

BHUTANESE REFUGEE PROBLEM AND MULTI-TRACK APPROACH OF NEPALESE DIPLOMACY

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Introduction :

The problem of the refugees and statelessness is among the most complex issues before the world community today. Refugee problem has become truly global and multi-dimensional and no region nor continent lacks refugees. The refugee problem is compact with humanitarian as well as political issues. The twentieth century has been notable for the intensity of refugee movement and problem attached therewith. The world's official refugee population has risen to 23 million people from 15 million at the beginning of the decade (Kane, 1995: 23). In the 1990s, more people are moving away from their homes and countries than ever before in history. Unprecedented numbers of people are on the move worldwide and changing conditions are likely to drive the numbers even higher. In the theoretical studies of refugee phenomenon, six broad causal factors have been identified responsible for creating refugees. They are : (a) Anti-colonies world and self determination movements, (b) International conflicts, (c) Revolutions, *cups* and regime changes, (d) Ethnic, communal and religious conflicts, (e) Creation and restructuring of state boundaries and (f) Population transfers (Muni and Baral, 1996 : 9).

Thus, International armed conflicts, political turbulence, racial, ideological differences in general and the gross violations of basic human rights particularly in the third countries have led to refugee movements and mass displacements. Racial discrimination and xenophobia which were things of the past have gained new impetus. Similarly the post-cold war era has pushed South Asia into a Whirlpool of refugee problem, an embarrassing outcome of ethnic conflict. Generally three broad categories of refugee generating factors in South Asia may be identified. In the first place, the breakdown of colonial rule and rationalization of some of the colonial legacies created refugee flows. The second category of factors responsible for generating refugees in South Asia is related to state and national-building processes which precipitated not only political, ethnic and religious conflicts but also created economic and environmental conditions enforcing people to migrate within or outside their respective countries. The third category of refugee generating

factors relate to the developments outside the region and the flow of extra regional refugees. So far such refugees have come from Tibet, Afghanistan and Burma (Muni and Baral, 1996 : 9-17). According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), South Asia is still beset with serious refugee crisis, and each one is tougher to handle than the other. With more than a tenth of the world's 23 million refugees living in their countries, the region is finding it more and more difficult to shelter of to take back those still escaping political and sectarian troubles in their homeland, (UNHCR, 1997 : 5) No country in the region has ratified the two main international refugee protection instruments, the 1951 global treaty on refugees and the 1967 protocol instruments to the status of Refugees. Different refugee groups or individuals are often treated differently. The challenge is how to manage the refugee movements so as to balance fairly the rights of refugees as well as the interest of state from humanitarian ground. Since the problem of economic migrants and political refugees is unique to South Asia, the sub-continent stands out as a region that has been unable to find a solution to it. Yet, the political leader in the region have not set the question of a refugee law at all. South Asian nations are unveiling to have refugee laws "because their refugee policy is based on political solutions reached through bilateral negotiation between the host country and the country of origin". The refugees therefore, have no guarantee of protection in the country they are sheltering in either.

Bhutanese refugees in Nepal represent a problem similar with many of the least developed countries of the world. Whereas refugees from such countries as Somalia, Afghanistan and Sudan were victims of armed conflict, refugees from Bhutan were forced to leave their homeland not because of civil war or foreign intervention but because of the policy of ethnic cleansing of the Royal Government of Bhutan. Though, Nepal has not endorsed the UN convention on refugees, the country has no other obligations than moral and humanitarian feelings to provide refuge, goods and services to the victims. Besides, the problem of refugees is not new phenomena in the political history of Nepal. Since long, this small Himalayan Kingdom has witnessed numerous instances of refugees seeking shelter jointly and individually. In the past, refugees were not considered as a problem, they were treated as guests and in some instances kings princes and statesmen felt proud to grant them asylum. But it has a different issue in the modern socio-political context. These refugees are not only regarded problematic but actually they are challenges of human civilization which require an appropriate and well managed international response based on International solidarity and burden sharing. The same sounds true in

