Nepalese society suddenly having to maintain a completely different populace. They may speak the same language, may look like one of the Nepalese but are not the citizens of this country.

5.6. Nepal's Policy Dilemma:

Since Bhutan and Nepal do not share a border, the refugees initially stayed in India and then moved into eastern Nepal. Every sovereign country has a right to close its international borders if a huge mass of refugees tries to enter its territory but this happened when the Nepali leaders were rejoicing over the advent of multi-party democracy after a peaceful struggle.⁹ The political situation was extremely delicate. The then K.P. Bhattarai led interim government was preoccupied with drafting of a new Constitution for the country and the onerous task of holding the general elections in 1991, thereby it simply chose to overlook this problem. Nepal's sheer "indecision" at that time came to be one of the most foolish "decisions" it has ever made in its diplomatic history. Over the ensuing years, it has had to carry the burden of the elderly, women, children, handicapped, orphans and also teenagers that were born after 1991 in Nepalese territory. In fact, the birth rate among the refugee population has been found to be double than that of the local people. A report made public by the UNHCR in Jhapa states that 21 per cent of the total refugee population has been born in the camps. This has obviously impacted Nepal in political, economic, environmental and social spheres. Nepal is not a signatory of the Refugee Convention of 1951 thus every refugee is considered a 'foreigner' with no political rights. Economic activity and property ownership are not allowed. Neither has Nepal been supporter of any political cause or armed rebellion outside its borders in South Asia and yet it had to face this sudden forcible entry of a huge number of people. They obviously did not enter all at once therefore there was time for the government to mull over the situation and take appropriate measures. Sadly these were not done.

Internationally too, Nepal was already being questioned on its poor management of the camps and lack of policy alternatives vis-à-vis the refugees. At a high-level meeting of the UN Committee on Elimination of Racial Discrimination held on 13 Aug. 1998,

⁹ Note: In an interview with this researcher, Bhekh Bahadur Thapa, former ambassador to India and Bhutan asserted that closing the border was not an option for Nepal as Nepal simply could not do it under the compulsion of the 1950 Treaty which stipulates free movement of people.

Nepal's charge d' affaires at the Nepal mission in Geneva in response to some of the questions raised by Committee members, said that the "Government had been engaged in dialogue with the organizations involved in the protection of refugees in Nepal. The Bhutanese refugees were there following political violence in the neighbouring State. Nepal was a recipient country and was doing its best to ensure the voluntary expatriation of the refugees where their rights were protected as citizens of Bhutan."¹⁰

Nepal government was always reluctant to allocate budget for the welfare of the refugees but with the onset of the Maoist insurgency in 1996, state resources had to be diverted to meet rising defense expenditures and the government had to leave the refugees totally at the mercy of aid agencies. In addition, 15 rounds of ministerial level talks along with a number of diplomatic exercises failed to bring tangible results, while these refugees survived in make-shift huts without proper and elementary conditions of living. Social tension arising due to unemployment, prostitution, scuffles between refugees and non-refugees along with the damage to the environment of Jhapa and Morang districts presented multi-faceted challenges for the society. Due to political instability and frequent changes in government positions such as replacing the Foreign Ministry to take charge of this issue instead of the Home Ministry, there were several embarrassing *volte-face* pronouncements by the Nepali government. An example was the decision to accept the refugees in 4 categories, which helped the Bhutanese government to buy time and shelve the issue over the years. Nevertheless, it has been a consistent stand of the Nepalese government that Bhutanese refugees came from Bhutan and that they must be allowed to return to their rightful motherland.¹¹

5.7. Life in the Camps:

Prior to the re-settlement in the U.S. and other countries, approximately 107,000 refugees resided in seven camps in eastern Nepal: Beldangi-I, Beldangi-II, Beldangi-II Extension, Sanischare, Goldhap, Timai, and Khudunabari. A few hundred refugees are living outside the camps. This is because some refugees started coming to Kathmandu for moral, political and financial support

¹⁰ United Nations (1998).

<http://www.unhcr.ch/hurricane/hurricane.nsf/0/4277F9701E76D35F802566600050201B?opendocument>

¹¹ Lohani, Mohan. "Internationalizing the Refugee Issue", *The Kathmandu Post*. 9 Sep. 2000.

and the local authorities were also lenient towards certain refugee leaders. This facilitated their access with Kathmandu based diplomats, M.Ps, academicians and the INGOs.

The population is nearly evenly divided between males and females. Children under 18 make up a little more than 35 percent of the population, with nearly 8 percent under the age of 5. Adults age 60 and older make up nearly 7 percent of the population.

Almost 97 percent of the refugees are ethnic Nepalese. The non-Nepalese include the Sharchop, Drukpa, and Khenpga ethnic groups. Nearly all refugees speak Nepali as a first language. UNHCR estimates that about 35 percent of the population has a functional knowledge of English as of 2010.

Of the refugee population, 60 percent are Hindus, 27 percent are Buddhists, and about 10 percent are Kirat, an indigenous religion. The percentage of Christians in each camp varies from 1 percent to 7 percent.

5.8.1. Failure in Involving India:

Both Bhutan and Nepal are India's closest neighbors and both look upto India for assistance in political, economic and other issues. Besides, by virtue of the Treaty of 1949, Bhutan's foreign and defense policies were till recently looked after by New Delhi. When the refugees were expelled from Bhutan in 1991, they had first taken shelter in West Bengal. But India's stand on the issue has been consistent. From the very onset of the crisis and till now the Indian Government has stated that "the subject of exiled Nepalese living in Nepal is a bilateral issue between Nepal and Bhutan and that India was hopeful that both countries would be able to resolve the humanitarian problem soon through the talks."¹²

Refugee leaders, the international community and the UN High Commission for Refugees, that administers the seven camps have repeatedly said that the impasse' can be resolved if India asks Bhutan to act. When Bhutan's new King Jigme Khesar Wangchuk visited New Delhi in February

¹² Note: MEA Press Briefing on June 1, 2007.

2007, (his first foreign trip after his father King Jigme Singhe Wangchuk announced his abdication), the refugees in Bhutan prayed for a change of heart in Thimphu. "We had hoped something would come out during the visit," Thinley Penjor, chairperson of the National Front for Democracy, told the Nepali media. "But nothing happened," he said.¹³ The 1949 Treaty too was revised and replaced with a new Indo-Bhutan Treaty but there was no mention of the Lhotsampas who are living abroad.

While India, through these years chose to remain a silent spectator, altogether 15 rounds of negotiations on the issue of repatriation of these refugees were held between Nepal and Bhutan. Little concrete came out of these talks. The refugees' hopes of returning home received a further blow when the Bhutanese foreign minister alleged that the camps were infiltrated by Maoist insurgents and repatriation would mean, "importing terrorism to Bhutan".¹⁴ It is true that taking cue from the grand success of an extreme left party in Nepal, a Maoist party has been formed in Bhutan and attempts to unify all the multifarious political parties in exile have been going on. In fact, it could simply be a sign of growing frustration and impatience that on May 30th 2007 thousands of the refugees began a march to exercise the right to return to their homeland by crossing the Mechi bridge dividing India and Nepal. They clashed with the Indian border security force resulting in one death and injuring several others. They had entered the same way and wanted to go back to their country but the behavior of the West Bengal police was different this time. The UNHCR stated, it was "extremely concerned" with the news of the clash while a hapless Nepal police did little to control the crowd at its side of the border. Refugee leaders said that they want to return home citing article 13 (2) of the Universal Law of Human Rights that states:- "Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state. (2) Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country."¹⁵ This incident demonstrated for the first time that the refugees were getting violent and as impatience grows, it was becoming late to address the problem.

¹³ "Bhutan refugees likely to resettled in U.S." *The Hindustan Times*, 8 March, 2007.

¹⁴ Note: This statement was later rejected by Nepal's Ministry of Foreign Affairs stating that it has found no evidence of terrorists inside the camps.

¹⁵ 'Freedom of Movement', Retrieved from ><http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>< on Feb. 6, 2010.

The intention on the part of India was from the beginning to get out of this tangle. "The utter lack of seriousness led to Nepal to accept the Bhutanese proposal for the establishment of the Nepal-Bhutan Ministerial Joint Committee (JMC) at the level of Home Minister. The agreement defined the refugee problem as a "bilateral issue", thereby effectively taking India off any possible hook in the future."¹⁶

India may also have realized that taking sides in this complex issue involving Bhutan which is so close and Nepal which it cannot afford to antagonize will serve no purpose at all. It will only make it a loser on both fronts as it is impossible to make both the sides happy. Bhutan's leadership has always chosen to be guided by Indian suggestions on foreign policy and its leaders have shown profound wisdom in utilizing the water resources for the benefit of power hungry states of India by virtue of which it receives handsome revenue. Although, there is shortage of such enlightened leadership in the case of Nepal, one must not forget that Nepali politics is much more complex. It is a country of nearly 28 million people with a fractured political leadership that relishes on out-smarting one another than worrying about the interests about their nation. Although in the long term, Bhutan may also face certain degree of political turmoil and pressure for change for opening up to the wider international community, it is with surety that one can argue that India would nevertheless take the side of Bhutan rather than Nepal in the case of the refugees. By doing nothing, Delhi helped the refugee issue to remain in the backburner and this was precisely what Thimpu wanted. It was therefore both a matter of New Delhi's indifference and Nepal's inability to impress upon the leadership in Delhi for a proactive policy on the refugee crisis.

5.8.2 Nepal's Attempts of International Lobbying:

Not all efforts to garner support from the Indian civil society, media, academics, and strategic analysts have been a failure. Refugee leaders occasionally try to meet Indian political leaders and also officials in the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu to impress upon the need to resolve the issue of Nepali speaking people within Bhutan. One of the minor successes of lobbying was the public call by a group of Indian politicians for the repatriation of refugees in 2008. In a rare but hard-hitting statement issued by former Union Minister Satya Prakash Malviya, who chairs the Indo-

¹⁶ Interview with Ambassador Leela Prasad Sharma, former Joint Secretary, MoFA.

Bhutan Friendship Society (IBFS), it was stated that the society supports the timely repatriation of the Bhutanese refugees with honor and dignity. “IBFS is appalled that even after the institution of democratic government in Bhutan for the last 10 months; the reports emanating from Bhutan are disturbing”, the statement read adding, “the fundamental human rights and democratic rights are not granted to the people. The political persecution is still rampant and freedom of speech and expression are restricted.” The statement further read, “Freedom of assembly and association is banned. Exiled political parties and human rights organizations are still banned. Independent judiciary is absent. Political prisoners are still incarcerated and the sentences meted out to political prisoners are utterly unbelievable.”¹⁷ This has been quite a vocal and strong statement by an Indian politician till date but efforts to garner further sympathy and support within India has been abysmally low. It is also because there are other important issues in India and the media usually tends to overlook incidents and causes of concerns until it really becomes a major security threat. However, it is indeed a failure on the part of the refugee leaders not to have got the backing of individuals like George Fernandez, Arundati Roy, Anna Hazare, or even independent Institutes and civil society organizations who are quite active in promoting democracy in Myanmar or the Free Tibet cause.

Occasionally there have been some talk programs organized in Delhi and Kolkata. Speaking at a symposium organised by the Human Rights Defense International (HRDI) at Indian Law Institute on 15 July 2012, Bhutanese Refugee Representative Repatriation Committee chairman Bhampa Rai said that "India has a moral responsibility to help secure justice for the refugees who were forced to shift to Nepal from Bhutan in the 1990s." She also revealed that not only the Nepali speaking but also the inhabitants of eastern Bhutan the followers of Nyingmapa sect are also suppressed.¹⁸

Effective lobbying within Nepal has definitely shown positive result in Nepali politicians and parties voicing their support for the cause of democracy in Bhutan. The then General Secretary of the Nepali Congress G.P. Koirala expressed his solidarity to the democratic struggle in the early 90s when the K.P. Bhattarai led government was busying itself with the twin tasks of constitution

¹⁷ “Indian politicians for repatriation of Bhutanese refugees”, Retrieved from >www.nepalnews.com< Dec. 19, 2008.

¹⁸ Bhutan refugees from Nepal seek India's help, (2012, July 12). *Daily Times*.

drafting and conducting elections. But the Druk Yul managed to convince Delhi that there was indeed a conspiracy on the part of Nepal to de-stabilize Bhutan for the cause of a 'greater Nepal'. However Koirala kept mum on the issue throughout his long tenures as Prime Minister. Only in his later days that Koirala said "change will come to Bhutan as well as in many countries of the world afflicted with the problem of despotism. This is a movement for change all over the world and I believe democracy will be established in Bhutan also."¹⁹ His Home Minister K.P. Sitaula also said that the "Nepal government gives moral support to the current movement for repatriation launched by Bhutanese refugees and even said that he supports their struggle for democracy and repatriation."²⁰ It is evident that many Nepali politicians with constituencies in the districts of Morang or Jhapa occasionally voice their support for the democratic urge of the refugees only with the aim to perform well in elections as the refugees have already established good contacts and friendship with the local voters. Some refugees have also acquired voter cards. But there is not much to expect from these leaders as most of their election promises are forgotten once the polls are over. Senior foreign ministry officials however maintain that "it was not because of any type of a weakness on Nepal's part but the hidden backing coming from India was main bulwark of Bhutan's adamant position throughout the bilateral talks."²¹

Other leaders like Madhav Kumar Nepal, Sher Bahadur Deuba, Prachanda, etc. have also been voicing their support occasionally to the cause of democracy and freedom but their vocal or moral support is not in a sustained manner, there is no follow-up mechanism either within their own parties or inside the MoFA of Nepal nor is there a system of continued pressure from the level of the Nepali civil society to force the Druk Yul to change its mind-set vis-à-vis the Lhotsampas. In the post-resettlement phase too, Nepal has been unable to impress upon the need to repatriate the remaining refugees so as to ease tensions and re-set the bilateral relations. Foreign Minister Narayan Kazi Shrestha while leaving for UN General Assembly on Sep. 2012 reiterated the old policy of urging Thimpu to sit for bilateral talks.

On the part of NGOs, a non-governmental pressure group led by Former Nepali Foreign Minister Shailendra Kumar Upadhaya was in Geneva back in 2003 for lobbying on behalf of the refugees.

¹⁹ "Koirala says winds of change to sweep Bhutan one day", Retrieved from >www.nepalnews.com<, Aug. 16, 2009.

²⁰ "Nepal Supports refugees' movement: Home Minister", Retrieved from >www.nepalnews.com<, June 2, 2007.

²¹ Interview with former foreign secretary Kedar Bhakta Shrestha.

Major donor countries had met in Geneva for a roundtable on Bhutan on Feb. 18-20, 2003 and the meet focused on the condition of the refugees and the Nepali speaking people's status within Bhutan. "Rakesh Chhetri, Executive Director of Centre for Protection of Minorities and Discrimination in Bhutan (CEMARD) on behalf of the lobbyists appealed to the donor community to a) pressurize Bhutan to submit a clear roadmap for speedy repatriation and re-settlement within one year, b) stop immediately re-settlement in the land left by the refugees c) speed up the verification and d) include organizations like UNHCR in the ministerial and joint verification teams."²² Geneva annually hosts the human rights commission meetings and other meetings where NGOs and civil society participation is sought. Again, the pressure has not been enough to make a decisive impact on the change of heart of the Thimpu regime.

It is an obvious fact therefore that these lobbying efforts of both the refugees and the Nepal government has not produced the desired results i.e. the refugees have not allowed to return with dignity and honor to their own country. The civil society activists within Nepal who were hyper-active during the people's movement-II of April 2006 also chose not to involve their names in this similarly analogous political movement just across West Bengal that relates to a large population of Nepali kith and kin. It is incomprehensible that the prominent media persons, civil society leaders of Nepal who are never tired of harping the tune of human rights and freedom of speech choose to remain dangerously silent on the issue as emotive as this? Why do they continue to do seemingly little for the cause of repatriation of the Lhotsampas and despite of millions spent on grants for democracy building and support to NGOs, the western donor community and the UN system based in Kathmandu are least bothered about one of the worst humanitarian crisis in this part of the world? This is an area where the refugee leaders need to do more, become more active in India, encourage media participation in all their programs and raise funds because only by lobbying can a distinct impact be made. They have to convince Indian leaders and officials that their cause is not de-stabilizing the country and thereby jeopardizing the hydro-projects that supply power to Indian states but rather to unite Bhutan among all its communities so that the kingdom remains secure for future generations.

²² S. Chandrasekharan, "Bhutan: Refugee Problem" *South Asia Analysis Group* (Update: 29) April 7, 2003.

5.8.3. Failure of Bilateral Talks:

With the Indian stand of not interfering in the bilateral problem between Nepal and Bhutan, and without an option of clandestinely supporting a Nepalese uprising within Bhutan, the Government of Nepal could utilize its only instrument at hand; that of the ministerial level talks that began in 1993. Although, Bhutan has time and again accused Nepalese politicians of trying to subvert the regime in Bhutan by supporting the Maoist movement in their country and trying to destabilize the entire sub-region by dreaming of a Greater Nepal, etc., Nepalese leaders were all the time reluctant to overtly sponsor a democratic movement outside their territory. No inference can be reached to prove that any of the political parties of Nepal ever assisted for the overthrow of Bhutan's monarchy or for the cause of a true multi-party system whereby all of its citizens could live freely.

Only two or three minor cases can be pinpointed in this regard:- The first instance was an interview given by G.P. Koirala when he was General Secretary of the Nepali Congress in 1992 that there should be a similar type of a democratic struggle in Bhutan for the establishment of a multi-party democracy and a constitutional monarchy. However, he himself became Prime Minister several times in the following years and chose not to follow this principle which he had articulated. Perhaps, he was aware of the geo-political sensitivities of Nepal's southern neighbor in this type of a dangerous political adventure. The second instance was when several Lhotsampa refugee leaders in the course of the Maoist people's war met with C.P. Gajurel and other leaders of the Maoist party to seek support for a similar style of a guerrilla warfare in Bhutan. There were vocal support from the Maoist leaders but despite of media commentaries that the Nepali Maoists were training Bhutanese refugee youth inside the camps in southern Nepal, there isn't any palpable proof to suggest the same. Other political leaders such as Madhav Kumar Nepal, Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat, Dr. Prakash Sharan Mahat, Dr. Shekhar Koirala, Bam Dev Gautam have been meeting various refugee leaders and academics and have been sympathetic to the cause of a right to return peacefully to one's motherland.

The security services primarily the Nepal Army, Nepal Police, Nepal Armed Police Force or the Nepal Investigation Department since 2006 became so engrossed with the Maoist insurgency, that none of them could even chalk out a possible institutional strategy out of this imbroglio. In other

countries such as India, the intelligence agencies do possess considerable clout, resources and manpower to be able to implement the national foreign policy objectives set by the political leadership even to the extent of subversion, revolution and coups but such operational readiness and shrewdness has neither been built up in our security forces nor were permitted by the leadership which would entail such an operation via the territory of India. It would have invited dangerous consequences for Nepal.

Prime Minister K.P. Bhattarai met King Jigme during the SAARC Summit in Maldives in Nov. 1991. The King gave Bhattarai his word that he would solve the political problem in South Bhutan, and in the event he needed assistance from Nepal he would approach the Prime Minister in Kathmandu. However, a few days after this meeting, Bhutan publicly accused Nepalese leaders of conspiring for the cause of Greater Nepal. Dawa Tshering, Foreign Minister of Bhutan said, "It was not merely out of ethnic affinity that the political parties and people of Nepal are supporting the anti-nationals of southern Bhutan, but more out of their deep-seated desire to promote the concept of a Greater Nepal. This concept envisaged Nepalese domination over the entire Himalayas by bringing Bhutan, parts of the Duars in West Bengal and Assam and the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Maghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland under Nepalese control just as in the case of Sikkim and Darjelling." Tshering repeated a similar view to the visiting Amnesty International team in Jan. 1992. Naturally, Indian eyes were raised and even some soft quarters in New Delhi regarding Nepal's legitimate helplessness chose to keep silent after this. Delhi deliberately directed its entire media not to pill venom against the royal regime in Bhutan (some Calcutta based newspaper had been carrying out news report against the autocratic rule before this).

After the visit of Minister Tashi Tobgyal of Bhutan in 1992, HMG/N consciously adopted the preventive measure of 'quiet diplomacy'. During the Earth Summit at Rio de Janeiro, PM Koirala raised the issue with his Indian counterpart and received the assurance from Prime Minister Narasimha Rao that "he would do whatever he could to resolve the problem".²³

Subsequently PM Koirala convened an all party meeting that was attended by representatives of CPN (UML), Nepali Congress, Nepal Sadhbhawana Party, Nepal Workers and Peasants Party etc.

²³ "India to assist Nepal", *The Rising Nepal*, 15 Dec. 1992.

The Prime Minister's statement after the meeting reflected a strategy of firstly engaging in a bilateral approach, secondly inviting India's assistance and if that too doesn't succeed, internationalizing the issue.

The problem with this was the blunder of publicly opening one's card. Thereafter Bhutan started to quash every option Nepal began to utilize. Consequently none of the three options worked in Nepal's favor. And all the rest is history.

The twice-postponed SAARC Summit took place in April 1993 in Dhaka. It was agreed by both Nepali and Bhutanese leaders to set up a Joint Ministerial level Committee (JMC) to identify whether or not the people inside the camps in Nepal were genuine Bhutanese. In May 1993, the Bhutanese Home Ministry released a pamphlet illustrating the refugee camps as terrorist training grounds, stating categorically that cadres of young men are being trained in the forests near the camps by retired Gorkha veterans. "Arms and ammunition are being collected and stockpiled as well", the ministry said. Likewise, *The Telegraph* published from Kolkata said "Maoist rebels are providing training to a section of Bhutanese refugees in eastern Nepal", quoting a report of the Border Security Force (BSF) of India.²⁴

HMG/N did not take these allegations seriously and did not consider it necessary to condemn the allegations, thereby establishing Bhutan as the victim and Nepal as the aggressor. The Indian media with its worldwide audience went out of its way in defaming Nepal and portraying Bhutan as a "Shangri-la with unique cultural heritage and tradition and a peaceful dragon Kingdom with fluttering prayer flags repeating the mantras of non-violence and peace."

