

**DELHI AS REFUGE: THE REHABILITATION
OF PARTITION REFUGEES, 1947-1956**

*Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
award of the degree of*

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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2007



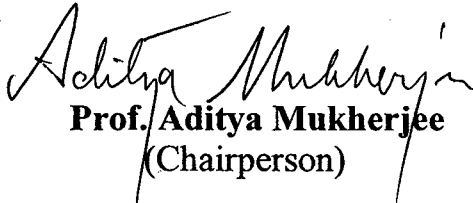
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Dated: 27/07/2007

CERTIFICATE

This dissertation entitled “**DELHI AS REFUGE: THE REHABILITATION OF PARTITION REFUGEES, 1947-1956**” is submitted by **AMITA KUMARI** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY** of this University. This dissertation has not been submitted in part or in full for any other degree or diploma of this university or any other university to the best of our knowledge.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to record my sincerest gratitude to my Supervisor, Dr. Indivar Kamtekar, for his encouragement, support and valuable guidance. I am also grateful to Dr. Radhika Singha for sparing her time to discuss my dissertation and boosting my morale when I was feeling very low.

I would like to extend my thanks to the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library and the Delhi Archives for their co-operation in my endeavour.

This dissertation would not have been complete without the generous support of all the refugees who I interviewed. I am also grateful to Dr. Gurdip Sidhu who shared his experiences as a refugee in Delhi and sent me e-mails to provide information related to my topic.

I would like to thank my friends, Malvika, Surabhi, Shilpa, Mamta and Jaya for their concern and constant support throughout the process of completing this work. I am indebted to Ipshita and Beryl for taking time to edit my chapters. Finally, I would like to thank Ratnesh for his untiring support in the last two years. He has contributed to my work in more ways than he realises.

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents. Their love, support and encouragement have been essential to the completion of this work. I would like to thank my brother for his constant moral support. His confidence in me always inspired me to give my best.

Amita Kumari

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

D. A: Delhi Archives

EPW: Economic and Political Weekly

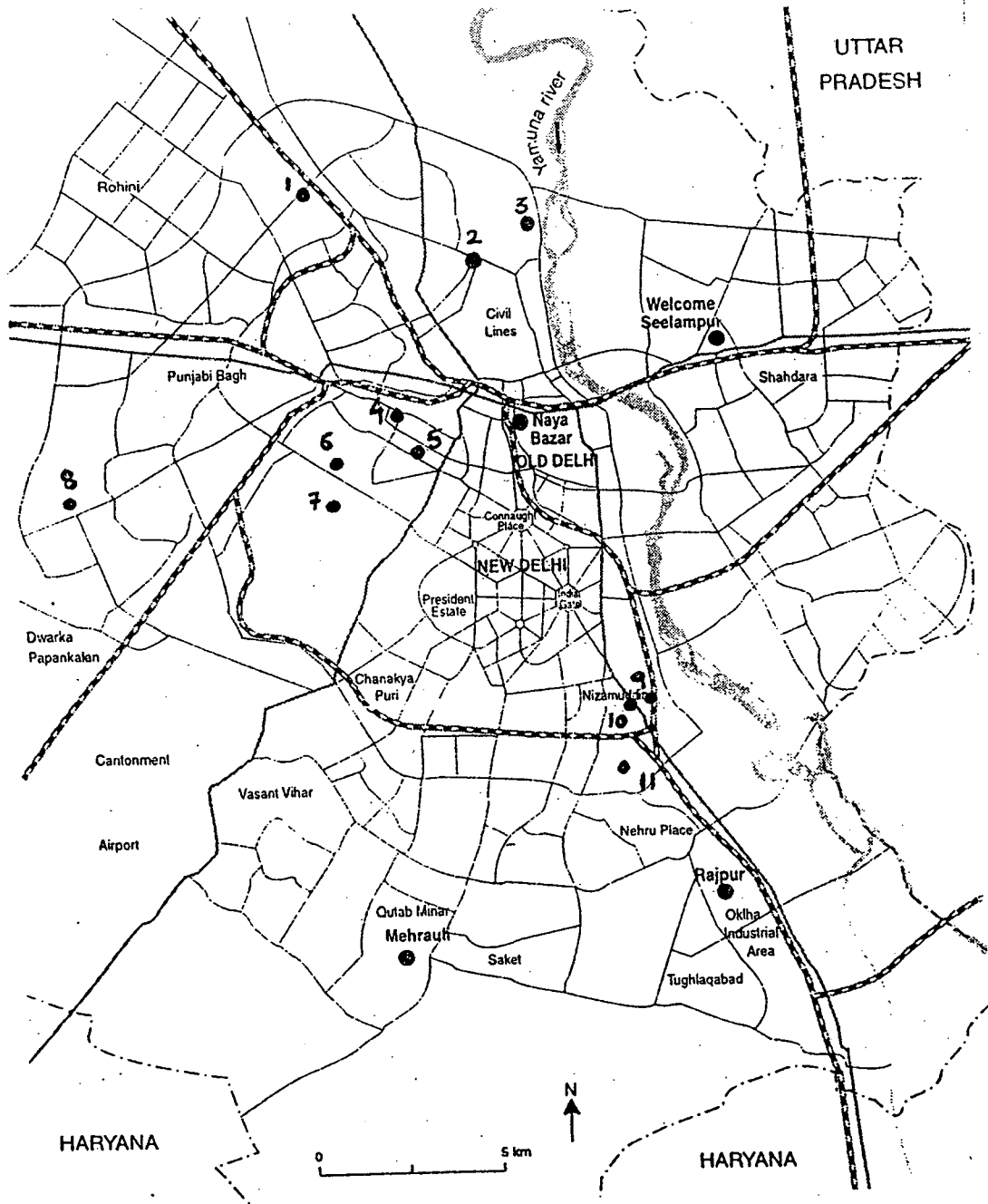
HT: The Hindustan Times

LSG: Local Self Government

NMML: Nehru Memorial Museum and Library

R and R: Relief and Rehabilitation

EXISTING REFUGEE COLONIES IN DELHI



1. New Azadpur
2. Kingsway Camp
3. Timarpur
4. Tibbia College
5. Karol Bagh
6. West Patel Nagar
7. Patel Nagar
8. Tilak Nagar
9. Nizamuddin
10. Jangpura
11. Lajpat Nagar

INTRODUCTION

Partition transformed the destiny of millions. The division of Punjab and Bengal led to the displacement of an estimated eighteen million people.¹ These displaced people assumed a new identity as they crossed the border. Several terms were used to describe them. In government circles the terms 'displaced person' and 'refugee' were used. The inhabitants of the places they went to called them '*sharanarthy*', '*bastutyagi*', '*bastuhara*', etc.² And the refugees themselves, preferred to be called '*purusharthy*'.

Different aspects of the refugee phenomenon that form broad themes in refugee studies include the rehabilitation and resettlement of refugees in the host country, as well as local reactions to it.

There are three agencies associated with the refugee phenomenon — the government of the receiving country, the refugees themselves and the local residents. It is the interplay between these three agencies that forms the core of our study. And it is these agencies that give rise to broadly three different approaches to refugee studies. These approaches differ in the degree of emphasis they give to each of these agencies and the way the concerns of the agencies are voiced.

¹ Gyanesh Kudaisya, 'The demographic upheaval of Partition: refugees and agricultural resettlement in India', *South Asia*, Vol. XVIII, Special Issue, 1995, p. 73.

² The last two terms were used for refugees in Bengal. See Md. Mahbubar Rahman and William Van Schendel, "'I am not a Refugee": Rethinking Partition Migration', *Modern Asian Studies*, 37, 3, 2003, p. 559.

Recently, a new area has also emerged in the field — the role of UNHCR (United Nations High Commission for Refugees), its understanding and treatment of the refugee problem. Research into refugee identity is also an area that has interested scholars. Apart from this, refugee studies form a part of larger issues of migration, human rights and globalization.

Literature Survey

In India, partition and refugees have attracted abundant research and study during the last two decades. The momentum in this new trend, as Augustine Mahiga points out, has its roots in the “widening academic and public awareness about human rights and humanitarian issues”.³ These studies have attempted to capture different aspects of the refugee phenomenon. From interpretation of various connotations of the term “refugee”, to analyzing and explaining different dimensions of the subject, the research so far has served to give a better understanding of how a crisis like partition impacts upon the socio-cultural, economic, demographic and political aspects of a region. V. N. Datta⁴ and Suparna Chatterjee⁵ have contributed to highlight the long lasting impact on Delhi. While Datta talks about the commercial hegemonisation of Delhi’s economic space by the migrants, Chatterjee goes into the socio-cultural changes.

³ Augustine Mahiga, Foreword to Ranabir Samaddar ed. *Refugees and the State: Practices of Asylum and Care in India, 1947-2000*, New Delhi, 2003, p. 8.

⁴ V. N. Datta, ‘Panjabi Refugees and the Urban development of Greater Delhi’, in R. E. Frykenberg ed., *Delhi Through the Ages*, Delhi, 1986.

⁵ Suparna Chatterji, *Refugee Rehabilitation and the Politics of Nation Building in India*, Milwaukee, University of Wisconsin, 2002 (unpublished dissertation), microfilm, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (hereafter NMML).

The research has also helped form a better picture of how the task of rebuilding ruptured lives in a new place is carried out and the ways in which the crisis is handled at different levels- the government, the refugees and the local residents. U. B. Rao⁶ and M. S. Randhawa⁷ gave a comprehensive account of the state's role in the rehabilitation process. Their works are government publication with a self congratulatory tone. Although they deliberately avoid going into the government's failures and weaknesses, the amount of information they provide is invaluable. The joint work of Tai Yong Tan and Gyanesh Kudaisya⁸, and edited book by Ranabir Samaddar⁹, also deal with government's response to the refugee phenomenon. They have adopted an approach different from Rao and Randhawa. They have critically evaluated state's role in the rehabilitation process and have highlighted very well the contrasts in government's handling of the crisis in two different parts of India—North-West and East India. Ravinder Kaur,¹⁰ situating her research in Delhi, deals with many themes. Her study into government's role establishes the state as an active player in the resettlement process. She analyses state's role in the rehabilitation process to explore the larger theme of understanding the character of the post-colonial state. She finds the state as a 'diffused' entity in contrast to the view that presents the state as a 'seamless monolith'.¹¹

⁶ U. B. Rao, *The Story Of Rehabilitation*, New Delhi, 1967.

⁷ M.S.Randhawa, *Out of the Ashes: An Account of the Rehabilitation of Refugees from West Pakistan in Rural Areas of East Punjab*, Chandigarh, 1954.

⁸ Tai Yong Tan and Gyanesh Kudaisya, *The Aftermath of Partition in South Asia*, London and New York, 2000.

⁹ Ranabir Samaddar ed. *Refugees and the State: Practices of Asylum and Care in India, 1947-2000*, New Delhi, 2003.

¹⁰ Ravinder Kaur, *Since 1947: Partition Narratives among Punjabi Migrants of Delhi*, New Delhi, 2007.

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 117.

The existing literature has also brought to light the strategies of survival evolved by different categories of refugees which include the various classes, the women, the children and students, and the infirm and disabled. Further it has also highlighted the conflict of interests between different groups involved in, and affected by, the process of gradual resettlement and assimilation of refugees. Datta has dealt with both the issues—he has shown how the refugee with his smiles and cheap products attracted customers and how his success alienated the original inhabitants. Anjali Bharadwaj Datta¹² and Karuna Chanana¹³ explored the various survival strategies evolved by Punjabi women in Delhi and how this challenged the traditional social norms.

Chapterisation

For Delhi, a witness to several great historical events, the partition came with far reaching changes in its socio-cultural, economic, political and demographic character. The partition brought to India 47.5 lakhs refugees. Delhi saw the influx of 4,95,391 refugees.¹⁴ The number when seen against the quota that was assigned to Delhi, which was three lakhs, reflects the enormity of strain that was put on Delhi's resources.

Before moving further let us acquaint ourselves with two specific things about partition refugees. Firstly, these refugees belonged to a special category, quite different

¹² Anjali Bharadwaj Datta, 'Gendering oral history of partition: interrogating patriarchy', *Economic and Political Weekly (EPW)*, 3 June 2006.

¹³ Karuna Chanana, 'Partition and Family Strategies', *EPW*, Vol. XXVIII, 24 April 1993.

¹⁴ V. N. Datta, 'Panjabi Refugees and the urban development of greater Delhi', in R. E. Frykenberg ed., *Delhi Through the Ages*, Delhi, 1986, p. 442

from the general definition of the term 'refugee'. They were entitled by laws introduced before and after partition to migrate and integrate into the other side of the border. They were never illegal immigrants and hence not considered alien. Secondly, partition refugees in India can be divided into two categories – those migrating from West Pakistan and those who came from East Pakistan. These two categories of refugees had altogether different experiences, both in terms of the degree to which they suffered the communal violence and the way the government of the provinces of East Punjab and West Bengal perceived and treated them.

The thrust of my research is to give a picture of how the partition refugees were rehabilitated and made a part of Delhi's socio- economic fabric. It is an attempt at unravelling the complex process of rehabilitation and assimilation of refugees within Delhi.

There were three main actors who participated in this long process. They were the refugees themselves, the Government and its implementing machinery, and finally the local population. The stress, however, would be on the first two participants, i.e., the Government and the refugees. And the first two chapters basically talk about them separately, without bringing the two face to face. In the third chapter I bring the two together and try to go into the niceties of the relationship they shared. Thus I have tried communicating the experience of partition and subsequent resettlement of refugees through primarily two voices — the voice of the government and bureaucracy, on the other hand, and of the refugees, on the other.

The first chapter simply seeks to delineate the various policies and measures that were undertaken by the Government for the rehabilitation of the refugees. It is a factual account, and does not venture to evaluate the government efforts. It is simply an account of what exists in the government files and newspapers about various positive steps taken.

The story of refugee arrival, their struggle in settling down, and their final assimilation within Delhi forms part of the second chapter. I explore their 'last journey', their life in camps and their long struggle for shelter. This chapter throws light on different coping strategies evolved by refugees in their struggle for survival. I also talk about the interaction between the refugees and the indigenous population, and explore the complexity of the relationship they developed.

The third chapter, as already mentioned, brings the refugees and the government face to face. Here, I talk about the reasons for refugee resentment against the Government, the assertiveness of the refugees in getting their demands met, and the efforts of the government to cope with the growing discontent and disillusionment of the refugees. The government was dealing with a very sensitive issue which was both complex and enormous. Under such circumstances, taking decisions and implementing orders was certainly a difficult task. So I try to see how the government handles those situations when the refugees refuse to co-operate and when they resort to unlawful acts like taking the law in their own hands or misrepresenting facts by making false claims about their possessions or qualifications.

Primary Sources

I have mainly relied upon newspaper reports and government records: the files of the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation (Min of R and R) and Local Self Government, Delhi Improvement Trust Records and Confidential Reports which had daily, weekly and fortnightly reports about Delhi. I have also looked into the private papers of Rameshwari Nehru, who was then managing the Women's Section working under Ministry of R and R. The *letters of Nehru to Chief Ministers* and the *Selected Works of Nehru*, both of which appear in published form have also been studied. In addition to this, I have conducted a few interviews with refugees in Lajpat Nagar, Old Rajinder Nagar and West Patel Nagar.

While the government files and oral accounts of refugees have their own biases, the newspaper reports conveyed respectively balanced and authentic information. They inform us about both government schemes and refugee grievances. The newspaper served as an important medium of expression for the refugees' complaints against government. 'Letters to the Editor' were productively used for the purpose, and they proved invaluable for my research. Information in the newspapers and the petitions that appeared in the government files helped me gauge the dissatisfaction among the refugees.

The complaints voiced through newspapers, petitions and the oral accounts are personal opinions. Questions have often been raised about the authenticity of accounts written on the basis of memory or personal testimony. They are questioned as they could

be affected by individual bias, class, gender and similar other factors. To quote Urvashi Butalia:

I am aware, of course, of the many pitfalls in such an exercise. Experience itself, for example, is not an unproblematic given. Nor is memory, the tool that I am by and large working with, sacrosanct... People choose to remember certain things depending on who they are, how they are placed, their class, their economic and political circumstances, their gender and indeed the position of the interviewer who might act as a catalyst for such memories.¹⁵

However such personal accounts, in spite of their limitations, form a part of history. These personal histories, if not captured now, might get buried forever. They should be considered as valuable as any official account.

¹⁵ Urvashi Butalia, 'Community, state and gender: on women's agency during partition', *EPW*, Vol. XXVIII, 24 April 1993, p. ws-13.

CHAPTER 1

GOVERNMENT EFFORTS AT REHABILITATION

Soon after the partition Delhi was faced with the gigantic task of integration of refugees within its confines. It was a challenge for which Delhi was hardly prepared. “No physical, economic and administrative infrastructure existed to cope with it. No extra housing, water supply, sewage or transport was available”.¹ Moreover this formidable task was posed to a newly formed government with hardly any experience to manage a crisis of such magnitude. In fact it was the first administrative challenge of this scale that independent India had to face.

The question as to what extent the Indian government managed to tackle this challenge and fulfilled its promises of rehabilitation and resettlement is still unclear. Different experts on this subject hold different views. U. B. Rao and M. S. Randhawa in their works give a government oriented approach to the process and tend to ignore both the shortcomings in the government projects and the accomplishments of refugees. Ranabir Samaddar sees in the government efforts a combination of ‘power and care’ and a paternalistic approach. One can interview the survivors themselves and ask for their opinion. But this again gives mixed responses. In fact it has been seen that the government is mostly absent in oral accounts; the public ignores its role in spite of having received benefits from it. Thus the views that come from individual accounts cannot be relied upon to evaluate government’s role correctly. Even those associated with the

¹ V. N. Datta, ‘Panjabi refugees’, p. 444.

rehabilitation process- the policy makers and the implementers-have different views. Moreover, there is the issue of what one understands by the term “rehabilitation”. Is it just physical and economic security or does it include social and psychological security too? As one Minister for Rehabilitation, A. P. Jain put it in the Constituent Assembly (February-March, 1951):

I consider (rehabilitation) to be a psychological question, and a person who feels that he is living well, that he can educate his children, that he is a citizen of India like any other person, well, I treat him as rehabilitated.²

In this chapter I have desisted from assessing the government efforts. This is just a factual account of Government schemes and their implementation.