the case of Bhutanese refugees in Nepal too. Nearly, a hundred thousand Bhutanese refugees are cramped in eight different camps in Eastern Nepal run by UNHCR. These refugees are passing their painful days in the hutments of refugee camps with faint hope to go back to their homeland safely and respectfully. Above all, the influx of Bhutanese refugees in this country has created genuine problem. The acid test of Nepal's diplomacy as a refugee receiving country has reached its peak with this Bhutanese refugee issue. This is the first major foreign policy challenge faced by democratically elected governments of Nepal ever since 1990s. HMG of Nepal has therefore, trying to resolve the Bhutanese refugee problem peacefully and diplomatically with multi-track approach. The purpose of this article is to explore and analyse this multi-track approach of Nepalese diplomacy to resolve the problem of Bhutanese refugees.

Genesis of Refugee Problem :

Bhutan, a small Himalayan Kingdom with the population of about 6,00,000 is an ethnic and cultural mosaic. It has been dominated by the Buddhist Drukpas. The southern Bhutanese, mostly of Nepali origin who migrated from India and Nepal over the years, not only lived under restrictions of movement and resident, but also were denied due share in the political and economic decision making of the kingdom. This was mainly due to the fears of the dominant Drukpa community that demographic expansion of Nepalese would eventually lead to their marginalisation within the kingdom. The conditions of the Southern Bhutanese of Nepali origin, further deteriorated when rigorous policies of Bhutanisation through the imposition of cultural and dress code (Driglam-namza) as well as citizenship qualifications, were carried out in 1988. Repressive implementation of those policies precipitated violent reactions, conflict and refugees (Sinna, 191). Ethnic conflict in southern Bhutan also carries political overtones, where the Nepali resistance besides demanding protection or their human rights, also claim to be struggling for the establishment of democracy in Bhutan (Dhakal and Strawn, 1994). More than 1,30,000 refugees have left Bhutan to seek asylum outside as a result of this conflict. Most of them approximately 1,00,000 have gone to eastern Nepal where they are kept in camps supported by the United Nations High Commission for Refugee (UNHCR). Almost 25,000 to 30,000 Nepalese of Bhutan have taken refuge in Bengal and Assam of India. The present refugee condition originated from the Bhutanese state government and society and its form because violent frightening even innocent citizens to flee their own country. It is alleged that the *Lhotsampas* the Bhutanese name for their citizens of Nepali

origin, were forced to leave following the Royal Bhutanese government's decision to intensify the campaign of 'one people, one Nation' imposing the language of Tibetan origin-*Dzongkha* and the *Drukpas*. The immediate cause of the conflict was the implementation of the 1985 Citizenship Act which adopts 1958 as the cut off year, which means those Nepali residing in Bhutan, would therefore be deprived of citizenship certificate (Baral, 1994 : 155). Obsessed with the victory of democratic forces over authoritarian regimes all over the world in general and Nepal in particular, Bhutan's absolute monarch foresaw a serious threat to his regime if the simmering human rights and democratic movement was not nipped in bud. To secure their ruling position unthreatened, the Druk government adopted a "ethnic cleansing policy" and duly implemented the policy. The Thimpu rulers had fear in their heart that they may be overthrown in case the country started functioning with democratic norms. Keeping this fear in mind, they voiced a slogan "One Nation, One People". The Druk government adopted various measures, such as-The Bhutan Citizenship Act 1985, the Bhutan Marriage Act 1980, *Driglam Namzha* (Code of Conduct), Green Belt Policy, No objection certificate and voluntary leaving certificate in order to implement their ethnic and culture cleansing policy (ICJ Nepal section, 1993:10). This policy of ethnic division erupted in demonstrations by about 60-70.00 Bhutanese citizens of Nepalese origin demanding human rights and democracy. The government termed it anti-national and resorted to military tactics. Political repression and atrocities had become regular features since then. Arbitrary arrest and detention without trials, torture, rape, murder, confiscation of lands, properties and citizenship documents, plunder, genocide, arson, humiliation, abuse, flogging and economic extortion etc. were synonymous with the Royal Government of Bhutan. It could thus be summarised that the origins of the ethnic conflict within Bhutan and refugee conditions in Nepal are rooted in language and dress regulations in addition to the numerous legal and political decisions made by the state for safeguarding the interest of the 'indigenous' community patronised by the ruler.