The then chairman of the parliamentary Human Rights and Foreign Affairs Committee Hiranya Lal Shrestha made a visit to Thimpu that was characterized as a confidence building measure and give an impression to the King that Nepal has left the policy of supporting the democratic movement in Bhutan. It was also advised by intellectuals to pursue a track II approach on confidence building thereby send parliamentarians, sportsmen, musicians, artists and

²⁴ *Nepali Maoists giving Military training to Bhutanese Refugees*. Retrieved July 29, 2011, from <http://raonline.ch/pages/bt/btbodo14.html>

businesspersons and consequently make the bilateral relations more warm and hassle-free.²⁵ There was nothing wrong with this track II approach. But, this too seemed to have given a false gesture to Thimpu. They took it as Nepal's weakness. Instead of becoming softer, they never wavered from their adamant position of not accepting the Lhotsampas back to Bhutan.

There was another high level visit led by the then Home Minister Govinda Raj Joshi reportedly 'to break the ice'. While returning back to the capital on Nov. 26, 1999 he said, "forthcoming ministerial level talks in Kathmandu would be decisive".²⁶ But it was clear upon completion of the ministerial level talks held in Kathmandu which was led by Jigme Y. Thinley and Dr. Ram Sharan Mahat from Bhutanese and Nepalese sides respectively that the Bhutanese officials are skilled in giving false hopes and promises with an intention of buying time.

One of the reasons for the Indian sympathy for the royal regime of Bhutan could also be due to Thimpu's decision in 2003 to forcibly close all camps of an Indian secessionist outfit known as the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) whose main motive is to carve a separate, independent state of Assam from the Indian union. Some refugee leaders proclaim that King Jigme wanted to play a double-game vis-à-vis India by using the ULFA camps inside Bhutan as a possible leverage against India. But as the threat of ULFA increased with regular incidents of bomb blasts and terror strikes in Guwahati, the Bhutanese government decided to use the Royal Bhutan Army (RBA) to flush out the armed militants of the from certain jungle hide-outs of Bhutan in 2003. Large number of personnel from the Indian security was also used for the operation. The prime minister, Lyonpo Jigmi Thinley, told the Bhutanese media that the "valiant troops of the RBA" had begun to expel the Indian militants from their camps that were spread across the country's southern region, from Diafam in the east to Samtse in the west.²⁷ The troops were able to overpower the central command headquarters of the ULFA, located at Phukaptong in Samdrup Jongkhar. This was the main camp of the ULFA which served as their central headquarters. Within a few weeks, all hide-outs of the rebels were cleared which once again proved to India that only the royalty of Bhutan was a true friend in need. This incident was used

²⁵ Baral, Lok Raj. "Bhutanese Refugees in Nepal: Quest for New Confidence Building Measures", *Nepal's Foreign Policy: Issues and Options*. Kathmandu: IFA/FES, 1999. p. 44

²⁶ "Home Minister returns from Refugee Talks", *The Kathmandu Post*, 27 Nov. 1999.

²⁷ *Bhutanese Army moves in to flush out Indian militants* <http://www.raonline.ch/pages/bt/btbodo12d.html>. Retrieved May 7, 2012.

by Thimpu as a lever against the refugee issue. A site has been constructed near Thimpu honouring all the dead of this operation.

Hence, the government of Nepal only had the choice of bilateral talks in order to impress upon the Bhutanese leadership to accept the refugees back to Bhutan. The institutional rivalry between the Home and Foreign Ministries, lack of credible information from within Bhutan on their line of thinking, deficit of trust with India, and gross political instability in Nepal contributed to flip-flops and erroneous decisions on the part of the Nepal government. Ultimately, in October 1993 it was agreed to categorize the refugees into four different segments:-

- a) Bona-fide Bhutanese evicted forcefully,
- b) Bhutanese who voluntarily migrated,
- c) Non-Bhutanese
- d) Bhutanese who have committed crimes.

A formation of a Joint verification team with 5 members from each country was also decided upon. By agreeing to these terms, the Nepali delegation at the time received flak from the M.Ps as well as from the intelligentsia. Category (b), (c) and (d) were especially objectionable and displeasing both to the refugees and to Nepal. Because, under category (d), "people who had committed criminal offences" had nothing to do with Nepal or Nepalese law therefore should not have been agreed upon by the Nepali delegation. They should have been accepted by Bhutanese government and the matter of whether or not they have committed any criminal offence should have been dealt with by the relevant Bhutani legal authorities. Category (c) also firmly positioned Bhutan's intention of ejecting as many refugees to Nepal because Nepal agreed that there were indeed some "non-Bhutanese" inside the camps.

In addition, hundreds of refugees had been compelled to sign a confession-document before being expelled from their motherland without being told the contents of the paper. This, they feared would be used for telling the world that the refugees had "left voluntarily". The fact that the Nepalese delegation accepted this plan came as a shock to all those that wanted an early and a fair

settlement of the impasse'. This categorization has since been termed as one of the biggest bloopers of Nepali negotiators in the country's diplomatic history after the signing of the Sugauli Treaty. Since its signing, the categorization has neither repatriated a single refugee nor has it helped bridge the trust deficit between the two countries.

According to the JVT which was formed later, Thimpu was only willing to take back the refugees that it established under category one and have their status of citizens restored to them. Consequently, the JVT interviewed a total of 12, 090 refugees registered in Khudunabari camp.²⁸ Out of these, the JVT placed 293 (2.4 %) in category one, 8,595 (70.55%) in category two, 2, 948 (24.2%) in category three and 347 (2.85%) in category four.

After the findings were made public, not only the refugee leaders but even some INGOs working in the field criticized the JVT for failing to meet established standards of refugee screening and verification. "It was a flawed exercise and therefore its results too were biased"²⁹, read the statement of the Bhutan People's Party. How can the report suggest that more than 70 percent of the refugees voluntarily migrated when virtually everyone says that they were forcibly made to leave their country?" questioned the statement.

Thereafter, an angry mob tried to manhandle the Bhutanese members of the team on Dec. 22, 2003 and since then no further interviews were conducted as Thimpu wanted security to the members of its verification team. The Bhutanese government did not repatriate even the 293 refugees coming under category one.

The Nepali civil society rejected the process calling it as "faulty" and the results as "invalid". So much so that even the UNHCR questioned the results. "UNHCR and the international community are right to reject the deeply flawed screening process agreed between Bhutan and Nepal," said Peter Prove, Assistant to the General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation."³⁰

²⁸ Note: Khudunabari is only one of the seven camps in eastern Nepal. Others are Beldangi I and II, Goldhap, Timai, Beldangi Extension and Sanischare.

²⁹ "Bhutan People's Party Rejects JVT Findings" *The Kathmandu Post* 21 Dec. 2003.

³⁰ Note: The Lutheran Foundation is also active in the re-settlement and for job placements of the re-settled refugees in the U.S. It primarily supports those refugees that have already converted into Christianity.

Undoubtedly, this incident further chilled the already cold relations between the two countries. In fact, the mistake was of the Nepal government of not providing adequate security to the members of the team and in a location as that of the camps where police cordon should have been provided, incidents such as manhandling of Bhutani team members should have been avoided. After Bhutan started blaming Nepal government for the incident, the Nepalese Foreign Ministry stated, "though highly regrettable, the incident in Khudunabari on December 22 was a spontaneous reaction from the refugees present at the scene to the provocative remarks made by the leader of the Bhutanese side of the Joint Verification Team (JVT) during a briefing on the terms and procedure applicable in Bhutan to the returnees."³¹

The 13th MJC meeting held in Thimphu from March 24 to 26, 2003 reviewed the work of the JVT on the categorization of people in the Khudunabari camp. During the 14th MJC held in Kathmandu from May 19 to 22, 2003, the two sides approved categorization of the refugees as per the report of the JVT. In the 15th MJC meeting held in Thimphu on October 20-23, 2003, the two sides agreed to repatriate the refugees falling under categories 1, 2 and 4 in Khudunabari camp. The MJC also entrusted the JVT with the task of reviewing the appeals submitted by those falling under category 3. The meeting agreed to take up Sanischare camp for verification of categorization with a view to expediting the resolution of the Bhutanese refugee issue. However, the unfortunate incident that erupted at Khudunabari Camp [completely] stalled the joint exercise undertaken by the two sides as per the mandate given by the 15th MJC.³²

After this, there was a period of lull for nearly 2 years as no meetings or bilateral contacts at the political level was held between the two countries on the refugee issue.

On September 7, 2005 Bhutanese Foreign Minister Lynpo Khandu Wangchuk called the then Foreign Minister Ramesh Nath Pandey on telephone and said that he is prepared to work with the latter in seeking amicable solution to the refugee problem. On his part, Pandey stressed the "need to immediately reactivate the stalled bilateral process by honouring the agreements and

³¹ "Press Release on JVT for Bhutanese Refugees" Ministry of Foreign Affairs Retrieved on (2003, Dec. 15 from [http://www.mofa.gov.np/news/metadata.php?ID=89&bread=Press Release](http://www.mofa.gov.np/news/metadata.php?ID=89&bread=Press+Release)

³² *Nepal-Bhutan Relations*. Retrieved Aug. 21, 2010, from <http://www.mofa.gov.np/bilateralRelation/nepal-bhutan.php>

understanding reached earlier in order to seek a durable solution to the problem."³³ Minister Pandey also met with his Bhutanese counterpart on Sep. 13-16, 2005 on the sidelines of the 60th UN General Assembly in New York in connection with resolving the stalemate of the bilateral process. They also had talks on the sidelines of the 13th SAARC Summit in Dhaka, on November 10, 2005 on matters relating to the Bhutanese refugees.³⁴

After the success of people's movement-II in April 2006 there was another long pause on the refugee issue. For Nepal, the critical agenda was the ending of the people's war, locking up of weapons belonging to the Maoist PLA and the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) leading to the elections to the Constituent Assembly in April 10th 2008. Only after a hiatus of 7 months, Foreign Minister K.P. Oli held talks with his counterpart during his visit in Thimpu on Nov. 20-21, 2006. Talks were inconclusive. Oli reiterated the stand of Tek Nath Rijal that the only durable solution is dignified repatriation and that Bhutan should hold talks with the refugee leaders. He added that it is Bhutan's problem and not that of Nepal and that repatriation, democracy and human rights are inter-linked. Oli also indicated that the next round of talks will be final and that Nepal would think of other options in case Bhutan does not agree to total repatriation.³⁵ Here again, having tested and tried all types of regimes and governments in Kathmandu, Bhutan was no longer concerned of the Nepali threat of applying "other options". Because it knew quite well by now that Nepal had none.

Druk National Congress President Rongthong Kunley Dorji was released in August 2010 after 13 years of confinement in India. Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal showed a positive gesture by meeting him at his office in Singha Durbar on August 10, 2010. "We are always of the opinion that there must be genuine democracy in Bhutan. Nepali people have deep sympathy for the suffering of Bhutanese refugees in Nepal," he said.³⁶ Dorji informed the PM that Bhutanese leaders were working to establish a contact office in Kathmandu, and expected cooperation from Nepal to run the office.

³³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs Press Release (2005, Sep. 7).

[http://www.mofa.gov.np/news/metadata.php?ID=46&bread=Press Release](http://www.mofa.gov.np/news/metadata.php?ID=46&bread=Press+Release)

³⁴ *ibid.*

³⁵ Chandrasekharan, S. "Bhutan: Sixteenth ministerial Talks- Breakthrough Unlikely". Retrieved July 4, 2010, from <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/%5Cnotes4%5Cnote348.html>

³⁶ "PM Assures Nepal's Support to the democratic struggle in Bhutan", *The Bhutan Today* 26 Dec. 2010.

After a nine year hiatus, Bhutanese Prime Minister Jigme Y. Thinley visited Kathmandu and met Prime Minister Jhal Nath Khanal. Although, this visit was related with SAARC activity as Thinley was the SAARC Chair, during his visit the two countries agreed to resume bilateral negotiations on the repatriation of refugees that were stalled since 2003. The date for resumption of talks however was not decided. “Both prime ministers agreed to resume stalled talks at the level of the Ministerial Joint Committee to resolve the problems of Bhutanese refugees staying in camps in eastern Nepal,”³⁷ a foreign ministry statement read.

After the collapse of the Khanal government at the end of August 2011, Prime Minister Dr. Baburam Bhattarai met his counterpart Jigme Y. Thinley at the sidelines of the 16th SAARC Summit in Addu, The Maldives. Even after this meeting, nothing concrete came out. Hence, it can be seen that governments under various regimes have failed to impress upon the Bhutanese side the imperative of resolving this issue once and for all. Whether it was a minority government headed by Man Mohan Adhikari or a majority one under G.P. Koirala or governments under the King and then later after a republican order in Nepal, all of them have explicitly demanded from Bhutan the permit to its own citizens to return. But Bhutan managed to snub every Nepali request and proposal and still get away with it.

5.9 An Appraisal of Nepal's Bhutanese Refugee Policy:

Nepal's definition of foreign policy is often overflowing with rhetoric, idealistic underpinnings and even strategic ideas of the cold war but bereft of substance. Although, all major political parties have time and again reiterated their stand that the refugees need to be repatriated to their own *bona-fide* motherland, none of them have actually articulated on how to do this? Alert countries with visionary leaders started reshaping their foreign policy goals and destinations right after the break way of the Soviet Union and the subsequent demise of the cold war. Unfortunately, Nepal chose to be a silent on-looker. Nepal hasn't changed both the ideological and operational terms of reference of its conduct of international relations over the last 20 years except some irregular exercises on economic diplomacy. Such a change was not only necessary to adjust to the post cold war power equations and trends of economic globalization, privatization and other tenants of free market economy, but also to meet the challenges brought about by

³⁷ "Nepal, Bhutan yes to resume talks" *The Kathmandu Post* 15 April 2011.

poverty, terrorism and mass migration - all are which are contemporary global phenomena. In his famous work the 'Clash of Civilizations' Prof. Huntington says,

"World politics is being reconfigured along cultural lines, with new patterns of conflict and cooperation replacing those of the cold war. The hot spots in world politics are on the fault lines between civilizations. The years after the cold war witnessed the beginning of dramatic changes in peoples' identities and the symbols of those identities."³⁸

We should have also been more aware of the nuances and preferences of Indian establishment which although supported Nepal's political parties in their struggle for democracy chose to remain silent on this particular case. Why didn't India ever support Nepal vis-à-vis Bhutan? This was never probed in depth either by the Nepali leaders or by the foreign ministry officials. Was it because Bhutan was and is closer and dearer in the Indian strategy of a regional game-plan? Is it due to the mis-trust and perpetual political bedlam within Nepal that led to the conclusion in Delhi that Bhutan's monarchy must be protected at all cost? Or is it because Delhi realized that if a functioning democracy is to be established in Bhutan, it will be similar to the rigmarole and disorder as of the Nepali variety challenging the several hydro-electric projects that India has initiated and thereby endangering India's energy security?

These embarrassing occurrences in the domain of the refugee crisis is thus a wreckage of this boorish approach to emerging trends in the earlier years of the 1990s and our inability to answer critical questions such as the one pointed above. Our descriptions, analysis and assessments simply did not match the events on the ground, its repercussions and its far-reaching impacts. As the refugees started arriving, HMG/N not only adopted a casual approach but at the same time did not go for a thorough and a detailed examination as to the origin, cause and the consequences of the mass eviction. "India had accommodated more than 8 million Bengalis from Bangladesh in 1971 but the then Mrs. Gandhi government was not hesitant to spend 2.5 million \$ per day to assist these refugees."³⁹ India being a large country could have easily accommodated these refugees in the Duar plains, other parts of Assam, Tripura or West Bengal. But in this case, its approach was to shift the problem to Nepal.

³⁸ Huntington, Samuel P. *Clash of Civilizations and Remaking of World Order*, New York: Simon and Schuster. 1996. p. 141.

³⁹ Ahmed, Imtiaz. "Refugee and Security: The Experience of Bangladesh". *Refugees and Regional Security in South Asia* Eds. S.D. Muni and L.R. Baral. Colombo: Regional Centre for Strategic Studies. 1996. 80-81.

Similarly, after China 'liberated' Tibet, more than 85 thousand Tibetans along with their spiritual leader Dalai Lama took shelter in India and the Government of India was doing its best to preserve their customs, rites and tradition by supporting them inside the Dharmasala which it continues to do despite of China becoming its largest trading partner. In another case, according to author Betram Vastiampillai, as the Tamils began leaving Sri Lanka following the ethnic riots of 1983, more than a hundred thousand of them became a burden for the Tamil Nadu government. None other than the chief Minister Ms. Jayalalitha herself complained of incidents of theft and robbery by these refugees. However, the government of India was giving the Tamils shelter and food.⁴⁰

Nepal's leadership clearly failed to convince its Indian counterpart of the need to settle these refugees in India itself, both because it is a friendly and a much larger neighbor of Bhutan and Nepal and because Nepal does not have the resources to carry the burden of these people at a time of great political changes within the country.

These one hundred thousand Bhutanese refugees would have simply merged with the Nepali speaking population of Sikkim or West Bengal and the problem would not have manifested into a humanitarian cataclysm as it did. In essence, Delhi's policy towards the Lhotsampas was dissimilar with its policies adopted at different intervals of time in regards to Tibetans, Tamils and the Bangladeshis. This should have been an eye-opener to the leadership of Nepal. Wasting of time in fruitless rounds of talks and unsuccessfully seeking international support not only cost the nation dear but also created enormous difficulties for Nepal.

A lot of writers have stated that had we sealed the border prior or during the inflow, we would not be facing the hardship that we are encountering today. Others claim that it was simply due to miscalculations and incorrect analysis of the likely scenario that a big misjudgment occurred. Authors Christopher Stern and DNS Dhakal believe that "Nepal took the decision (to allow the refugees in) upon consultation with the Kathmandu based international community, hinting that a

⁴⁰ "Country Report on the Refugee Situation in South Asia. South Asia Human Rights Documentation Centre." Retrieved from > http://www.hrdc.net/sahrdc/resources/country_report.htm<

prior visit of a representative each from the American Embassy and the UNHCR, from Kathmandu to Kakarvitta border post was to make their own assessment on the refugee situation."⁴¹ If under humanitarian and charitable grounds there refugees were admitted, the then decision making hierarchy could not evince the procedure and the course of them going back to their rightful country.

The mass expulsion that had begun from June 1991 turned to a total of 10 thousand by February 1992 and by 1994 it reached 85 thousand. Children were born in the camps. Refugees also started getting married outside the camps with local Nepalese in Jhapa and Morang, further complicating the problem. Ultimately, the number turned into a whopping one lakh four thousand - one of the largest refugee population in South Asia. Nepal government at the time had no option but to seek international help and without contemplating the pros and cons of inviting INGOs of all hues, we initiated a begging bowl diplomacy. This episode of the early 90s must not be forgotten and remain a tough lesson to learn at an institutional level by all future policy makers and foreign ministry officials of the country. How to handle a humanitarian crisis without jeopardizing one's national security interests must remain a top priority which obviously was ignored in the light of sympathy and goodwill towards the Lhotsampas. But these kinds of slipshods can occur again. Nepal is surrounded by most populous countries of the world. Both India and China have long unsettled ethnic problems whether in Northeast India or in Tibet both in close proximity with Nepal. In Assam, there have been riots in 2012 against Muslims and ethnic Nepalese have been subject to regular harassment which can have a bearing on the psyche' of the million strong Diaspora sending ripple effects to Nepal. In addition, there have been sporadic demands of the extreme left parties in Nepal to abrogate the 1950 Treaty which ensures equal treatment to Nepalese in India. If this clause is removed in the new treaty, it could essentially entail losing of the privilege to settle and work in India, thereby raising the possibility of massive inflow of additional Nepali speaking people into Nepal. If the treaty is abrogated or replaced without taking care of the safety and rights of the Nepali people living in India, it will have a lasting implication for the security of Nepal.

⁴¹ *ibid.*

CHAPTER 6

FLIGHT TO FREEDOM: THE THIRD COUNTRY RESETTLEMENT OPTION

Yet again in 2006, Nepal faced a sudden, dramatic move of equal strategic surprise as it was caught without any option but to accept the reality. The U.S. decision to accept Bhutanese refugees into the U.S. surprised many, principally the Nepal government. Again, it was a very difficult period of the country's history. With the second people's movement reaching its peak in April 2006, King Gyanendra re-instated the parliament that was dissolved in 2002. The leadership under G.P. Koirala was having to confront several challenges on all fronts. The Maoists having decided to come to the political mainstream were demanding an Interim Constitution and an Interim Parliament. There was pressure from multiple pressure groups demanding salary hike, permanent jobs and even the IDPs were asking for a suitable climate to return home. Crisis in the terai with new parties and outfits demanding more autonomy, better representation turned violent. In this rigmarole, U.S. envoy to Nepal James F. Moriarty offered the generous assistance to re-settle Bhutanese refugees into the United States. Without going deeper into the nuances and complications involved in the field of international relations and tired of having to deal with Bhutan for more than a decade without any result, the Foreign Ministry quickly accepted the offer. It was precisely during this period that Nepal lost the UN Security Council seat under a non-permanent category in a most humiliating manner. Nepal had in the past twice been elected in the UN Security Council. Why the Americans chose a very volatile period in Nepal's history to grant this offer remains a mystery however, it definitely took Nepal by astonishment. There were skeptics that felt that the illiterate and the elderly refugees would be a burden for the Nepali polity, society and economy hence would be better if they could be repatriated and whichever country would be eager to take them would not actually concern Nepal. Refugee leaders - Tek Nath Rizal in particular was vehemently against this third country re-settlement proposal of the U.S. as it would dilute the democracy struggle of the Bhutanese people against an autocratic monarchy. Rizal even predicts that Bhutan is preparing to kick-out 80 thousand more Bhutanese out of Bhutan as an encouragement of the American gesture.