Government Perception Of Partition Refugees

A refugee can be defined as a person who has been forced to leave his country or home, because there is a war or for political, religious or social reasons. However there is often also a negative connotation attached to the term. There is an illegitimacy about his presence in the receiving nation as he is an alien and an illegal intruder within the confines of the nation. He is considered a burden for the host country which wants to get rid of him as his presence is seen as eating into the limited resources of the receiving nation. The Bangladeshi refugees who still continue to trickle into India through its

² Ritu Menon, ‘Birth of social security commitments’, in Ranabir Samaddar ed. *Refugees and the State*, p. 154.

porous borders are perceived in this manner. Even in cases where the refugees have been allowed by the government of the host nation, for example, the Tibetan refugees,³ the final solution lies in the repatriation of refugees to the land of their origin.

But the partition refugees did not fit this description. Their identity was different both for the government and the original inhabitants of India. They were a product of an event- Partition- something which was brought about by a consensus, an agreement concluded by those who were at the helm of affairs in India at that time. Therefore the Government on both sides- India and Pakistan- had a moral responsibility to the resettlement of these displaced and uprooted lot of refugees. They were not considered alien.

The refugee was, as Ritu Menon points out, “the native returning home; the embattled, beleaguered, and violently dealt with son of the soil in need of protection and succour”.⁴ His right to a dignified life in India was considered legitimate and a prime responsibility of every government official, as only his proper rehabilitation could give a stability to the country which was undergoing great turmoil. Hence the overwhelming response of the entire government machinery to the enormous task of rehabilitation. When I characterize government response as ‘overwhelming’, I limit myself to the numerous policies and programmes drafted to meet the situation. Here the characterization doesn’t extend to the extent of implementation and final conclusion of

³ On 20 May 1959 the Government of India allowed a large batch of Tibetan refugees, mostly women and children, into Bomdilla in Arunachal Pradesh. For details see Rajesh Kharat’s ‘Gainers of a stalemate’ in Ranabir Samaddar ed *Refugees and the State*, pp 281-287.

⁴ Ritu Menon, ‘Birth of social security commitments’, p. 156.

the process, as it is still a moot question. When one evaluates the government at the level of planning and finalizing the schemes, the response does seem overwhelming and matching the magnitude of the crisis. This chapter has delineated the numerous plans and schemes undertaken by the government and one can see that these schemes sought to touch almost every sphere of refugee interests and requirements.

For the refugees the consciousness about the legitimacy of their presence in India encouraged their assertiveness, which further drove the government to make efforts at efficient use of the potential of the administrative machinery and nation's resources.

A proper resolution of the refugee issue was also considered necessary from the point of view of saving the country and in particular Delhi from utter confusion. A permanent solution to the problem in the form of resettlement and assimilation of the refugees was necessary to bring normalcy in the city, to effect smooth administration, and development of the capital. This is what Nehru wanted to convey when he said,

The problem of rehabilitation of the vast number of refugees from Pakistan must be considered as one having the highest priority. Not only have we to prevent, as far as we can, human suffering but we have also to prevent large number of embittered people, who have lost much, from becoming homeless wanderers.

Even from the point of view of the security of the State this is undesirable.⁵

⁵ Letter of Nehru to Chief Ministers, 5 January 1948, in G. Parthasarthy ed., *Jawaharlal Nehru: Letters to Chief Ministers 1947-1964, Volume I: 1947-1949*, p. 46.

The best answer to this enormous challenge, the Government felt, was to engage them in the task of reconstruction of the newborn country. The Government thus chose to perceive the refugees not as a burden but as a significant resource with potential to contribute to nation building. Mohan Lal Saxena, Minister of Relief and Rehabilitation, likened the refugees to the Pilgrim Fathers of America and declared that “the newcomers in our midst with their talent, drive and initiative would be an invaluable help in fighting the battle against poverty and in the programme of reconstruction”.⁶ The Minister of Relief and Rehabilitation, Mr. K. C. Neogy, put the Government’s stand about the refugees:

Sir, we may have to be grateful to the refugees for having drawn our attention to the urgency of the problem of planning for the development of this country, and perhaps future generations will acknowledge their gratitude to the so called refugees for having furnished the manpower which is necessary for the purpose of developing the resources of the country as a whole.⁷

This approach sounded constructive and positive. However the authorities often failed to conform to it, as we will see in subsequent chapters. Perhaps such noble thoughts existed only on paper and in public speeches. There were occasions when responsible leaders and administrators departed from this noble stand that had been proclaimed. And this became a potent cause for the resentment of the refugees against the Government.

⁶ *Hindustan Times* (hereafter HT), 17 June 1948, p. 8.

⁷ Ritu Menon, ‘Birth of social security commitments’, p. 152.

The first major step taken to handle the enormity of the task was to set up the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation which was established on September 6, 1947 with Mr. K. C. Neogy as the Minister.⁸ A Committee consisting of officials of the East Punjab and West Punjab Governments was set up to co-ordinate their administrative measures.⁹ The implementation of the rehabilitation schemes was the responsibility of the Provincial governments.

Government Rehabilitation Schemes: Their Implementation

The schemes of the Government can be categorized broadly into following areas:

- i. Employment Of Refugees
- ii. Arrangements For Students
- iii. Rehabilitation Of Refugee Women
- iv. Cooperative Societies
- v. Maintenance Allowance Scheme
- vi. Miscellaneous Measures
- vii. Rural Rehabilitation

Employment Of Refugees

To arrange for the employment of the refugees several employment exchanges were functioning and the refugees seeking jobs were required to register themselves. Of the

⁸ V. N. Datta, 'Panjabi refugees', p. 449.

⁹ Ibid, p. 445.

24,631 refugees registered during December 1947 at the Employment Exchanges and District Employment Offices of the Ministry of Labour, 3899 involving 15,697 dependents were placed in employment. The placement figure for this month was the highest.¹⁰ Eighteen hundred refugees secured jobs through the employment exchange up to March 1952.¹¹

Several government schemes were in operation to provide for technical and vocational training to the refugees. Many of them were trained in the training centres run by the Ministry of Labour. These centres were originally established for the training of technicians during the Second World War. At the end of the war these centres were reorganized to train personnel demobilized from the Services. They had thus been in existence for some years and when the refugee problem arose, they were able to undertake the training of refugees in addition to that of ex-servicemen.¹²

There was a provision for vocational training in the refugee schools, too. A vocational cum training centre started functioning in Shamshad Manzil from 20th of May, 1949.¹³ The Centre had a junior section for boys of ages 12 to 14 and a senior section for boys of ages 14 to 16. As regards the vocations that were proposed to be taught to the children, they were:

¹⁰ HT, January, 22, 1948, p. 3.

¹¹ V. N. Datta, 'Panjabi refugees', p. 449.

¹² File no. 3(141)/48, Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation (hereafter Min of R and R), letter from the Minister of R and R to the Chief Commissioner, Delhi, Delhi State Archives, New Delhi (hereafter D. A.).

¹³ File no. 3(141)/48, Min of R and R, D. A.

- Carpentry
- Workshop practice
- Electrical repair and wiremen's course
- Weaving, cloth dyeing and printing
- Basket making, cane work and mat making.¹⁴

Further, loans were provided to traders and shopkeepers, medical practitioners, chemists, persons starting small scale industry and to individual business and private limited companies.¹⁵ Also, sewing machines were issued to deserving individuals trained in tailoring at a concessional price or free of charge. These machines were mostly issued to widows or married women whose husbands were not in a position to earn the livelihood due to some disease, etc. During the period from 1948 to 1952, 795 sewing machines were issued from Prime Minister's National Relief Fund and 166 machines from the fund of the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation. Also during the period 1950-51, 94 sewing machines were also distributed on a "no profit no loss" basis.¹⁶

A statement of the number of sewing machines issued during the period between 1948 and 1952 is given below.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ V. N. Datta, 'Panjabi refugees', p. 449.

¹⁶ File no. 9(12)/52, Min of RandR, D.A.

Table 1¹⁷

Period	No of machines from PM NRF	No of machines from Min of R and R
1948-49	251	
1949-50	390	23
1950-51	83	57
1951-52	71	86
Total	795	166

Efforts were also made by the Delhi Employment Exchange, with the help of factory owners, to sponsor schemes for technical training of refugees. It was proposed to give to a trainee a living wage, one third of which would be contributed by the government and the balance by the employers.¹⁸

Also, measures were taken to organize cottage industries for the employment of the refugees. An officer was sent by the Ministry of Rehabilitation to Japan and he had returned with a multitude of ideas.¹⁹

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ HT, 19 December 1947, p. 10.

¹⁹ Nehru to Chief Ministers, 15 August 1949, in G. Parthasarthy ed., *Jawaharlal Nehru, Volume I*, p. 440

Employment of Refugee teachers: A number of teachers from Pakistan areas, who were employed in schools managed by private and local authorities, took refuge in Delhi. In order to cope with the educational problems arising out of the displacement, the Provincial Education Department, opened early in September 1947 a “refugee section” and all teachers and students were requested through the press and AIR to register their requirement with the section.²⁰ Those engaged in registering unemployed refugee teachers included the Transfer Bureau, the Ministry of Home Affairs and the employment exchanges.

A study of the Government files shows that refugee teachers attracted special attention from the administration. The Ministry of R and R, in its circular dated 21 April 1948, to all the provinces and States, recommended that at least 25% of the total vacancies arising out of the recommendations of the scheme for education expansion should be reserved for refugee teachers. It was also recommended that the conditions of age and domicile be waived to enable them to compete for ordinary jobs.²¹

The Government of India in their letter dated 9 December 1947, had decided to fix salaries of displaced government servants strictly in accordance with the basic pay drawn by the incumbents at the time of evacuation from Pakistan and not to give them less than what they were being paid in Pakistan. The position of Government was reiterated for the refugee teachers in the meeting of the Special Education Board (on 6 August 1948) and

²⁰ File no. 15(194)/47, LSG (education), D. A.

²¹ File no. 3(141)/48, Min of R and R, D. A.

also in a press note issued on 29 February 1948.²² Further, it was specifically laid down by the Ministry of R and R that the resumption of their salary would take effect from the very next day after independence, i.e. from 16 August 1947 or the date from which a refugee teacher ceased to get his salary because of the closure of the institution due to partition, whichever was later.²³

On 2 June 1949, it was decided that the same benefits of pay, etc that was given to teachers in the privately managed or aided schools would be extended to refugee teachers.²⁴ In the camp schools, initially, appointments were made from amongst the teachers resident in the camps. Later (from 6 November 1948), this provision was changed and only those registered by the Transfer Bureau were employed as teachers in camp schools.²⁵

Much hardship was caused to the refugee teachers owing to the late payment of salaries. This was due to the very complicated procedure adopted. There was so much pre audit and the bills had to pass through so many hands that the prompt payment of salaries became extremely difficult.²⁶ This was resolved due to the personal interest in the welfare of the refugee teachers taken by Mr. S. S. Mathur, Director of Education, Delhi. As a

²² File no. 6(26)/48, Min of R and R, D. A.

²³ Ibid, Min of R and R to the Secretary of All India Refugee Teachers Association.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ File no. 3 (141)/ 48, Min of R and R, letter from Director of Education, Delhi Province to Secretary of the Chief Commissioner, Delhi, D. A.

result of which they had begun to receive their monthly pay more or less regularly. The Delhi Schools Teachers Association appreciated Mathur's efforts.²⁷

A special consideration was given to widow teachers and about 90% among those registered had been given appointments during 1947. The rest could not be employed because of language difficulties.²⁸

Displaced Employees Of Local Bodies: In the beginning, vacancies in the Municipalities and other local bodies in Delhi was completely absorbed and it was not possible to take in more displaced employees. This remained the situation till May 1948. However, gradually a few vacancies emerged which absorbed a small number of refugees. By July, 1949, the number of ex- employees from Pakistan working in Municipal Committee and the District Board of Delhi stood at 55 and 70 respectively.²⁹

Arrangements For Refugee Students

As regards the displaced students, the government had started taking steps for them quite early. As early as April, 1947, after the first disturbances in March in Lahore, the Provincial Education Department, had issued circulars to various schools to admit students without production of transfer certificates. Schools were required to admit as

²⁷ File no. 6 (26)/ 48, dated 28 July 1949, Min of R and R, D. A.

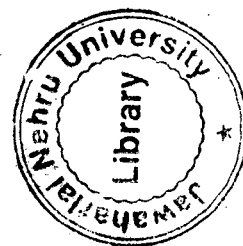
²⁸ File no. 15(194)/47, LSG (Education), D. A.

²⁹ File no.11 (45)/48, LSG/ Local Bodies/ General, D. A.

many displaced students as they could without creating undesirable crowding and normal criteria for admission was temporarily suspended.³⁰

The number of school going children among the total number of refugees in Delhi of 1, 20,000, was 18,000. Of these 1300 had already been admitted in existing schools.³¹ Schools were opened by the government both inside and outside the camps. To start with, four primary schools started functioning in the following refugee camps:

- Outram Lines Barracks
- Hudson Lines Barracks
- Edwards Lines Barracks
- Kalkaji Refugee Camp



TH-15025
A special teacher was deputed in each of these schools to look after the play of these children and to keep them busy in other recreation activities.³² This was one of the very few instances where the government gave special attention towards the psychological rehabilitation.

The Education Department from 1 November 1947, started two High schools- one for boys and the other for girls which followed the Punjabi curriculum, as the syllabi prescribed by the Board of Secondary Education, Delhi Province were different from

³⁰ File no.15 (194)/47, LSG (Education), D. A.

³¹ File no.15 (184)/47, LSG/ (Education), D. A.

³² File no.15 (194)/47, Min of Rand R, D. A.

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those laid down by the Punjab University. No fee was charged from the displaced students. In course of time the number of such refugee schools expanded. By April 13, 1949, there were 10 High schools with 3651 students, 10 Middle schools with 3910 students and 17 primary schools with 4202 students.³³ Also the Government in association with the Hindustan Talimi Sangh imparted education to the displaced children on the *Nai Talim* model.³⁴

It was laid down by the government that the new schools would have the same status as the Delhi secondary schools and shall be affiliated for the first two years to the East Punjab University and subsequently to the Delhi University.³⁵

Government attention was also directed towards higher education of refugee students. Students who had pursued a regular course of study in the 2nd year in the Lahore Law College were admitted to the Proficiency Class (3rd year Law Class) subject to their appearing and passing in the test examination.³⁶ Camp College, affiliated to Punjab University, provided higher education up to the M.A. degree for refugee students, at nominal fees. The Ministry of Education arranged two shifts of classes for refugee students for Intermediate Arts and Science, together with the Medical students, B. A., Pass and Honours and M. A. in the Hindu College, Delhi.³⁷

³³ File no.15 (184)/47, LSG/ (Education), D. A.

³⁴ HT, 15 October 1949, p. 3.

³⁵ File no. 6(23)/48, Min of R and R, D. A.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ HT, 14 January 1948, p. 7.

Financial assistance to refugee students was another positive step taken. Government announced that refugee students appearing privately at the Matriculation examination should, if they so desire, be exempted from the payment of examination fees, provided they advance proof that they were reading in eighth class in a recognized school in Pakistan.³⁸

Scholarships and loans were also made available to the students. The students' awards varied from five rupees for primary school students to twenty rupees for fifth and ninth year students; from forty rupees for 9th and 10th year students to twenty to forty rupees for students in the intermediate classes. In another scheme a scholarship of Rupees 25 per month was granted to deserving displaced children. It was further held that the benefits of this scholarship could also be extended to the students who were victims of pre partition riots and migrated to India on or after the 1 March 1947, but before 15 August 1947.³⁹ However the Government made it clear that the liability of the Government was for a limited period only i.e., till such time as the scholarship holders complete their courses of study.⁴⁰ As regards loans to refugee students, they were supposed to be repaid in installments, the recovery of which commenced two years after the payment of last installment of loan. Rate of interest charges was at 2% per annum up

³⁸File no. 6 (27), 1949, Min of R and R, letter from Assistant Secretary, Government of India to all Provincial Governments, D. A.

³⁹ File no. 6 (45), 1949, Min of R and R, D. A.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

to 31 Aug 1948, a loan of 192,985 rupees⁴¹ was given to refugee students and 39,024 rupees were given as free grants.

To provide employment for displaced teachers and to make available educational facilities for children who had not been able to get admission to any existing schools the Ministry of Rehabilitation had decided to launch a scheme for the establishment of what were known as Cooperative Crafts and Middle Schools.⁴²

Rehabilitation Of Women Refugees

The women refugees, unlike other categories, were treated by the Government as a lifelong responsibility. The unattached women and children along with aged and infirm were to be taken care of throughout their life or until they had become independent. In their case too the Government adopted the positive approach of involving the women refugees in the task of national reconstruction and they were thus considered a 'national asset'.

The Government and the women refugees were blessed in having a good number of dedicated women workers who made a remarkable contribution towards the rehabilitation process. The Women's Section attracted praise from all corners and the way it used

⁴¹ In comparison to 1948-49, the value of rupee today is greater by approximately 18 times. In 1948, (according to HT, 8 January 1948, p. 3) the cost of one *ser* (approximately 900 grams) of sugar was one rupee and two *annas* (one *anna* is equal to 1/16th of a rupee). Today the cost of one kilogram of sugar is about rupees twenty. This gives a ratio of 1:18 between *anna* and rupee.

⁴² HT, 24 July 1949, p. 3.

diverse means to make optimum utilization of its resources was really commendable. This was the only department which rarely came under criticism, either by the refugees or by the press. Its commitment to the cause can be gauged from the amount of work done by it which is outlined in the following pages.

Formation of Women's Section:

Initially as a measure for taking care of women refugees, the Indian National Congress appointed a Central Relief Committee with Mrs. Sucheta Kripalani as its Secretary and a United Council for Relief and Welfare was set up with Lady Mountbatten as its Chairman. These associations operated in various relief centres of the country. They cooperated with the Government in organizing relief measures and set up schools, hospitals, and production and training centres in the refugee camps.⁴³

But it was soon felt necessary to enforce a properly organised policy of women's rehabilitation. It was also considered necessary to associate some women workers with the cause as they would be more sensitive to the material and emotional requirements of the displaced women. Hence in September 1947 a small advisory committee of women social workers was formed under the Ministry of R and R.⁴⁴ This was the Women's Section designed to look into the needs of, and take necessary steps for, the refugee

⁴³ Rameshwari Nehru Private Papers, Reports 1946-59, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (hereafter NMML), New Delhi.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

women and children. Before moving further I have attempted to trace the changes in the structure and functions of the Women's Section over the years.