Serious Concern :

The 1951 United Nations Convention defines "a refugee as a person who had fled their community because of well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion" (UNHCR:1951). This statement clearly signifies that refugees are deprived of basic rights of statehood and are virtually "stateless" persons. Statelessness is a

condition recognised both by municipal law and international law. It has, indeed, become, in recent years, a major problem of international law, the very urgency and acuteness of which prompted the assertion of article 15 in the universal Declaration of human rights of December, 1948, that "everyone has the right to a nationality" and that 'no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality'. It is a condition which not only means great hardship and lacks of security for individual, but involves the existence of a vast gap in the application of international law (Starke, 1994:346). Nepal remains the only window for the world community to observe the sad plight of the Bhutanese people of Nepali origin. Outside Nepal the world does not know they are there. The few have heard of them are told that they are migrants from the north east of India. The illegal immigrants were finally deported, may be a few are Bhutanese who have left voluntarily receiving generous compensation from the Thimpu government, unlike the well published incidents ethnic cleansing in Bosnia and Rawanda, the Bhutani transgression remains shielded from worldview for a number of reasons. In this connection, K.M. Dixit rightly observes, "The rulers of Bhutan know the world well. They are astute and use every available advantage : The remoteness of their country, manilable media, the weakness of all outsiders for last remaining *Shangrilas* and the blessing of a gaint southern neighbour that-oblingly turns a blind eye" (Dixit, 1992:7). The fate of the refugees and the legitimacy of their demands are therefore, further complicated with the Royal Bhutanese governments refusal to recognise them as Bhutanese citizens, asserting that only a smaller number could legitimately be resettled in Bhutan. The rest are illegal economic immigrants, some of whom have never set foot in Bhutan and are merely taking advantage of UNHCR's generosity, the government claims. Nevertheless, the dissidents and the Nepal government, however, insist that all or very nearly all of the people in the camps are genuine Bhutanese refugees. This conflicting stances of Nepal Bhutan and the dissidents, and Bhutan's reluctance to deal with the issue have made negotiation of a solution difficult. However it is now a humanitarian obligation as well as being in our national interest, to find an early and honourable solution to the refugee problem. His Majesty's Government of Nepal therefore have taken various steps to resolve the problem and has been trying through various diplomatic means to persuade Bhutan to take the refugees back.

Nepal's Efforts to Resolve the Problem :

The large number of Bhutanese refugees for a developing country like Nepal is considerably a big burden. The mass influx of refugees

made the Nepalese authority to consider the problem if it could be resolved through its bilateral, trialtaral and multilateral efforts. Though, ethnic cleansing and refugee crisis is a global phenomena, refugees even under exceptionally critical circumstances have been able to go home through international mediation and negotiation. So far as the Bhutanese refugees issues are concerned they are evidently genuine Bhutanese nationals. Their intention to return to their country is vital and is very much protected by all international treaties and practices. As a signatory country of all major international human rights convention and as a country dedicated to the norms of democracy. Nepal is trying its best to resolve the problem as soon as possible so that the Bhutanese refugees could rehabilitate in their country safely and with dignity.