Surely, the economic burden to the national exchequer was overwhelming and there was absolutely no way that the ailing Nepali economy, crippled by a decade of insurgency could afford several more years of hosting the refugees in eastern Nepal. For the international community too, the financial burden was getting too much. "For 20 years the international community through UNHCR and otherwise paid the overwhelming percentage of the cost of looking after the refugees. We calculated something like Rs 2 billion over the course of their time and never in the history of refugee law, has it happened that the countries from outside the region agreed to resettle virtually every Bhutanese refugee now in their country. That's an unusual sign of solidarity and I think it's because the Nepalese people showed good faith, they did receive and played host to the refugees for 20 years."¹

Obviously, since this was a U.S. led and initiated program, Nepal was simply put into the frame but not actually taken aboard and little consultation was done with refugee leaders before making the re-settlement program public. "The first plane-load of the refugees could be arriving in the U.S. around later part of January 2008",² said Ellen Sauerbery, U.S. Assistant Secretary at the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, during her trip to Nepal on Nov. 1st 2007. She was referring to one hundred and six thousand Bhutanese refugees living in Nepal, sixty thousand of whom the U.S. has agreed to re-settle in the U.S.

But on the other hand, this thrilled a large segment of the refugees stranded from the last 17 years in 7 camps in two politically volatile districts of Morang and Jhapa. However, a sizeable portion of the refugees mainly refugee leaders and activists of various Bhutanese political parties formed in exile were totally against the idea saying that this could further encourage *Druk Yul* to suppress its people of Nepali origin. The U.S. offer for third country settlement has [in fact] led to such sharp division and polarization of opinion among the refugees that two youths from Beldangi camp were killed in a police firing during a scuffle instigated by a 'controversial' interview of Hari Adhikari Bangale, the camp secretary of Beldangi-II. Bangale had advocated in favor of third country resettlement.³ In another incident in Beldangi-II extension camp, a few huts

¹ Hathaway, James C. "Int'l Community has shown tremendous solidarity towards Nepal", *The Kathmandu Post*, 5 June 2011.

² "Bhutanese Refugees to be repatriated soon", *The Kathmandu Post* 7 Nov. 2007.

³ Note: The incident occurred on May 27-28, 2007.

belonging to those in support of third country resettlement were vandalized. Some of the refugees were even manhandled by a mob. All of these incidents leave a clear message that the refugee entangle now reached a decisive phase after years of stalemate.

While the refugees did find basic protection inside the camps, the continuing confinement was obviously not sustainable either for the Nepal government or for the international community including the UNHCR which by 2006 had said that its “funds for the Bhutanese refugees were drying out”.⁴ With the ebb and flow of time, options such as 'dignified repatriation' and 'local integration' were getting overshadowed. A time came when the Nepal government and the international community who are truly committed to finding a durable solution to the refugee stalemate, began working to promoting the refugee's sentiment by unlocking all options. Frustrated with over a decade of vacillation, the restless refugees also desperately needed a solution. And when the United States said that by the next four years, “about 60 thousand of the refugees would be re-settled”, at last there was a glimmer of hope. Not only the U.S. but Canada, Denmark, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Norway and Australia would also take a portion of these refugees.

Ambassador Moriarty while meeting with Bhutanese refugee leaders emphasized that it was essential that refugees have the freedom to make well-informed, independent decisions regarding their future without fear of threats or intimidation. He discussed details of the American program, beginning 2008 that offers to resettle at least 60,000 Bhutanese refugees in America over the next four-five years. He made it clear that: -

The Core Group of donor governments' (U.S., Canada, Denmark, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Norway and Australia) decision to offer third-country resettlement was based solely on humanitarian concern for the well being of the Bhutanese refugees in Nepal. The resettlement offer was not made for political reasons.

⁴ Note: World Food Program (WFP) has been facing some difficulty for quite a few years. It has been alleged that funding shortfalls have led to delayed distribution and poor food quality.

- The U.S. supports the right of eligible refugees to repatriate to Bhutan and will continue to urge the Royal Government of Bhutan to fulfill its obligations in this regard.
- Third-country resettlement does not preclude the right of refugees to return to Bhutan should conditions there permit return at a later date.⁵

Distressed by the years of waiting, the government of Nepal too swiftly granted U.S. government the permission to begin planning for resettlement based on the assumption that third-country resettlement would be an integral component of a comprehensive solution for the Bhutanese refugees. An Overseas Processing Entity (OPE) was set up in Kathmandu primarily to process the refugees. But no sooner had the permission been granted, some vocal groups including prominent refugee leaders and political parties denounced the offer as it undermined the struggle for the right to repatriation.

But despite these threats and intimidation, the United States' offer of third country resettlement for the Bhutanese refugees finally gained height, engaging both people and the authorities concerned in hot debates. Once fully implemented this offer is likely to put an 'end' to the 17-year-long stalemate following the formal announcement to the refugees to fill up the resettlement forms available in dozens of places in and around the camps.⁶ The refugees must first express interest in re-settlement to the UNHCR before the refugee agency refers cases to International Organization for Migration (IoM) for processing. Once accepted for re-settlement, the refugees will have to undergo cultural orientation program organized by IOM and the re-settlement countries to prepare them for their new life.

It is understood that the U.S. wants to diversify its population by bringing in people across cultural and religious lines so as to maintain the societal mosaic of being multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-lingual. It has been said that the resettlement was purely a "humanitarian" offer, which would be based on the desire of the person concerned. But strategic analysts point out the old American desire of having its foothold in the Himalayas so as to leverage its relations

⁵ Note: The then U.S. Ambassador to Nepal James F. Moriarty's press statement of June 15, 2007. Retrieved from www.nepalusembassy.gov

⁶ Mishra, T.P., "Opening all Options for Refugees", *The Rising Nepal*. 13 Dec. 2007.

with India and China in the long run. Others have guessed the shortage of soldiers for the American Army and the ready hardwearing ethnic Nepalese that will fill in the gap for America in troubled hotspots around the world. Even otherwise, Nepalese in their thousands are already in Iraq and Afghanistan working illegally for private security firms and agencies even though their government has banned Nepalese to work in those countries. A lot of former Bhutanese refugees that now live in the U.S. are working in department stores, gas pumps and other menial jobs where probably the local manpower was getting scarce. There is also a separate theory that suggests that this offer was actually coordinated with New Delhi in order to ease the headache for India and as an American gesture for India.

6.1. Resettlement and the life in the States:

Wikileaks has exposed in Jan. 2011 that U.S. Ambassador Moriarty in 2005-06 linked the issues of Tibetan refugees with that of the Bhutanese refugees and wanted Nepal to agree on the re-settlement option. He wanted Nepal government to agree on the re-opening of the Dalai Lama's Tibetan Welfare Office in Kathmandu⁷ which authorities always regarded as an unofficial embassy of the Tibetan government in exile and wanted Nepal to allow easy passage to Tibetan refugees stuck in Nepal through bus to India. It is noteworthy that in the American long-term planning and global agenda, the issues of the Tibetan and Bhutanese refugees was being pursued and lobbied in the same plank as leaked by the Wikileaks. The then Nepalese Foreign Minister Ramesh Nath Pandey was concerned about the encouragement of this gesture to the Thimpu regime to evict additional number of Lhotsampas out of Bhutan.⁸ Why the U.S. government chose to be generous with the issue of the Bhutanese refugees at an interesting period of post-2006 transition of Nepal's politics can be analyzed with the following hypothesis:-

-Bhutan is the only country in South Asia that the U.S. does not have diplomatic relations. All communications and contacts with Thimpu have to be routed through Bhutan's embassy in New Delhi which invariably informs the South Block. For a global superpower aiming to hedge both India and China that are rising powers of the 21st century, this type of an arrangement does not auger well for future strategic considerations. It could be possible that the U.S. administration

⁷ Note: The office was closed down in Jan. 2005 by the then Sher Bahadur Deuba government.

⁸ "Wikileaks lets Cats out of the bag", *The Kathmandu Post*, 14 Jan. 2011.

regarded assistance to the Bhutanese refugees as an embellishment to the larger canvas of its South Asia policy in general and North-East India and Tibet policies in particular. A strong foothold in the Bhutanese refugee issue could give it a particularly stout position whilst dealing with India and the Thimpu regime in the future. Besides, with both the Tibetan and the Bhutanese refugees living in various corners of the country, the publicity advantage that they would accrue would prove to be helpful in the long-term. With this re-settlement program, the second largest percentage of Bhutanese citizens are now living in the U.S.

- As a country facing a lot of internal security and demographic problems due to the continuous overflow of asylum seekers from world hot-spots especially from Islamic countries yet being the most generous host to refugees, the U.S. has an annual refugee re-settlement program. After the events of 9/11, "cynics have pointed out to the desire of the Bush administration to be seen to fulfill their refugee re-settlement quota by absorbing a group of politically unthreatening refugees."⁹ By having these refugees from a country with which it does not even have diplomatic relations, the U.S. policy makers may have tried to use the quota in the most favorable manner.

- Internationalization of the refugee issue is imminent and is already making news in far-flung places where even 'Bhutan'- the name of the country was unheard of. Young and educated refugees have set-up blog-sites, are working in media houses, enrolled in universities, working in wal-marts and publicizing the plight of the ethnic Nepalese in Southern Bhutan. Not only in Bhutan, but in the entire Northeast India, the Nepali Diaspora has been subject to periodic harassment and discrimination and especially in places like Darjelling, the Nepalese are even waging a struggle for a separate statehood within the Indian union. All these issues will increasingly get international attention. "Nearly half of the newly re-settled have access to the Internet and they have assumed new roles as Ambassadors of our movement and as more refugees join the Diaspora, the effectiveness of the campaign will only grow and expand," says R.P. Subba of the Youth Organization of Bhutan. Similarly, Jogen Gazmer, a former Amnesty International Prisoner of Conscious now re-settled in Australia says, "Our activism must also be geared to

⁹ Laenkholm, Christer. "Re-settlement for Bhutanese Refugees", *Forced Migration Review*, University of Oxford. Vol. 29. p. 59.

detering further eviction of southern Bhutanese.”¹⁰ Increased attention, publicity and presence of the people of the sub-region will be a strategic advantage for the U.S. and to the Western countries that would desire to have a foothold in between the two rising economic and military giants of the 21st century. America will be in a position to use this leverage as and when the time is ripe.

-Bhutanese refugees were relocated in the U.S. during the economic recession, where some 6.5 million people have been laid off since 2007. But for instance in Kentucky, almost every refugee house-hold among those re-settled had at least one working member. Kamal Bista, who was teaching in Biratnagar before flying to the U.S., initially started as a part-time interpreter at the Kentucky Refugee Ministries where he worked for 4 months and is now a full-time case worker. Harka Maya Rai is the eldest of a family of 3 sisters and now works as a house-keeper from morning to evening. Some 40 Bhutanese work for the Wal-Mart in Kentucky as cashiers, stockers, cleaners, etc. It is estimated that some 500 re-settled Bhutanese refugees are currently employees of Wal-Mart in various states.¹¹ In a country where there is shortage of manpower for menial, low-wage jobs, the refugees have filled in the gap. Former Ambassador Dr. Bishnu Hari Nepal says, "the U.S. strategic interest in the case of accepting the refugees from Nepal to the U.S. is secondary. The primary factor is buying cheap labour to their market."¹²

- The U.S. and western countries want to establish their footprint in the sub-region of North-East India and Tibet bordering one of the longest standing conflicts in Asia such as Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and the Tibetan question too remains contested. The only way to enter into Bhutan is by assuaging the Indian and the Bhutanese leadership that indeed they are benevolent powers and only have a noble intention to genuinely help them. Therefore, by re-settling the refugees who were already becoming a big embarrassment for India and Bhutan, the U.S. has been successful in scoring some points in Delhi and in Thimpu. As a result of the clearing off of this major scar, Bhutan is now thinking of standing for the UN Security Council in its non-permanent category which Nepal lost in 2006.

¹⁰ Mishra, T.P., “A Diaspora Begins”, *Himal Southasian*, May 2010.

¹¹ Mishra, Vidhyapati and B.M Dhakal, “Post Resettlement Employment – I”, *The Rising Nepal*, 2 June 2010.

¹² Interview conducted with Bishnu Hari Nepal.

- With the resettlement process having been underway since 2008 significant numbers of the registered Bhutanese refugees living in the camps in Nepal have now moved, primarily to the USA and in smaller numbers to Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the Netherlands and Denmark. The update circulated by UNHCR and International Organization for Migration (IOM) on August 17, 2011 shows that 50,000 Bhutanese refugee left the camps in Nepal to start a new life in the United States.¹³ In total, 42,000 refugees have been resettled in the US, 1006 in Australia, 892 in Canada, and a few hundreds in other countries like Norway, Denmark and New Zealand.

In total, more than 80,728 refugees have already expressed their interest in resettlement. The current job market in the U.S. and in countries that have agreed to accept these refugees point out to enormous problems as regards to manual and low-income jobs; jobs such as cleaning, plumbing of sewage and water pipes, electricians, other works of the municipalities, etc. These jobs are seldom filled by their own citizens as the monthly subsistence is hardly enough to make ends work in these societies. Agile and committed workforce from South Asia and chiefly of the Nepali ethnic group who are well known for their honesty and bravery could economically be a gain for the labor market of these countries. This is perhaps why the refugees have been settled evenly in all 50 states of the U.S.

- As most of the refugees are low-class Hindus, there is no dearth of missionary and extreme-right organizations in the U.S. that would want to convert them to Christianity. Missionaries with lots of funds travel all across South Asia hoping to especially convert dalits, *janjaati*, scheduled castes and tribe community populations to Christianity. They openly give funds to construct churches, and run hospitals and schools. Some of the most renowned schools and hospitals in Nepal have been run by missionaries of charity. With such a large number of receptive and open-minded poor people being settled in the U.S., it will be much easier to wean them away from their old faith and practices. Southern Bhutan too is nowadays facing the growing trend of conversion whereas the Drugpa community is less inclined for conversion to Christianity.

¹³ "Re-settlement program for refugees from Bhutan passes 50,000 mark", Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/4e4bea789.html> on 17 Aug. 2011.

- As and when a full-fledged multi-party democracy is established in Bhutan, these populations with experience in an open and free society of the U.S. may wish to return. Their children with American degrees will return to Bhutan and occupy top level government jobs and run businesses. Dhruba Rizal, author of *Bhutan: Decentralization and Good Governance* suggests that the re-settled Bhutanese community could now begin to contribute intellectual resources as well as moral and financial support offering positive examples from the Tibetan, Tamil and Burmese Diasporas.¹⁴ The U.S. will enjoy considerable weight and influence in this phase in Bhutan or may to the least enjoy preferential treatment by those that received modern U.S. education by the help of American re-settlement program.

-Human rights leader Tek Nath Rizal has said that discussion have begun with Bruce Fein & Associates Inc, a law firm of Washington DC, to initiate legal procedures against the former King Jigme Singhe as torture suits. Rizal said that a firm, on behalf of the Bhutanese Diaspora outside Bhutan, will file these suits worth hundreds of millions of dollars under the US Torture Victims Protection (TVP) Act, as compensation to the damages caused to thousands of victims of torture who have been forced to live in exiles as refugees during the rule of the king and even at present.¹⁵ The U.S. law in issues such as torture is very complicated and stern. If the U.S. judiciary so desires, there will be immense diplomatic pressure on Bhutan. Such a scenario would not have emerged had the refugees not been re-settled in the U.S. The international exposure, mobility and access to information and new contacts with INGOs, think-tanks in the U.S., media coverage, etc. has given the refugee issue a new twist. For instance, Bhutanese refugees resettled in various western countries have recently declared a scholarship scheme targeting higher secondary students of refugee camps and the host communities of Jhapa and Morang districts. Such an initiative has come from the Punya Foundation, a charity forum formed by resettled Bhutanese in the memory of those who sacrificed lives during the struggle for human rights and democracy in Bhutan. The foundation is officially registered in Australia.

- There is a purely humanitarian and charitable angle for the re-settlement policy as well and this cannot be overlooked. Although there could be strategic motive behind the acceptance of the

¹⁴ Mishra, op. cit. p. 34.

¹⁵ "Rizal Contemplates law suit against Jigme Singhe Wangchuk; Expects to Recover Compensation", ><http://www.bhutannewsservice.com>< accessed on April 18, 2011.

largely illiterate, some of whom are chronically ill and a considerable number of women and children refugees into the U.S., the generous acceptance of these refugees has proven that the U.S. is a civilized, responsible and a big-hearted superpower whatever its long-term planning maybe. The soft power status of the U.S. in the comity of nations has received a further boost because of this generous assistance.

It has been stated that the resettling Bhutanese refugees will continue to have refugee status until they choose to apply for and are granted the citizenship in the countries in which they have resettled. The resettlement offer is open only to the registered Bhutanese refugees in Nepal and there are an estimated 35,000 refugees living outside the camps in Nepal and India.

The US, working with the UNHCR, the IOM and other members of the Core Group began resettling Bhutanese refugees in early 2008. The Bhutanese resettlement program is currently the third-largest resettlement operation for the US, which takes in around 75,000 refugees from around the world each year.

"We are gratified, together with our partners, to be able to help turn an unfortunate and often painful situation into something more hopeful for these people--America's newest residents, whom we welcome with open arms and hearts," said US Ambassador to Nepal Scott H. DeLisi in a press statement in August 2010.¹⁶ Certainly, the re-settlement drive initiated by the U.S. and implemented not only by the U.S. but also by other partners such as Australia, Canada, Denmark, New Zealand, etc. have been instrumental in giving a new life to these people living with donor supplied food and daily necessities for over a decade. Such as painful and woefully miserable life has changed for the better and a glimmer of hope has emerged in the 7 refugee camps in eastern Nepal. "The US is committed to accepting as many of the Bhutanese whom the UNHCR refers to us for consideration in Nepal and who meet the requirements of US law for refugee admission," the U.S. embassy has repeatedly said and added, "Bhutan should take back its citizens. But the government of Nepal should be active to engage the government of Bhutan in this issue. There

¹⁶ "Bhutanese Refugees Resettled in the U.S.", Retrieved from <http://nepal.usembassy.gov/pr-09-1-2010.html> on 1 Sep. 2010 .

should be strong and decisive talk between Nepal and Bhutan regarding this issue. We will keep pressurizing both the countries."¹⁷

However, the threat of further eviction looms large. Although there is a clear mention that re-settlement does not relinquish repatriation back into Bhutan, the Thimpu regime could have been encouraged by this American offer and could use it as a lever to further evict the ethnic Nepalese out of the country in order to create a pure Drukpa nation of Mahayana Buddhists. The government will not be inclined to evict provided that the Lhotsampas follow the established rules of the land and do not organize themselves in the form of protests. But if they do, further eviction cannot be ruled out just like in 1990.

From the national security imperative, Nepal will need to carefully watch Thimpu's overtures with lots of seriousness and attention. The new King Jigme Keshar has been visiting his country more than his father, may have been aware of the plight of the Lhotsampas in the South where it is believed that there is sometimes load shedding during winter and where the government writ has loosened over the years due to modernity and people's aspirations to change. The eviction of more refugees may not happen because the Lhotsampas too have learnt a lesson not to engage in demonstrations against the government but if the situation turns averse, Nepal must not repeat the mistakes of 1990s. Nepal must immediately control its borders.

Unfortunately, the third country re-settlement option although takes care of more than 70 thousand refugees, does not talk about the rest of them that will still remain inside the camps. It is silent on what will be the conditions of the refugees in U.S., Norway, Australia, etc. in terms of health care, education of their children, employment and housing. There have been a few cases of suicide by the resettled refugees. It is the duty of the Nepal government to insist that the refugees need to be respected and given sufficient care and attention once they are in these host countries. The UNHCR has been systematically excluded from efforts by Bhutan and Nepal to bilaterally resolve the refugee crisis over the past 17 years, and the government of Bhutan has flatly denied UNHCR access to the country, which is normally granted in most refugee situations around the globe.

¹⁷ "Bhutan should take back its citizens," *New Spotlight* 4 May 2012

Still a significant portion of the refugees want to be repatriated right now and do not want third country resettlement. This is a major problem and little can be done about that under the present circumstances. But what would be the future of these who want to be repatriated under any circumstances? Will the Bhutanese who wish to get locally assimilated in Nepal get that chance? Majority of the so-called frontline leaders in exile, most of the political and a few apolitical organizations have been frequently opposing the offer of third country resettlement, claiming it would not do justice to the suppressed Bhutanese people. Thus, not only third country resettlement, the authorities concerned should work towards exploring all possible options, including repatriation to their original homeland. The long-standing issue will get a safe landing only when all possible options are opened at a time.

After the safe-landing of this thorny issue, Nepal and Bhutan need to widen the periphery of their bilateral relationship and venture into plenty of other areas of common interest to which virtually no one has given a thought till now. Afterall, both are tiny land-locked countries in between two emerging economic and military heavyweights of the 21st century.

6.2. The Context of GNH and Refugee Predicament

Once an orthodox Buddhist state, Bhutan has been modifying and altering according to the current of globalization and information technology. It has opened itself to tourists although cautiously, Internet and t.v. are made accessible to the public and a massive plan for economic development is also underway¹⁸. The current King's father Jigme Singye unveiled an innovative concept of measuring growth and progress of his country not by gross domestic product (GDP) but by gross national happiness (GNH) of its people. GNH is based on the conviction that material wealth alone does not bring happiness. On the economic front, the hydropower potential of the country is being tapped for the benefit of not only the Bhutanese but more so for power short states of bordering India by virtue of which Bhutan annually receives millions of dollars as income. In fact, they now provide 40 percent of the country's revenue.¹⁹ But the GNH concept that he unveiled is an interesting and an innovative alternate to other scales of measurement of human and a country's progress that base themselves on material growth.