Mrs. Rameshwari Nehru was invited to take up the responsibility of the care, maintenance and rehabilitation of the uprooted women and children from Pakistan. In November 1947 she became the Honorary Director of the Women's Section. Mrs. Mathai and Mrs. Hannah Sen worked with her as Honorary Secretary and Honorary Joint Secretary. Some other significant names associated were Mrs. Handu, Mrs. Shoba Nehru, Mrs. Raksha Sarah and Dr. Sushila Nayyar.⁴⁵

In the initial stages the responsibility of the Delhi Women's Section extended to the whole country; but it was soon realized that most of its time and energy was taken up by the displaced persons in Delhi, and adequate attention could not be paid to the work in other states. Therefore, regional organizers were appointed in Bombay, Ahmedabad, Saurashtra and Rajputana to organise the work in these areas. But this system did not prove effective enough. It, therefore, began to be increasingly felt that the work in the states should be handed over to the State authorities. Accordingly, at a Conference of the Provincial Chief Ministers held in Delhi in July 1948, it was decided that in the States where the number of displaced persons was large, separate Women's Sections should be established to deal specifically with the problem of women and children.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

With effect from 15th January 1949, the Provincial Women's Section for the province of Delhi was set up. It worked under the administrative control of the Chief Commissioner of Delhi and was responsible for the preparation and execution of schemes and settlement of refugee women and children in Delhi.⁴⁷

On 1st June 1952, the Women's Section was reorganized and redesignated as "Social Welfare and Rehabilitation Directorate to Delhi State". Its duties were further expanded to include:

- Care of the displaced destitute women and children;
- Vocational training of the displaced persons; and loans and stipends to students studying in colleges, professional and technical institutions;
- Grant of maintenance allowance to displaced persons;
- Welfare of non-displaced persons, destitute women and children.⁴⁸

As local conditions varied from place to place, and reactions of local Government in respect of the work were not the same, the pattern of State Women's Section was not uniform. In Delhi, the authority was vested in the Honorary Director, who had wide executive powers. In Bombay the work was entrusted to a Women's Committee of honorary members who had executive powers and worked under the Rehabilitation of the State Government.⁴⁹ Similar arrangements were made in other states keeping in mind the local requirements. To attach further significance to the cause Women's Week was

⁴⁷ File no. 13(20)/49; Min of R and R, D. A.

⁴⁸ File no. 9(5)/52; Min of R and R, D. A.

⁴⁹ Rameshwari Nehru Papers, Reports 1946-59, NMML.

observed by the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation for the week that commenced on 15th February 1948.⁵⁰

There were four main adjuncts of the Delhi Women's Section:

- The Homes;
- The Training cum Production centres;
- The Marriage Information Bureau; and
- The Employment Bureau.⁵¹

The Destitute Homes:

Three houses were run for destitute women and children in Delhi and one in Kurukshetra⁵²:

- Shamshad Manzil: Accommodated 400 women and children.
- Mehrauli: Housed infirm and disabled women.
- Rambagh.
- Kurukshetra: Accommodated 300 women and children. 225 women, 251 boys and 153 girls had been restored to their families or employed through the agency of this house.

⁵⁰ File no. 1/48, Confidential, Fortnightly report for the fortnight ending 31 December 1948.

⁵¹ Rameshwari Nehru Papers, Reports 1946-59, NMML.

⁵² HT, 18 April 1948, p. 5.

Training cum Production Centres:

The Centers run by Women's Section were mostly work and training centers. These centers took part in order works for their trainees from the Refugee Handicrafts shop and other sources that paid wages to the inmate refugees.⁵³

In four areas of Delhi- Sabzimandi, Paharganj, Karol Bagh and Babar Road Colony- there were work and relief centers which distributed free clothes to destitute women and provided them with some work. Each centre supplied the women refugees with cloth and sewing machines. Each week about 1,000 unskilled women earned a few rupees by preparing garments. In addition about 100 skilled workers were also employed in the centers. Most of the work was done in response to private orders.⁵⁴

Foreign embassies in New Delhi had shown a particular interest in the articles manufactured at the centers. Lady Mountbatten and Pandit Nehru had also ordered a number of face towels and luncheon sets. Mr. K. M. Pannikar, then ambassador to China, had taken with him eight dozen handkerchiefs made by the refugee women.⁵⁵

300 refugee women received training in *Curzon Road Centre*. Subjects included typing, stenography, commercial and clerical training, tailoring, embroidery, etc. Each selected trainee received Rupees 50 a month as a scholarship in addition to free clothes.

⁵³ File no.13 (36)/49, Min of R and R, D. A.

⁵⁴ HT, 18 April 1948, p. 5.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

After the deduction of charges for board and lodging the trainees were left with an adequate amount as pocket money.⁵⁶

A *Swatantra* Women's Cooperation Industrial society was set up in Delhi at the instance of the Regimental Director of Resettlement and Ministry of Rehabilitation. It took women on a contract basis and opened a training centre for those desirous of receiving training in various trades.⁵⁷

Refugee Handicrafts shop worked on a commercial basis. During the year 1949-50, the business activities of the shop had considerably expanded (including in exports), so much so that the financial sanction of Rs. 41,000 under the head 'purchase of raw material' had been found to be utterly inadequate keeping in view the interests of the business.⁵⁸

The following were some of the centers of the Refugee Handicrafts shop.

- Karol Bagh Center,
- Central Lane Center,
- Birla Mandir Center,
- Mrs. Kabi's Center,
- Sabzimandi Center,
- King Edwards Road Center, etc.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ HT, 12 August 1949, p. 7.

⁵⁸ File no. 13(33)/49, Min of R and R, D. A.

⁵⁹ File no. 13(36)/49, Min of R and R, D. A.

Refugee handicrafts on show:

Exhibitions were organized to create a market for the products created by the refugees in various handicraft centers run by the Government. These were good examples of how successful such shows could be and how far the Government help worked for the betterment of the refugees. In an exhibition organized by the Women's section of the Ministry of Rehabilitation in the Constitution Club, New Delhi, there was positive response from different quarters. The following description indicates the extent of the labor and perseverance of the refugee women.

Articles worth Rs. 80,000 were exhibited which included children's garments, dolls, bed sheets, pillow covers and other knitted goods and embroideries. These had been made by over 3,000 women working at ten Centers in Delhi. Refugee handicrafts were sold through two cooperative societies and three sales depots in Delhi and a sales organization at Shillong, Hyderabad and Bombay each. The workmanship of refugee handicrafts, especially in embroidery, had so fascinated the Americans that several organizations in the USA had offered to send their linen and other materials to be embroidered at the refugee work centers. The embroidered materials would be sent for sale back to the USA. Samples of the articles made by the refugee women had been sent to 18 Indian embassies abroad to enable them to secure large scale orders. The Indian relief Committee in UK was organizing sales of these handicrafts in that country. Summer and winter liveries of all peons in the Central Secretariat had also been supplied

by the women's work centers. The articles were cheaper than the market price because only 20% of the cost was added to cover overhead charges.⁶⁰

Marriage Bureau:

A Marriage Bureau had been founded with the intention of introducing uprooted refugee women and men to each other with the purpose of marriage. A number of marriages had been performed under the auspices of the Women's Section and several other marriages were arranged through the process of introduction of financial aid up to Rupees 25 and gifts of clothes were given in some needy cases.⁶¹

Employment Bureau:

The Employment Bureau of Women's Section worked in close collaboration with the Regional employment exchange of the Ministry of Labour. This Bureau by the end of March 1949 had registered about 2,000 women and had succeeded in securing employment for about 500.⁶²

⁶⁰ HT, 10 December 1949, p. 10.

⁶¹ Rameshwari Nehru Papers, Reports 1946-59, NMML.

⁶² Ibid.

Women's Section and Children:

The Women's Section was also engaged in providing education facilities to children. The Government recognized two classes of refugee children.

- Non Muslim children who had lost either their father or guardians during the disturbances in Pakistan and who migrated to India; and
- Children who had lost both their father and guardian during disturbances in Pakistan and who migrated to India.

It was the responsibility of the Women's Section to make arrangements for their education in Delhi Province. The Director of the Women's Section was also authorized to pay a scholarship not exceeding Rupees 25 per month to each such child admitted to a recognized institute.⁶³

Schools for refugees:⁶⁴

- A residential middle school for girls at Mehrauli was run. It accommodated 30 girls. 150 girls attended as day scholars.
- In the Lodi Colony an evening shift middle school for girls was opened in the premises of the Municipal Girls School.

⁶³ HT, 10 December 1949, p. 10.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 18 April 1948, p. 5.

- In the Purana Qila camp a mixed school being run by the enterprising residents themselves had been taken over by the Women's Section. Over 300 boys and girls attended it from kindergarten to middle standard.
- In the Poor House building near Kingsway camp, which had been taken over by the Women's Section, over 150 children and about three dozen women had been accommodated. Children between three and ten received education according to the Nai Talim System.
- The education of women was undertaken in accordance with the scheme evolved by the Kasturba Trust to train social workers. About 150 women had been accommodated but only 36 had joined the scheme since the trainees had to give an undertaking to work in the same village under the Kasturba Trust for three years after the completion of the eighteen month course. Moreover education up to the middle standard was necessary for admission.

Unattached Children: The Women's Section also undertook the task of placement of the unattached children in foster homes.⁶⁵

Co-Operative Societies:

In June 1948, the government decided to rehabilitate refugees on co-operative lines.⁶⁶ The registered refugees formed themselves into co-operative societies. Government help was advanced to the societies as a whole keeping in view the individual need of each

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ File no. 13(39)/48, Min of R and R, D. A.

refugee in the society. This mainly aimed at the promotion of the economic interests of member refugee by providing loans to them.

The Ministry of Rand R proposed to recruit 100 organizers who might be trained to organize the co-operative societies among refugees. An Action sub-committee was formed to watch the progress of the various co-operative societies financed by the government and supervise their functioning. When a refugee became a member of a co-operative society by receiving a loan, his registration card was marked by the Assistant Registrar, so that he could not derive the same benefit by becoming a member of another society.

The Bombay co-operative societies Act, 1952 was extended to Delhi province. Its main provisions included⁶⁷:

- Only those societies could be registered which had a membership of at least 10 persons over 18 years of age.
- This number could be reduced to between 5 to 9 for the purpose of formation of small scale producers' co-operative societies of displaced persons.

Grants issued by the government to the refugee co-operative societies, were subject to following rules⁶⁸:-

⁶⁷ File no. 5(52)/49, Min of R and R, D. A.

⁶⁸ File no. 5(24)/48, Min of R and R, D. A.

- Each individual was charged interest at the rate of 3% per annum on loans advanced.
- Each member of co-operative society receiving loan had to be a bonafide registered refugee in Delhi.

By March 1949, the total number of refugee societies registered in Delhi Province was 290.⁶⁹

Maintenance Allowance Scheme⁷⁰

On 30th September government sanctioned a scheme for the grant of maintenance allowance to widows, unattached women, minors and other persons who because of old age (over 50 years), infirmity, illness or other causes were unable to make a living for themselves and who depended entirely upon the income from the property in Pakistan. These were persons who had no means of livelihood in India and had not been given any rehabilitation benefits.

On 30th November 1949, Major T. Ramachandra was appointed officer in charge of the scheme. He was assisted by a committee of seven members. By 31st December 1949, 12,925 applications were received. The applications were scrutinized and those that failed to fulfill the eligibility criteria were rejected. Those selected were interviewed and they were granted allowance which they received at the Custodian's office in New Delhi.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ File no. 17(17)/50, Min of R and R, D. A.

In case a displaced person receiving maintenance allowance died the sanctioned amount in full went to the wife, in the case of male; and to the 'supervisors', in case of female. The 'supervisors' probably meant sons or grandsons. No fresh application was entertained from survivors of the original grantee. As regards the pensioners who were receiving small amounts as pension, they were also entitled to a maintenance allowance which amounted to the value of difference between the due allowance to him and the pension he was receiving. November 30th 1950, was fixed as the last date for accepting applications. This permission was relaxed only in cases of hardship.

There were instances of pending applications of maintenance allowance. By March 1952, there were 1600 applications pending scrutiny because the applicants had not turned up for the examination of the cases.

Rural Rehabilitation.

There were several rural refugees from different areas of Pakistan who arrived in Delhi. The administration divided them into two categories⁷¹:

- The colonists who left land in West Punjab.
- The refugees from NWFP, Sindh, Baluchistan, Bahawalpur.

The refugees from West Punjab were not allotted land in Delhi. Only those falling in second category were entitled to land in Delhi villages. Moreover, rehabilitation in Delhi

⁷¹ File no. 2(51) A/49, Min of R and R, D. A.

was confined only to those who have been registered in Delhi before the 29 February 1948.⁷²

The second category refugees were allotted land in different proportion according to the region from where they hailed. The different percentage of share entitled to them was⁷³:

NWFP-	45%
Sindh -	33%
Baluchistan -	5%
Bahawalpur -	17%

There were around 150 families in this category. They were rehabilitated, almost completely, in the lands allotted to Muslim evacuees in village, Punjab Khor, in Delhi.⁷⁴

There were certain general principles that were followed by the government regarding land allotment in Delhi for the refugees. These were⁷⁵:

- Not more than 10 acres was to be allotted to any single family.
- Preferences given to those who had some means of their own.
- The order of preference for evacuee land allotment was:
 - i. Peasant proprietors

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ File no. 2(83)/49, Min of R and R, D. A.

⁷⁵ File no. 2(51) A/49, Min of R and R, D. A.

ii. Land owners, provided they started cultivating immediately after allotment.

iii. Landless cultivators.

The rural refugees were encouraged to organize themselves into co-operative societies. Initially, it was laid down that only a refugee landholder could become a member of co-operative society. This was later on changed and even a landless cultivator could become a part of co-operative society. The organization of rural refugees into cooperative societies facilitated their rehabilitation by the government. The latter preferred co-operative societies to individual claimants in offering grants of loans or agricultural equipments like tractors, etc.

In Delhi, village-wise land allotment couldn't be undertaken for the rural refugees as happened in East Punjab. This was because major portion of land in Delhi villages were not in big blocks, and instead lay scattered in partly evacuated villages.

Another feature of rural rehabilitation in Delhi, which contrasted with what happened in the East Punjab rural rehabilitation process, was that no refugee could be given a better title of land than what they had left behind in Pakistan. Moreover in East Punjab, the partition refugees were given land irrespective of whether they had possessed land or not. This is a feature that has been highlighted by M.S. Randhawa, who credits the sacrifices of large land-owners for the rural rehabilitation success in East Punjab.⁷⁶ In Delhi,

⁷⁶ Randhawa, *Out of the Ashes*, p. 99.

however, a landowner got as much land as he deserved and a tenant was given a title of tenant to the land allotted to him.

Other Schemes And Measures Undertaken

- **Information Bureau:** An Information Bureau was opened in Delhi Railway station on 21 December 1947. In addition to guiding the refugees, the Bureau provided necessary assistance to them in matters of food and medical aid. The refugees were accommodated by the bureau for 24 hours and those who had to prolong their stay found place in Wavell Canteen Camp that served as a transit camp. Wavell Canteen was a temporary halting place and those who were required to stay longer in Delhi were removed to other camps. It was the responsibility of the Assistant Commissioner (camps) to send the refugees to various camps from the Wavell Canteen.⁷⁷
- **Searchers Organisation:** It was formed to trace the missing persons during those days of calamity. During the period of one month before 31 October 1947, the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation (Min of R and R) received more than 5000 enquiries by their relatives about the missing persons in the West Pakistan.⁷⁸
- **Displaced Persons Inquiries and Search Service:** It was set up in October 1947. By 22nd of January 1948, over 23,000 inquiries about missing persons had been received. The Service received enquiries at the rate of over a thousand a week. One of the

⁷⁷ File no. 3(26)/48, Min of R and R, D. A.

⁷⁸ HT, 13 October 1947, p. 3.

problems faced by the Service was to restore to parents and guardians their children from Pakistan. This was done by exhibiting the recovered children's photographs at refugee camps.⁷⁹

- **Refugee Welfare and Vigilance Committee:** It was formed with the aim of exercising vigilance on the activities of the Central and Provincial governments relating to the relief and rehabilitation of the displaced persons.⁸⁰
- **Involvement of Refugees:** New policies and methods were evolved to resettle the refugees. One unique example was set by the Minister of R and R, Mr. Mohan Lal Saxena when he led a few volunteers to level a 34-acre plot of land in Nizamuddin site where 700 tenements were proposed to be built under the Nizamuddin Village Expansion Scheme. The administration claimed that this step was taken to resolve the 'problem of labour shortage'. However the reason put forward seems untenable in view of the fact there were a number of refugees without any work at that period.

The Minister prepared a self-help squad consisting of officers and members of the ministerial staff of the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation. It was decided that those refugees who offered their services would be given preference when the newly built houses were allotted. The Ministry itself consisted of a large number of refugee employees and hence it was expected that many of them would take advantage of the

⁷⁹ HT, 23 January 1948, p. 3.

⁸⁰ HT, 14 December 1947, p. 12.



Shree Mohanlal Saxena, Minister for Relief and Rehabilitation, with shovel in his hand levelling up the Delhi Nizamuddin extension area with other members of the ministerial staff. Right: A group of ladies helping with pick-axes.

opportunity. On the appointed day i.e., 1 July 1948 the Minister led a volunteer squad of about 500 people and worked for nearly two hours with spades and shovels. The Rehabilitation Commissioner of Delhi, Govind H. Seth, came with about 150 refugee volunteers from Anand Parbat Wavell Canteen and Kingsway Camp. Another 150 people came from the Delhi Provincial Congress Committee and other public organisations. A batch of women volunteers was brought by Sucheta Kripalani.⁸¹

A similar method was evolved to meet the 'labour shortage' by involving the refugees themselves in the process, by providing incentives to them. In Kingsway Camp a new House Building Scheme was launched, in which it was provided that any refugee who laid 6000 bricks would be entitled to own a house. It was found that this motivated the refugees to come for the work and start laying the bricks.⁸² These instances point towards a shift in Government policy, from keeping the refugees passive to the resettlement work undertaken to a more sensible policy of involving them in the entire process. This new approach, apart from lightening the burden on the government authorities, would have imparted a sense of hope and participation among the refugees.

This approach was furthered by Nehru's promise to associate the refugees' representatives more closely with rehabilitation policy-making. The main executive body entrusted with the task decided to appoint two advisers- one representing the Sind refugees and the other those of East Bengal.⁸³

⁸¹ HT, 30 June and 2 July 1948

⁸² HT, 2 June 1948, p. 3.