The first batch of refugees from Bhutan entered Nepal December 1990. At present there are more than one hundred thousand refugees quartered in eight different camps in two districts i.e. Jhapa and Morang of eastern Nepal. The problem of Bhutanese refugees in Nepal by its very nature is completely different, as the refugees crossed the international frontiers and sought asylum in a third country which does not share a contiguous border with Bhutan. They were deliberately allowed to pass through the narrow Indian corridor into Nepal. That is why the issue has reached crescend into what it has become now. The refugees began pouring into Nepal at a time when the Nepalese government was a half hearted body of squabbling and infighting lot. There was no sense of permanence in the Nepalese government. The dye was cast from the very begining when the fledgling constitutional mohnrhcic democracy in Nepal was clearly seen as no match at all for the cemented autocratic monarchy in Bhutans (Karthak, 1996:4). Besides the frequent changing of guard in Nepal was got into tune with Dawa Tshering ever long serving foreign minister in the world, who had virtually no contending counterpart in the bureaucracy of Nepal. In a talk to a senior international civil servant about the Bhutanese refugee problem, Dawa plainly stated, "you know every time I have to deal with a new face from Nepal to discuss the refugee problem. How is it possible to arrive at a quick understanding if there is no continuity in the dialogues ?" (The Kathmandu Post, 1993:6:18). Dawa certainly has a point. But in the absence of a regular foreign minister (1991-1994) and assigning of a new man, the continuity was indeed disturbed.

Talks with Bhutan :

To this day, the government of Bhutan and Nepal have already held seven rounds of talks to negotiate and resolve the problems of

Bhutanese refugee crisis. After the constant efforts Bhutan agree to establish a joint ministerial commission to examine and identify genuine Bhutanese among the refugees in the camps. On October 7, 1993, Nepal and Bhutan had bilaterally agreed to categorise the people in the refugee camps in eastern Nepal and said "the categorization will be made in the camps on the basis of the ground mentioned below :

1. Bonafide Bhutanese who have been evicted forcefully, 2. Bhutanese who emigrated 3. Non Bhutanese people and 4. Bhutanese who have committed criminal acts." This emerged out at the meeting of ministerial joint committee held in Kathmandu (The Rising Nepal, October 7, 1993). According to a joint press release issued in October 7, 1993, the mechanism of the verification was to determine at the next ministerial joint committee meet in Thimpu on February, 1994. But the way the refugees were placed into various categories has raised doubts about the very purpose. During the talks, the Nepali side did not suspect the designs behind categorization proposal put forth by the Druk rulers. But the fact remains that Thimpu has achieved what it wanted. The first category includes all those bonafide Bhutanese citizens who now been forcibly evicted. This category was created to draw a distinction between the so called 'emigrants' who were said to have left the kingdom voluntarily and those who were evicted forcibly. While this category conforms incidence of forced evictions it also establishes voluntary emigration which does not exist at all in reality. The second category consists of the bonafide Bhutanese citizens who have emigrated voluntarily. One fails to understand why the Bhutanese citizens should choose to immigrate only after 1990 and not earlier? Normally, people opt for emigration when they see better prospects of income and employment in another country. Why would Bhutanese citizens emigrate to live in refugee huts? Obviously the socio-political atmosphere in Bhutan has not been congenial to a normal living especially for southern Bhutanese in the last years (Pradhan, 1994:11). The largest chunk of refugees fall under this category. If this category is acceptable, then their chances of returning to Bhutan is dim. Bhutanese laws clearly state that while a person has the right to emigrate and leave the country once he does he forfeits his citizen. The third category comprises non-Bhutanese posing as Bhutanese refugees. The fourth category includes Bhutanese citizens who have committed criminal acts are hiding in the camps. It would not be so easy to final out the definition of criminal in this context. If one is follow the Bhutanese laws, then anyone who speaks against the king or oppose the government is regarded as criminal. A human right activist opines, in principle, the classification of refugees in various categories is a wrong step. Refugees are not born