¹⁸ Wangmo, Dorji, *Of Rainbows and Clouds: Memoirs of Yab Ugyen Dorji*, New Delhi: Penguin, 2007. p. 14.

¹⁹ Wangchuck, Ashi Dorji Wangmo, *Treasures of the Thunder Dragon: A Portrait of Bhutan*, New Delhi: Penguin, 2006. p. 19.

The term "gross national happiness" was coined in 1972 by King Jigme Singhe. He used the phrase to signal his commitment to building an economy that would serve Bhutan's unique culture based on Buddhist spiritual values. At first offered as a casual, offhand remark, the concept was taken seriously, as the Centre for Bhutan Studies, under the leadership of Karma Ura, developed a sophisticated survey instrument to measure the population's general level of well-being. Because of the far-sightedness of King Jigme in terms of preservation of natural flora and fauna of his kingdom, Bhutan's forward steps towards economic prosperity by insisting on eco-friendly developmental programs has been appreciated by each foreign dignitary that visits his country. More than 50 percent of the country is still under forest cover but new roads have been constructed such as a highway connecting Phuentsoling in south-west Bhutan bordering West Bengal to the capital city of Paro which can be covered in six hours.

"The king has made an explicit commitment to preserve Bhutan's cultural heritage and natural environment while formulating national goals and policies not only on the basis of socio-economic progress and GDP, but also by taking into account less quantifiable factors like spiritual well-being of the people. Philosophical by content, GNH has become an ideological vector.....[it] has been inspired by traditional principles of like conciliation, pragmatism and compassion. The welfare of the public is a modern version of Buddhist doctrine."²⁰ There have also been assertions that no matter how much money a human being makes, it doesn't make him/her happy therefore GDP growth rate of measuring progress is unscientific. There is also a whole set of affirmations that with the current rate of development, the environment is getting nastier and our eco-system is getting more and more fragile so there is something that mankind has done wrong. Hence, instead of pursuing happiness outside, one should try to pursue it inside - a typical Buddhist belief. It has also been said by Bhutanese scholars that the amount of happiness is a good indicator because if it is high, it generally means the country is going on the right path. How the concept really came about in public is really interesting. Jigme Y. Thinley states the following:-

²⁰ Mathou, Thierry. *How to Reform a Traditional Buddhist Monarchy*, Bhutan: The Centre for Bhutan Studies. 2008. p. 6.

"Personally I resisted the development of quantitative indicators and this whole approach until the philosophy of GNH crossed the borders of Bhutan for the first time in 1998 when Bhutan finally overcame its inhibition to speak about GNH abroad. It was at the Asia-Pacific Millennium meeting sponsored by UNDP in Seoul, Korea. The UNDP had invited His Majesty the King to speak on happiness but His Majesty does not do lectures. As I was Prime Minister at the time, I was designated to go and speak on the subject and it was very well received. I remember going to the ministerial meeting and being worried that GNH would not be taken seriously so I was really taken by surprise. The UNDP put the speech on their website and it was accessed worldwide. It was thereafter that the world really started talking about it."²¹

Therefore, the concept of GNH which has emerged as an innovative barometer to gauge the people's satisfaction towards their daily life, family, health and societal issues is being studied for its efficacy the world over. Reputed scholars have also begun voicing their support for looking more closely at the happiness part of human life in a holistic perspective rather than simply monetary growth. According to a study on the quality of life and mental peace in Japan, it was felt that "while the dislocations of rural life are certainly a concern, the large majority of Japanese live in urban environments, and these environments are the front-line of the present Japanese social malaise."²² In other countries supposedly wealthy, the rapid urbanization and pressure from the workplace has resulted in depression and rise in suicide rates. As a testimony of the growing interest on the concept, an International Conference on GNH was held at Foz do Iguaçu, Brazil, in 2009 with more than 800 participants.

Although, measuring happiness could be possible through long, cumbersome interviews the difference in the happiness index over the years of the same household becomes a complicated exercise. Despite of this, well trained researchers of the Centre for Bhutan Studies have been going around villages to collect data, collate and analyze them. The GNH also takes into consideration the following: basis of employment, literacy, access to piped water, access to safe toilet, ownership of land, safe source of lighting, safe source of cooking fuel, distance from motor road, telephone, computer, etc.²³

²¹ McDonald, Ross. *Taking Happiness Seriously*. Bhutan: Centre for Bhutan Studies. 2010. p. 2.

²² Watt, Jonathan. "The Suicide Priests of Japan and the Search for Gross National Happiness", <http://www.bhutanstudies.org.bt/pubFiles/10.3rdGNH.pdf>

²³ Pankaj, Prabhat. "Conglomerate Radar of Happiness in Bhutan". Thimpu: Centre for Bhutan Studies. (2008). p.

The SAARC Regional Poverty Profile (2007-08) states that Bhutan remains potentially on track towards achieving most of the MDG indicators. While there has been notable advancements in the context of reducing gender gaps in various areas, particularly in enrollment in primary and secondary education, alleviating existing gender differences in tertiary level education and in workplaces is still a challenge. Even if there is low number of HIV cases, the increasing number of detected cases each year is a cause of grave concern. In this context, if there is so much of gender disparity in the country, how can the women folk be happy?

The following 7 barometers are used for the measurement of the GNH.

1. Economic Wellness: Indicated via direct survey and statistical measurement of economic metrics such as consumer debt, average income to consumer price index ratio and income distribution
2. Environmental Wellness: Indicated via direct survey and statistical measurement of environmental metrics such as pollution, noise and traffic
3. Physical Wellness: Indicated via statistical measurement of physical health metrics such as severe illnesses
4. Mental Wellness: Indicated via direct survey and statistical measurement of mental health metrics such as usage of antidepressants and rise or decline of psychotherapy patients
5. Workplace Wellness: Indicated via direct survey and statistical measurement of labor metrics such as jobless claims, job change, workplace complaints and lawsuits
6. Social Wellness: Indicated via direct survey and statistical measurement of social metrics such as discrimination, safety, divorce rates, complaints of domestic conflicts and family lawsuits, public lawsuits, crime rates
7. Political Wellness: Indicated via direct survey and statistical measurement of political metrics such as the quality of local democracy, individual freedom, and foreign conflicts.

6.3. The 2008 Elections and Electoral Politics

In December 2006, King Jigme Singye suddenly abdicated and handed over the throne to his Oxford-educated son, Jigme Khesar. He also pledged to grant some measure of democracy to his subjects by holding “democratic” elections in 2008. The Indian media was quick to publicize

this as a genuine move towards democracy. The same analysts and academics who had criticized the Nepal's monarchy for being dictatorial praised King Jigme for handing over power to the people voluntarily. In fact, there were only two political parties in Bhutan. Bhutan marched toward becoming a 'constitutional monarchy' by electing 15 National Council members in the first such poll in the kingdom. The following chart shows the election results. Elections to the lower house was held in February and March 2008.

Table 1
Strength of Political Parties in Bhutan's Parliament

| Parties | Votes | % | Seats |
|------------------------------------|--------------|----------|--------------|
| Bhutan Peace and Prosperity Party | 169,490 | 67.04 | 45 |
| People's Democratic Party | 83,522 | 32.96 | 2 |
| Total votes (turnout 79.4%) | 253,012 | 100.00 | 47 |
| Source: election-bhutan.org | | | |

Bhutan Peace and Prosperity Party led by the incumbent Prime Minister will complete its term in office in 2013 after which there will be new elections. As mentioned earlier, candidates at the local level will need to be independent. There is much prospect of younger leaders to come up in Bhutani politics which will solidify the system and worker towards greater stability and prosperity. A lot of youngsters after education abroad are returning who may want to join politics. Unlike in Nepal, the gross salary of bureaucrats and ministers is very good which attracts qualified individuals to serve the country. If this two-party system brings prosperity and

happiness, the role and functions of the political parties in exile will increasingly become irrelevant. On the side of the political parties in exile, there is little prospect of them being allowed to contest these elections.

In 2010, major parties such as Druk National Congress (DNC), Bhutan's People's Party (BPP) and Bhutan National Democratic Party (BNDP) and Bhutanese Movement Steering Committee (BMSC) announced that they would move ahead under the leadership of DNC's chairman Rongthong Kunley Dorji to consolidate democratic struggle inside Bhutan. "We decided to go under the leadership of the DNC since it has better hold inside Bhutan", said Dr. DNS Dhakal, Chief of BNDP. He further said that the "re-settlement package is only a temporary solution of the prolonged refugee crisis and that there is no option for repatriation to the homeland with dignity and honor."²⁴

There is no dearth of refugee leaders that are averse to the idea of an armed movement to overthrow the royal regime saying that this will neither be viable considering the geo-political realities of Bhutan nor logistically possible. Some say that they need to "extra cautious in analyzing the intention of an armed violence and support of leaders like C.P. Gajurel, [may have been] in good faith but will only jeopardize the democratic movement and justify the claims made by the regime in the international arena."²⁵

Additionally, in contrast to the Nepali politics, there is a shortage of a uniting, galvanizing leadership in the Bhutanese democratic movement. Lack of towering personalities inside the political parties has hampered steady evolution from a refugee incited pressure group in exile to a well grounded political movement able to establish an inclusive multi-party system like in neighboring Nepal. Tek Nath Rizal could have certainly been the galvanizing persona but without an organizational base and devoid of dedicated cadre, the central, democratic middle ground is slipping away that could lead to a dodgy, radical left to take control of the cause of the ethnic Nepalese in Bhutan. This is equally perilous to the Druk regime, silent and nonchalant as it has been for well over two decades. It should remember that dilly-dallying will only strengthen the voice and appeal of the radicals.

²⁴ "Bhutanese refugee leaders announce unified move for democracy in Bhutan", >www.nepalnews.com<, Aug. 26, 2010.

²⁵ Durga Giri, "No To Armed Struggle in Bhutan", *The Rising Nepal*, 27 Oct. 2010.

In the final analysis regarding the political parties that believe in constitutional monarchy, it is evident that Bhutan will continue to be at the center stage of ethno-religious, cultural and political turmoil in the coming years due to the fact that such a large number of its own citizens live abroad. Monarchy will need to take those refugee leaders aboard that espouse constitutional monarchy. Once in America and Europe, these refugees surely will utilize their time and energy to publicize about the need to pressurize Bhutan's regime to accept change and pluralism not only by organizing elections for the majority Drugpas but also by admitting the *Lhotsampas* back. Just like the Tibetan refugees in exile, they will remain an irritant for Bhutan and if there are any other designs of western powers, they will continue to be a bargaining chip.

6.4. Current Plight of Lhotsampas in Bhutan:

There is no exact figure of the Lhotsampas still living in Nepal but estimates vary around 46 percent. Most of these Nepali speaking people have been living in fear and anxiety since the last 2 decades. It is also very unfortunate for them as their close relatives are either in the refugee camps or re-settled in the U.S. and other destinations that they have chosen. They are subject to regular harassment by the local authorities who suspect them of having links with their relatives in eastern Nepal. False charges against Lhotsampas is routine. For instance, a Bhutanese court slapped a 3 year jail sentence to Prem Singh Gurung on charge of attempting to promote civil unrest by screening movies of Christianity on Oct. 20, 2010. He was convicted by Gelephu Dungkhag court for screening movies on Christianity in Gonggaon and Simkharka villages.²⁶ Similarly Motilal Acharya was arrested from Gelephu on 'charge of earning the hereditary property of his parents' after his parents were evicted from the country in 1992. Chairperson of the Human Rights Organization of Bhutan (HUROB) S.B Subba called on human rights defenders to ask the Government of Bhutan to disclose the whereabouts of Acharya through a press statement on March 12, 2011. According to the statement, Acharya is the son of Devi Charan Acharya, who was evicted in 1992 and registered as a refugee in Beldangi - II extension, sector-E hut number 43/44. Such cases are routine and have been deliberately targeted against the Lhotsampas

²⁶ "Bhutanese National of Nepali origin sentenced for screening movies of Christianity", www.nepalnews.com, Retrieved on Oct. 20, 2010.

especially those that are known to maintain contact with their parents/in-laws/friends in the camps. Bhutan considers its national security to be under constant threat from these refugees.

Southern Bhutan that had large tracts of land owned by fleeing refugees were given back others after 1992. Some ethnic Nepalese are also in top, influential positions in Bhutan and this fact cannot be looked over. For instance, Thakur Singh Poudel is minister for education and Nandalal Rai, minister for information and communications in the present cabinet of Jigme Thinley. A lot of Nepali speaking youngsters are also in the Royal Bhutan Army and in the Police. These are usually trusted Nepalese loyal to the crown and also academically qualified. Hence, although there is still some discontent among Lhotsampas, the younger generation wishes to forget the episode of the early 90s and become economically vibrant. They don't see the functioning of multi-party system of Nepal as anything to aim for as it has produced a new Prime Minister every year.

6.5. Maoist Movement in Bhutan:

Through their decade long 'people's war' the Maoists of Nepal were not only able to sensitize the poor people in the countryside but also able to neutralize the state security forces through hit and run tactics. In the elections held in April 2008, the UCPN (Maoists) emerged as the largest party in the C.A. There are those refugees who espouse a similar cause of an armed movement in Bhutan.

Formed on April 23, 2003, the Communist Party of Bhutan (Marxist, Leninist, Maoists) is led by General Secretary 'Vikalpa'. Taking their cue from the launch of the Maoist movement of Nepal in which Dr. Baburam Bhattarai had handed over a 40 point demand to the then Sher Bahadur Deuba government in February 1996, the Bhutanese Maoists also faxed a 13-point demand to the Royal Government of Bhutan on March 22, 2007. Their demands included the introduction of a people's republic replacing the monarchy, guarantee of multi-party democracy, repatriation of the refugees with honor and dignity, etc.

However neither the formation of the party nor the faxing of the demand list came into lime-light until it detonated bombs on Jan. 21, 2008. These bombs were detonated in Thimpu and three other locations. The red flag was thus un-furled in a grand manner in the Dragon Kingdom. According to the Royal Bhutan Police, the explosions caused minimum damage, one woman was injured. The government blamed it on 3 militant organizations viz. Bhutan Tiger Force, Bhutan Maoist Party and the Bhutan Communist Party.

A petrified Thimpu regime started a blame game on the linkages with the Nepali Maoists. But it is not clear whether there are indeed linkages between the two organizations. There is no proof to this effect. However, the objectives of the two parties are identical: both emphasize the dominance of the bourgeoisie over the proletariat and imperialism as major obstacles. Like the Nepali Maoists, their Bhutanese counterparts also want their country to be secular which could appeal to the Scandinavian countries and western democracies not to mention those American rightists that feel that they should be allowed to go to the nooks and corners of the world to actively proselytize. Another element of similarity is that both want 'unequal treaties with India' to be scrapped. "The Bhutan Communist Party is trying to emulate the success of their comrades in Nepal to turn the country from a monarchy to a republic. Party member 'Ajay' says that the BCP has set-up the Bhutanese Tiger force, an armed wing to stage attacks within Bhutan. The BCP is trying to capitalize on the frustrations of the one-third of Bhutan's disenfranchised population and the refugees."²⁷

The pressure of the Maoists is well known to the Indian establishment whose state security, Cobra Battalion and the CRPF have been collectively unable to tame the Naxalites in states such as Bihar, Orissa, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Chattisgarh, and parts of Andra Pradesh. Most of these states being land-locked, there is no credible data on how weapons are being brought in to these Naxalites but abject poverty, jungle terrain and poorly trained police have contributed to the worsening of the law and order situation in these states. Success against Naxalites in the recent months have been reported but it is yet to be seen on whether this pressure can be sustained or not.

²⁷ "Bhutan's Maoists", *Naya Patrika*, Kathmandu: 14 June 2009.

With the sudden bomb blasts deep inside Bhutanese territory, the royal government decided to erect an elite force like India's National Security Guards. The unit was formed under the 'Special Reserve Force' in the Police Bill, Royal Bhutan Police (RBP) chief Col. Kipchu Namgyel said. Initially it will have strength of 178 personnel. "Besides, specialized counter terrorism response, the unit will also support local police in tackling law and order and shore up security duties."²⁸

Deepak Adhikari writing for the *Nepal weekly* has quoted an unnamed source that the Nepali Maoists have provided ideological and material assistance to their Bhutanese counterparts.²⁹ However, owing to Indian sensitivities on the matter, Bhutan Maoists could only be strengthening their brotherly relations with other like-minded outfits operating in the region. The main battleground is within Bhutan itself and in order to succeed in their cause, they require the support of the rural Bhutanese peasants and workers.

As early as 2004, the U.S. Embassy in Nepal had already fathomed a growing sense of militancy in the refugee camps. In a secret report sent to the state department (recently brought to the public by Wikileaks) by the then Deputy Chief of Mission of the U.S. Embassy in Nepal Robert K. Boggs quoting Ratan Gazmere said, "newly elected camp secretaries and many refugee youth are now advocating taking up arms against the Royal Government of Bhutan and are requesting financial 'donations' to purchase arms and ammunition for the movement. The growth of militancy in the refugee camps, a dangerous response to years of frustration and repeated disappointments, will seriously hurt the refugees' chances of repatriation."³⁰

Although communism in the erstwhile Soviet Union and Eastern Europe failed to achieve its primary objective of creating an equal and just society, extreme left fever is catching up in the South Asian region primarily in the Himalayan region. Till today, very small pockets of communist strongholds remain primarily in North Korea, Cuba, Venezuela, etc. that still advocate socialism of the Marxist, Leninist variety in its truest form. How Maoist ideology came to captivate the rural people of the Himalayan region and the plains of Northern India is a separate analysis but there is a striking similarity in these areas over the centuries of neglect and abject poverty of the villagers, gross exploitation of women and the down-trodden, increasing gap

²⁸ "Bhutan to Raise counter-terror force", *The Times of India*, 5 Jan. 2009.

²⁹ Mishra, T.P. "Rise of Red-Army in the last Shangri-La", www.bns.com < March 23, 2010.

³⁰ Note: Cable reference ID no. 04Kathmandu594 1 April 2004. U.S. Embassy, Kathmandu.

between the have and have-nots, difficult terrain suitable for guerrilla type insurrection, non-democratic political culture, corruption and nepotism, exclusive rights and privileges to certain ethnic groups and injustice to a large segment of the population. Large areas of Bhutan resembles the plight of the Nepalese villagers of the mid-west region and very much so to the disparity between the elite class of Paro and Thimpu with that of the other areas of the country.

Having said this, there is also a note of caution: Bhutan has very intimate relations with India that has been nurtured for decades by successive Kings. Bhutan has successfully managed to create a sense of dependency for India not to disturb the internal stability by allowing large hydro-electric projects to be constructed and the power generated from these projects to be transmitted to the power-hungry states of India. New Delhi will be worried of the ensuing instability in Bhutan and especially in lieu of the danger to these plants if the Maoist rebellion grows as it did in neighboring Nepal.

Another element that could deter any overtures within India of covert support to the Bhutanese Communists is the China factor in South Asian politics. New Delhi could be anxious of Chinese maneuvering within Bhutanese politics if the monarchy is reduced to a ceremonial role or abolished altogether. Currently, China does not have formal diplomatic ties with Bhutan.

Therefore, the future course of the Leftist movement in general and Maoist party in particular will need broad based support from the grass-root of the Bhutani society and all ethnic groups primarily the Lhotsampas, Sarchops, Ngalops and Khengs as well as backing from at least a small section of the Royal Bhutan Army if it is at all to succeed in the years to come. It will most certainly need a tacit support of the Indian intelligence agencies just as in the case of the Nepali Maoists who had used the Indian capital to negotiate the 12 point deal with the mainstream political parties in November 2005.

Whether or not the Royal Bhutan Army (RBA) is capable of meeting the challenge of an insurgency like situation is difficult to predict however, one must study the strength, capability and inherent culture of the RBA from the fact that it was formed in the soon aftermath of the 'peaceful liberation of Tibet' by the Chinese in the early 50s. India considered Bhutan to be most vulnerable in strategic defense systems as regards to China hence prompted Bhutan to form a

military albeit, small in size. As of 2007, the RBA's strength is 9 thousand. The government is keen to start militia training for the youngsters of the country rather than have a bulky and expensive military. There could also be a threat to the royal regime if an un-checked, hulking military without anything to do is to emerge in the Bhutani political variable. This will make the RBA a power centre on its own. Indian Army maintains a training mission known as 'Indian Military Training Team' and the Indian Army Engineers also maintain roads and bridges and also the airport at Paro.

The Maoist movement in Bhutan is only at the phase of establishing bases and planting bombs during major events such as in the run-up of the royal coronation. It has not yet grown to become a viable alternate to the established order in Bhutan nor been able to join hands with centrist democratic political parties.

CHAPTER 7

FOREIGN RELATIONS OF BHUTAN

7.1. Bhutan's Limited International Profile:

Bhutan has been cautious in the domain of its international relations exercise. It has established diplomatic relations only with 25 countries.¹ It established diplomatic relations with India as late as 1968 while it was already in Treaty agreement with India since 1949. From 1947 to 1968, Bhutan had diplomatic relations with no country in the world. This careful approach restricted Bhutan's international profile to the extent that there were virtually no high-level visits to the kingdom from majors powers except for India. Even till today, Bhutan does not have formal diplomatic ties with any of the 5 permanent members of the UN Security Council. It has residential missions in Bangkok, New Delhi, Dhaka, Brussels, Geneva, Kuwait and New York whereas India, Bangladesh, Kuwait, Canadian Cooperation Office, Liaison Office of Denmark are stationed in Bhutan.²

Some of the main guiding principles of Bhutan's foreign policy are: To enhance and maintain national security, promote world peace and security by engaging in meaningful dialogue with the international community, promote and contribute towards international understanding and cooperation as well as international peace and security on the basis of peaceful co-existence and develop and expand mutually beneficial bilateral, regional and multilateral economic and trade co-operation.³

7.2. Indo-Bhutan Relations:

India inherited the legacy of Britain, which by virtue of the Treaty of Punakha, was looking after the foreign affairs of Bhutan. This treaty was ratified in 1910 and remained till 1947 till the departure of the British from India.