⁸³ HT, 8 June 1948, p.5

- *Measures Against Epidemics:* The timely intervention of the administration towards checking epidemics saved Delhi from outbreaks. Delhi was congested and health facilities were strained. There were newspaper reports that gave accounts of the increased rush in the hospitals of the city. The residents of Delhi complained about the inadequacy of medical aid in the capital, especially in the congested areas. They resented the increase in population due to the Punjab disturbances and blamed the local administration for having failed to meet the situation.⁸⁴ Also, with the influx of refugees, the amount of refuse that had to be cleared every day had practically doubled. In order to guard Delhi against any kind of health crisis the local authorities decided to incur an expenditure of about Rupees 80 lakhs for efficient maintenance of health services in Delhi.⁸⁵

The local administration undertook intense inoculation drive against cholera in various refugee camps in Delhi. Over 40,000 people living in the camps were proposed to be covered in a fortnight. To coerce the camp residents to get vaccinated the administration issued orders that it would stop food supplies to those who did not get themselves inoculated.⁸⁶ Also, as a newspaper reported, the incidence of small pox in Delhi was comparatively lower in 1948 than in preceding years despite the influx of a large number of refugees, possibly due to the mass vaccination campaign launched by the Health Department of Delhi Province.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ HT, 15 May 1948, p. 3.

⁸⁵ HT, 10 April 1948, p. 5.

⁸⁶ HT, 6 April 1948, p. 4.

⁸⁷ HT, 6 May 1948, p. 3.

- **Emergency Measures:** The Government set up an Emergency Control Committee to review and plan relief work at frequent intervals. The capital had been divided into ten zones for the sake of convenience, with one social worker in charge of each zone. They were to hear the grievances of displaced persons and provide relief in deserving cases. A representative of the Emergency Committee was posted in the control room in Delhi to guide and direct displaced persons in all matters of relief work.⁸⁸

The New Delhi Municipality made arrangements to receive and deal with emergency calls throughout the day and night. The number provided to the public to make a call were 7144 or 7666.⁸⁹

The deluge of July and August brought great inconvenience for the refugees staying in camps and tents. The total number of refugees from the Humayun's tomb, Bela Road and other tented refugee camps, who moved after the rains commenced to roofed buildings in the Red Fort barracks, Government House Estate and Travancore House, reached 1400 on 2 August 1948.⁹⁰

In April 1948 when the temperature was extremely high, staying in the camps in the open would have been awfully uncomfortable. Taking this into consideration the authorities made arrangements for cooler tents in the camps at Purana Qila, Tis Hazari and the Kingsway camp which accommodated nearly 45,000 refugees. The

⁸⁸ HT, 8 June 1948, p.5

⁸⁹ HT, 6 May 1948, p. 3.

⁹⁰ HT, 3 August 1949, p. 3

tents were covered with thatch. Thatching of a small sized tent cost Rs 100. The majority of the tents in Purana Qila were much bigger in size. The total expenditure for thatching was calculated to be about Rupees 89,000.⁹¹

- The Rehabilitation Ministry provided training to one hundred social workers who would supervise various aspects of refugee rehabilitation. They were trained for three months at the social Workers Training Centre, run by the Rehabilitation Ministry. The trainers were selected from among the refugee workers and were given a stipend on the condition that they served for at least three years in rehabilitation in any part of India.⁹²
- The Rehabilitation Ministry was exempted from the 20% cut on capital expenditure imposed by the Finance Ministry on all other ministries as part of the Government's economy measures.⁹³
- Special goods trains were arranged to bring cloth to Delhi from the neighboring states.⁹⁴ Also the Government facilitated the donations made by people to refugees by exempting from postage charges and registration fees those parcels not exceeding 400 *tolas* in weight, that contained gifted clothes, including blankets for refugees.⁹⁵

⁹¹ HT, 22 April 1948, p. 7.

⁹² HT, 28 October 1949, p. 4.

⁹³ HT, 15 October 1949, p. 3.

⁹⁴ HT, 23 October 1947, p. 10.

⁹⁵ HT, 2 November 1947, p. 3.

Conclusion

The description of schemes and policies undertaken for the different categories of the refugees does not end here. There were a number of more arrangements made towards the resettlement of refugees and they have been enumerated in different works on the subject.

These schemes and measures reflect the amount of resources and energy of the Government that went into the formidable task. It was rated as the foremost priority, as claimed by different leaders and officials, at least for the first two years. The policy makers had taken pains to delineate the various schemes and as the need arose, they were changed accordingly, and new schemes adopted. Although I have not mentioned many other schemes (like arrangements for housing, shops, cottage industries, etc, which have been already enumerated in different works), a cursory look at them highlights the concern of the policy makers to touch every aspect that formed part of the rehabilitation process.

The process started well before the partition actually occurred. This can be said about the help to refugee students and the arrangements made by the Military Evacuation Organisation to assist refugees to cross the border and move towards the Indian side. After partition, the task became more complicated as the government was providing both immediate relief and preparing for future resettlement. The rehabilitation work went on for a decade and it was only after 1956 that the government started winding up the process. The long stretched out process undertaken reflects the diligence and grit of those who were a part of it. There were a few well-known and many unknown names that

deserve special applause for their commendable efforts and dedication. Some known names include M. S. Randhawa, the Deputy Commissioner of Delhi, K. C. Neogy, the Rehabilitation Minister, Rameshwari Nehru, Sucheta Kripalani, H. M. Patel. There were however several others at the lower rungs of the administration, but for whose diligent and consistent efforts the process would not have been sustained over such a long period.

The whole process however was not without loopholes, both at the stage of policy making and the stage of implementation. Where there was an army of committed workers there was also a band of corrupt and inefficient officials. The subsequent chapters go into details about different instances of corruption and laxity in the administration. Further, there were a few constraints that hindered the process. To mention a few: the communally disturbed atmosphere, the far from concluded formalities and arrangements with the outgoing colonial government and the Pakistan administration. Similar other factors, that have been dealt in the last chapter, did affect the efficiency of Indian Government. However, keeping such shortcomings apart, one cannot deny that the government was actively involved in the rehabilitation process. For the independent Indian government the partition and subsequent crisis offered the first opportunity to administer its resources towards nation rebuilding. The handling of the process also served as a great learning experience for the newly established Indian government.

CHAPTER 2

REFUGEE RESPONSES

Partition was a great upheaval. Its repercussions can still be felt. It created a new set of people- the refugees- on both sides of the border. The search for a shelter is fraught with several difficulties. In the long process of finding shelter and rebuilding lives, the refugees devise several coping strategies, which form the main theme of this chapter. The chapter also looks into the response of the original residents of Delhi towards the refugee influx, and the complexity of the relationship that developed. I have tried to narrate the story of refugees starting from when they left their homes; going on to their journey towards Delhi and concluding with their stay and gradual assimilation into the socio-economic setting of Delhi.

Uprooting

For most refugees there was no realization that this departure was permanent. Most of them left home with a few valuables and some money. They thought that once normalcy was restored they would return home. An affluent family in the dry fruits business in Dera Gazi Khan, managed to keep just some jewellery. Since there were some small children in that family they also carried a sewing machine to stitch the children's torn clothes. The old lady of the family stitched some pillow cases with dry fruits inside for eating on the way. They came to Delhi never to return. There is another similar example where a person kept all the valuables and money in a trunk and hid it under the earth in

his courtyard. He came empty handed to Delhi with his family, finally to stay here forever, and had to live a very tough life.¹ That trunk was probably discovered by someone who was also a victim of partition; or it may still be lying there.

Few could come to the other side of boundary with all their loved ones around. A refugee, who had come to Delhi after the disturbances broke out in Bahawalpur, finally met his family by a coincidence. This man, Laxmi Narayan, was working in the railways in Karachi. His two brothers and mother were staying at Bahawalpur. As the riots broke out, he left for Delhi by air. His family came to Delhi by train. They were ignorant of each others' whereabouts. While his family was staying in Birla Mandir he was searching for them in various camps and stations. He had a sister in Kanpur and so he finally decided to go there in case his family had reached Kanpur. Before leaving for Kanpur he went to see a friend who was also staying in Birla Mandir. A few minutes after he had left, his friend met his brother and informed him about the visit to Kanpur. His brother took a vehicle and reached the next station before the train reached. On this fateful day the separated family was reunited.²

The question of choice of one's nation was not relevant for many, although there were some for whom the country to which they would belong did matter. The latter category consisted of mostly those who were educated and conscious about the political developments taking place in the country for past decades. This included two sets of people: the first were those who felt that India would provide them opportunities, for

¹ Based on interviews with Vidya Devi and Santram in Old Rajinder Nagar on 19 November 2006.

² Based on interview with Laxmi Narayan in Old Rajinder Nagar on 20 November 2006.

example in politics or business; the second category comprised those who never believed in the concept of Pakistan. They preferred to stay in India, which they considered was a secular and progressive nation as opposed to the idea which formed the basis for the conceptualization of Pakistan. But for a majority of people, crossing border was a means to escape those horrific and bloody days. Randhawa observed:

The fatal decision was not long delayed, as the ring of death and destruction closed in from all sides. The hand that was sowing seed in the fields in the morning was hurriedly packing in the afternoon.³

Gyanesh Kudaisya makes a similar observation when he says that “for most of the rural population which was displaced, the traumatic period of uncertainty of whether to go or not was relatively short and the ultimate decision was often made abruptly”.⁴

Arrival Of Refugees

On 21 August 1947, the estimated strength of refugees in Delhi was 1,20,000.⁵ This was a huge addition to the already existing 9,17,939 people in Delhi (according to 1941 census).⁶ The quota system was devised in July 1948 for the distribution of refugee population to provinces. Within a year of fixing the quota Delhi had exceeded its limit.⁷

³ Randhawa, *Out of the Ashes*, p. 25

⁴ Tan and Kudaisya, *The Aftermath of Partition*, p. 126.

⁵ HT, 21 August 1947, p. 3.

⁶ Datta, 'Panjabi Refugees', p. 443

⁷ Chatterji, *Refugee Rehabilitation*, p.54.

The Chief Commissioner and the Deputy Commissioner of Delhi in an interview stated that it was impossible to take in any more refugees. The Provincial Civil Supplies Director had also said that it was not possible to allocate any more food for the great rush of refugees from East Punjab. They suggested that all further refugees should accommodate themselves in camps in East Punjab.⁸ In spite of the fact that there were many who left Delhi during the period, there was still a sizeable addition to Delhi's population. During the period between 1947 and 1951, 329,000 Muslims left the Delhi region. During the same period 495,000 refugees arrived in Delhi. The population increase, thus, was by 166,000⁹. Of the total population of Delhi in 1951, which was 17,44,072,¹⁰ the refugees comprised 28.4%.¹¹

Thomas Krafft talks about Old Delhi in his article. He says most Muslims occupants who had been staying in the city for centuries (as in the districts of Mori Gate and Kashmere Gate) had to leave.¹² Till the middle of nineteenth century both the Hindus and Muslims were equal in number. After partition this changed with the intrusion of a large number of Hindus into former Muslim quarters.¹³

⁸ *The Hindu*, 27 August 1947, p. 6.

⁹ Thomas Krafft, 'Contemporary Old Delhi: Transformation of a historical place' in Eckart Ehlers and Thomas Krafft, ed., *Shahjahanabad / Old Delhi: Tradition and Colonial Change*, Bonn, 1993, p. 95

¹⁰ Datta, 'Panjabi Refugees', p. 443

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Krafft, 'Contemporary Old Delhi', p. 95.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

The refugees who settled in Delhi included Hindu Punjabis from West Punjab, non-Muslim Pathans from NWFP and the Sindhis from Sind. Delhi thus assimilated a heterogeneous mass of people as refugees.¹⁴

All means of transport were used by the refugees to cross the border and reach a land unfamiliar for most of them, yet safe and with hope of a better and secure future. It was a land “where they could live a free life again, and preserve their self respect and honour”.¹⁵

There were migrations even before the partition. The disturbances in Bengal, Bihar, the N.W.F.P., and West Punjab led to a migration of nearly five thousand non-Muslims and a few thousand Muslims.¹⁶ In the beginning the Government felt that the displacement was a temporary one and that once normalcy was restored those who migrated would be repatriated. A news report said:

Leading members of the National Congress, including Gandhiji, seem to hold the view that ultimately it should be the policy of the Indian and Pakistan governments to take back their people who were compelled to migrate.¹⁷

That is why, initially the refugees were left to themselves to migrate. However, later the Governments of India and Pakistan had realized that the migration was permanent and

¹⁴ Suparna Chatterji, *Refugee Rehabilitation*, p. 54.

¹⁵ Randhawa, *Out of the Ashes*, p. 26

¹⁶ C. N. Vakil, *Economic Consequences of Divided India*, Bombay, 1950, p. 78.

¹⁷ *The Hindu*, 14 November 1947, p. 6.

needed planned transfer of the migrants. The Government of East and West Punjab undertook to give the maximum assistance towards the evacuation of refugees from one province to the other.¹⁸

Transporting lakhs of uprooted people from the distant and remote parts of Pakistan to India was a difficult task. Since during those long distance journeys the travellers had to be provided with protection this task was entrusted to the army, which formed the Military Evacuation Organization (M.E.O) that came into existence on September 5, 1947.¹⁹ Even before the M.E.O started functioning, nine hundred thousand refugees had already come to India.²⁰ The M.E.O organized huge foot convoys each numbering 30,000 to 40,000. Airplanes in many cases flew cooked food as well as food grains and other necessities for these marching columns. Drugs, vaccines and doctors were reached by air as well as by motor transport. Field ambulance units were sent to inoculate refugees before they crossed the border. Large scale movement ceased by the end of the year. The last foot convoy consisting of 10,000 from Montgomery reached India in the middle of May 1948.

The Military Evacuation Organization of India also organized road transport. It alone used 1,200 military and civilian trucks. The United Provinces Government provided 600 trucks and another few hundred came from private organizations.

¹⁸ The Hindu, 27 August 1947, p. 1.

¹⁹ Randhawa, *Out of the Ashes*, p. 26.

²⁰ Vakil, *Economic Consequences*, p. 79.

Over 400,000 non-Muslim and over 200,000 Muslim refugees were evacuated by motor transport. These vehicles were also used for collecting non-Muslims stranded in villages and small pockets in Pakistan and bringing them to railway stations.

Trains were used in large numbers. Over 673 trains moved over 2,300,000 refugees across the border and inside India between 27 August and 6 November 1947. Scheduled trains in East Punjab were suspended so that the maximum number of railway carriages could be used for the movement of refugees from Pakistan to India and their dispersal to camps within India.

Aircraft was another means employed to get evacuated. Aircraft available in India and a fleet of British Overseas Airways Corporation planes employed for the purpose made 962 flights covering 939,439 miles between 15 September and 7 December, 1947 and evacuating 10,060 persons on the outward journey and 27,500 on the inward journey²¹.

Ravinder Kaur makes an interesting observation about the class differences in the various means of transport employed to migrate. She tries to highlight the complexity and multiplicity of experiences during the migration which the popular narrative overlooks.

To quote her:

²¹ HT, 15 August 1948, p. 3.

The duration of the journey and the means of transport used to undertake the journey are crucial indicators of the class differences that significantly alter the experience of displacement.²²

I made similar observations during my interviews with refugees. Those who had the advantage of taking flights and getting accommodation in a relative's or friend's house had not much to talk about the journey and the difficulties surmounted to return to a normal life. For them, as Ravinder Kaur informs, the 'memory of "what happened during Partition" is, therefore, limited to the stories they had heard or news reports they had read'.²³ However, those whose "last journey" was either in trucks or train, and those who were complete strangers with little or no money, had many tales to narrate. It is these tales and experiences of the rural and urban poor and middle class that the Partition historiography mostly captures.

The memory of the long arduous journey fraught with the fear of being persecuted on the way is still etched fresh in the minds of those who were lucky enough to survive. Attacks were frequent and people were butchered, belongings looted and women abducted. Foot convoys, in particular were most vulnerable to such attacks. Their misery, however, did not end there. The foot convoys had to bear torrential rains and floods. The floods halted road and railway communications by washing away roads, railway tracks, bridges, etc.²⁴ People coped with starvation, fatigue, illness and natural disasters.

²² Ravinder Kaur, 'the last journey', EPW, Volume XLI, 3 June 2006, p. 2224.

²³ Ibid, p. 2227.

²⁴ Randhawa, *Out of the Ashes*, p. 29.

Accidents, which were sometimes fatal, also occurred. An incident was narrated by an old woman refugee whose husband had a narrow escape from death. This woman with an infant child could not wash clothes for many days and hardly any cloth was left to cover the child. The truck in which they were traveling halted near a pond and she started washing clothes while her husband, collected water from the pond in a container. The pond had a slippery ground and he lost his balance and slipped down. He would have drowned but for the help of people around who pulled him up.²⁵ There were instances as highlighted by M. S. Randhawa in his book, when “many aged or infirm persons who could not walk were left to die on the roadside. Mothers threw their new born babies in bushes...”²⁶

As the refugees reached the Indian side, they were convinced that there was no looking back. Now this was the place where they had to make space for themselves. As we will see later, these refugees succeeded in rebuilding their lives and recreating what they had left on the other side of the border. They were assimilated in the city and made it their new home.

All the migrants did not come to Delhi directly. Some first went to Uttar Pradesh or Punjab. When they felt that the place was not offering opportunities they required, they left and came to Delhi. Many had never planned to come to Delhi, but since the trains, the military vans, the airplanes, etc., were heading to Delhi they found themselves in the capital. For those who made the conscious choice of going to Delhi, there were a variety

²⁵ Based on interview with Vidya Devi, in Old Rajinder Nagar on 20 November 2006.

²⁶ Randhawa, *Out of the Ashes*, p. 28.

of reasons. Delhi, owing to its national capital status, offered a safe and secure refuge. With its commercial importance and communication facilities, it provided a suitable space for the establishment of factories. Also the refugees knew that it had enormous potential for employment. Some refugees preferred to come to Delhi because they had relatives here.

Finding Shelter

On reaching Delhi, the refugees took shelter wherever they could find a little space. In the beginning the government's arrangements were too meagre to accommodate in refugee camps the big hordes of refugees who kept coming to Delhi everyday. Around 27 August 1947 about 4,000 refugees were arriving everyday into Delhi and its suburbs.²⁷ These refugees accommodated themselves in schools, colleges, temples, military barracks gardens, etc.²⁸ Railway platforms, streets, pavements, thoroughfares, etc., were also occupied by them. Among them a few were lucky enough to find relatives in Delhi who accommodated them. Still others accommodated themselves in houses Muslims had evacuated.

The shelterless refugees or those living in camps or with relatives or friends were primarily concerned with getting a permanent house of their own. Even those residing in rented houses or illegally occupied Muslim evacuee houses applied for house allotment. Possession of one's own home gave a sense of stability and security. It helped bringing

²⁷ HT, 28 August 1947, p. 3.