they are created by individuals and state. People do not leave their countries in hordes especially women and children unless compelled by unbearable circumstances. The only category applicable to the Bhutanese refugees is that they are stateless and political victims of the racial Thimpu government, and they need protection of the international community." (The Kathmandu Post, January : 1994). Agreeing these "categorization" tactics, Nepal now is between the proverbial "deep sea and the devil". It can neither back out from the already acceptal "Categorization" in keeping with the Bhutanese proposal nor can it even urge on Thimpu to take back at least those that have been recognised, even by the UNHCR as being "genuine" refugees. Thus it is clear that the novice and naive Nepalese negotiators fell headlong into a trap laid by the suave and shrewd Bhutanese counterparts by agreeing to the latter's proposal of categorizing the refugees. What lead Nepalese negotiators to agree to the caregorization politics as such? A negotiator from the Nepalese side, opines "If you go with a closed mind and say that my stand is the only stand there is hardly any margin for talks. For us that makes it all the important. We have just taken that into account, subject to verification. The categorization is not definitive, it is subject to verification. When we say 'subject to verification' then you can very clearly state that we haven't given in we haven't lost a position "(Banstola, 1993:23) But a keen observer of refuge opines", What ever finesse has outwitted and outmanoeuvered the Nepali team. The Nepali skill of negotiation is incoherent and unclear and in each stage of negotiation its position has been compromised. On the contrary the stub born Bhutanese attitude yielded favourable result to it when both sides agreed to the categorization of the people residing in the camps "(Baral, 1996:167). However the decision of the joint ministerial committee to classify the refugees into four categories has turned out to be a major obstacle in the resolution of the problem.

In the initial stage of the problem, an all-parly meeting was held on 7 July 1992, which agreed to a three pronged starategy : PM Koirala was to continue to try to make direct contact with Thimpu, if that failed to seek the good offices of India, and if that too fails, to internatinalise the issue. Nepal and Bhutan have therefore, concluded the seventh round of inconclusive talks on refugee repatriation. On failing to "harmonise" the posititon of the two countries on the different refugee categories, the two countries on the different refugee categories, the two side had deliberately postponed the problem. The sides tried to discuss the "harmonization" but was dead lock. Initially, Bhutan was not even prepared to accept the term 'refugee' intending to dismiss

them as displaced persons or economic migrants. Bhutan later accepted the term with great reluctance, but consistently insisted on the categorization of refugees. This has been viewed by some as a tactical device to buy time for stalling the refugee issue as long as it can. But in words, Dawa Tsering, foreign minister of Bhutan, reiterates. "The Royal Government is convinced that given the political will, it will be possible to resolve the problem through the ongoing bilateral process, the Joint ministerial committee talks are making steady progress and in less than a year have already reached a very crucial stage. As such, it would be better to resolve the problem through mutual understanding and dialogue" (Himal, 1994:24). Clearly it implies to Thimpu's tactics has been sound conciliatory and ready-to-act, but then to let the matter languish. However, Nepal has since long, initiated various rounds of talks with Bhutanese official through diplomatic channels. But these talks have remained inconclusive. Hence, Nepal has little options to resolve the problem, among which includes requesting India's help.

India and Bhutanese Refugee Problem :

India, which has "special relations" with Bhutan and holds the key that could untangle the refugee imbroglio once and for all has not been very forthcoming to assist the two smaller neighbours to expedite the process. Needless to say that no refugee from Bhutan can enter Nepalese territory without using India as transit. How India be a silent watcher when there is a growing exodus of such refugees ? This is where India's involvement becomes relevant. The conspicuous Indian indifference to the refugee issue obviously encourage Bhutan to depopulate the Lhotshampa from the Southern districts. The 1949 Treaty between India and Bhutan (Article-2) obligates Bhutan to be 'guided by the advice of the Government of India in regard to its external relation" (Baral, 1996:167). To resolve the refugee problem Bhutan did not want the third party or third person to involve in the negotiations proposed by Nepal but have agreed to opt for such a mediation if the bilateral approach failed. Any third party involvement for Bhutan is tantamount to internationalization of the issue on the refugee problem. India preferred 1. bilateral talks between Kathmandu and Thimpu to resolve the problem, 2. It did not want to be a party to the talks, Thus ruling out trilateral talks on the matter, 3. India was against internationalizing the issue right from the beginning, and has even covertly warned Nepal against doing so (The Kathmandu Post, 1995:4). Regarding the mediation of India, ex-foreign secretary, J.N. Dixit said, "we are disinclined, because we are tired wherever we have gone in with the desire to help, we have always been criticized. When Tribbuvan came