¹"Bhutan's Bilateral Counterparts" Retrieved from <http://www.mfa.gov.bt/foreign-policy/bilateral-relations>

² *ibid.*

³ *ibid.*

The Treaty of 1949 between India and Bhutan spoke of Bhutan 'agreeing to be guided by the advice of the govt. of India in regard to its external relations' under article 2 of the treaty.⁴ Article 7 of the same treaty stated, 'Bhutanese subjects residing in Indian territories having equal justice with Indian subjects, and that Indian subjects residing in having equal justice with the subjects of Bhutan'. This clearly unfurls the domination of India in Bhutanese realm of affairs, its complete influence over the foreign policy Bhutan and the authority that it was allowed to exercise inside Bhutan because of the same treaty. The British had devised a similar policy mainly to stop Chinese advances in the Himalayas and did not waver from this policy till they left the sub-continent in 1947. It has already been mentioned in this research earlier that unlike the Shah or Rana rulers of Nepal, the Bhutanese King used to go to Calcutta to pay homage to the visiting head of state of Britain. New Delhi found it prudent to continue this type of an extremely close engagement with the Bhutanese. It could be because of the shortage of credible and reliable alternates to the monarchy or due to the enormous possibility of hydro-power development. After the 1962 border war which saw Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim as main frontiers, Bhutan's location became even more crucial for India's security.

The Bhutanese monarchy too instead of attempting to break away from this shield and make an endeavor to make its country active in the international arena always remained submissive. This not only suited their interests but also in the long-term benefitted Bhutan considerably in terms of economic aid and political support. They Kings always desired to maintain cordial relations with every political party and Prime Minister that emerges in the Indian political scene. The best explication of this attitudinal difference between the Nepali and Bhutani rulers can be found in the memoir of Former Indian Foreign Secretary and National Security Advisor J.N. Dixit entitled 'My Southblock Years' in which he says,

⁴ Indo-Bhutanese Friendship Treaty of 1949. Retrieved from <http://www.bhutan2008.bt/en/node/61>

I served in Bhutan for about a year, not as an officer of the govt. of Bhutan but on deputation from the former. My spell in Bhutan was an interesting part of my early career in Foreign Service, and I came to deal with this country again as Foreign Secretary nearly 30 years after my assignment. By then, of course, the King under whom I had served earlier had passed away and the 7 or 8 years old prince, whom I had observed practicing archery on the grounds of the royal palace at Paro, was now king. I visited Bhutan from 4 to 8 June 1992 to prepare for the official visit of His Majesty to India in the winter of 1992-93. A cherished memory which I carry of the visit was that, a part from the audience granted, His Majesty hosted a luncheon for me, organized practically on the scale on which he would have entertained a cabinet minister from India. The King and queens were present, along with a number of Bhutanese ministers who had worked with me 30 years ago. The lunch was followed by a cultural program featuring Bhutanese dances. The *piece de resistance* of His Majesty's graciousness-both a personal gesture to me, but even more, a political gesture confirming his friendship with India-was his setting aside all rules of protocol to come to see me for lunch at the guest house where I was staying. He came without any attendant, advisors or paraphernalia, and had a detailed discussion with me, affirming the importance that he attached to Indo-Bhutanese relations and underlining the fact that he wanted to enter into agreements with India for additional joint projects in the hydroelectric and industrial sectors'.⁵

While top Indian South Block Mandarins have had some or the other personal friendship with Thimpu, the highest political leadership too has never endeavored to try and break this friendship for the sake of a larger role in the international arena especially involving China or the U.S..

India on its part has a deep understanding of the Bhutani polity, a sense of anxiety on what will happen to the several mega projects if the monarchy is reduced or abolished, perhaps a fear that the U.S., China and other extra-regional powers will enter Bhutan the same way as they have influenced Nepalese politicians or it could also be a combination of all these factors based on pure national interest. It could also be because of the sheer nature of Indo-Bhutan relations in which there hardly exist any problems such as in the cases of Indo-Nepal, Indo-Bangladesh or Indo-Pak relations in which the blame is usually directed to India. There are no controversies surrounding Indo-Bhutan ties like border encroachment, unequal treaty, Indian hegemony over water resources, interference in internal affairs - accusations that are hurled time and again against India by political parties of Nepal or Bangladesh. Hence, for India, Bhutan is the best illustration of a happy and cooperative neighborhood and a relationship that has worked amicably for both the countries. When a westerner accuses India of being a 'big brother' in the sub-continent, Bhutan's example is given to prove that cooperation with India is being seen by the neighboring

⁵ Dixit, J.N., *My Southblock Years*, New Delhi: UBS Publications. 1996. p. 121

country as being beneficial and productive. It has worked for both the countries. There is no reason why Thimpu or Delhi would want to disturb such an exulted mode of relations.

The then Prime Minister of India I.K. Gujral in his speech to the *Asia Society* on 8 March 1997 touts virtually the same line, "India has the closest and friendliest of relations with Bhutan, strong inter-linkages exist between our two economies, perhaps but exemplified by the on-going mutually beneficial cooperation in the hydropower sector. The successful 336-megawatt Chhukha hydropower project, most of whose generation is purchased by India, is an example."⁶

India has always had the perception that the monarchy as the only power centre is a friendly institution to pursue its own interests and Bhutan being a small country does not really need a complex multi-party system whereby instability more than stability can accrue impinging on the security of the sub-region. This is the reason that Indian diplomats, academics and media persons usually endeavor to safeguard Bhutan's polity especially the monarchy. Salman Haider, a former foreign secretary and a prominent diplomat of India says, "Probably more than any of its South Asian neighbors, Bhutan seems to have a fair prospect ahead. There are no looming dangers that could threaten to distort its expectations. Internally, under the enlightened rule of the King, steady and orderly progress is being made. The instruments of governance, including the National Assembly, the law courts and the administration, are becoming continuously more effective, so that power and authority can be permitted to develop away from the throne towards popular and accountable institutions."⁷

Both the above excerpts reflect the close bond of relations existing at the highest level between the two countries. India assisted Bhutan develop its infrastructure like roads, industries and telecommunications while lobby on behalf of Bhutan in important human rights conventions while Bhutan has bestowed its entire hydro power to the latter not to mention the presence of Indian military inside Bhutan. Now, the question comes, why should India side by Nepal in the refugees entangle by antagonizing its old ally? What does Nepal have to offer to India that Bhutan cannot give? Even the treaty on the Mahakali, Tanakpur Barage and Pancheswor projects ratified

⁶ "Gujral underscores India's Neighborhood Policy", *The Statesman* 18 Sep. 1997.

⁷ Haider, Salman (date not given) "Bhutan". *External Affairs: Cross Border Relations*. Ed. J.N. Dixit. New Delhi: Lotus Books. p. 213.

by the Nepalese parliament has hanged in limbo for well over a decade. The Nepali parliament attached a strange memorandum to the treaties after it has been signed by two governments and after it was already ratified - simply trying to unnecessarily collide with India. In Sep. 2012, the breakaway Maoist party led by Comrade Kiran has even vowed to ban Indian movies and stop the plying of vehicles with Indian number plate inside Nepal, a move that disturbs not only India but also other parties such as the NC and the Madhesi parties. Such a chaotic scenario in which one or two outfits can virtually run amok in the country without having to worry about law enforcement agencies can very much happen in Bhutan too if an orderly system is not ascertained.

The reverse is also true. India's hand in bringing a political change in Nepal in 1990 might also have acted as a lesson for King Jigme to agree to all of India's demands otherwise face internal political disturbances. Whether toeing the Indian line in multi-lateral or international forums such as SAARC and the UN or never attempting to play India off China or flushing out the ULFA militants from within its borders in order to bring calm in Assam, Thimpu has done precious for the sake of enduring the friendship existing between the two countries. Bhutan has not even attempted to establish diplomatic relations with the P5 countries of the UN - namely the U.S., Russian Federation, China, Britain and France in order to impress Delhi. As a result, today it is India that has a larger stake in ensuring a stable Bhutan. This can be attributed as a success story for Bhutanese diplomacy.

7.2.1. India's Dependency on Bhutan's Hydro-power:

Hydro-power is a major issue in Indo-Bhutan relations and therefore is of concern in this research on the refugees. Bhutan-India relations has been cemented due to the excellent cooperation in the hydro-power sector. India is a 'bottom-less pot' as far as energy is concerned as it had realized more than two decades ago that there could be a win-win situation for both the countries if this sector can be harnessed. This aspect of their bilateral ties is likely to be further accentuated as a 'Rising India' needs more power. As rapid industrialization and modernization makes inroads to the heartlands of North India, power hungry states at the moment are U.P., Bihar, Northeastern states and West Bengal - all of which are in close proximity of Bhutan. Bihar chief Minister Nitish Kumar made his first foreign visit after being re-elected to Bhutan in May 2011 and

requested for electricity. Similarly, Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina after taking over as Prime Minister visited Bhutan in 2010 and sought cooperation in the power sector. Bhutanese counterparts have been cautious not to give hasty promises but it can hardly be debated that Bhutan has been smart in using hydro resources as a leverage against neighbors especially India, a feature that Nepal has been perpetually unable to do despite of possessing 83 thousand mega watts of potential hydro resources. "Nepal has a huge hydropower potential; yet it is power deficient and currently an importer of power from India. This sector has the potential to fundamentally alter the Nepalese economy in two ways – first, the generation of hydropower has forward and backward linkages and second, export of power from Nepal to India can bridge its trade deficit with India."⁸ However, largely due to political instability, labour unrest and a lack of consensus on how to forge an understanding with India, Nepal's hydro-resources are still under-developed to the extent that its own domestic demands cannot be met in the winter.

Similar to the Koshi, Gandak and Mahakali the river systems (the Pagladiya, Manas, Sankosh, Rydak, and Torsa) of Bhutan join the Brahmaputra into the Indian territory. But unlike Nepal, Bhutan had since the early 80s felt the desperate need of India to get power at a cheap rate. India too agreed to construct most of the projects on its own. Bhutan in turn was willing to harness hydro-resources due to which it has earned handsome revenue. This can be easily stated as King Jigme Singhe Wangchuk's greatest contribution to the Bhutan's economy and for the long-term durability of Indo-Bhutan relations. The manner with which Bhutan has almost completely handed over its power sector to India can be attributed to the closeness of Indo-Bhutan relations on the one hand and the far-sighted approach of Bhutan's India policy. While Nepal has eternally found itself at the wrong end while trying to do anything concrete in this sector with India; Bhutan has never had qualms in agreeing to India's terms. Although experts have lately begun stating that in the long-term the whole of Bhutan will start facing load shedding, its own domestic industries will face problem because of the lack of power, it is a fact that even though per unit price generated by Bhutan is extremely low it has greatly helped to earn revenue for Bhutan making it the richest country in SAARC.

⁸ Taneja, Nisha. "Enhancing Nepal's Competitiveness: India's Role" *Nepal's National Interests*. Eds. Tomislav Delinic and Nishchal N. Pandey. Kathmandu: Centre for South Asian Studies (CSAS) and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2011. p. 178.

However with the complete resources handed over to India, there are a few concerns being raised by experts:- how will Bhutan manage its own industrialization and the tourism industry if it exports all of its electricity to a neighboring country? During the lean season India has been supplying the same power to Bhutan that it actually imported. This is indeed a healthy and a prudent approach. But is this sustainable in the long-term with the population rising in both the countries? These are difficult questions. We will endeavor to get a complete analysis of the Indo-Bhutan cooperation in the power sector.

The first electricity plant, a 256 kw diesel generator was installed in Phuentsholing in 1966 through Indian assistance. Places like Samtse, Sibsoo and Phuentsholing in Southern Bhutan were provided with electricity supplied from West Bengal state Electricity Board in 1968.⁹ But since the early 80s, Bhutan began exporting electricity to India which has today become India's dependence on Bhutan which the latter uses as a leverage for seeking Indian support on issues including the refugees.

7.2.2 The Chhukha Hydel Project:

The construction of Bhutan's first mega power project, the 336 MW Chhukha hydro-electric project on Wangchu river began in the 70s. Nu. 2,460 million turnkey power plant was funded by the Government of India which provided a 60 percent grant and 40 percent loan at 5 percent per annum repayable in 15 years in annual installments.

The project was successfully commissioned in 1986 but was handed over to Bhutanese management only in June 1991. The beneficiaries of the hydro plant outside Bhutan are West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa, Sikkim and Damodar Valley Corporation (DVC) of India.

⁹ Bisht, Medha. "Bhutan on the path to Democracy" *India and its Neighbours: Towards a New Partnership*. Ed. Ashok K. Behuria. New Delhi: Institute of Defense Studies and Analyses. 2008. p. 22.

The National Revenue Report of 2005-2006 reveals that Chukha Hydropower contributed Nu. 2,092.682 million which is 30.01% to the total revenue of Bhutan. The receipt during the year showed an increase of 8.75% or Nu. 168.395 million from the previous year's collection.¹⁰

It is interesting to note that the royal family has itself overseen some of these mega projects which could be for two reasons:- One because of the sensitive nature of these projects. As India is dependent on power exported from Bhutan, they obviously don't want the projects to be overseen by those that are not friendly towards India and two, because of the large amount of funds allocated by India in these projects which demands that the highest political authority of Bhutan take charge of these projects. One of the Queens Ashi Dorji Wangchuk, Representative of the King in the Ministry of Development, is the Chairman of this Authority. All the powers of the Authority have been vested in the Chairman. The Chairman is assisted by the Directors of the Authority in the administrative, technical, financial and organisational matters connected with the execution of the project.¹¹

7.2.3. Tala Hydel Project:

Tala is the biggest hydroelectric joint project between India and Bhutan thus far, generating 4865 GWh/year. Tala is located in Chukha Dzongkhag in western Bhutan. It is located on the Wongchu River and, and is at a height of 860 metres (2,820 ft).

The dam is 92 metre high and feeds a 22 km-long headrace tunnel. Three 440 kV transmission lines stretch to the Indian border, since the power is being entirely supplied to India. Dam building started in 1998 and the project was commissioned in 2007.

Indo-Bhutan hydro-power relations is being further taken forward by encouraging the private sectors as well. Companies planning to develop the hydro projects include National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC), NTPC, Tehri Hydro Development Corporation (THDC) and Satluj Jal Vidyut Nigam (SJVN). The bulk of the power generated by the plants is expected to be imported back to India.

¹⁰ *Statistical Yearbook of Bhutan-2011*, National Statistics Bureau, Royal Government of Bhutan. p. 150.

¹¹ Bhutan People's Party's website gives information on the party's programs and activities (<http://www.bhutanpeoplesparty.org/lawtreaty/chukhahydro.htm>), retrieved on May 4, 2011.

NHPC has signed an agreement with the Department of Energy of the Royal Government for providing engineering and consultancy services relating to pre-construction activities of another project called the Mangdechhu hydroelectric project (720MW) in Bhutan. Presently, NHPC is also preparing DPRs of Chamkharchhu-I (670MW) and Kuri Gongri (1800MW) hydro projects.

Likewise, THDC India has also signed a memorandum of understanding with the Government of Bhutan for up-gradation of DPR of 4060MW Sankosh multipurpose project. The Sankosh project is part of the Government of India's initiative of developing 10,000MW of hydro power in Bhutan by year 2020 and constitutes almost 40% of total target.¹²

In July 2006, an agreement on cooperation in the field of hydro electric power was signed between the two governments of India and Bhutan under which both countries have sought to achieve generation of 5,000 MW of hydro power by 2020. [At present] "three hydro electric plants have been in operation with Indian assistance namely: Chukha (336 MW), Kurichu (60 MW), and Tala (1020 MW)."¹³

Nepali hydro expert Dipak Gyawali is of the view that the model of Indo-Bhutan cooperation cannot be replicated with Nepal mainly due to the sheer size of Nepal and the demand which is much higher. He also opines that since Bhutan has without any planning exported most of its electricity to India, it will not have power itself as industries, tourism business and consumer demands soar within Bhutan. "Though Bhutan has twice the electricity-generation capacity of Nepal, around 80 percent of its electricity is exported to India, leaving only about 300 MW for consumption in Bhutan. Of this, only 80 MW is for domestic use, while the rest goes to southern Bhutan to be consumed by various Indian-owned industries, such as cement factories, lured here by the availability of cheap electricity. Subsidized electricity has led to booming demand, which grew by 19 percent from 2007 to 2008, increasing a further 27 percent in 2009 and 54 percent in 2010. As a result, Bhutan will be compelled to reduce its consumption by around 25 MW via

¹² Note: "India to Develop four Hydro-electric projects in Bhutan", http://hydro.energy-business-review.com/news/india_to_develop_four_hydroelectric_projects_in_bhutan_100324, accessed on April 21, 2011.

¹³ Bisht, Medha. *Contemporary Issues in South Asia: Documents*. New Delhi: Institute of Defense studies and Analyses. 2009. p. 142.

load-shedding this coming dry season, worsening as demand continues to escalate till 2016, when Punatsangchhu-I comes online."¹⁴

Although the Bhutan model of hydro-power use has symbolic value for creating a dependency for India in the smaller neighbor's political stability, it could be difficult to replicate it in the Nepali context because of the different psyche' of the Nepalese politicians, bureaucrats, and academics and also the political context of Nepal which is much more complicated than Bhutan. The sheer size of Nepal with 26 million inhabitants is also a totally different picture. However, Nepali leaders could learn lessons from the ability of the Bhutanese royal family in impressing the Indian leadership that any instability in the polity of Bhutan will have disastrous consequences for India as the power projects could land in wrong hands. For precisely this reason, Delhi maybe apprehensive of a functioning multi-party democracy to take root as it fears that multifarious political parties could demand higher prices, foreign investment, and equal sharing of water and electricity with India just like the politicians of Nepal. Obviously the Indian leadership has learnt a lesson from the Nepali constitutional framework wherein a two-third majority was warranted before inking any major project related to natural resources of the country.¹⁵

Is the exact duplication of the Indo-Bhutan relations in the power sector feasible? Gyawali says that "Nepal has about fifty times more people than Bhutan, which would imply that India would need to fund 17,000 MW of equivalent hydro development in Nepal on the same terms as it does in Bhutan, i.e. 60 percent grant and 40 percent soft loan, with similar per kWh royalty provisions. It is doubtful if India has that kind of development money available: it certainly has not indicated so publicly."¹⁶

The harnessing of water resources and export to India is therefore a crucial factor in Indo-Bhutan relations which must be studied and addressed by refugee leaders aspiring to establish their version of democracy in Bhutan. Without assuaging the Indian policy makers that the policy of the political parties will also remain the same as of the monarchy, there is little prospect of Delhi

¹⁴ Gyawali, Dipak. "Hype and Hydro-power in Nepal: What went wrong and what corrective measures are Needed?" *Nepal's National Interests*. Eds. Tomislav Delinic and NN Pandey. Kathmandu: Centre for South Asian Studies and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung: 2010. p. 168

¹⁵ Note: The Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal-1990.

¹⁶ Gyawali, op.cit., p. 170.

going out of its way to help them. However, it is a fact that because of the closeness in the hydro-sector, Bhutan's ruling elite has created a strong lobby in Delhi and a perception in India that similar type of a political uprising against the monarchy in Bhutan will be detrimental to India's economic interests and thereby its overall security interests.

7.3 Bhutan's Relations with Other Countries:

Bhutan has diplomatic relations with seven European nations, which form The "Friends of Bhutan" group, together with Japan. These countries are Switzerland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, the Netherlands, Finland, and Austria. Also the major donors, these countries contribute generously to Bhutanese development and social programs.

Japan is one of the biggest donor because of the common 'Buddhist component'. Kuwait has aided Bhutan tremendously in its tryst with economical development. The brother of the four queen mothers and former Prime Minister Lyonpo Sangay Ngedup was an ambassador to Kuwait symbolizing the high regard that Thimpu wished to convey to Kuwait. In its turn, Kuwait has supported Bhutan through the Kuwait Development Fund. Kuwait has also provided Bhutan with BMW luxury cars for formal ceremonies.

Occasions when Bhutan has shown the desire to forge relations with other countries without the knowledge of India are rare but there are instances such as in the coronation of King Jigme in June 1974, invitations were sent to U.S., UK, Soviet Union, France and China without the prior knowledge of New Delhi. But these dissensions with Delhi were realized to be harmful to the regime and soon rectified.

The United States of America does not have formal diplomatic relations with Bhutan. However, Bhutan does participate in a regional program for South Asia sponsored by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) that assists countries develop their power infrastructure (SARI-E). A few Bhutanese military officers have attended courses at the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, Hawaii. The U.S. Government annually brings several Bhutanese participants to United States through its International Visitors and Fulbright Programs. Bhutan does not falter

from entertaining guests from America and from other western countries. U.S. Ambassador to Nepal Scott H. Delisi who has recently been designated America's ambassador to SAARC paid a rare visit to Bhutan in 2011.