²⁸ Datta, 'Panjabi Refugees', p. 444.

normalcy to their lives. It was only after getting a house that they could plan the future afresh.

Applying for accommodation and claiming compensation for the property left in Pakistan was done in the Custodian and Evacuee Department. It was a long drawn out process and getting a small two-roomed house took months and sometimes few years.

The problems of refugees were aggravated to a great extent by the corruption that was rampant in the government circles. Those with money and connections could get their work done without trouble. This becomes evident both from interviews and newspaper reports. To quote from a letter to the editor of *The Hindustan Times*:

Due to great rush at the office of the Custodian of Refugees' property... it has not been possible for poor and humble refugees to fill and hand over the forms of houses and shelter... It is alleged that the clerks issued the receipts to only those who were known to them or who greased their palms.²⁹

An incident was reported when two evacuee property managers in the Custodian office were arrested on charge of accepting bribes for issuing a property that had actually been declared as a non evacuee property.³⁰

²⁹ HT, 17 October 1947, p. 4.

³⁰ HT, 17 July 1949, p. 9.

A person hailing from Dera Ismail Khan, Pakistan and the lone survivor of his family had to face the same corruption. On 20 September 1947, he went to one of the Special Magistrates of Sabzimandi for getting allotment of one flat vacated by Muslims. The Magistrate after signing the application asked him to take possession of a house in Roshanara Road, which he did immediately. On the 26th when he was returning to his residence he found his belongings scattered in the street and the house occupied by a stranger. The stranger informed him that the house had been allotted to him by the Special Magistrate and showed the application countersigned by the same Magistrate who had permitted the refugee to occupy the house. The refugee got another application signed by the same Magistrate and occupied a vacant room near a dustbin in the Basti Punjabian. But again on 5 October the same Magistrate came to his room and asked him to shift to some other place as that room had been allotted to some other person. When he said that the Magistrate had himself allotted that room, the refugee was told that the word written on his application was not "allotted" but "attested".³¹

Another example can be given reflecting the predicament of refugees waiting for accommodation. A leading medical practitioner from Lahore who claimed to possess "three spacious bungalows with a number of servant quarters" applied for a residential quarter and a clinic soon after reaching Delhi in October 1947. In February 1948 he was allotted accommodation but possession of it was not given. Later in May another allotment was done. Two rooms were allotted at Bela Road for both residential purposes and for clinic. He had a family of five daughters and one son and the allotted house was

³¹ HT, 12 October 1947, p. 4.

too small to accommodate the whole family. Hence he made another application for larger accommodation for which he remained waiting (as on 11 January 1949).³²

As if the laxity and corruption in administration was not enough, the refugees became victims of many tricksters also. The refugees in desperate need of houses fell easy prey to them. There was an incident reported in a daily where a refugee lost a sum of rupees 673 to a cheat who took an advance and showed the refugee a house in Chandini Chowk but never turned up to give the house keys.³³

There were numerous houses vacated by Muslims. As the refugees poured into Delhi they forcibly occupied these houses. However this was illegal in the eyes of the Indian government as such property was supposed to be disposed of by the government. So the administration often resorted to force to evict the refugee occupants.

Later, there were instances when the Government legalized the occupation of houses by granting the possession right to the occupying refugees. This was done in return for rent and house tax. In these cases also the refugees had to face some problems from the way the process worked. For example there were complaints by the refugees of Narela, Delhi who expressed dissatisfaction against the unreasonable rent charged by the authorities. Force was sometimes used against those delaying the payment. The Custodian of Evacuee Property allegedly collected the dues with the aid of the police

³² HT, 11 January 1949, p. 4.

³³ HT, 18 April 1948, p. 9.

force. The refugees were said to have tendered their complaints to higher authorities but to no avail.³⁴

Getting accommodation was in itself a strenuous job. But once the accommodation was finalized it created new difficulties. Many refugees were not very satisfied with the allotted plots or houses and lands. There was a family who never went to the allotted house plot in Karol Bagh area as it was felt that the social atmosphere there was not healthy enough for their growing children.³⁵ Such dissatisfaction was particularly true for the allotted agricultural lands. The land was mostly located in a place far from the allotted residential plots. Moreover sometimes the land was not very fertile and needed a huge investment of both money and time. Since the refugees did not possess any shelter in the village where the land was allotted, they either sold it off or abandoned it. Those who actually made use of the land for farming did so with great difficulty. I met a refugee who used to stay with his wife under the tree on the allotted farm during the growing and harvesting season, as the allotted house was very far.³⁶

Illegal Occupation Of Evacuee Houses

As mentioned earlier, the homeless refugees were also involved in forcible occupation of houses vacated by the Muslims who either left for Pakistan or were residing in camps. I cite below a few such instances:

³⁴ HT, 2 June 1948, p. 4.

³⁵ Based on interview with Vidya Devi in Old Rajinder Nagar on 20 November 2006.

³⁶ Based on interview with Ram Swarup in Old Rajinder Nagar on 20 November 2006.

On January 5, 1948, refugees tried to forcibly enter Muslim evacuee houses in Phatak Habash Khan, in spite of police resistance. They resorted to “old tactics of bringing forward women”. The police had to use tear gas to disperse the unruly mob of about one thousand.³⁷

Two days later, a batch of women entered in Katra Ghee situated in Phatak Habash Khan with a view to occupy the vacant Muslim houses forcibly.³⁸

Two refugee men and five women attempted to enter a house at Pul Bangash, then occupied by the police picket posted there.³⁹

In Sabzimandi area of Delhi a few refugees forcibly occupied four vacant houses on the refusal of the landlords to rent the houses to them. Property was also looted. This ultimately led to a twelve hour curfew in Delhi.⁴⁰

There was another similar incident when the refugees occupied the buildings of six municipal schools and in spite of the best efforts of the Delhi Municipal Committee they had not vacated these buildings. The committee finally decided to approach the police authorities to get the buildings vacated.⁴¹

³⁷ File no. 21/48, Confidential, Delhi Archives (hereafter D. A.), New Delhi.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ File no. 68/47, Confidential, Delhi Archives, New Delhi.

⁴⁰ HT, 26 August 1947, p. 1.

⁴¹ HT, 15 December 1947, p. 3.

A news report talks about prosecution of 133 refugees on the charge of theft of wood and criminal trespass into the gardens known as Tir Andy Khan and Jhabbar Bag Wali in Kingsway. These were evacuee property. Later 79 of the refugees were granted bail.⁴²

As regards the reasons behind such unlawful acts of the refugees the Deputy Commissioner of Delhi, M. S. Randhawa, provides the explanation in one of his letters to the Commissioner of Delhi:

A large number of refugees, many of whom have families and children are extremely discontented. They are suffering great hardship, especially in the present cold wave. Many of them have been so desperate that they have no hesitation even in going to jail. It is persons such as these who invade empty Muslim houses.⁴³

Illegal takeovers and allocation of evacuee properties through the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation became the “quickest solutions to the acute housing crisis”. The wakf properties in the former Muslim quarters were non-transferable. But they were taken over by the incoming refugees. Thomas Krafft highlights how till today a large number of property ownership disputes are lodged in the courts and “several hundreds of these were instituted by the Delhi Wakf Board alone”.⁴⁴ The officer I met in the Rehabilitation Department in the Jaisalmer house, New Delhi, in September 2006 also mentioned many

⁴² HT, 8 July 1949, p. 4.

⁴³ File no. 68/47, Confidential, report for the week ending April 30, 1948, D. A., New Delhi.

⁴⁴ Thomas Krafft, ‘Contemporary Old Delhi’, p. 95.

property disputes, which have their roots in such illegal takeovers and allocations made by the Custodian and are still unresolved.

The administration also failed to take adequate steps to address the housing problem. In Pul Bangash and Sadar Bazar areas as many as 30% of houses belonging to Muslims were lying vacant.⁴⁵ The confidential files of government inform us that there were “hundreds of Muslim houses which have been kept vacant for more than seven months”.⁴⁶ The Custodian failed to secure and list the evacuee houses. As on July 15, 1948, out of about 2000 vacant Muslim house only about 70 to 80 had been secured.⁴⁷ This had further aggravated the problem.

There were several occasions when Randhawa complained about the lack of housing. To quote him:

In spite of setting up of so many committees and boards including the Rehabilitation and Development Board not a single house has been built and no tangible results have been obtained.⁴⁸

He further complained:

There is a great deal of discontent among the refugees who are suffering a good deal of hardship in the rainy weather. Refugee tents in Tis Hazari were flooded

⁴⁵ File no. 68/47, Confidential, Weekly report, D. A.

⁴⁶ File no. 1/48, Confidential, D. A.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid (this was a report for the fortnight end of 15 May 1948).

with water and most of the tents in Kingsway leaked badly...Excepting houses which have been illegally constructed by the refugees, not a single house has been constructed by the government. The scheme of building kachha houses is at a standstill on account of bad weather. I inspected these houses a few days ago and found that kachha bricks which were stored nearby for building purposes had been spoiled by rain.⁴⁹

Apart from such inefficiency on the part of the administration there was another roadblock in the path towards addressing housing problem. It was a Government decision that Hindu and Sikh refugees were not to be settled in the vacant houses situated in predominantly Muslim areas.⁵⁰ This was done in view of the prevailing communally sensitive atmosphere.

The housing problem was made worse by the continuing influx of refugees into Delhi. This included the Muslim returnees from Pakistan and the refugees from East Punjab, where the camps had been closed.⁵¹ The Muslim returnees mainly included the Meos, a Muslim tribe found in the hilly regions of Gurgaon, Alwar and Bharatpur and also scattered over Delhi.⁵² A fact finding committee of officials and non-officials reported on 13 July 1948 that out of 4,01,596 Meos in Gurgaon, Alwar and Bharatpur

⁴⁹ Ibid (this was a report for the fortnight end of July 15, 1948).

⁵⁰ File no. 68/47, Confidential, D. A.,

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Selected Works of Nehru, Second Series, Vol. 6, p. 105.

regions, 1,93,085 had migrated to Pakistan and of these 9,556 had returned to India.⁵³ A news report informed:

Large numbers of Muslims collect daily in front of the office of the High Commissioner for India in Pakistan to obtain permits to return to India. From 800 to 1,000 Muslims apply for permits, out of whom about 350 get permits.⁵⁴

The government decided not to encourage this influx. On 19 May 1948, the Government of India issued a communiqué stating that while it would welcome the return of Muslim evacuees from Pakistan, such return should be “subject to any interest that may have been created in pursuance of plans for rehabilitation of non-Muslim refugees. Large scale one-way movement of evacuees was no more to be permitted”.⁵⁵ Railway services between Delhi and Lahore, scheduled to commence from 20 April 1948, were postponed as they might encourage influx of Meos and other Muslims from Pakistan.⁵⁶

The return of Muslim refugees from Pakistan created a great deal of uneasiness among the refugees. The latter were afraid that they would be deprived of the houses which had already been occupied by them and the prospects of getting empty houses would also fade. Refugees in possession of Muslim houses had declared that unless their

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ HT, 8 August 1948, p. 1.

⁵⁵ Selected Works of Nehru, Second Series, Vol. 6, p. 105.

⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 106.

houses were not returned to them in Pakistan they should not be dispossessed.⁵⁷ There were refugees who had spent large sums of money in repairing Muslim houses. The refugee villagers were discontented as the returning Muslim evacuees were claiming a share in the crops which the former had raised on the latter's land during their absence. The Muslims had returned to villages like Chandan Hula, Hauz Khas, Hauz Rani and Khureji.⁵⁸ It was to avert this problem of new arrivals that the refugees generally resorted to tactics of creating panic among incoming Muslims by spreading rumors that some sort of trouble would take place.⁵⁹

Illegally occupying the evacuee houses was not the only means resorted to by the refugees in desperate search for houses. There were reports of protests by the residents of Karol Bagh against some refugees who were digging foundations for residential flats in open spaces in Karol Bagh. Refugees had made markings for proposed foundations within as much as five feet of the main entrances to some bungalows. This amounted to transgression of proprietary rights and violation of municipal laws. In some cases the bungalows were vacant and the owners were unaware of the developments. There were also cases where the owners had actually allowed the refugees to carry on their work after arriving at some sort of understanding with them.⁶⁰ Also there were instances of refugees illegally building their own houses in Government owned lands.⁶¹

⁵⁷ File no. 68/47, Confidential, D.A.

⁵⁸ File no. 1/48, Confidential, D.A.

⁵⁹ File no. 68/47, Confidential, D.A.

⁶⁰ HT, 3 June 1948, p. 3.

⁶¹ File no. 1/48, Confidential, D.A.

The above instances, apart from highlighting the coping strategies of refugees to deal with the situation, show how the refugees were struggling with everyone- the administration, the locals and the Muslim returnees. It appears as if the refugees had antagonized everyone around. The clash of interests was natural as the resources were limited and the administration could not evolve an effective solution to the crisis.

Life In The Camps

The traumatized refugees found shelter in the various refugee camps. Life in the camps was difficult. There were three refugee camps that were set up by the Government. These were located in Kingsway, in Tibia College area in Karol Bagh, and in Shahadra.⁶² There were altogether seven camps in Delhi in April 1948.⁶³ The other four camps were at Purana Qila, Anand Parbat, Tis Hazari and Bela Road. Wavell Canteen was a transit camp where about 800 people could stay. The Kingsway Camp, the largest, with 30,000 inmates, looked like a small town. The population of this camp had nearly doubled during a period of three months preceding April 18, 1948. Purana Qila was the biggest self supporting colony of refugees where about 5,500 people were staying.⁶⁴ It was a shelter meant for the Muslim refugees- those who were resident of Delhi but were rendered homeless due to the communal disturbances and those who came from neighbouring states. H. M. Patel informs us that the Muslim refugees from neighbouring states

⁶² Datta, 'Panjabi Refugees' p. 445.

⁶³ HT, 19 April 1948, p. 7.

⁶⁴ HT, 19 April 1948, p. 7.

belonged to the villages of the states of Alwar and Bharatpur, the adjoining districts of Uttar Pradesh and East Punjab.⁶⁵

A census was carried in the camps on the night of 2 and 3 October 1948. A “stay at home” order was issued and a physical check of all persons was carried out in every room, barrack or tent. The census calculated the camp population to be 43,970 on the 3 October 1948.⁶⁶ The total population in the camps under Delhi administration on 15 October 1948 was 43,424. Out of these, 17,425 were self supporting. The rest numbering 25,999 were getting free rations.⁶⁷

Free rations were distributed among the refugees in the camps by the government. They were issued temporary ration cards to draw food supplies from government agencies. Permanent ration cards were only issued to those who had got living accommodation. This provision however created difficulties for those refugees who were without any accommodation. The Rationing Department declined to give permanent cards to such refugees as it was felt that since they would be moving from place to place it would be difficult to check the bogus ration cards from getting into circulation.⁶⁸

The refugees were not very satisfied with the arrangements in the camps. A demand was made by the Homeless Provinces Refugee Association to increase the ration for the

⁶⁵ H. M. Patel, *Rites of Passage*, New Delhi, 2005, p. 85.

⁶⁶ File no. 1/48, Confidential, Fortnightly Report for the 1st half of October 1948.

⁶⁷ File no. 1/48, Confidential, Fortnightly Report for the 1st half of October 1948.

⁶⁸ HT, 6 January 1948, p. 3.

refugee and improve its quality, overhaul the management of the camps and make arrangements for sanitation and privacy.⁶⁹ There were some people who never wanted to go to the camps owing to the congestion and dismal arrangements for food and sanitation. This was particularly true for those who were well off. They preferred to stay with relatives or friends; if this was not possible they rented houses. Illegal ration cards also came to light. There were a few instances where refugees, who had already been allotted accommodation, used old ration cards of the camps for free rations. This happened in the Kingsway Camp where about 7,000 ration cards were held illegally. This reduced resources for genuine refugees.⁷⁰

The Kingsway Camp was originally meant for 5,000 refugees. It finally came to accommodate 30,000 of them. On 6 May 1948, the strength of the camp was 29,000, and was increasing daily. On an average about 60 refugees came and 50 left the camp everyday. The groups of refugees who would go out to settle in the UP or East Punjab and other places often returned to the camp dissatisfied. The thatched roofing of the barracks was in a battered state. Thefts of rations and clothing in the camps were also not uncommon. There was an acute water shortage. Hundreds of women and children were seen washing and bathing, with their scanty clothing, in a nearby tank.⁷¹

⁶⁹ HT, 18 April 1948, p. 10.

⁷⁰ HT, 7 May 1948, p. 8.

⁷¹ HT, 7 May 1948, p. 8.

The condition of the Kurukshetra Camp, a hundred miles North West of Delhi was similar. With 20,000 refugees it gave a look of a “miniature army camp”⁷². The miserable state of Kurukshetra Camp was brought to light by Mrs. Sucheta Kripalani. Accommodating a population of nearly 20,000, this camp had just 800 tents. As Kripalani said in a newspaper report, due to this “a fairly large percentage of refugees have to spend these wintry nights in the open and this accounts for the several cases of deaths of smaller children”.⁷³ She also complained against the inadequate arrangements of medical and sanitation. She further highlighted the callous attitude of the Government authorities. About 13,000 refugees were sent out to settle in nearby villages vacated by the Muslims. These refugees were supplied with rations for only seven days and left on their own to settle wherever possible and harvest standing crops. A large number of these refugees came back without finding adequate shelter. She stated: “their (refugees) principal complaint was that the assurance given to them that the Revenue Department of the East Punjab Government would offer them necessary help in connection with their rehabilitation was not implemented”.⁷⁴

The camps, though devised as a temporary measure to provide relief, continued for many years (in the absence of data the exact year of when the camps were finally closed is not available). So there were many refugees who had to pass many years in the camp. I

⁷² HT, 15 October 1947, p. 8.

⁷³ HT, 17 October 1947, p. 3.

⁷⁴ HT, 17 October 1947, p. 3.

interviewed a refugee whose family stayed in military barracks with inadequate arrangements in Karol Bagh for more than six years.⁷⁵

The unhealthy environment in the camps persisted in spite of the inoculation drives undertaken by the administration (those who did not get themselves inoculated were also debarred from getting food supplies). That these drives were successful to some extent is revealed by the following report:

The incidence of smallpox in Delhi is comparatively lower this year in spite of the influx of a large number of refugees. This is largely due to the mass vaccination campaign launched by the Health Department of Delhi Province.⁷⁶

The camps were ill equipped to deal with the changing seasons and accidents or natural calamities like floods. In the month of July 1948 there were sharp showers in Delhi. The Kingsway and Tis Hazari camps, that had been located in a low lying area, were flooded, causing great hardship to the refugees.⁷⁷ The luggage of refugees was seen floating in the flooded compounds.⁷⁸ The tents in the Kingsway Camp, in particular, were mostly old and most of them leaked badly during the rains.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Interview with Santram in Old Rajinder Nagar on 19 November 2006.