to India and we restored his monarchical power, that was not appreciated, we go to the preserve the integrity of Srilanka and immediately, we are labelled interventionist. We rescue the maldives from insurguts and the rest of the region is antagonised. Bhutan has contacts all over. The China card, the potential access to Tibet, is still there. Because of our large size, regardless of rationale, it tend to get interpreted as a facet of hegemonism Prime Minister has told Nepal, that the only advice he can give is to talk and settle the issue in a reasonable manner" (Himal 1994:15). To this day, India's ultimate aims in Bhutan are unclear, simply because it is difficult to analyse that Delhi perceives as advantageous and disadvantageous in framing its long term policy goals for Bhutan. The problem is either that the refugee issue is viewed as a small or bilateral issue between Bhutan and Nepal, requiring India to be concerned with long-term resource management or long term political stability in Bhutan vis-a-vis its own design for the reason (Dhakal and Strawn, 1994:522). To a great extent, India's goals determine what will happen to the refugees and Bhutan. Nepal's persuasion to India to help resolve the problem is always a positive factor, though it is not necessary the factor should be relationship between Bhutan and Nepal improve. Moreover in the given context, India in the middle and having its own short and longterm assessment of the situation no hawkish postures and activities would help resolve the problem (Baral, 1994:4). The involvement of India in a trilateral framework is increasingly becoming imperative for the repatriation of the refugees. Having a credential of a democratic country, India is in claustrophobic position on the Bhutanese problem in view of its own strategic and securing calculations and of Bhutan's future status as a traditional monarchy. Though it may be desirable to involve India in the talks, there is a likely danger that it may broker a solution in its own interests at the cost of both Nepal and Bhutan.

Internationalization of the Refugee Issue :

The refugee crisis has certainly put Nepal in a vulnerable position. Since the chances of solving the crisis through bilateral talks is not only slim but pointless and India is against trilateral talks, internationalizing the issue is the only option open to Nepal. However, Nepal is deliberately internationalizing the issue so as to pressure Bhutan to come to an agreement that will rehabilitate the refugees, their homeland. But on the international front, Bhutan is spending considerable resources to expand and strengthen its UN missions in New York and Geneva and making strenuous efforts to sell its side of the story in world capitals. On the otherhand, Nepal's efforts to

internationalize the issue is limited to some statements made by the permanent representatives in the UN and Human right forums in Venice and Geneva. This process was initiated by Prime Minister G.P. Koirala meeting with foreign amnassadors in Kathmandu in 1993. On the otherhand, Bhutan succeeded in cultivating India, strengthened its public relations compaigns portraying the refugees as greedy immigrants subversive elements out to overwhelm the indigenous people of a small and peaceful country (Rana, 1993:7). We shall therefore, have to check Bhutan on all those fronts if we want them to negotiate in good faith.

In the absence of resident embassies in Thimpu and the extremely controlled access to malleable media, the aid agencies are the world's ears and eyes to Bhutan, unfortunately, they are as good as deaf and blind. Michael Hutt of SOAS, who organised the international conference on the Bhutan crisis observes, when he say "Bhutan has retained the loyalty of a select band of foreign academics who seem to swallow the 'voluntary emigration', and 'cultural swamping' arguments whole, apparently without question. These academics are fiercely protective of Bhutan, and constitute an important factor affecting Bhutan's Judgement of the validity of its case (Himal, 1992:27). The Thimpu Government shames every other south Asian government in its ability to charm and manipulate the media. Bhutan has only three resident embassies, in India, Bangladesh and Kuwait, and two missions at the United Nations, in New York and Geneva. In total, she has diplomatic relations with only eighteen countries. But Bhutan is credited for having a very efficient foreign office, which is able to make optimum use of diplomacy, public relations and personal contact to convince the world of its point of view. This is seen in stark contrast to Nepal's inability to do the same. These lacks of "holistic view" on Bhutanese refugee problem in foreign services of Nepal to mobilize the international support.