Due to the generous assistance of the U.S. govt., the Bhutanese problem of having to face tremendous day to day hassle of having to deal with the issue of the refugees is currently shoved aside. But this has not led to the change of American policy towards Bhutan nor have the Bhutanese desired to establish formal diplomatic ties with the U.S. For instance, U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration Kelly Clements who visited Bhutan in June 2011 urged the Bhutanese government leaders to take tangible immediate steps to help resolve the protracted refugee situation in Nepal as a sign of Bhutan's commitment to democratic values and human rights. "The government of Bhutan agreed to examine other ways to resolve this humanitarian situation in a humane and expedient manner, especially for the most vulnerable," read the statement by the U.S. Embassy at the end of his visit.¹⁷

Prof. Mohan P. Lohani, former ambassador who also headed a high-level task force in the MoFA to advise the government on possible ways out of the Bhutanese refugee imbroglio states that the "U.S. strategic interest is bound up with strategic partnership between the U.S. and India. While Bhutan is a close and dependable ally of India and the latter accepts the Bhutanese argument that these refugees of Nepali origin are not bonafide citizens of Bhutan, the U.S. willingness to take in the refugees under the third country settlement plan is an American gesture to appease India and, for that matter, Bhutan as well which is happy to know that the refugees are being re-settled elsewhere. Both Bhutan and India can this avoid international criticism if all the refugees are resettled in a third country."¹⁸

Although the two do not have formal diplomatic relations, Bhutan and Tibet Autonomous Region of China have had age-old relations. A Bhutani Agent was posted in Lhasa until 1960 and communications with Peking had remained intact. The 1962 India-China border war changed the

¹⁷ "US Urges Bhutan to take tangible steps to resolve refugee crisis", *The Kathmandu Post* 6 June, 2011.

¹⁸ Interview with Mohan Prasad Lohani.

dynamic completely in which Bhutan's territory was used by the PLA in a place called Kameng for a surprise attack in Arunachal Pradesh. Only then did the Indians started to see the strategic importance of having Bhutan strongly clasped towards itself. Bhutan was also afraid after the annexation of Tibet in which it thought that it will be the next casualty of China's southward expansion and it closed all trade routes to Shigatse and Lhasa.

Bhutan and China have engaged in 19 rounds of high-level talks regarding a border dispute over three Chinese-built roads which the Bhutanese Government alleges encroach on its territory. Although the current official trade between the countries is minimal, the Chinese Government announced that trade had increased by 3,000 percent from 2006 to 2007. Chinese goods these days are found in abundance in Bhutan, Chinese tourists have also started to visit Bhutan.

In 1964, even without having diplomatic relations, "Premier Zhou En-lai sent a condolence message to the King when Bhutan's Prime Minister Jigme Dorji was assassinated on April 5th that year. This was despite the fact that Jigme Dorji was known for being pro-India and an ardent 'anti-communist'." ¹⁹ This was meant to re-establish contacts with Thimpu. Re-establishing ties has remained somewhat of an embarrassment to Beijing because Bhutan is the only neighbor with which China does not still have diplomatic relations with. This is despite the fact that China shares a contiguous border of 470 kilometers with Bhutan to the north and its territorial disputes with Bhutan have also been a cause of embarrassment because Beijing points out the fact that except with India in South Asia, it does not have border problems with any other country.

Until the 1970s, India represented Bhutan's concerns in talks with China over the broader Sino-Indian border conflicts. Obtaining membership in the United Nations in 1971, Bhutan began to assert a different course in its foreign policy. In the U.N., Bhutan voted in favour of Communist China filling the seat occupied by the ROC and openly supported 'One China' policy. In 1974 in a symbolic overture, Bhutan invited the Chinese ambassador to India to attend the coronation of King Jigme.²⁰ China on the other hand supported Bhutan's membership of the U.N. In 1979, Bhutan "voted with China at the NAM Summit held in Havana on the question of keeping the

¹⁹ Singh, Swaran *China-South Asia: Issues, Equations, Policies*. New Delhi: Lancer's Books, 2003. p. 259

²⁰ Note: Chinese charge d' affairs a.i. at its embassy in New Delhi Ma Mu Ming participated in the coronation.

Cambodian seat vacant until their internal crisis resolved where Bhutan chose to support the ousted Pol Pot regime which enjoyed the backing of Beijing."²¹

Bhutan has also shown remarkable reluctance to get involved in the Free Tibet Movement or in the political activities of the Dalai Lama. There is no official record of the 14th Dalai Lama visiting Bhutan despite the fact that the cultural relations between Tibet and the royal household of Bhutan was actually quite strong in the historic sense. According to Bhutanese Queen mother Ashi Kesang, "The 13th Dalai Lama Ngawang Lobzang Thubten Gyamtso stayed in the newly built Bhutan House in Kalimpong for three months in 1912" as the guest of her grandfather Raja Ugyen Dorji and his sister Ayi Thubten Wongmo. "His Holiness named the newly built Bhutan House Mingyur Ngonpar Gawai Phodrang, 'the palace of Unchanging Supreme Joy.'²² There is a reason for the chilling of the relations between the 14th Dalai Lama and the Wangchuk dynasty. In the early 1970s, the Dalai Lama was implicated in a conspiracy to assassinate the 18-year-old King of Bhutan King Jigme Singye. Dalai Lama's brother Gyalo Dondrup and Lhading, his personal representative in Bhutan, were named by the Bhutanese authorities as the principle agents of the conspiracy. This continued a long history of the Dalai Lamas attempting to invade or meddle with Bhutan and Thimpu has always been suspicious of attempts from the Tibetans to intrude into the cultural uniqueness of Bhutan. However, with the flow of time, there are examples of normalization of relations. Bhutanese students study at the Tibetan Learning School in Bangalore whereas Richard Gere who champions the cause of Free Tibet has visited Bhutan.

In 1983, the Chinese Foreign Minister Wu Xueqian and Bhutanese Foreign Minister Dawa Tshering held talks on establishing bilateral relations in New York. In 1984, China and Bhutan began annual, direct talks over the border dispute. In 1998, China and Bhutan signed a bilateral agreement for maintaining peace on the border. In the agreement, China affirmed its respect for Bhutan's sovereignty and territorial integrity and both sides sought to build ties based on the *Panchaseel*. However, China's building of roads within Bhutanese-claimed lands in violation of the 1998 agreement has provoked tensions. In 2002, China presented claims of evidence

²¹ Singh, op. cit., p. 145.

²² Wangchuk, Ashi Kesang Choden (The Queen Mother of Bhutan) *His Holiness the 13th Dalai Lama and the Bhutan House in Kalimpong*, Retrieved February 24, 2011, from
>http://himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/journals/jbs/pdf/JBS_05_01.pdf

regarding ownership of disputed tracts of land; after negotiations, an interim agreement was reached.

Despite these slight overtures on the part of Bhutan, the Thimpu regime has not gone to the extent of annoying New Delhi by either establishing formal diplomatic ties with China or doing anything that may raise suspicions in Delhi. Prime Minister Nehru's statement in parliament in 1949 is especially noteworthy:-

"The Government [of India] is responsible for the protection of the borders of Sikkim and Bhutan and for the territorial integrity of these two states and any aggression against Bhutan and Sikkim will be considered as aggression against India."

With the success in handling its India policy with utmost caution and nurtured by the royalty, Thimpu may now be on the throes of another major shift in its foreign policy. How can it remain aloof to the fact that Sino-Indian relations itself has dramatically improved in which they are now projecting an annual trade volume of \$ 100 billion by 2014? Whereas Bhutanese territory will still be the easiest access to Shigatse from Northern and Northeastern India, how long will it choose not to open up to trade and investment from China? As Chinese tourists are fast becoming the largest foreign travelers in the world, how can the quality tourism feature of Bhutan not endeavor to attract the Chinese? And moreover, in an era when the international community is talking about G2 consisting of just the U.S. and China, how long will Bhutan benefit by turning its back towards China? In 2012, there has been much hullabaloo of the prospect of the establishment of diplomatic ties between Bhutan and China. Probably it is because of the normalization of Sino-Indian relations, Bhutan's interest to contest the UNSC seat in which it requires China to support its bid and also because of the steady flow of Chinese tourists and Chinese investment in Bhutan telecom. "While the Chinese state news agency Xinhua and others said that a historic moment at the sidelines of the United Nations Rio +20 Conference on Sustainable Development in Brazil was the first ever meeting between Prime Ministers of Bhutan and China, where expressions to establish diplomatic ties were discussed, the Bhutanese PM's media cell has said the Chinese local media has mis-reported that Bhutan and China will forge formal diplomatic ties."²³

²³ "The China Factor", *Bhutan Today*, 24 June, 2012.

These questions are becoming critically important questions for the Bhutanese policy makers. For India too, a Bhutan that has diplomatic relations with all major powers of the world, a prosperous small neighbor that takes its side in all regional and international forums, and a Himalayan country that embraces the civil society and free media rather than stopping its activities will be a better asset in the long-term. New Delhi needs to view its Bhutan policy with the aim of allowing more freedom for Bhutan's ruling elite with which it enjoys total trust so that they begin to get more international credibility and recognition as a functioning and a modern democracy in the comity of nations. Bhutan's formal relations with China will be a first step toward that end. India need not be anxious and apprehensive of Bhutanese intentions anymore because Indo-Bhutan relations has matured enough.

Merely by having informal meetings and secret talks, Sino-Bhutan relations is not going to grow beyond the formalities. Although every Chinese Ambassador to India in the last 25 years have visited Bhutan, lack of formal political and economic interchanges not only between the two governments but also between the industrialists and private sector will be a drawback to Bhutan's tryst with modernity. Still, Chinese workers are not permitted in Bhutan. An international scale airport has already opened in Shigatse and the Chinese are also constructing a railway to the Nepal border which will come via Lhasa-Shigatse. The Bhutanese will at least need to see the economic potentials that exist in the future of having warm relations with China.

This will present Nepal with opportunities because an outward looking Bhutan, participating in major regional and international conferences with an open visa regime will facilitate contacts and help in conflict resolution. Much of the problem of not being able to resolve the refugee tangle has been due to the lack of contacts and free and frank dialogue between the two sides both at the track-I and track-II levels. A formal diplomatic relations with its northern neighbor will not only connect Bhutan with Shigatse, Lhasa and the rest of China but also link with Nepal since the Golmud-Lhasa railway is being extended to Shigatse by the Chinese authorities.

CHAPTER 8

NEPAL-BHUTAN RELATIONS

There is hardly any research conducted either on the historical development of Nepal-Bhutan relations or on the steady evolution of the relations in the modern period. Even the official website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) of Nepal hardly goes beyond the refugee issue and only starts the bilateral ties with the visit of King Jigme to Nepal to attend the 3rd SAARC Summit. "A country with whom Nepal had so much interaction in the past could seldom take any decision to upgrading the level of relations, let alone the exchange of visits between the heads of state or government."¹

However, during the Malla period, Kathmandu valley had already come up as a cultural and religious centre of Buddhism. Swayambhunath attracted a lot of Bhutanese Lamas and Buddhist tantriks including Samdrub Nawang Namgyal to come to the Kathmandu valley. Bhutanese Lamas and rulers were given special authority over monasteries not only within the valley but also in places like Vijayapur in eastern Nepal by the Sen Kings. After the unification, there was a period of lull but the Bhutanese Lamas were quick in re-establishing ties with the Kings from Gorkha. "After the Tibet-Nepal war a Bhutanese Lama wrote a letter to Kaji of Nepal. In this he mentioned that six Gompas (monasteries) of the East, which are presented to him as gift at the time of Ram Shah, were being ruined due to confiscation and improper care from the Nepalese side. So, he requested the Kaji to help preserve the religious property set by the ancestors. It can be surmised that the Gompas were given to Bhutanese by the Gorkhas on various dates, i.e., since Ram Shah to Krishna Shah and later by Prithivi Narayan Shah. In total, it is expected that the Nepalese kings provided the Bhutanese Lamas authority over 12 Ghyangs or Gompas."² Relations between predominantly Hindu country like Nepal and the Mahayana Buddhist country like Bhutan was thus cemented through bilateral visits and contacts at the level of the rulers, high priests and pilgrims.

¹ Baral, Lok Raj. "Bilateralism under the Shadow: The Problems of Refugees in Nepal-Bhutan Relations." *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*. 20.2 (1993). 197.

² Dhakal, Suman, "Nepal-Bhutan Relations (A Study of its Past)"

>http://himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/journals/ancientnepal/pdf/ancient_nepal_152_01.pdf<, retrieved Sep. 14, 2011.

It has also been well established that Dharmaraja Nawang Namgyal visited Gorkha in 1640 A.D. which then set the stage for Nepalese artisans and craftsmen to go to Bhutan because Namgyal himself took some Nepalese with him. This incident is mentioned by all refugee leaders to prove that Nepalese in southern Bhutan are not recent settlers as claimed by the royal government. For instance, the Sgo-mang-Khora stupa of Yang-tse is a good example which having big eyes resembles Boudhanath. On the other hand, "the Tamrapatra of 1741 A.D., issued to a popular Lama (known as Lhopa Lama) providing Nagathali Gompa and a vast tract of land around it, supports the Nepal-Bhutan relations. The inscriptions mention that prior to this much land and property were provided to Dharma Lama (Tsyong Lama) as kusa birta by issuing Tamrapatra."³

A fable linking the Shah Kings with the Lamas of Bhutan is particularly interesting. King Narabhupal Shah of Gorkha was issueless. In his efforts to have a son, he invited a great Lama from Bhutan renowned for his spiritual prowess to invoke benign benediction. Sometime later when Prithvi Narayan Shah was born to him, a highly obliged King Narabhupal wanted to return the favour. "I will ask the favor at an appropriate time", the Lama said. Later when Prithvi Narayan unified Nepal by capturing the valley, the Lama reminded the King of his father's promise and asked for a land grant of an area encompassing the Swayabhu hillock along with a right to conduct the religious affairs of the stupa. The request was promptly granted and the arrangement was hardly challenged later on. Thus, this story can be stated as an eternal embodiment of Nepal-Bhutan relations in the historical period. At one point the main priest of the stupa was even regarded as an un-official representative of Bhutan to Nepal. To continue the religious and emotional relations of his great father, Prince Bahadur Shah whose forces went beyond the current confines of the Mechi and Mahakali border, invited well known "Bhutanese Lama Tanjin Dugyal to Nepal and provided Thon-mon and Kalari villages to Dharmaraja as gift."⁴

At various intervals of history, the Swayambhu stupa has been renovated and each time the Bhutanese ruler of the time has done previous to help in the works. The Swayambhu records show that in 1817 by Lama senge-Norbu, in 1915 by Chewang Jigme and in 2010 by a Trust which

³ Dhakal, *ibid.*

⁴ Dhakal, *ibid.*

received a lot of support from the royal family of Bhutan. Today, there are several other monasteries and stupas that receive regular help from Thimpu such as the "Bhutan monastery" in Boudha area.

8.1. Nepal-Bhutan Relations in Modern Period:

Despite of so much and such early establishment of contacts and visits, it is unfortunate that the two countries remained without formal bilateral ties for a long period. Bhutan's political evolution has always mimicked that of Nepal. The treaty of Sinchula very much like the Treaty of Sugauli, Indo-Bhutan Friendship Treaty which was signed after the Indo-Nepal 1950 Treaty, the small demonstration in 1949-51 in Bhutan taking inspiration from the anti-Rana movement in Nepal, the mass rally in 1990-91 at various places within Bhutan asking for democratic reforms and constitutional monarchy after a similar movement in Nepal the same year are illustrations of the intimacy between the people of the two countries. Even the Maoist party has recently been formed within Bhutan but whether or not it will be able to make the same type of an impact like in Nepal will have to be seen.

The formal bilateral relation between the two countries was established only in 1983. Nepal had established bilateral relations with Costa Rica, which is negligible in Nepal's worldview prior to that of establishing formal relations with Bhutan, which is so close culturally, politically, economically and geographically. There is no official book/article/paper/resource document written on Nepal-Bhutan relations beyond the refugee issue. Even the Nepali academia, media and the civil society has given very less importance to Bhutan beyond the narrow prism of the refugee entangle. There are influential voices against forging better political, cultural and economic relations with Bhutan as this may dilute the core issue of the refugee repatriation and make Bhutan contented with the current state of affairs. Hence, there are these two undercurrents of perception as regards to normalizing the relations with one side taking the firm view that Bhutan must accept some refugees back and only then there will be normalization of relations while the other increasingly of the realization that tourism and trade issues need not be kept hostage till the refugee problem is resolved.

The first visit of the King of Bhutan took place only in 1987 even that was part of the 3rd SAARC Summit held in Kathmandu hence cannot be stated as a visit to Nepal *per se*. However, during the visit he went for a pilgrimage of the Halesi Mahadev temple in Khotang district where his mother had prayed for the birth of a son. There has not been a high-level visit either on the part of the King or the level of the Prime Minister of Nepal except the latter on the auspices of SAARC. Late King Birendra visited Bhutan on October 5-6, 1988 for the consultation of SAARC Meeting. Before this, it must not be forgotten that the sister of King Jigme used to be a regular visitor to Kathmandu and was accorded a VIP treatment by Nepal government whenever she came. Biratnagar used to be especially a transit city for royal families visiting Kathmandu through the land route. The then Prince Dhirendra, brother of King Birendra who went to the coronation of King Jigme maintained warm personal relations with the Bhutanese royal family throughout his life.

On the cultural and religious front, a lot more had been happening. It is said that Guru Padmasambhava visited Bhutan via Nepal. Boudhanath and Swayambhunath shrines are a must for all Mahayana Buddhists who come here often for pilgrimage purposes forming an essential part of tourism relations between the two countries. On Padmasambhava's consort practice with Princess Sakya Devi from Nepal it is said that "in a state of intense bliss, Padmasambhava and Sakyadevi realized the infinite reality of the Primordial Buddha Mind, the All-Beneficent Lord (Samantabhadra), whose absolute love is the unimpeded dynamo of existence. Experiencing the succession of the four stages of ecstasy, their mutual state of consciousness increased from height to height. And thus, meditating on Supreme Vajrasattva Heruka as the translucent image of compassionate wrathful (energized) activity, they together acquired the Mahamudra of Divinity and attained complete Great Enlightenment."⁵ As a consort of the Guru, Nepalese have a special place in the religious texts of Bhutan.

In June 23-30, 2003 Ashi Dorji Wangmo, the then Queen of Bhutan visited Kathmandu and was received by the then Crown Prince and Crown Princess of Nepal. Queen mother of Bhutan (Mother of King Jigme) visited Nepal in a private capacity in 2011 and paid homage to

⁵ "Padmasambhava", Tibetmaster.com

http://www.tibetmaster.com/Distinguish_Buddha/Padmasambhava%20,tibet%20tour.html. Retrieved on Aug. 15, 2011.

Swayambhunath and Boudhanath. "Regular exchange of gifts between the royal families of the two countries is also common" especially during the birthdays and other occasions."⁶ The personal relations need not be discontinued rather needs to be strengthened after the establishment of a republican order in Nepal. The President's Secretariat, Prime Minister's Office, Nepalese Foreign Ministry need to look at giving continuity to these gestures from the national interest point of view.

Several Prime Ministers of Bhutan have also visited Nepal. Buddhist pilgrims in Bhutan regard the Swambhunath and Boudhnath stupas in Kathmandu as sacred and desire to visit these revered shrines at least once in their lifetime. Druk Air also flies to and from Kathmandu 3 times a week. Bilateral relations on other areas such as trade and tourism, education, sports and culture and people to people contacts is satisfactory. Nepalese and Bhutanese usually get together making use of other venues such as UN General Assembly meets, SAARC Summits, SAF games, Olympics, and scouts jamborees. Through the aegis of organizations and NGOs such as the South Asia Foundation (SAF) the students, strategic analysts and academics of the two countries get together and share their views. At the Scouts Jamboree held in Bhutan in 2002 supported by SAF, Nepalese scouts team participated. A few Bhutanese students are also undergoing technical training at various vocational schools in Nepal.

Despite these positive features, the two governments are so engrossed with the refugee entangle from the last two decades that this sole issue has haunted the healthy growth of the bilateral ties. In fact, no other area seems to be crucial for them except the safe landing of the refugee issue involving one hundred thousand *Lhotsampas*. Such has been the impact of the refugee issue on the overall gambit of Nepal-Bhutan relations that one sometimes gets the feeling that there is nothing else in the realm of the bilateral relations other than the refugee issue. Indeed, nothing can be as sorrowful as living away from one's home in another country as a refugee. But the two countries need to overcome this hurdle and begin focusing on the many areas that they can cooperate on. "Nepal and Bhutan are both land-locked LDCs and also members of SAARC. Both could make joint efforts to promote their common interests in multilateral forums like the UN, SAARC, NAM, BIMST-EC, G-77 and even the LDC group which met recently in Istanbul and

⁶ Based on interview with Dr. Bhekh Bahadur Thapa, former ambassador.

adopted the plan of action for the 2011-2020 decade."⁷ On issues of mutual concern such as forest conservation, hydro-power generation and quality tourism, Nepal could learn from Bhutan whereas Bhutanese and Nepalese can jointly work on many things in Nepal in the areas of IT, trade facilitation, cross-connection of flights and tourists, sports, etc. There is a resort in Hattiban which is run solely in Bhutanese proprietorship hence the same model can be replicated by attracting Nepalese private sector investment within Bhutan.

"Nepal and Bhutan are friendly Himalayan neighbors and members of SAARC with similar situations. Both must cooperate to remove the irritant that sometimes creep in their otherwise cordial relations by finding a just and dignified solution to the refugee problem. Resolving this problem will help both countries to further strengthen their traditional strong bond of friendship and cooperation, learn from each others' successes and failures, strengths and limitations. To this end, opening of resident embassies of both countries in each other's capitals would be one concrete step."⁸

While Nepalese officialdom has been reluctant to normalize relations, the Bhutanese side too has been shy to invite people from the Nepali cross-section in order to correct the enormous disgruntlement that exists against the Thimpu regime. Mutual hesitancy or disinterest to set a new nature of relations for the future has compounded the problems that exist in the bilateral relations.