⁷⁶ HT, 3 May 1948, p. 3.

⁷⁷ File no. 68/47, Confidential, D.A.

⁷⁸ HT, 10 July 1948, p. 1.

⁷⁹ File no. 68/47, Confidential, D.A.

Life of the refugees in camps and other shelters was difficult. It became tougher when they were ejected from such temporary refuge. Schools remained closed during the disturbances and many of them served as shelters for the refugees. But it was not possible to keep the schools shut indefinitely. For example the authorities at the M. B. Primary schools at Turkman and Ranjit Singh roads wanted the schools to be cleared of the residing refugees. The refugees of these schools had organized themselves into the M. B. Primary Schools Refugee Committee. They appealed to both the school authorities and the Ministry of R and R to shelve the plan till the monsoons got over. They proposed that they would stay in tents on the lawns of adjoining school buildings. They also urged the Government to use cinema houses and clubs for rehabilitation and stated that “domestic living should have preference over luxurious recreation”.⁸⁰

Diwan Hall in Chandini Chowk also offered refuge to the incoming migrants. Forty refugee families had been residing in the building since their arrival from West Punjab. As displaced persons began to be rehabilitated the number gradually came down to twenty families. In response to the failure of the residents to vacate the premises even after being asked by the management to do so, the management cut off electric connections and water supply on 9 October 1949.⁸¹

⁸⁰ HT, 30 July 1948, p. 3.

⁸¹ HT, 20 October 1949, p. 3.

Refugee Versus The Local Population

A majority of the refugees came from urban areas in West Punjab. Most of them had migrated from West Punjab's large cities like Lahore, Gujranwala, Multan, and Lyallpur. Because of their urban background the Punjabis were mostly interested in trade and commerce. And owing to their perseverance and enterprising nature, the refugees were able to surpass the locals in this field. That is why, although initially a local person was sympathetic to the refugees, "but when he found that the refugee was becoming strong his attitude changed".⁸²

After the arrival of a flood of refugees into Delhi, there sprang up in the streets and the bazaars little box like wooden stacks. The pavements were full of these "*khokhas*" or mini shops set up by the refugees. Soon the refugees who were called the "*sharnarathi*" or the refuge seekers, came to be called the "*purusharathi*"- the courageous hard workers.⁸³ New markets for the refugees came up. Lajpat Rai Market and The Karol Bagh Market came up owing to the efforts of enterprising refugees.

Apart from the commercial encroachment of refugees, there were cultural factors too that created tensions between the refugees and the locals. Language became an important factor for alienating the refugees from the locals. Multanis spoke Pushto or Hindko languages which was locally considered "coarse" and "harsh". That is why the Multani refugees were labeled as "unsophisticated". A political leader of East Punjab had been

⁸² Datta, 'Panjabi Refugees', p. 453

⁸³ Maheshwar Dayal, *Rediscovering Delhi, the story of Shahjahanabad*, New Delhi, p. 24.

quoted as saying that “(refugees) must go out from one place to another as their tongue is coarse and their way of living is rough”.⁸⁴ Refugees from Punjab were found to be more acceptable to the locals than those from other regions. The local families readily took in Punjabi refugees as tenants.⁸⁵

The people who had already been residing in Delhi complained against the way of living and the worship practices of the refugees. In Chunamandi, the Sikh refugees were complained against for beating drums in Sikh gurudwaras at odd hours, especially early in the morning and at midnight. In the Kalkaji temple, where there was a refugee camp, refugees were reported to be destroying temple property and eating meat and slaughtering animals within the temple premises. The original residents were also annoyed at Punjabi refugees selling meat out in the open. There are still people who say that the refugees changed the culture of Delhi for worse. The practice of selling cheap goods by hawkers from one house to another was something new to Delhi and disgusted those living in posh areas of the city.⁸⁶ The local residents alleged that after the influx of refugees there had been an increase in the use of liquor. They also complained to Gandhiji that it was due to the presence of refugees that the revenue derived from liquors had increased enormously.⁸⁷ But whether it was because the refugees traded in liquor or they consumed it excessively, was not clear from the newspaper which reported the incident.

⁸⁴ Suparna Chatterjee, *Refugee Rehabilitation*, p. 54.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Based on interviews in Delhi.

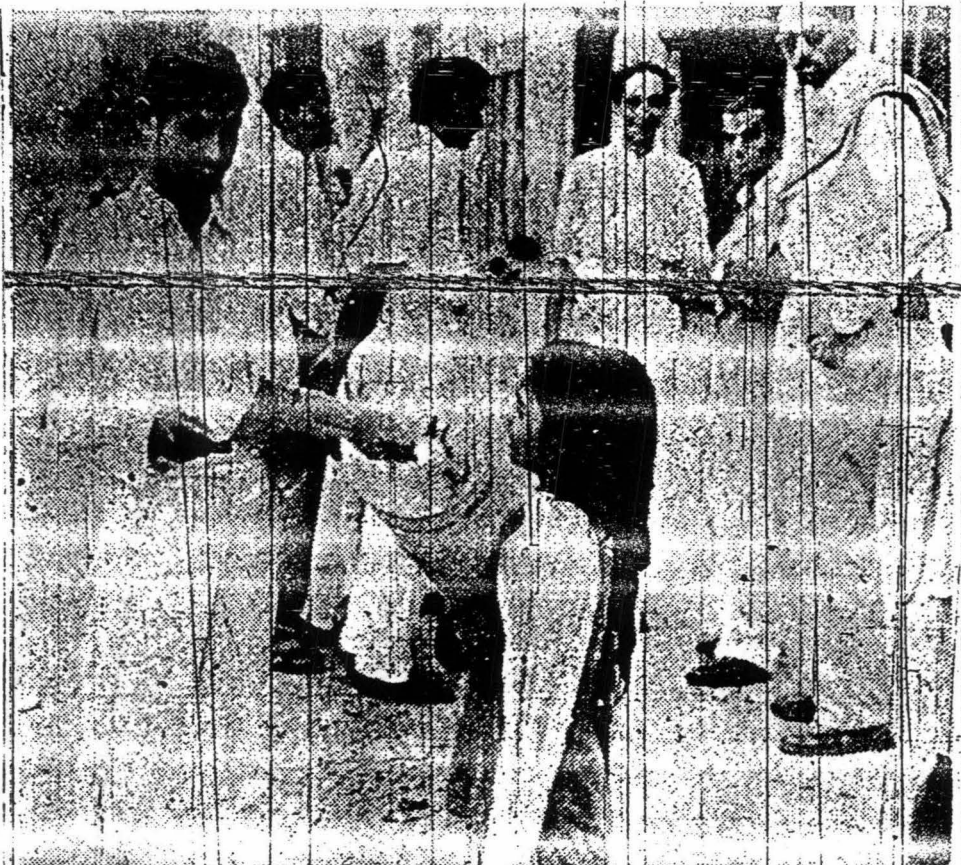
⁸⁷ HT, 6 November 1947, p. 8.

The local residents took exception to the freedom with which Punjabi women moved out of houses. Their non-observance of purdah system, participation in marriage parties, dancing in *baraat*, etc, were resented by original inhabitants of Delhi. Here one needs to understand that this behaviour of Punjabi women did not have a basis in their culture; rather it was a response to the life after partition. They had been living in the same traditional patriarchal culture which defined the life of most Indian women. The new attitude was necessitated in view of what they had experienced during the trial of exodus and the subsequent life in a new place where they had to rebuild their lives. As Karuna Chanana argues:

... Partition narrowed the physical spaces and enlarged the social spaces available to women thereby affecting the practice of *parda* or seclusion, modified the impact of caste and regional culture on marriage arrangements and widened the channels of educational mobility and employment for girls and women.⁸⁸

In the journey in packed trains and trucks and during their stay in camps the women had to compromise on privacy and seclusion. The partition crisis had necessitated that they should come out of seclusion, take up jobs and fend for their children and dependents on their own. The private space available to Punjabi women was shrinking to make way for social space.

⁸⁸ Karuna Chanana, 'Partition and family strategies', p. ws-25.



This is the picture of a refugee-girl who sells newspapers at a street corner in Connaught Place to pay for her own education. Students working their way through school and college are no rarity in Europe and America. In India, for some unexplained reason, the practice is not common. If the habit catches on, it will be largely due to the refugees in our midst. And here once again is another direction in which the refugees are showing the way.

Women refugees taking to prostitution should be seen in this context. Such steps, which were unacceptable to the local inhabitants and were dubbed as polluting Delhi's culture, actually represent the coping techniques evolved by the refugee women to counter the crisis.

This change in the outlook and behaviour of Punjabi women refugees, draws attention to another point—how in times of social and political upheavals the traditional social norms are attacked. The involvement of women refugees in illegal take-overs of evacuee houses, in various protests against the government, etc., demonstrates the new roles that the women had acquired. This process of altering gender role was not due to female efforts alone, but involved male strategies too. In the instance of illegal take-over already described in this chapter, while defying the police, the refugee men were seen to be putting their women in front to escape police wrath. This presents an interesting example of how the men themselves broke the earlier patriarchal norms, and set the stage for a new role for their women.

The erosion of Delhi's culture, which the refugees were alleged to have caused, was not the only point of friction. Forcible occupations of public buildings like schools, municipal buildings, temples, etc., and not vacating them for months was another factor that estranged relationships. There were complaints to the Delhi Provincial Congress Committee Office about the refugees using police for securing houses. There were news reports about police officers having approached the Muslims for securing housing accommodation for the refugees. Also there were cases of Muslim landlords and their

agents being called to the police stations at the instance of the refugees, to be threatened and so that refugees could get houses.⁸⁹ Such intimidation by the refugees was bound to create aversion in the minds of locals. I met a local resident of Delhi who narrated an incident of how his friend's house was forcibly taken over by the refugees, who entered the house asking for some food.⁹⁰

The local residents took exception to the refugee attitude of expecting special rights. There were complaints that the refugees expected the shopkeepers to give them things free of charge or make considerable reductions in price. Similarly it was alleged that they wanted the *tongawallas* to charge nothing or charge lower rates than those prevailing.⁹¹ Such stances on the part of the refugees are a contrast to the image of Punjabi refugees that was popularized: of being independent, hard working and unwilling to accept any charity. On the other hand, I have interviewed many refugees who claim to have never asked for anything, even from the government. They claim to have built up their lives on their own, with whatever they had brought.

The local people and the government authorities resented the presence of the rich refugees who were considered "not a burden" but "a disturbing factor". It was alleged that this category of refugees had amassed a good deal of riches and resources in the black market during the war years and with it they bought up established firms, business quarters and residential buildings at high prices. It was reported that there were some

⁸⁹ HT, 17 December 1947, p. 2

⁹⁰ Based on an interview in Lajpat Nagar 4 on 18 October 2005.

⁹¹ HT, 6 November 1947.

premises which had been acquired by Lahore businessmen on paying *pugrees* ranging between rupees fifty thousand and hundred thousand⁹². Such practices must have made competition tougher for the local businessmen.

The several instances narrated above where the refugees have been portrayed as a source of trouble for the local residents, was only one side of the coin. There were many instances when the locals had taken advantage of the helplessness of the refugees. Cases of locals charging exorbitant prices from the refugees were not few. There were reports of landlords demanding high rents in addition to *pugrees*.⁹³

The Arya Samaj Relief Society brought to the notice of railway authorities that the coolies at the railway station of Delhi treated the refugees in a “harsh, indecent and objectionable” manner and charged them exorbitantly.⁹⁴

One instance underlines the craftiness of the local residents in taking advantage of the prevailing situation. The Muslim evacuee shops in Chawri Bazaar, the local hardware market, were occupied by the Hindus who already had got their shops and establishments there. These Hindu hardware merchants paid heavy sums (from rupees 10,000 upwards) to both the Muslim evacuees and the Hindu landlords of the shop. In addition to this they got the Rent Deeds in their favor giving therein the date of acquisition prior to the date

⁹² HT, August 21, 1947, p. 3.

⁹³ HT, August 21, 1947, p.4.

⁹⁴ HT, 17 August 1947.

when such properties were put under the possession of the Custodian.⁹⁵ Several similar cases of employment of dubious means by the local residents had led to numerous illegal takeovers of evacuee property that ultimately injured the genuine interests of the refugees.

Similar practices on the part of local residents can be seen in the case of the Tibbia College quarters in Karol Bagh which had afforded shelter to some thirty refugee families for more than four years. These quarters had not been let out till the arrival of refugees there and the college authorities could have easily spared these quarters for the refugees. But they fixed exorbitant rates of rent; and the refugees badly in need of shelter were not in a position to bargain for a reasonable rent. The refugees were willing to pay rents regularly but they demanded that a fair and reasonable rent be fixed. They had formed themselves into Gandhi Ajmal Tibbia College Tenants Association. To quote what one of the representatives said:

These quarters had been built over twenty years back from public donations for a philanthropic purpose and it was not fair for the management to have charged excessive rents from us. In spite of the assurances for fixation of fair rents, for one or the other reason they have not yet been fixed though four years have since been passed. To mention some high rents, rupees 30 per month is being charged from us for quarters meant for compounders whose salary ranges between rupees 100

⁹⁵ HT, 2 November 1947, p. 4.

to rupees 300 per month and rupees 500 per month is being charged for the Principal's quarter whose salary was perhaps, just that much.⁹⁶

This makes the plight of the refugees staying there apparent and gives another example of how the change in situation owing to partition was utilized by the local residents to make profits.

A sense of insecurity and suspicion about each other also brought the refugees and local residents into conflicts. For example, on the night of 26 February 1948, a quarrel took place between the refugees of Kingsway Camp and the nearby villagers, in which some persons were injured and a goat pen was burnt. This happened due to a misunderstanding on the part of the villagers, who thought that a refugee, who had gone to ease himself in the fields, had come with the intention of removing some fencing. The situation was brought under control only after the involvement of the police and the magistrate.⁹⁷

In another instance, two Muslims passing from the parade ground were reported to have been rough-handled by some refugees.⁹⁸ On two occasions, lorries carrying Muslim refugees had been attacked by non Muslims, resulting in injuries to some of them, and looting of their property.⁹⁹ Again, according to another report, a Hindu refugee was

⁹⁶HT, 18 February 1952, p. 5.

⁹⁷ File no. 68/47, Confidential, D.A.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ File no. 1/48, Confidential, D.A.

attacked by the Muslims of Ahata Kidara for spreading red chilies under the sunshine.¹⁰⁰

This instance shows that trivial issues were used as excuses to harm each other.

Thus, the clashes between the refugees and the locals cannot be simply described as an expression of conflict of interests between two different set of people who had to share limited resources. There was an element of communalism that was also working in these clashes. The following example makes the communal element more evident. In the area of Nabi Karim, the temporary structures of the refugees were demolished by Abdul Jabbar, a member of the Mosque Restoration Committee, accompanied by the police. Abdul Jabbar was said to be doing that job “in a fanatic zeal and with vindictiveness”.¹⁰¹

There were also reports that some Muslim teachers of the Jamia Millia were asking the refugee students to say “*Aslama-Alukum*” instead of “*Namaste*” and were being refused classes in Hindi on the plea that Urdu was the lingua franca of India.¹⁰²

H. M. Patel provides instances of refugees being fanatically involved in communal disturbances. He recalls in his memoirs:

Groups of blood-thirsty refugees would even rush into houses and drag people out to be stabbed. Roving bands of Sikh refugees struck so much terror in New Delhi

¹⁰⁰ File no. 68/47, Confidential, D.A., New Delhi.

¹⁰¹ File no. 68/47, Confidential, D.A., New Delhi.

¹⁰² Ibid.

that it became necessary to evacuate Muslim servants into refugee camps so as to ensure their safety.¹⁰³

Such incidents must have aggravated the communal atmosphere of Delhi. Communalism also hampered relief work. For example, as has been mentioned earlier, it was due to the communally charged conditions that many vacant houses left by the outgoing refugees were not allotted to Hindu and Sikh refugees as these were located in predominantly Muslim areas. Thus the sensitive communal situation in Delhi not only led to more clashes but also served as a roadblock towards resolving the refugee problem.

However, except for such communal clashes between the refugees and the locals, there were hardly any serious clashes between the two. The resentment against each other was mostly expressed in a covert manner and there were hardly any serious physical conflicts between them. This contrasts with the situation in Tripura where there were violent clashes between the inhabitants and immigrants from East Pakistan. These clashes still continue and have taken the form of civil war in the state.¹⁰⁴

Helping The Refugees

As the above section shows, there were numerous occasions when the interests of the refugees and local residents clashed. This was very natural in view of the limited resources which the two had to share. Further, the socio cultural make up of the

¹⁰³ Patel, *Rites of Passage*, p. 83.

¹⁰⁴ Rahman and Schendel, "I am not a Refugee", *Modern Asian Studies*, p. 582.

immigrant population was different from that of the indigenous population and the latter considered their arrival as a danger to their already existing culture. These factors had ample potential to create friction between the two. It was a situation where the two struggled to define their relationship to each other. The predicament of the refugees did demand sympathy and generosity. The locals often helped them. And there was more than one occasion when the local residents were found reaching out to the refugees to offer a helping hand. Among the refugees I interviewed, hardly anyone took exception to the attitude of the locals. All of them recognized the fact that the locals were never unwilling to help them out. They narrated stories of how the locals welcomed them at stations with cooked food and other necessary articles. They tell us how the locals took them to the Muslim evacuee houses and asked them to occupy the vacant houses. This was the case wherever the refugees arrived in India. Randhawa describes response of local residents in the context of East Punjab:

In the earliest days of the great migration when it was not known whether the refugees were coming to India for temporary shelter or for permanent rehabilitation, food was supplied to them by the residents of East Punjab. The various public bodies organized catering arrangements, and thousands of maunds of *rotis* were distributed at railway stations, halting places along the roads, as well as in the evacuee villages.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵Randhawa, *Out of the Ashes*, p. 29.