On the other hand, Appeal Movement Coordinating Council of Bhutan (AMCC) appealed to the UN commission, the international community through the diplomatic missions based in New Delhi and Kathmandu to take practical measures on the situation and play a mediating role in the resolution of the long standing Bhutanese refugee crisis (The Kathmandu Post, April 10, 1997). The European union, therefore, expressed its concern in the 53 UN commission on Human Rights meeting in Geneva, Switzerland on the plight of the Bhutanese refugees languishing in the UNHCR administered camps in Nepal and called the governments of Bhutan and Nepal to find a fair and everlasting solution to the refugee problem. This was the first time the European government have ever taken to formally interest to formally express its concern about the Bhutanese refugees in the UN forum since Bhutanese

refugees began to pour into camps in Nepal from early 1990s. In March 1996 the European parliament had adopted a resolution expressing its serious concern on the violation of fundamental human rights in Bhutan and the continued refugee crisis. However, the internationalization of the Bhutanese crisis has gained momentum, but credit for this will not only goes to Nepal but also to dissidents, leaders of democratic movement in Bhutan and refugees themselves.

Conclusion :

The issue of Bhutanese refugees does not appear anywhere near solution. Rounds of bilateral talks between the Nepalese and Bhutanese governments have turned dead lock. Bhutani officials have successfully been evading the real issue using the talks only to show international observers that they are willing to negotiate the refugee problems. The Nepali governments have not been able to concentrate on the problem of refugees. Unfortunately, the Bhutanese refugee issue has frequently remained peripheral in Nepali politics. The Bhutanese government has been benefited from this lack of focus and persistence in the governments policy. As a matter of fact the Bhutanese government has been successfully in creating a false perception that Bhutan's pristine. "Shangri-La" environment and "puritan". Bhuddhist traditions are about to be over run by the largely land hunger Nepal; which are not Bhutanese at all but come from all over including Nepal and India.

This problem could have been sorted out long time back if India wanted, but her present attitude in sorting out the refugee problem does not seem to be of any help. India's rejection of Nepal's plea for mediation seemed to some extent, encouraged the Bhutanese authorities in taking harsh decisions towards refugee crisis. As per international law on refugees, it was India's responsibility to grant them asylum since it was the country of first asylum but she did not do so. Instead, India arrested Bhutanese peace marchers and sent them back to refugee camps in Jhapa. The Nepalese side has been relying on the good will of the Bhutanese government and hoping for the good offices of India to settle the problem. The seven rounds of fruitless bilateral talks have only given Bhutan the opportunity to buy time and to continue violations of human rights through ethnic cleansing. Devious game plans such as the categorization to refugees, which meant that most refugees would stay put in the country of asylum were tried by Bhutan. This has actually led to the stalling of the seventh rounds of talks on the issues.

The adverse implications of Bhutanese refugees in Nepal are not only limited to economic, social and environmental degradation. It has also developed a serious dispropertion in our foreign policy and

diplomacy pertaining to the resolution of the Bhutanese refugee issue has been proved to be unproductive. This crisis has definitely led Nepal to a vulnerable position. Dependent entirely on their good will, Bhutan knows our handicaps. We would presumably use this genuinely humanitarian problem to enlist the support of neighbouring India, with whom we have warm bilateral relations. Bhutan may also be worried that, Nepal may mobilise the support of the international community in favour of an honourable and early repatriation of the refugees. Bhutan understands this reality and has been active on all important fronts. We shall therefore, have to check Bhutan on all these fronts if we want them to negotiate in good faith. Our efforts should therefore be geared towards offensive diplomatic moves. But we should not be influenced by any emotive slogans and pressures in our dealings. Similarly Nepal should not expect India's help in every steps in resolving this issue, because there is a likely danger that it may break a solution in its own interests at the cost of both Nepal and Bhutan. We must therefore, continue to mobilize international support in favour of the refugees and their right to return home. We must also present the refugee case to those, who have been extending economic and technical assistance to Bhutan. If Nepal succeeded in getting the world community, especially human rights organizations and international bodies like the United Nations and its specialized agencies to pressure Bhutan, it might compel India to enter the talks, the best possible chances for a negotiational solution to the crisis. A national consensus at home and a well coordinated a multi-track approach abroad is essential for an early, honourable and durable settlement of this problem.

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