8.2. Nepal-Bhutan Economic Relations:

On the economic front, Bhutanese jam, carpet, Bhutanese investment in Nepal's hotel industry and the role played by ethnic Nepalese in their commercial, educational, military and other spheres are issues of importance. The informal relation on the level of the common-man, monks, businesspersons, and tourism entrepreneurs is more warm and multi-faceted than the relations at the formal government to government level.

In 2004, Nepal and Bhutan signed an agreement to increase the number of flights between Paro and Kathmandu from twice a week to seven flights a week. Delegations of chambers of business

⁷ Interview with Prof. Mohan P. Lohani, former ambassador.

⁸ Interview with Dr. Shambhu Ram Simkhada, former ambassador.

of both nations have exchanged visits, and both nations recently held joint secretary-level talks to work towards a trade agreement. Although the two South Asian countries have no formal bilateral trade agreement both are signatories to the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) and both are members of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sector Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMST-EC). Bhutan has emerged as a potential export destinations for Nepal. Nepal enjoyed all time high trade surplus of Rs 1.42 billion with Bhutan in 2009/10. Nepal exported goods worth Rs. 1.55 billion to Bhutan during the period. Its import stood at Rs 133 million. Nepal's exports to Bhutan in 2008/09 stood at just Rs 194 million, whereas import from the Druk kingdom was recorded at Rs 352 million. Exports to Bhutan made up around 3.5 percent of the country's total exports to SAARC countries in 2009/10. Nepal's total exports to SAARC countries during the fiscal year stood at Rs 45 billion. Encouraged by this rise in exports, Nepal has been asking for zero tariff for 300 goods. Nepal has been exporting industrial products, such as electricity transformers, noodles and handicrafts to Bhutan and importing fruits, tomatoes and other agro-based products from there.

In May 2011, Nepal and Bhutan exchanged lists of tradable items. "So far, trade between the two countries is done through indirect agreements such as the South Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA) and BIMSTEC."⁹

According to published reports, the Nepali side forwarded a list of 91 tradable items and told Bhutan to carry out business through three customs points— Birgunj, Bhairahawa and Kakarbhitta. Since there is no direct border crossing, both the countries have agreed to request India for providing tradable route through the 160-km Kakarvitta-Phuntsoling Road.

It is not only Nepal that is interested to improve the trade and transportation linkage. The Bhutanese side also forwarded a list of 127 tradable items. The list include primary agriculture produce, intermediary products such as billets, ingots and ferrosilicon, and finished products such as cement and alcohol, while Nepal is interested in exporting steel poles, iron structures and agricultural produce to Bhutan. Trade and Export Promotion Centre states that Nepalese exports such as industrial products, electricity transformers, noodles and handicrafts have a lot of scope

⁹ Giri, Anil "Nepal-Bhutan Trade Talk: Nepal Bhutan Exchange List of tradable Items". *The Kathmandu Post*. 11 May 2011.

whereas importing fruits, tomatoes and other agro-based products will be good for the Nepali consumers.

Nepal and Bhutan both are predominantly agricultural countries but despite of this there exist a lot of potential for cooperation in the field of tourism also. A Nepalese delegation led by Mr. Lava Kumar Devkota, the then Secretary, Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation visited Bhutan from February 2-4, 2004. During the visit, an Air Service Agreement was concluded between the two Governments. The agreement envisaged to increase the flight numbers up to seven flights a week between Paro and Kathmandu. Giving access to Druk Air to operate flights in the Kathmandu-Delhi sector was contested by a lot of operators including the Nepal Airlines. This was a gesture shown by the Nepalese to their Bhutanese counterparts by giving fifth freedom right to the Druk Air to carry passengers from Nepal to Delhi and vice versa which has given it a lot of revenue.

A delegation of FNCCI visited Bhutan in March 2010. An MOU has also been signed between FNCCI and Bhutan Chamber of Commerce and Industry to promote the development of trade and economic relations between the two countries. This is an important agreement and in a country where the private sector is only beginning to take up major undertakings, relations with an already established institution such as the FNCCI will accrue great benefits for the future.

During Indian Prime Minister Dr. Man Mohan Singh's visit to Bangladesh in September 2011, several aspects were agreed upon for allowing Nepal and Bhutan to get access to the port facilities in Bangladesh. The Bangladesh Prime Minister expressed her appreciation to the Indian Prime Minister for amendment of the MoU between the Bangladesh and Indian Railways allowing Rohanpur-Singabad as an additional route for both bulk and container cargo for Nepalese rail transit traffic. Bangladesh side also appreciated the assistance from India for the movement of fertilizers from Bangladesh to Nepal by rail route. They also agreed to re-establish rail connections between Chilahati-Haldibari and Kulaura-Mahishashan in the spirit of encouraging revival of old linkages and transport routes between the two countries. The Addendum to the MoU between India and Bangladesh to Facilitate Overland Transit Traffic between Bangladesh and Nepal was also signed. These new arrangements between India and Bangladesh has

significance for both Nepal and Bhutan because both countries are land-locked and both desperately are craving for an alternate to the congested Kolkata port. If Bangaldeshi port of Mongla can be used by the two countries, there can be added trade between Nepal and Bhutan as well as facilitation in third country traffic of goods.

Not only on the rail and road transportation but "Bhutan and Nepal should [also] focus on the proposed 21st century Multi-Purpose project for developing a canal to the bay of Bengal along the Ganges and the Meghna region."¹⁰ In addition, Bhutan can also think of joining into the Buddhist circuit by taking help of travel tour operators of Nepal and India in which it can join into the traditional Lumbini, Bodhgaya, Sarnath, and Kushinagar pilgrimage sites for Buddhists coming from all over the world. Currently, Bhutan does not attract so many pilgrims from South Korea, Japan and China due to the unknown ways of travel, expensive accommodation and badly connected route to Thimpu from Southeast Asia.

¹⁰ Interview with Bishnu Hari Nepal, former ambassador.

Table 2.

Nepal's Exports and Imports from Bhutan in Comparison to SAARC Member Countries

Value in '000 Rs

| Direction | F.Y. 2005/06 | % In Total | F.Y. 2006/07 | % In Total | F.Y. 2007/08 | % In Total | F.Y. 2008/09 | % In Total | F.Y. 2009/10 | % In Total |
|--------------------|--------------|------------|--------------|------------|--------------|------------|--------------|------------|--------------|------------|
| India | 40,714,700 | 98.4 | 41,728,800 | 97.7 | 38,555,700 | 88.7 | 43,574,482 | 89.4 | 39,902,811 | 88.6 |
| Bangladesh | 234,323 | 0.6 | 521,499 | 1.2 | 4,664,363 | 10.7 | 4,710,402 | 9.7 | 3,373,718 | 7.5 |
| Bhutan | 238,275 | 0.6 | 310,958 | 0.7 | 142,688 | 0.3 | 194,826 | 0.4 | 1,554,824 | 3.5 |
| Maldives | 47 | 0 | 1,028 | 0 | 89 | 0 | 4,007 | 0 | 289 | 0 |
| Pakistan | 186,228 | 0.5 | 126,944 | 0.3 | 80,681 | 0.2 | 86,003 | 0.2 | 78,971 | 0.2 |
| Sri Lanka | 2,207 | 0 | 3,123 | 0 | 35,147 | 0.1 | 161,544 | 0.3 | 100,263 | 0.2 |
| Afghanistan | 457 | 0 | 12,461 | 0 | 922 | 0 | 2,346 | 0 | 973 | 0.0 |
| Sub Total | 41,376,237 | 100 | 42,704,813 | 100 | 43,479,590 | 100 | 48,733,610 | 100 | 45,011,848 | 100 |
| Total Exports | 59,776,874 | | 58,927,097 | | 58,474,359 | | 68,596,852 | | 60,949,603 | |
| % in Total Exports | | 69.2 | | 72.5 | | 74.4 | | 71 | | 73.9 |

Nepal's Imports from Bhutan in Comparison to SAARC Member Countries

Value in '000 Rs

| Direction | F.Y. 2005/06 | % In Total | F.Y. 2006/07 | % In Total | F.Y. 2007/08 | % In Total | F.Y. 2008/09 | % In Total | F.Y. 2009/10 | % In Total |
|--------------------|--------------|------------|--------------|------------|--------------|------------|--------------|------------|--------------|------------|
| India | 107,143,100 | 99.6 | 115,872,300 | 99.5 | 142,376,500 | 99.4 | 165,119,002 | 99.3 | 214,261,109 | 99.4 |
| Bangladesh | 104,646 | 0.1 | 286,477 | 0.2 | 491,211 | 0.4 | 418,014 | 0.3 | 764,830 | 0.4 |
| Bhutan | 127,301 | 0.1 | 119,478 | 0.1 | 136,425 | 0.1 | 352,367 | 0.2 | 133,152 | 0.1 |
| Maldives | 45 | 0 | 106 | 0 | 311 | 0 | 71 | 0 | - | - |
| Pakistan | 191,380 | 0.2 | 171,455 | 0.2 | 179,766 | 0.1 | 248,893 | 0.2 | 281,240 | 0.1 |
| Sri Lanka | 52,019 | 0 | 46,192 | 0 | 24,929 | 0 | 58,224 | 0 | 54,773 | 0 |
| Afghanistan | 221 | 0 | 6,184 | 0 | 25,323 | 0 | 6,225 | 0 | 7,384 | 0 |
| Sub Total | 107,618,712 | 100 | 116,502,192 | 100 | 143,234,465 | 100 | 166,202,796 | 100 | 215,502,488 | 100.0 |
| Total Imports | 160,677,924 | | 195,808,412 | | 237,030,276 | | 291,000,944 | | 375,605,870 | |
| % in Total Imports | | 67.0 | | 59.5 | | 60.4 | | 57.1 | | 57.4 |

Source: Trade and Export Promotion Centre, Nepal.

The above figure shows that Nepal has a trade surplus with Bhutan and it exports more to Bhutan than to Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Afghanistan. On the import front, Nepal imports more from Bhutan than from Sri Lanka, Maldives and Afghanistan. In addition, the export volume is increasing every year and is likely continue due to increased air connectivity. There are a lot of avenues for promoting bilateral cooperation. "Nepal and Bhutan should work together for international trade, tourism, transportation, transfer of technology (on human resources management, agricultural development, social development sectors like health and

education, infrastructure development and environment conservation and hydropower /energy generation."¹¹

So far, trade between the two countries is conducted indirectly through agreements such as the South Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA) and Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sector Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC). If both the countries are permitted to use the Mongla port in Bangladesh, then easy connectivity between the two countries could also be explored. Currently, both Nepal and Bhutan use the congested Kolkata port for the third-country trade. In addition, Nepal and Bhutan are also being connected through the optical fibre network under the grant assistance of the Asian Information High-way project of the Asian Development Bank. "This will help in swift and cheaper data and voice transmission and will also create a hub of local e-centres in rural areas of Nepal, Bhutan, India and Bangladesh."¹²

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Narayan Kazi Shrestha met his his counterpart Lyonpo Jigme Yoezer Thinley on the sidelines of the 67th UN General Assembly and agreed to revive the ministerial joint committee meeting. Shrestha asked Bhutan government to come forward to resolve the refugee problem once and for all. "We hope that Bhutan will take up the matter with urgency and welcome back those refugees who want to be repatriated back to their homes."¹³ Hence, there is a perception that Bhutan has not shown interest to repatriate even a single refugee nor agreed to re-start the bilateral meetings that is commonly shared among all major political parties of Nepal including the Maoists.

Nepal and Bhutan need to overcome the refugee tangle and focus on mutually beneficial areas of cooperation. While tourists have been using Nepal route to visit Bhutan, for Nepal, hydro-power is of prime importance as nearly 18 hours of load shedding has crippled Nepal's industrialization. There could be a study on the possibility of export of power from Bhutan. In addition, Nepali craftsmen, engineers, bankers and entrepreneurs that have been visiting Bhutan have complained of the visa scheme which still remains restrictive. As a member of SAARC, Bhutan needs to grant visa on arrival for Nepalese on a reciprocal basis without having to prove their stay with

¹¹ *ibid.*

¹² "Optical Fibre between Nepal, India, Bangladesh and Bhutan", *Kantipur*, 16 May 2012.

¹³ "Human Treatment", *The Kathmandu Post*, 5 Oct. 2012.

per day expense of 200 US dollars. There is also increased potential of investment both by Nepalese industrialists in Bhutan and vice versa. The Chaudhary Group which has factories in Sikkim, Dehra Dun can also set-up companies in Bhutan as their products such as the wai wai noodles have much demand inside Bhutan. Similarly, certain Bhutanese products such jam and pickles can also be jointly marketed. The tremendous opportunity that exists for import of electricity from Bhutan to Nepal needs to be looked into without delay. Nepal government needs to talk to Bhutan and India for this as Kathmandu grapples without daily load shedding of 18 hours during dry season. Bhutan also benefits as it may want to diversify its power market instead of relying heavily on only one buyer. There is also great potential for joint marketing of tourism in the international market. Bhutan being a small country with limited resources and international exposure, the Nepal Tourism Board can assist in this regard as both countries will gain from participating together in International Travel Marts, Road shows, etc.

CHAPTER 9

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

9.1. Findings:

At the beginning of the 1990s, Bhutan adopted an unfair policy and started expelling thousands of its citizens of Nepalese origin out of its territory. These *Lhotsampas* had been living in Bhutan for generations and also owned houses, land and other property in Southern Bhutan. They had contributed significantly to the economic development of Bhutan but were victimized by the authorities for their alleged role in the pro-democracy movement of 1990.¹ One of the key findings of this research has been that it was indeed a deliberate policy of protecting the unique culture, language and religion of Bhutan that the government wanted to ensure. The democracy movement the Lhotsampas orchestrated was only an excuse to expel them out of the country.

Through the usage of historical and situational/circumstantialist approach, one of the key findings of this research is the different kinds of identities that individuals and groups have adopted in Bhutan. Most ethnic groups in the country socially construe their ancestry, origins and culture by reference to the past. Despite the state's standpoint that there is common origin and ancestry, all the ethnic groups in Bhutan are also the result of centuries of migrations from neighboring areas. Therefore, contrary to the perceived common ancestry, history or customs, there is not a single ethnical identification of the self, neither is there any group called 'Bhutanese'. Whether it is the Sarchops, Khengs or the Lhotsampas - all have migrated to Bhutan at varying intervals of history. Multi-ethnicity of Bhutan therefore is an established truth.

The second important finding of this study are the series of anti-Lhotsampa measures implemented by Bhutan such as Driglam Namza Code of Conduct, the Green Belt Proposal and the Citizenship Law that were directly aimed at pushing most of the Nepali speaking people out of the country. These measures were taken much before the democratic movement of 1990 in a gradual but planned manner. The multi-ethnicity in which the Lhotsampas were an important

¹ Pandey, Nishchal N. "Bhutanese Refugees in Nepal: Trouble to the Host" Eds. Vandana A. & Ashok C. Shukla. *Security in South Asia: Trends and Directions*, New Delhi: APH Publishing 2004. p. 155.

aspect became a source conflict as a consequence of the perceived threat felt by the regime in Bhutan to the rising demographic profile of the Nepali speaking Hindus. Other factors, such as economic and political competition, marginalization and inequality, and external dynamics such as rising tendency to assert among ethnic Nepalese in India's Northeast has also contributed to the regime's insecurity syndrome.

It has been underscored during the course of the research that due to the far-sighted economic planning of King Jigme that hydro-power has become the mainstay of the economy and the decision to allow India to erect power stations has created India's dependency in Bhutan's political stability. Although there are skeptics of the replication of the Bhutani model of power development, it is true that for New Delhi, Wangchuk dynasty has proven to be reliable partner. India's role will thus be crucial in the final settlement of the refugee problem and for the safety and well-being of the Lhotsampas that still reside in Bhutan. Any provocation to boot out these people from Bhutan will have catastrophic consequences not only for Nepal but for the sub-region inflamed by radical, extreme left movements which was not the case in the initial years of the refugee exodus in the early 90s. Times have changed and the emergence of Bhutan Communist Party (Maoists) which could alter the dynamics of politics within Bhutan, threatening the very stability of the society. Any attempts to expel the Nepalese further by getting encouragement of the American generosity of re-settlement of the refugees will set-off a major upheaval not only in Bhutan but also in some of the Nepali settled areas of the Northeast.

The re-settlement option offered by the U.S. to the refugees has also been explored as being borne out of sheer compassion to strategic leverage. It definitely came as a surprise but there were refugees who rejected it outright stating that they preferred going back to Bhutan. Over 50 thousand have been re-settled to the U.S., Canada, Australia and other countries. They are settled in all the 50 states of America and are working, lobbying for their cause and trying to establish a robust pressure group within the U.S. Long-term implications of such a large number of refugees being settled in foreign countries have been found to be a matter of concern for Bhutan as they will begin internationalizing the issue.

The other critical finding is the foreign relations of Bhutan which is limited to only a few countries. Bhutan does not have diplomatic relations with the 5 permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and has handful foreign missions. Despite of no formal ties, Indo-China relations has grown from official talks on the border issue to burgeoning trade and increase in Chinese tourists.

In the final chapters, discussion has centered around Nepal-Bhutan relations. Can Bhutan and Nepal set aside their differences, put behind tensions in favor of a peaceful resolution of this crisis in a crucial sub-region between India and China? Can they begin pursuing hassle-free relations focusing more on trade and investment, culture and tourism and perhaps re-establish the old relationship? This question is urgent for many actors – state and non-state. India has repeatedly found itself enmeshed in competing claims by the countries of the region and could not but warmly welcome any just and peaceful settlement nor could it wholly ignore Nepal's claims that the *Lhotsampas* are indeed citizens of Bhutan and need to be repatriated with honour. It has had to be a hapless middleman in between two friends but such a detached position will not be possible to continue as the U.S., and other western powers have already shown enormous interest on Bhutan. Strategic, long-term goals of the U.S. in this sub-region involves Tibetan and Bhutanese refugees – both living now in large numbers in the U.S. who will certainly be a strategic leverage for the U.S. in the coming decades. If India continues to be a mute spectator in this issue, it will risk losing its own backyard to extra-regional powers.

Bhutan has shown a great deal of interest in the maintenance and protection of the many monasteries and stupas inside Nepal. This is a fact that the government of Nepal may not be aware of but is very crucial for bilateral relations. Bhutanese easily get Nepal visa on arrival but Nepalese have to acquire Bhutanese visa through a cumbersome process as there is no embassy or consulate inside Nepal. Taking advantage of this a lot of Bhutani businessmen are involved in hotel and tourism business while others are engaged in export of handicrafts and metallic works to Bhutan.

Another key finding of this study is a critical appraisal of Nepal's strategic failures in terms of Bhutan policy. Sweep of domestic requirements have negatively influenced the foreign policy

goals of Nepal. Frequent changes of governments have led to transfers of bureaucrats leading to a serious lapse of institutional memory on most part. The agreeing on the verification of the refugees was a serious flaw in itself but more fatal was to allow Bhutan to pick and choose when to sit for talks and when not to.

The prospects of a fresh start of the bilateral relations is essential and necessary but also affected by the postures of India and China with their growing rivalry witnessed in the recent years. Nepal and Bhutan must make it a point to re-boot their relations so as to pay their tribute to the forefathers who had established strong cultural and religious relations which has been duly elaborated in the previous chapters. There is no reason why the two countries should continue to scuffle over the refugee issue when there is so much prospect in the areas of economy, trade, sports and tourism that they can cooperate with one another.

Nepal and Bhutan - both land-locked and both situated in almost the same politico/geographic reality in between India and China have many things in common on the basis of which bilateral relations can be strengthened. The people to people contacts between the two kingdoms have been going on since time immemorial and it is this bond of cultural and religious affinity that needs to be nurtured in the days ahead. One such interesting illustration of the intimate relations between the two kingdoms is evident from a paragraph of a famous memoir of Yab Ugyen Dorji, father of the four queens of Bhutan. In his memoir, "*Of Rainbows and Clouds*", written by HM Queen Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuk, Dorji recollects that during the restoration of *Sangchhoekar dzong* in Bhutan, the central idol of Guru Rimpoche on the first floor of the *Utse* was under the patronage of the queens themselves. The head and hands of the idols were refined by silversmiths in Bhutan and the brass work was done in Kathmandu closely supervised by his wife's uncle.

"As a predominantly Buddhist country, Bhutan sees many of its people going to Nepal and India on pilgrimage as many holy sites for Buddhists include Bodhgaya and Lumbini are in [these countries]. Bhutanese pilgrims maybe encouraged to visit these places so that appreciation for culture and history of another country is increased."²

However, this complicated issue of the refugees needs to be resolved without further delay. It will become a win-win situation for both the countries. Indecision and a deliberate attempt to buy time on the part of Thimpu with the hope of forever shelving this core issue might actually fan the flame of frustration among the refugees who are idle and situated near the strategically important chicken-neck area of India.³ If these idle minds out of utter impatience or exasperation join hands with the Maoists or with numerous outfits fighting for varied causes in North Eastern India, the whole sub-region will be up in flames. In such an unwanted scenario, Bhutan will find itself to blame for the sheer disregard to the complexity of the problem and indifference to the need towards swiftly arriving at a lasting solution. "While, there does not appear to be a danger of a full-blown conflict breaking out, between them [Bhutan and Nepal], the tensions that arise from the ethnic divide are a source of perennial concern."⁴ Nepal on the other hand must forge a thorough national consensus on this issue and deal with strength at the diplomatic level.