The refugees were also accommodated in the houses of the locals, particularly of those who were predominantly Punjabis.¹⁰⁶ A family accommodating as many as forty refugee guests was not uncommon in Delhi.¹⁰⁷

The local women would cook food and distribute it among the refugees staying in their neighbourhood. This was routine work for many women, who shared the work among themselves to supply meals at different times. During my field work, I met an old man of about eighty who saw the refugees settling down in Delhi. He had lent one of his houses in Lajpat Nagar area to some thirty refugees who stayed there for many years. Being a member of Arya Samaj, he used to go along with other Arya Samajists from house to house asking for donations for the refugees. Whatever they collected in the entire day was distributed to the refugees in the evenings.¹⁰⁸

Various organizations of Delhi were diligently working for the refugees. They were praised in glowing terms by Lady Mountbatten.¹⁰⁹ To mention some of them, there were the Hindu Mahasabha, the RSS, and the INA who were engaged in providing emergency relief to the refugees. Even international organisations like the International Red Cross and the UNICEF contributed towards providing relief.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ *The Hindu*, 27 August 1947, p. 1.

¹⁰⁷ *The Hindu*, 7 September 1947, p. 1.

¹⁰⁸ Based on interview with Mahender Nath, a resident of Lajpat Nagar, 4 on October 12, 2005.

¹⁰⁹ HT, 26 October 1947, p.11.

¹¹⁰ Ritu Menon, 'Birth of social security commitments', p. 154.

Commendable efforts were made towards collection of money for the refugees by the indigenous population. A purse of one thousand rupees was presented to the National Christian Council by Delhi Christians to undertake relief work for the people of West Punjab.¹¹¹ Students of Delhi were very enthusiastic in lending a helping hand for the refugees, taking the initiative on their own. Students of the ASVJ Higher Secondary school, Daryaganj collected one thousand rupees, purchased 52 new blankets and collected another ten old blankets for the refugees.¹¹² In another instance about one thousand students registered themselves under the Social Service Scheme of East Punjab University. Five hundred of them worked in the Kingsway refugee camp, another two hundred worked with Delhi Rationing Organization.¹¹³

Capitalist groups also offered aid. Godrej Company had placed an advertisement in the Hindustan Times, not for its own promotion, but to appeal to the people of Delhi to help the refugees whom it called the “victims of political changes”.¹¹⁴ The Birla group of Sugar Mills were approached by several representatives of the refugees. The former consented to their request that instead of opening retail shops, sugar would be sold to public through the refugees. In this arrangement refugees could sell the sugar to the consumers at a profit of two paisa per ser.¹¹⁵ Some new multipurpose houses for the refugees were built in New Delhi by Azad Hind Trust, a private concern. It was building

¹¹¹ HT, 2 November 1947, p. 3.

¹¹² HT, 26 October 1947, p. 3.

¹¹³ HT, 15 January 1948, p. 10.

¹¹⁴ HT, 21 December 1947, Magazine Section.

¹¹⁵ HT, 23 December 1947, p. 5.

Man's Ingratitude
is bitter
Than The Biting
Winter Wind
But Homeless,
Forsaken People
Require Your Help.
Give It.



REFUGEES

OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS
IN DISTRESS - VICTIMS
OF POLITICAL CHANGES

Your
Immediate
Help
is needed

STUDIO RATAN BATHAL

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at the rate of 4 houses in 25 days to tide over the acute shortage of houses. Each house had the capacity to accommodate four families.¹¹⁶

Help to the refugees was forthcoming generously from abroad too. Indians living in USA, UK, Africa, Australia, Malaysia, Fiji, etc., came forward with donations. Among the donors were individuals, members of staff employed by Indian representatives abroad and Indian business firms. Catholics of America sent nearly 6000 bags of wheat, 3000 boxes of chocolate milk powder and a quantity of Rolston cereals. Another American body, the Friends Service, sent 40,000 lbs of Rolston cereals and 400 bales of cotton goods. Cheques of over fifty thousand rupees had been received from the Punjab Relief Fund Centre, Nairobi, and East Africa.¹¹⁷ Apart from this there were a few foreigners involved in the relief work. The name of Lady Smith and Lady Mountbatten deserves mention. The former looked after “hospital arrangements at one of the camps and the tireless manner in which she worked was indeed inspiring”.¹¹⁸

Conclusion

As the chapter highlights, the primary concern of the refugees soon after their arrival was to get shelter. Other amenities could wait till they found a place to live in. A shelter gave a sense of stability; only when this basic need was fulfilled could they plan for the future,

¹¹⁶ HT, 11 May 1948, p. 8.

¹¹⁷ HT, 10 September 1949, p. 6.

¹¹⁸ Patel, *Rites of Passage*, p. 98.

including finding jobs, arranging schools for children and similar other plans that are needed to rebuild lives.

The abysmal conditions and the daily struggle for survival in the camps goaded the refugees to look for shelter on their own. Both fair and unfair means were used. And in this effort, the entity that challenged them most was the administration. This was an issue that brought the refugees into an open confrontation with the government. The confrontation will be dealt with in detail in the next chapter.

Rebuilding a new life was a long process and every refugee has his or her own story of struggle. The efforts of refugees towards resettlement brought them into close interaction with the local residents of Delhi, among whom they had to find a place for themselves. The development of a relationship between the two took its own course. Initially, it was the feeling of sympathy that bound the two. Later, as the refugees started making a place for themselves in the limited socio-economic space of Delhi, a sense of rivalry developed, which engendered bitter feelings towards each other. In spite of the fact that the refugees did hegemonise the socio-cultural and economic make-up of the city, the past rivalry and bitterness hardly exists today. The refugees, their children and grandchildren identify themselves with Delhi as their home. The reminiscences of places left in Pakistan are still there and they remember their past days with nostalgia, but since they tried to rebuild here what they had left, the city is no longer strange for them. They are as much a part of Delhi as the original inhabitants are. Delhi does not see them as “refugees” any longer.

CHAPTER 3

REFUGEE—GOVERNMENT INTERACTIONS

The preceding two chapters have given an account of the government and the refugees. The chapter on government's tackling of the rehabilitation process highlights the schemes that it undertook to implement for the refugees. The next chapter considers the refugees' efforts at reconstructing their lives and the consequent interaction with the local residents. In the ongoing rehabilitation process both the government and the refugees participated actively and interacted with each other. This interaction, however, was far from being one of coordination and consonance. It involved struggle, apprehension and constant negotiation. I have brought the two actors face to face in this chapter and tried to see the nuances of the relationship.

Refugee Complaints

How did the refugees respond to the government's policies and schemes? Were they satisfied? An answer to such questions would help us to have a better understanding of the rehabilitation process. The work of the administration, when seen in the light of refugee responses, helps us have a clearer idea of what was happening on the ground. However, one should keep in mind that these responses may have had an element of exaggeration. Still, a look at the various complaints voiced by the refugees helps us gauge the prevailing mood among the refugees. An understanding of the prevailing mood is significant because this affected government's way of functioning. We will see that

refugee resistance, for example through hartals and dharnas, often brought the refugees and administration to the negotiating table and compelled the latter to consider the demands.

The following paragraphs give an account of various complaints that the refugees articulated against the government. These complaints capture the refugee side of the story of rehabilitation, which has remained neglected in the existing literature on refugee rehabilitation in north India. Randhawa does talk about the existence of discontentment among the refugees of the East Punjab, but he avoids going into the nature of resentment and complaints. He mentions the arrangements made by the administration to deal with the non-performance and corrupt practices of subordinate officials.¹ But he does not talk about the kinds of refugee grievances that were addressed by the administration. Similarly, U. B. Rao and Tai Yong and Kudaisya have not provided space to refugee voices. A look at the reasons for refugee discontent and resentment not only gives a better picture of the post partition reconstruction process, it also reflects upon the day to day functioning of the post colonial administrative machinery.

Complaints of refugee teachers: We have seen in the first chapter the government efforts at rehabilitating refugee teachers. I have mentioned how the teachers' grievance of delay in payment was successfully addressed by the administration. However, the government failed to put into force its own rules of giving the refugee teachers a salary based on their experience in Pakistan. This caused great displeasure among the refugee teachers. The government of India in their letter dated 9 December 1947 had decided to

¹ Randhawa, *Out of the Ashes*, p. 89.

fix the salaries of displaced government servants strictly in accordance with the basic pay drawn by the incumbents at the time of evacuation from Pakistan and not to give them less than what they were being paid in Pakistan.²

In spite of the rule, the refugee teachers with experience in non-government recognized and aided institutions in Pakistan, and now employed in government and government-aided schools in Delhi, had been made to start from the lowest rung of the salary ladder. Further, new scales had been introduced in Delhi Province, and teachers in government and aided schools alike had been given special increments in view of their past service and experience. But the refugee teachers did not benefit at all from these increments. These were some of the complaints voiced by the Delhi Refugee Teachers Association.³

Other complaints:

There were complaints against the practice of disposal of evacuees' property by auction or selling, as this could result in a number of interested non-refugee parties buying the property. Therefore the Custodian Committee was requested by the refugees to confine the disposal or sale only to such refugees who may furnish proof that they had been in the same profession previously and would run the same business at least for a period of five years.

² File no. 6 (26)/ 48, Min of R and R.

³ Ibid.

The gigantic refugee problem became more serious in view of the constrained resources both material and human. Under such circumstances, delays, never-ending queues, repeated applications which remained unresponded to, and similar phenomena were bound to be a part of refugee experiences. We have seen how one 76 year old refugee complained about the non-working of the office for registration of refugees. He had to unsuccessfully stand in long queues for hours.⁴ There were also complaints about the shortage of officers involved in relief work. The refugees resented that important posts in the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation were lying vacant for want of experienced officers.

The arrangement of getting compensation against claims made about land and property left in Pakistan caused great discontentment among most refugees. During my interviews with the refugees, there was none who was satisfied. I got mixed responses. There were those who did not get anything in return, those who could get hardly 50% and those who theoretically received their full claim; yet the grant of money in fact stopped after the first installment. These responses to my interview questions may not always have been correct. Moreover, the arrangement of making claims and getting compensation had its own constraints. In the absence of full documents the administration had no option to check the veracity of claims made. So, instances of refugees making exaggerated claims cannot be ruled out.

Land allotment created a lot of discontent among the refugees. An earlier chapter of this dissertation mentions how a refugee was given barren land in a distant place and

⁴ HT, 28 October 1947, p. 4.

faced difficulties using it. During my interviews I came across refugees who found the land they received in East Punjab of no use and therefore sold it and came to Delhi. There were similar instances in Delhi too. I met some refugees who got land which was either not fertile or was too far away to be cultivated.

Also, I came across some refugees who claimed to have received almost nothing as government help. Except for having been given a small shop, they alleged they were left entirely on their own to make a living. There were also those who categorically expressed their displeasure for having been utterly neglected by the government.

The announcement about the appointment of a Minister for R and R had not been well received. The refugees had expected that some notable from among the refugees themselves would be appointed, as they felt that a person who had himself been a refugee could understand their problems better than anyone else.⁵

The regular meetings of the refugee associations and their anti government utterances indicate the prevailing mood among the refugees. The following paragraphs give an account of how these meetings responded to the administration efforts.

A newspaper report of 1952 said that for some months the refugee meetings had been demanding that the stage next to that of assurances be entered upon. They no longer wanted an acceptance of the principal of compensation or a reiteration of assurances about it, but a tangible fulfillment of these. "Refugee Demand Number One now is a

⁵ File no. 68/47, Confidential, letter by Randhawa to Khurshid, dated, June 8, 1948.

definitive decision as to what compensation is to be paid and when and how and [sic] immediate payment of a first installment.”⁶ This expresses the frustration of the refugees engendered by the prolonged process of rehabilitation and the non fulfillment of some of their basic requirements. A look at the following demands put forward by the refugees who had formed themselves into Purusharthi Beopar Mandal in Karol Bagh gives a further sense of the refugee response to government efforts:

- i. Purusharthis should be given unconditional rights of citizenship.
- ii. The offices of the Rehabilitation Department and the members of the various advisory committees should be taken from amongst the purusharthis and all offices like that of the Custodian of Evacuees Property which entail extravagant expenditure be closed forthwith.
- iii. Purusharthis should be billeted in government buildings and the bungalows.
- iv. The words used for them should be ‘purusharthi’ and not ‘sharanarthi’.
- v. Azadi tax be levied on every individual of the Indian Union to make up for the losses that the purusharthis had suffered in Pakistan.⁷

A meeting of about 1200 refugees at the Kingsway camp, criticized “the halfway measures of the government and demanded a separate ‘refugee state’ to be established.”⁸

In another meeting of refugees at Shahadra, the employees of the Department of

⁶ HT, 25 February 1952, p. 5.

⁷ HT, 2 August 1948, p. 4.

⁸ File no. 68/47, Confidential, Weekly Diary of the Suptd. Of Police, for the week ending 8 May, 1948.

Custodian were criticized for trespassing into Hindu houses without any intimation to the inmates. They also criticized the statement of the PM at the Kurukshetra camp that the refugees were a burden to the government.⁹ The refugees often complained about the anti refugee statements of the government leaders and officials. A similar complaint was made in a meeting of the refugees held at the Kingsway Camp on the 13 May 1948 where a resolution condemning the anti refugee utterances of the members of the Delhi Municipal Committee was passed.¹⁰ A letter to the editor of the *Hindustan Times* expresses the disappointment of the refugees against the government:

Unfortunately the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation has persisted in its unhelpful attitude due to Government's policy of driving away as many refugees from Delhi as possible. The forced rush of refugees to Delhi and some UP towns has been described by Mr. K. C. Neogy as an "invasion" and he has persisted in his unsympathetic policy despite popular protest... Only recently it was the direct action of some of the "refugees" which moved the Government to provide them with some accommodation which they had not done before in spite of repeated requests...¹¹

Here we can pause and go back to an earlier chapter where I had dwelt upon the nature of government perception of partition refugees. I mentioned that the administration chose to perceive the refugees as national asset and involve them in the task of nation

⁹ File no. 68/47, Confidential, Weekly Diary of the Suptd. Of Police, for the week ending 10 April, 1948.

¹⁰ File no. 68/47, Confidential, Weekly Diary of the Suptd. Of Police, for the week ending 15 May, 1948.

¹¹ HT, 18 January 1948, p. 4.

building. But now, as we see, the officials more than once failed to conform to this approach and such utterances also came from those holding responsible positions. This further alienated the administration in the eyes of the refugees.

The sense of frustration and discontent against the administration did not end in tendering complaints and venting the anger in the form of various protests. There were few cases where the refugees died waiting to get their grievances addressed. Dewan Kartar Khan was a Municipal Commissioner in Sialkot for twenty years. After partition he crossed border to come to the Indian side and occupied a part of a building in Darya Ganj. The building was declared evacuee property, and the Custodian after allotting these rooms to Dewan Kartar Khan had realized the rent for two years. But when the Muslim owner of the house returned after two years were over, the building was given to him. The new owner now demanded four years' rent at the rate of Rupees 100 per mensem, without any regard to whatever had been realized by the Custodian Department. Dewan Kartar Khan had referred the matter to the Minister of Rehabilitation and the All India Refugee Association for some assistance on January 21, 1952. Two days after, however, he died of heart failure.¹² In another case a refugee, Professor Radha Krishna Seth, formerly of DAV Colleges, Lahore and Multan, had committed suicide on a railway line, displeased with government efforts. His suicide note stated that 'his act would not be in vain if it pulled up the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation'.¹³

¹² HT, 4 February 1952, p. 5.

¹³ HT, 25 December 1947, p. 5.

These complaints, apart from giving a glimpse into refugee minds, inform us that the rehabilitation process was not a smooth one as has been projected by some scholars who give a pro-government account of the process. To quote U. B. Rao:

...Government's effort was greatly assisted by the imponderable human factor—the character of the refugee... This cooperation with the Government's rehabilitation plans was readily forthcoming in every department, housing, financial help, resettlement in trades and professions. There was very little of grumbling or sulking.¹⁴

Rao's description of a harmony between the refugee and the government stands discredited in the light of the above complaints. That the refugee-government relation was far from being smooth and one of cooperation becomes further evident later in this chapter where I have described several instances of refugee-government confrontation.

One realizes that the refugee reacted to almost everything that was going on then. He had assumed a pro-active role in the process. He was aware of his rights and what was due to him. The demand made by the Purusharthi Beopar Mandal regarding levying of Azadi tax on all members of Indian Union reflect the feeling that the refugees had paid a price for the formation of independent India or as B. R. Nanda points out, "the Muslim

¹⁴ Rao, *The Story of Rehabilitation*, p. 57.

League's pound of flesh was taken from the ribs of the non-Muslim minorities of the provinces which were formed into Pakistan".¹⁵

Housing Problem-A Major Government Failure

I have already dealt with this issue at length in the first chapter where I have highlighted the inefficiency and rampant corruption within administration. This led to a rise in refugee discontent and a worsening of the law and order situation in Delhi. This section seeks to show that even after a span of five long years the housing problem was unresolved. And it had acquired further complications. As we will see, there were still refugees without accommodation; and those provided with houses were not happy with the arrangements.

The scholars dealing with the matter, like V. N. Datta and U. B. Rao, give statistics on government progress in settling refugees by undertaking construction works. Datta, however, desists from going into the question of how successfully the housing crisis was solved. U. B. Rao recognizes the delay, but he sees the cause not in administration's ineptitude but in "a legacy from war time restrictions-constructional bottlenecks and scarcity of essential building materials like cement and steel".¹⁶

An earlier chapter mentions a remark by M. S. Randhawa in May 1948 about not a single house being built even after a period of about one year. However, the government

¹⁵ B. R. Nanda, *Witness to Partition: A Memoir*, New Delhi, 2003, p.104.

¹⁶ Rao, *The Story of Rehabilitation*, pp. 58-59.

undertook construction on big scale later. By December 1950, three lakhs of refugees had been provided with accommodation- 1, 90,000 in evacuated houses and 1, 00,000 in the new construction.¹⁷ But in spite of the efforts taken, they fell short of satisfying the refugees. The following example of refugee houses constructed in the New Rajinder Nagar Colony reflects the new face of the still unresolved problem.

Here the chief grievance of the refugees was that the Rehabilitation Ministry built the houses on an area which was too small. As against the usual 200 yards of comparable housing in other refugee townships in Delhi, the New Rajinder Nagar plots measured only 128 square yards. Of the 200 square yards elsewhere, half the area could be covered. To make up for the smallness of the plots in New Rajinder Nagar 66% of the area was allowed to be covered. Even that gave too little living accommodation. The New Rajinder Nagar residents sent representatives to urge that they be allowed to cover three fourths instead of two thirds of their plots. But the New Delhi Municipal Committee gave no heed to their grievances and instead amended the bye laws to reduce the 66% to 56%.¹⁸

Further the design of the houses failed to fulfill the requirements of those inhabiting them. There was no pantry or small store room. Because of this the occupants, in many cases, started constructing some additional structures themselves. After the colony was handed over to the New Delhi Municipal Committee there were changes in the bye-laws that debarred the occupants from making additional constructions. Hence these occupants started getting notices for demolition. But in many cases such additions were made before

¹⁷ Datta, Panjabi Refugees, p. 445.