9.2. Conclusions:

Bhutanese refugee issue is an important ingredient of Nepal's foreign policy and has been a test for Nepal's international relations exercise. The self-isolationist policy adopted by successive Kings of Bhutan has not helped establish a mature, forward looking and robust relations with Nepal which by its sheer size, political system and history is bigger and more complex than Bhutan. But situated in between India and China and amidst the same types of geo-strategic challenges it is sad that Nepal and Bhutan have so comprehensively failed for over two decades to find an amicable solution to their bilateral problem. This study has assessed and identified a number of important aspects of the multi-ethnicity of Bhutan and the central ingredient of the

² Choden, Tashi. "Security Problems of Bhutan: Confidence Building Measures". *Confidence Building Measures and Security Cooperation in South Asia: Challenges in the New Century*, Ed. Mohammad Humayun Kabir. Dhaka: BISS, 2002. p. 179

³ "SOS from Kathmandu" *The Times of India*, 6 July 2004.

⁴ Nambiar, Satish. "Promoting Transparency and Cooperation in the Region: Role of Regional Research Institutions." *South Asian Security: Futures* Ed. Dipankar Banerjee. Colombo: RCSS. p. 153.

Lhotsampas in the society which was not appreciated by the Thimpu regime in 1990. The following have been found in the course of this study:

- Bhutan is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country with the Sarchops, Khengs, people and the ethnic Nepalese composing a mix of the existent demography. There can be disagreement on when they entered Bhutan but all international scholars of repute have categorically mentioned that the Nepalese have contributed significantly to the modernization of Bhutan under various Kings. Multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-religious nature of the country has been attempted to be cleared off using various pretexts such as the democratic movement of 1990. It is a multi-ethnic society in which the Khengs, Sarcops and Ngalops comprise as one sub-group and the Lhotsampas as the other. It was the duty of Thimpu to treat all its citizens fairly and with affection after all it were the Nepali speaking people that had contributed to the economic and infrastructural development of the country since the start of the first five year plan.

- It has been found that through cunning measures such as the Green Belt Proposal, Driglam Namza Code of Conduct, Citizenship Act, etc. Thimpu deliberately wanted the Lhotsampas to exit from the country. The 1990 people's movement was only an excuse.

- The Nepal government has made several costly mis-judgements in its handling of the refugee issue. There has never been a coherent strategy to deal with Bhutan. Instead, change of governments and regimes within Nepal has allowed Bhutan to buy time and shelve the problem citing political instability in Nepal.

- The third-country re-settlement option came as a surprise to Nepal and several motives behind this generous gesture from the U.S. and western countries have been analyzed in this study. However, it has a positive corollary because the refugees are settling in far-flung places like the U.S. and Australia and helping to disseminate their cause which will come in advantage in the longer term.

- India has special relations with Bhutan which has matured over the decades. Delhi prefers the monarchy in Bhutan because it is always easy to deal with one man in the helm especially as

regards to complicated hydro-power projects that supply energy to India. This is the reason why India does not want to interfere on the issue of the refugees as this will help Nepal's position.

- Internal political developments inside Bhutan in lieu of the enormous democratic upsurge in the Middle East points to a period of uncertainty and turmoil no matter how stable the Thimpu regime looks from outside. The formation and growing activities of the Bhutan Communist Party (Maoists) does not auger well either for Bhutan's regime or for India.

- Nepal and Bhutan need to overcome these differences soonest and focus on mutually beneficial areas such tourism, trade, people to people contacts and investment. We cannot allow the next generation of Nepalese and Bhutanese to nurture hostility towards each another.



The Kingdom of Bhutan



King Ugyen Wangchuk
(1907-1926)



King Jigme Wangchuk
(1926-1952)



King Jigme Dorji
(1956-1972)



King JigmeSinghe
(1972- abdication 2006)



King Jigme Khesar (2006-)



Chukha Project



Traffic Police Booth in Thimpu

GLOSSARY

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Ashi | : Princess |
| Dasho | : Formal title to Bhutanese bureaucrats or male members of the royal family |
| Dharma Raja | : Religious Head of the Dual Administrative System |
| Driglam-Namza | : Code of Conduct |
| Druk Gyalpo | : Kind of Bhutan |
| Druk-Yul | : Land of the dragon |
| Dzongdag | : District Administrator |
| Dzongkha | : District |
| Gho | : Drukpa dress of male |
| Gumba | : Buddhist monastery/ |
| Gyaltsen | : Finance Minister |
| Kasho | : Royal decree |
| Khajana | : Tax Revenue |
| Kira | : Drugpa dress for female |
| Kuensel | : Weekly newspaper of Bhutan |
| Lhengyal Shungtshog: | Cabinet |
| Lhotsampas | : People of Southern Bhutan/ethnic Nepalese |
| Losar | : Bhutanese / Tibetan New Year |
| Lyonpo | : Minister |
| Lhotsham Chicap | : Administrator of Southern districts |
| Lhengye Shungtsog | : Cabinet |

| | | |
|-------------|---|--|
| Ngolops | : | Rebels (title for the refugees) |
| Shungthrim | : | Capital punishment |
| Sarchops | : | People of East Bhutan |
| Tshogdu | : | National Assembly |
| Zangdopelri | : | Temple of Guru Rinpoche/Guru Padmasambhava |

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX-I

Treaty of Sinchula

On the 11th day of November, 1865

Treaty between His Excellency the Right Honourable Sir John Lawrence, G.C.B., K.S.I., Viceroy and Governor-General of Her Britannic Majesty's possessions in the East Indies, and the one part by Lieutenant Colonel Herbart Bruce, CB, by virtue of full powers to that effect vested in him by the Viceroy and Governor – General, and on the other part by Samdojey Deb Jimpey and Themseyrensey Donai according to full powers conferred on them by the Dhum and Deb Rajahs, 1865.

ARTICLE I There shall henceforth be perpetual peace and friendship between the British Government and the Government of Bhootan.

ARTICLE II Whereas in consequence of repeated aggressions of the Bhootan Government and of the refusal of that Government to afford satisfaction for those aggressions, and for their insulting treatment of the officers sent by His Excellency the Governor-General in Council for the purpose of procuring an amicable adjustment of differences existing between the two states, the British Government has been compelled to seize by an armed force the whole of the Doars and certain Hill Posts protecting the passes into Bhootan, and whereas the Bhootan Government has now expressed its regret for past misconduct and a desire for the establishment of friendly relations with the British Government, it is hereby agreed that the whole of the tract known as the Eighteen Doars, bordering on the districts of Rungpoor, Cooch Behar, and Assam, together with the Taloo of Ambaree Fallcottah and the Hill territory on the left bank of the Teesta up to such points as may be laid down by the British Commissioner appointed for the purpose is ceded by the Bhootan Government to the British Government forever.

ARTICLE III The Bhootan Government hereby agree to surrender all British subjects, as well as subjects of the Chief of Sikkim and Cooch Behar who are now

detained in Bhootan against their will, and to place no impediment in the way of the return of all or any of such persons into British territory.

ARTICLE IV In consideration of the cession by the Bhootan Government of the territories specified in Article II of this Treaty, and of the said Government having expressed its regret for past misconduct, and having hereby engaged for the future to restrain all evil disposed persons from committing crimes with in British territory or the territories of the Rajahs of Sikkim and Cooch Behar and to give prompt and full redress for all such crimes which may be committed in defiance of their commands, the British Government agree to make an annual allowance to the Government of Bhootan of a sum not exceeding fifty thousand rupees (Rupees 50,000) to be paid to officers not below the rank of Jungpen, who shall be deputed by the Government of Bhootan to receive the same. And it is further hereby agreed that the payments shall be made as specified below:

On the fulfillment by the Bhootan Government of the conditions of this Treaty Twenty Five Thousand Rupees (Rupees 25,000).

On the 10th January following the 1st payment, thirty five thousand rupees (Rupees 35,000)

On the 10th January following, forty-five thousand rupees (Rupees 45,000)

On every succeeding 10th January, fifty thousand rupees (Rupees 50,000)

APPENDIX - II

TREATY OF PUNAKHA

Whereas it is desirable to amend Articles IV and VIII of the Treaty concluded at Sinchula on the 11th day of November, 1865, corresponding with the Bhutia year Sing Lang, 24th day of the 9th month, between the British Government and the Government of Bhutan, the undermentioned amendments are agreed to on the one part by Mr. C. A. Bell, Political Officer in Sikkim, in virtue of full powers to that effect vested in him by the Right Honourable Sir Gilbert John Elliot-Murray-Kynynmound, P.C., G.M.S.I., G.M.I.E., G.C.M.G., Earl of Minto, Viceroy and Governor-General of India in council, and on the other part by His Highness Sir Ugyen Wangchuck, K.C.I.E., Maharaja of Bhutan.

The following addition has been made to Article IV. of the Sinchula Treaty of 1865.

"The British Government has increased the annual allowance to the Government of Bhutan from fifty thousand rupees (Rs. 50,000) to one hundred thousand rupees (Rs. 100,000) with effect from the 10th January, 1910."

Article VIII. of the Sinchula Treaty of 1865 has been revised and the revised Article runs as follows: –

"The British Government undertakes to exercise no interference in the internal administration of Bhutan. On its part, the Bhutanese Government agrees to be guided by the advice of the British Government in regard to its external relations. In the event of disputes with or causes of complaint against the Maharajas of Sikkim and Cooch Behar, such matters will be referred for arbitration to the British Government which will settle them in such manner as justice may require, and insist upon the observance of its decision by the Maharajas named."

Done in quadruplicate at Punakha, Bhutan, this eighth day of January in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and ten, corresponding with the Bhutia date, the 27th day of the 11th month of the Earth-Bird (Sa-ja) year.

C. A. Bell, Political officer (seal)
in Sikkim.

Seal of Political officer in
Sikkim.

Eighth January, nineteen
hundred and ten
(8 January, 1910).

Seal of Dharma Raja. [seal]

Seal of His Highness the
Maharaja of Bhutan. (seal)

Seal of Tatsang Lamas.
(seal)

Seal of Tongsa Penlop.
(seal)

Seal of Paro Penlop. (seal)

Seal of Zhung Dronyer.
(seal)

Seal of Timbu Jongpen.
(seal)

Seal of Punaka Jongpen.
(seal)

Seal of Wangdu Potang
Jongpen. (seal)

Seal of Taka Penlop. (seal)

Seal of Deb Zimpon. (seal)

MINTO,
Viceroy and Governor-
General of India.

This treaty was ratified by the Viceroy and Governor-General of India in
Council at Fort William, on the twenty-fourth day of March, A.D. one
thousand nine hundred and ten (24 March, 1910).

S. H. BUTLER,
Secretary to the Government of India,
Foreign Department

APPENDIX-III

INDO-BHUTAN TREATY -1949

The Government of India on the one part and His Highness the Druk Gyalpo 's Government on the other part, equally animated by the desire to regulate in a friendly manner and upon a solid and durable basis the state of affairs caused by the termination of the British Government 's authority in India, and to promote the foster the relations of friendship and neighbourliness so necessary for the well-being of their peoples, have resolved to concluded the following Treat, and have for this purpose, named their representatives, that is to say Sri Harishwar Dayal representing the Government of India, who has full powers to agree to the said Treat on behalf of the Government of India, and Deb Zimpon Sonam Tobgye Dorji, Yang-Lop Sonam, Chho-Zim Thondup, Rin-Zim Tandin and Ha Drung Jigmie Palden Dorji, representing the Government of His Highness the Druk Gyalpo, Maharaja of Bhutan, who have full powers to agree to the same on behalf of the Government of Bhutan.

Article 1: There shall be perpetual peace and friendship between the Government of India and the Government of Bhutan.

Article 2: The Government of India undertakes to exercise no interference in the internal administration of Bhutan. On its part the Government of Bhutan agrees to guide by the advice of the Government of India in regard to its external relations.

Article 3: In place of the compensation granted to the Government of Bhutan under Article 4 of the Treaty of Sinchula and enhanced by the Treaty of the eight day of January 1910 and the temporary subsidy of Rupees one lakh per annum granted in 1942, the Government of India

agrees to make an annual payment of Rupees five lakhs to the Government of Bhutan. And it is further hereby agreed that the said annual payment shall be made on the tenth day of January every year, the first payment being made on the tenth of January, 1950. This payment shall continue so long as this Treaty remains in force and its terms are duly observed.

Article 4: Further to mark the friendship existing and continuing between the said Governments, the Government of India shall, within one year from the date of

signature of this Treaty return to the Government of Bhutan about thirty-two square miles of territory in the area known as

Dewangiri. The Government of India shall appoint a competent officer or officers to mark out the area so returned to the Government of Bhutan.

Article 5: There shall, as therefore, be free trade and commerce between the territories of the Government of India and of the Government of Bhutan; and the Govt. of India agrees to grant the Government of Bhutan every facility for the carriage, by land and water, of its produce throughout the territory of the Government of India, including the right to use such forest roads as may be specified by mutual agreement from time to time.

Article 6: The Government of India agrees that the Government of Bhutan shall be free to import with the assistance and approval of the Government of India, from or through Indian into Bhutan, whatever arms, ammunition, machinery, warlike material or stores may be required or desired for the strength and welfare of Bhutan and that this arrangement shall hold good for all time as long as the Government of India is satisfied that the intentions of the Government of

Bhutan re friendly and that there is no danger to India from such importations. The Government of Bhutan, on the other hand, agrees that there shall be no export of such arms, ammunition, etc., across the frontier of Bhutan either by the Government of Bhutan or by private individuals.

Article 7: The Government of India and the Government of Bhutan agree that Bhutanese subjects residing in Indian territories shall have equal justice with Indian subjects, and that subjects residing in Bhutan shall have equal justice with the subjects of the Government of Bhutan.

Article 8 (1): The Government of India shall, on demand being duly made in writing by the Government of Bhutan, take proceedings in accordance with their provisions of the Indian Extraction Act 1903 (of which a copy shall be furnished to the Government of Bhutan), for the surrender of all Bhutanese subjects accused of any of the crimes specified in the first schedule of the said Act who may take refuge in India territory.

(2): The Government of Bhutan shall, on requisition being duly made by the Government of India, or by any officer authorized by the Government of India in this behalf, surrender any Indian subjects, or subjects of a foreign Power, whose

extradition may be required in pursuance of any agreement or arrangements made by the Government of India with the said Power, accused of any of the crimes, specified in the first schedule of Act XV of 1903, who may take refuge in the territory under the jurisdiction of the Government of Bhutan, and also any Bhutanese subjects who, after committing any of the crimes referred to in Indian territory, shall flee into Bhutan, on such evidence of their guilt being produced as shall satisfy the local court of the district in which the offence may have been committed.

Article 9: Any differences and disputes arising in the application or interpretation of this Treaty shall in first instance be settle by negotiation. If within three months of the start of negotiations no settlement is arrive at, then the matter shall be referred to the Arbitration of three arbitrators, who shall be nationals of either India or Bhutan, chosen in the following manner:

- (1) One person nominated by the Government of India;
- (2) One person nominated by the Government of Bhutan;
- (3) A Judge of the Federal Court, or of a High Court in India, to be chosen by the Government of Bhutan, who shall be Chairman.

The judgment of this Tribunal shall be final and executed without delay by either party.

Article 10: This treaty hall continues in force in perpetuity unless terminated or modified by mutual consents.

Done in duplicate at Darjeeling this eighth day of August, one thousand nine hundred and forty-nine, corresponding with the Bhutanese date the fifteenth day of the sixth month of the Earth-Bull Year.

Harishwar Dayal
Political Officer in Sikkim

Deb Zimpon Sonam Tobgay Dorji
Yang-Lop Sonam Chho-Zim Thondup
BHUTAN
Rin-Zim Tandin Ha Drung Jigmie Palden Dorji

INSTRUDMENTS OF RATIFICATION

Whereas a Treaty relating to the promotion of, and fostering the relations of friendship and neighbourliness

was signed at Darjeeling on the 8th day of August 1949 by representative of the Government of India and of the Government of His Highness the Druk Gyalpo, Maharaja of Bhutan, which Treaty is, word for, as follows:

The Government of India, having considered the Treaty aforesaid hereby confirms and rectify the same and undertake faithfully to perform and carry out all the stipulations therein contained.

In witness whereof this instrument of ratification is signed and sealed by the Governor- General of India.

Done at New Delhi, The 22 nd day of September, 1949.

C. Rajagopalachari, Governor-General of India

Whereas a Treaty relating to the promotion of, and fostering, relations of friendship and neighbourliness was signed at Darjeeling on the eighth day of August, 1949 by representatives of my Government and of the Government of India which Treaty is, word, a s follows:

My Government having considered the Treaty aforesaid, hereby confirm and ratify the same and undertake faithfully to perform and carry out all the stipulation herein contained. In witness is hereof I have signed this instrument of ratification and affixed hereto my seal. Done at Tongsa, the fifteenth day of September, 1949.

J. Wangchuk, Druk Gyalpo

APPENDIX-IV

INDIA-BHUTAN FRIENDSHIP TREATY - 2007

The Government of the Republic of India and the Government of the Kingdom of Bhutan: Reaffirming their respect for each other's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity; Recalling the historical relations that have existed between our two countries; Recognizing with deep satisfaction the manner in which these relations have evolved and matured over the years into a model of good neighbourly relations; Being fully committed to further strengthening this enduring and mutually beneficial relationship based on genuine goodwill and friendship, shared interests, and close understanding and cooperation; Desiring to clearly reflect this exemplary relationship as it stands today; And having decided, through mutual consent, to update the 1949 Treaty relating to the promotion of, and fostering the relations of friendship and neighbourliness between India and Bhutan; Have agreed as follows:

Article 1

There shall be perpetual peace and friendship between India and Bhutan.

Article 2

In keeping with the abiding ties of close friendship and cooperation between Bhutan and India, the Government of the Kingdom of Bhutan and the Government of the Republic of India shall cooperate closely with each other on issues relating to their national interests. Neither Government shall allow the use of its territory for activities harmful to the national security and interest of the other.

Article 3

There shall, as heretofore, be free trade and commerce between the territories of the Government of Bhutan and the Government of India. Both the Governments shall provide full cooperation and assistance to each other in the matter of trade and commerce.

Article 4

The Government of India agrees that the Government of Bhutan shall be free to import, from or through India into Bhutan, whatever arms, ammunition, machinery, warlike material or stores as may be required or desired for the strength and welfare of Bhutan, and that this arrangement shall hold good for all time as long as the Government of India is satisfied that the intentions of the Government of Bhutan are friendly and that there is no danger to India from such importations. The Government of Bhutan agrees that there shall be no export of such arms, ammunition and materials outside Bhutan either by the Government of Bhutan or by private individuals.

Article 5

The Government of Bhutan and the Government of India agree that Bhutanese subjects residing in Indian territories shall have equal justice with Indian subjects, and that Indian subjects residing in Bhutan shall have equal justice with the subjects of the Government of Bhutan.

Article 6

The extradition of persons wanted by either state for crimes and for unlawful activities affecting their security shall be in keeping with the extradition agreements between the two countries.

Article 7

The Government of Bhutan and the Government of India agree to promote cultural exchanges and cooperation between the two countries. These shall be extended to such areas as education, health, sports, science and technology.

Article 8

The Government of Bhutan and the Government of India agree to continue to consolidate and expand their economic cooperation for mutual and longterm benefit.

Article 9

Any differences and disputes arising in the interpretation and application of this Treaty shall be settled bilaterally by negotiations in a spirit of trust and understanding in consonance with the historically close ties of friendship and mutually beneficial cooperation that form the bedrock of Bhutan-India relations.

Article 10

This Treaty shall come into force upon the exchange of Instruments of Ratification by the two Governments which shall take place in Thimphu within one month of the signing of this Treaty. The Treaty shall continue in force in perpetuity unless terminated or modified by mutual consent.

In witness whereof, the undersigned being duly authorized thereto by their respective Governments, have signed this Treaty.

Done at New Delhi on the Eighth Day of February Two Thousand and Seven, in two originals each in Hindi, Dzongkha and English languages, each text being equally authentic. However, in case of difference, the English text shall prevail.

For the Government of

The Republic of India

Sd/-

(Pranab Mukherjee)

Minister of External Affairs

For the Government of

the Kingdom of Bhutan

Sd/-

(H.R.H.Trongsa Penlop

Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck)

The Crown Prince of Bhutan

APPENDIX V

INTERVIEWS AND INTERACTION

- 1) Ambassador Dr. Bhekh Bahadur Thapa, former ambassador to India and Bhutan
- 2) Ambassador Kedar Bhakta Shrestha, former foreign secretary
- 3) Ambassador Dr. Shambhu Ram Simkhada, former ambassador to United Nations, Geneva
- 4) Ambassador Dr. Bishnu Hari Nepal, former ambassador to Japan
- 5) Prof. Mohan Prasad Lohani, former Executive Director, Institute of Foreign Affairs
- 6) Ambassador Leela Prasad Sharma, former Joint Secretary (SAARC), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nepal Government
- 7) Maj. Gen. (retd.) Dipankar Banerjee, Mentor, Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, New Delhi
- 8) Maj. Gen. (retd.) Ramesh Chopra, senior strategic analyst, New Delhi
- 9) Lt. Gen. (retd.) Sadip Shah, Nepal Army
- 10) Keshav Poudel, Editor, New Spotlight newsmagazine
- 11) Tashi Tshering, Head Monk, Thrangu Tashi Yangste Monastery, Boudha, Kathmandu
- 12) Mingmar Sherpa, Himalayan Health and Education, Solukhumbu.

APPENDIX VI

QUESTIONNAIRE

Name of Researcher:

Nishchal N. Pandey

1.1. S.No.

1.2. Name (Optional)

1.3. Profession:

1.4. Date:

2) What in your opinion were the main reasons behind the massive Bhutanese refugee exodus of 1991?

3) Why do you think the Bhutanese authorities treated the Lhotsampas as foreigners?

4) What is the basis of the closeness of relations between Bhutan and India and why hasn't Nepal been able to use India's good offices to resolve the issue?

5) What has been the key reasons behind the diplomatic failures in repatriating the refugees?

6) Why do you think the U.S. and other countries decided to re-settle the Bhutanese refugees in their own countries?

7) Please give your personal experiences with regards to dealing with Bhutan in the past.