¹⁸ HT, 25 February 1952, p. 5.

the NDMC took over the charge of the colony. Also there were many residents who came to know of the NDMC taking charge only after it started issuing notices threatening demolitions. The residents here also lacked proper facilities regarding water supply and electricity etc.¹⁹

The authorities realized their original mistake in assigning 128 square yards per plot and indirectly admitted too, for the 300 new plots that were allotted in the township measured the standard 200 square yards.²⁰

Also, there was a lack of uniformity in the houses constructed for the refugees in the New Rajinder Nagar. The area ranged between 1,130 square feet and 3,900 square feet. Thus the area of some units was three times that of others. The roofs of some houses had sheets coupled with reinforced concrete; others had entirely reinforced concrete. Some had a verandah, others had none. Some had a regular boundary wall; others had just an 18 inch high surrounding wall. The living accommodation, however, was uniform with two rooms, a small bathroom and a kitchen. Regardless of the differences in the constructed houses the price paid by all the occupants was the same. The house tax was uniform too.²¹

The housing crisis was a live issue which figured in the speeches of political leaders. At a reception organized by the Motia Khan Refugee Association in Delhi, Brahm

¹⁹ HT, 4 February 1952, p. 5.

²⁰ HT, 25 February 1952, p. 5.

²¹ HT, 4 February 1952, p. 5.

Prakash, Delhi Congress President, said that he would give high priority to slum clearance and the housing problem of the refugees, and that he was fully aware of the acute suffering of some of the refugees who lived in congested locations such as Motia Khan.²²

In the absence of data, we are unable to come to a conclusion as to how many people were still without accommodation. But that the problem was still unresolved becomes evident by how the leaders made it an issue for their election campaign. The issue of refugee rehabilitation could now be used as a plank to get votes. This reminds us of the allegations made against the present West Bengal government who are charged with offering protection to Bangladeshi refugees to garner votes.

Over the question of accommodation the refugees and the administration came to a face-off more than once. Such incidents were covered extensively by the newspapers. In one instance, refugee women staying at Reading Road staged a demonstration demanding alternative accommodation in case they were evicted.²³ There was another similar case, when some refugees from Anand Parbat marched to the PM's house. The government had made temporary arrangements for accommodation for them at Anand Parbat barracks at Karol Bagh on the understanding that they stay there temporarily pending the final allotment elsewhere. The time limit expired on 17 January 1948 and the very next day a deputation consisting of 100 refugees met the PM.²⁴

²² HT, 29 February 1952, p. 2.

²³ File no. 68/47, Confidential, Weekly Diary of the Suptd of Police for the week ending October 2, 1948.

²⁴ HT, 19 January 1948, p. 3.

Soon after the disturbances during the partition, the refugees had occupied a number of different kinds of shelter which included religious establishments like mosques and temples, etc. Getting such places evacuated of the refugees posed a very vexed problem as it was bound to get mixed up with religious issues and become communal. This task was achieved with a greater degree of success in Delhi than in other provinces. This was acknowledged by the PM in one of his letters to the Chief Ministers, dated 2 July 1948.²⁵ But it had its own dangers which the implementing authorities had to handle.

The eviction of refugees from such places apart, from alienating the government, made the communal situation more tense. The mosque situated on the corner of Gali Than Singh in Bazar Sita Ram was occupied by the refugees since the partition. The police got it evacuated on the 2 May, 1948. While it was being evacuated a number of refugees, who were witnessing the operations with resentment, were adversely commenting on the policy of the government. They felt that the government was unmindful of the hardships of the Hindus and the Sikhs, and was supporting the Muslims, and that this was evident from the fact that whereas the non-Muslims were allowed to rot, the Muslims were being allowed to return to Delhi and resettle here. They proclaimed that soon all the locks put on Muslim houses and mosques would be broken open and the houses occupied by Hindus and Sikhs.²⁶ A government report noted:

²⁵ Nehru to Chief Ministers, 2 July 1950, in G. Parthasarthy ed., *Jawaharlal Nehru, Volume 2*, p. 130.

²⁶ File no. 55/48, Confidential, Source Report, May 10, 1948, D. A.

There is, however, a general feeling that the more the refugees are exposed to sufferings in Delhi, the more are the chances of communal disturbances.²⁷

The refugees evacuated from mosques and other religious establishments were transferred to tents. For the evictees from the mosques, about 70 tents were pitched in Tis Hazari.²⁸ Such an ad-hoc arrangement, instead of a permanent resolution of the housing crisis, was bound to create resentment among the refugees. The evacuation of mosques and temples and educational institutions was necessary as engagements of such social infrastructure for more than a year as refugee accommodation was a hindrance to bringing normalization to the city. But the evacuation, unaccompanied by a suitable arrangement for the refugees, was only a halfway solution to the complicated problem, as until the refugees were permanently resettled and assimilated, normalization in the functioning of the capital could not be expected. This basic understanding of the problem seemed to be missing among the policy makers and the implementing authorities.

The change in weather demanded changes in the arrangements made for sheltering the refugees, because the shelters were not permanent, at least till the mid 1948. In the absence of a permanent shelter in the form of *pucca* houses, the administration resorted to such temporary measures as putting up cooler tents in summer or thatching the tents in winters or transferring the camp residents to another place temporarily. Pucca houses

²⁷ File no. 55/48, Confidential, Source Report, May 10, 1948, D. A.

²⁸ File no. 1/48, Confidential, Fortnightly Report for the 2nd half of September 1948, by the R and R Commissioner, D. A.

were especially necessary in Delhi, where the three seasons reach their extremes. The refugees passed their chilling winters and scorching summers in the temporary shelters but the rains threatened the very existence of their refuge. In the rains of July 1948 the refugee tents in Tis Hazari were flooded and most of the tents in the Kingsway Camp leaked badly. Due to the wet weather the scheme of building *kachcha* houses was also at standstill. And the unbaked bricks that had been stored for building purposes were also spoiled by the rain. It was in this context that Randhawa complained that the Minister of R and R had failed to keep up his promise of providing covered accommodation to most of the refugees.²⁹

The way in which Serai Rohilla was settled presented a remarkable example of refugee grit and enterprise. Here, with little help from the authorities, the refugees created a new industrial area. The industrial area, however, lacked certain facilities that were required to convert it into an attractive and modern township. It lacked regular power supply for domestic and industrial use and civic and sanitary amenities. The authorities, however failed to give a positive response to the requirements to the refugees settled there, which if given would have gone a long way in modernizing the area. As the news report said, “the only attention it seems to receive is in the form of notices threatening demolition.”³⁰

²⁹ File no. 1/48, Confidential, Fortnightly report for the fortnight ending July 15, 1948, D. A.

³⁰ HT, 18 February 1952, p. 5.

Other Weaknesses In Government Working

Arrangement for women refugees: There was a disparity between the original number of unattached women in Delhi and the number left after a gap of one year in the camps and women's shelters. The number of unattached women in October 1948 was 45,374. This number was considerably reduced after one year (the data on disparity was not available). Rameshwari Nehru explained that large numbers of women migrated to other towns in search of relief and work.³¹

This disparity forms another ground for criticizing government efforts. The government, as we have seen, gave special attention to the women refugees and the number of schemes implemented by the Women's Section, indisputably made a huge difference in the lives of the destitute women refugees and children. But that a lot remained to be done, and that a considerable number of women were still deprived of the fruits of the relief work, cannot be denied. Rameshwari Nehru, who was in charge of the Women's Section, admitted that "as no adequate arrangements were made for their protection and maintenance most of them have gone to their distant relatives or friends."³²

Another trend in Delhi during the years 1949-1950 was the increase in traffic in women and children in Delhi. Pandit Nehru accepted in the question hour in the Constituent Assembly that there was a certain amount of immoral traffic in abducted and

³¹ Rameshwari Nehru Papers, NMML

³² Ibid.

refugee women in Delhi province.³³ According to a report in the *Statesman*, the social workers and the philanthropic institutions interested in the problem suspected a regular gang of traffickers in Delhi and the adjoining districts in East Punjab. They believed that the traffickers were exploiting the fact that there were a large number of destitute women who could be easily drawn into their net. There were cases of young girls being sold by their destitute parents and of girls of 12 or 13 years suffering from venereal diseases.³⁴

According to the report the operators or proprietors of the brothels in Delhi were local men in most cases. A few abducted women, after having been kept by their abductors for some time, were handed over to habitual brothel keepers. The women who were 'rescued', but whose families were unwilling to accept them, also became a part of these brothels.³⁵

The report rightly sees the roots of the phenomenon in the partition that left the most women vulnerable and helpless. The unattached women refugees, who were not fortunate enough to receive help from any quarters, be it the government or the locals, were left with no other option except occupations like this. The report further argues that "the partition resulted in the disintegration to a certain degree of family life among the poorer sections of displaced persons". The social workers pointed out that life on the pavements

³³ HT, 6 April 1948, p. 3.

³⁴ Rameshwari Nehru Papers, Select Correspondence files, file no. 3, Suppression of immoral traffic in women: 1941-1959, NMML.

³⁵ Ibid.

with no prospects of rehabilitation resulted in “loss of respect for the moral code which a well organised family life generally enforces”.

One cannot deny that the onus for the predicament of such women lay heavily on the government which recognized the problem, but took only half hearted measures. To quote the report:

Delhi authorities have, however, done nothing definite to check this traffic in women. The East Punjab suppression of Immorality Act which declares the running of such brothels illegal is applicable to Delhi also, but it has never been enforced rigorously. The Delhi police force, it is stated, is already occupied to its utmost capacity, and is not adequate to check the traffic effectively.

Moreover what were needed more were measures in a positive direction towards the rehabilitation of the destitute women and carrying out the “life long responsibility”, as the government proclaimed, of taking care of them. Checking the trafficking by effective implementation of the act was only a secondary measure.

A practical step towards the resolution of the malady was taken later when a Committee with Mrs. Rameshwari Nehru as its President divided Delhi and New Delhi into two zones. Its main aim was to establish a rescue home and devise means for the authorities to enforce effectively the Suppression of Immorality Act.³⁶

³⁶ Ibid.

Discrimination in favour of rich and well connected refugees: Refugees who were associated with the Government or the ruling Congress party or were well connected had an advantage over other refugees. There was a clear discrimination in their favour. I have given a few instances in an earlier chapter where those with money and contacts could get accommodation easily. While roots of such incidents were in the corruption within the administrative machinery, the examples in this section would reflect the general perception of administration that those associated with the government or the ruling party belonged to a privileged group and should be given priority over others.

The government took measures to put extra tents to accommodate those refugees whose temporary camps were flooded. Apart from putting up tents the affected people were also shifted to shelters like ancient monuments, nearby schools etc. For example when the rains hit the Humayun Tomb Camp some of the displaced were shifted to the nearby medieval monuments. An officer was appointed to maintain 'labour gangs' that could be available at any time for emergency work.³⁷ However, a clear distinction was made between the common refugees and the refugees who were government employees. The former had to find shelter in schools and monuments that were hardly equipped with amenities to meet the daily requirements of living, viz., bathrooms and toilets or a kitchen. Under such situations one can imagine the amount of inconvenience faced by the refugee girls and women who had to compromise with their privacy. In contrast to this, the government servants of the same camp i.e., Humayun's Tomb, were given shelter in the Governor General's estate, which the then Governor General, Mr. C. Rajagopalachari

³⁷ HT, 10 July 1949, p. 2.

had placed at the disposal of the Ministry of Rehabilitation. The halls of the estate were once occupied by the Viceroy's bodyguards. About 500 to 600 of the refugees were shifted to eight big halls of the estate.³⁸ Each family was to have its own kitchen. Free meals were distributed and arrangements were made to supply rations on the spot.³⁹ In spite of being privileged compared to those who were destined to shift to nearby ancient monuments, these refugees had complaints of "their men folk being removed farther from their place of work".⁴⁰

The transfer bureau working under the rehabilitation ministry was set up to look after the government employees affected by partition. The government took the services of aircraft to transfer its employees from Pakistan. Thus Ravinder Kaur rightly argues that "the migration course followed by the government employee was different from ordinary people since their travel, stay and continued employment was arranged by the state."⁴¹

Special attention was given to the refugee Congressmen. Among the refugees they seemed to form a separate category in the eyes of the government. This is evident from the separate arrangements made for them. For example 200 stalls were allotted in People's Park, Paharganj and Karol Bagh for refugee Congressmen.⁴²

³⁸ Ibid, 25 July 1949, p. 1.

³⁹ HT, 26 July 1949, p. 10.

⁴⁰ HT, 27 July 1949, p. 10.

⁴¹ Ravinder Kaur, 'The last journey', *EPW*, Vol. XLI, June 3, 2006, p. 2221.

⁴² HT, 11 January 1948, p. 7.

The lack of coordination with the Pakistan government: The Indian and the Pakistan governments had decided to coordinate their efforts in different areas to carry out the process of the exchange of population and subsequent resettlement. There were joint arrangements made for land and property transfer, money transfer from banks, the recovery of abducted women and children, etc. This arrangement failed to work smoothly many times, to the disadvantage of the rehabilitation process. The Indo-Pak Agreement about movable property was signed in June 1950 but, as a news report informs us, the Pakistan authorities had effectively obstructed the removal of immovable property. Also, there was not even a single case where they permitted removal of goods in the safe deposit locks.⁴³ Nehru voiced the problem:

Most of our schemes and proposals have been held up because of this lack of agreement. I confess to feeling somewhat frustrated in this matter because most of our approaches to the Pakistan government yield no result.⁴⁴

A suit for partition was filed by one Hira Lal in the court of the Senior Sub Judge, Lahore. On 17 May 1946, the sub judge dealing with the case appointed Prakash Chand Mahajan, Official Receiver, Lahore, as a receiver. He was to realize the rent of the property in dispute and distribute it among the parties. Before partition an amount of rupees 2277-14-8 had been collected by the Receiver and kept in the Punjab National Bank, Lahore. After partition it was transferred to the Chandini Chowk branch. But the

⁴³ HT, 18 February 1952, p. 5.

⁴⁴ Nehru to Chief Ministers, December 1, 1953, in G. Parthasarthy ed., Jawaharlal Nehru, Volume 3, p. 461.

family failed to recover that amount from this bank. The family, badly in need of the money, had sent representations to the Receiver and the Punjab government, but to no avail. The official reply was that the Indian government would take up the matter with the Pakistan authorities in the Partition Implementation Committee. The Receiver expressed his helplessness and said that the disposal of the money depended on the decision of the Partition Committee. The newspaper reported:

If it is clear how much of the money belongs to which party, a way of helping the people in their dire need should be found. A settlement between the two Governments concerned may be a protracted affair but if payment after such a settlement is a certainty, humanity and commonsense demand that payment be made now.⁴⁵

Such delays posed a great discomfort for the refugees. This was the situation till late 1952. Whether the Indian administration tried to resolve this or not is a matter that deserves study. But what ultimately emerges is that the non working of this arrangement became another cause of trouble and discontentment for the refugees and delayed the process of normalization. A reporter in the *Hindustan Times* constantly urged the government to remedy the situation. He wrote:

I have often urged in this column that moneys lying with the courts, the post office or with the State governments in the pension fund should be made speedily available. Just to keep these pending till a settlement has been arrived at between

⁴⁵ HT, 25 February 1952, p. 5.

the Government of India and that of Pakistan will not do. Where the title to the money is clear and it is badly needed, to put off matters is to add greatly to the hardships of an uprooted family.⁴⁶

The post partition refugees who reached Delhi have been known to have, as V. N. Datta points out, “made a world of difference to the development of Delhi”.⁴⁷ Today they do not belong to a helpless and pitiable category. They have succeeded in assimilating themselves within Delhi and at present they are both economically and socially secure. In fact, as we all know, after refugees from West Pakistan started settling in Delhi, there was the beginning of a process of economic and cultural domination over the local residents. This could be explained by the fact that most of those who left Delhi belonged to the Muslim middle class. Moreover the entire upper political strata left for Pakistan in search of better opportunities.⁴⁸ Thus those who were left were the Muslims who belonged to lower class. Most of them were economically weak, with a low level of education and were traditional and conservative by nature. And the refugees who reached Delhi, mostly belonged to urban middle class, were trained and educated.⁴⁹ The ratio of urban to rural refugees was 4:1.⁵⁰ The literacy percentage of the refugees was 51.8 as compared to 48.2 for the population of Delhi in 1951.⁵¹ This explains the enterprising and resourceful

⁴⁶ HT, 25 February 1952, p. 5.

⁴⁷ Datta, ‘Panjabi refugees’, p. 443.

⁴⁸ Krafft, ‘Contemporary Old Delhi’, p. 95.

⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 96.

⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 96.

⁵¹ Datta, ‘Panjabi refugees’, p. 443.

attitude of the refugees who were enthusiastic and hopeful about carving out for themselves a secure and normal life in Delhi.

It is in this composition of the partition refugees that lies their assertiveness. They did not allow the government to take them for granted. They demonstrated that they knew how to wrest things from the authorities. They were vigilant about what was being offered to them and what was happening around them. This kept the government on its toes and it was forced to listen to the refugees and fulfill their demands. Whenever the refugees felt that they had been deprived of their due, they expressed their resentment and offered resistance. These articulate refugees used various means to get themselves heard. The press formed an important medium through which they expressed their grievances. Other means included petitioning and writing complaints to the authorities. The government files have a number of complaints. The refugees formed various refugee associations and resorted to various means of protest. In the following pages I have tried to introduce the readers to this aspect of refugee behaviour, which brought the refugees in confrontation with the government.

Refugee Associations

The formation of associations by the refugees highlights another important aspect of the character of the partition refugees in Delhi. It indicates a consciousness among them about their legitimate rights, the willingness to adopt, and the faith, in a progressive, democratic means to get their demands met. The initiative to get organised into particular

groups having similar interests can also be seen as a legacy of our long national struggle that taught us the power of associations and different modes of constitutional and extra constitutional protests.

The refugee associations, as we will see, were formed by refugees with similar interests. They worked as representative bodies that presented refugee grievances in front of the government. The government also recognized their representative role, as the officials often negotiated with them and addressed meetings organised by them, in order to present the government's position.

These were some of the refugee associations I came across during my course of research:

- i. **Evacuee Press Association:** This was formed by the press owners who had evacuated from Pakistan.⁵² The representatives had met Sardar Patel and urged for facilities and protection to remove their presses and stocks etc from Pakistan.⁵³
- ii. **Refugee Teachers Association:** This was formed with the aim to make efforts for the rehabilitation of refugee teachers. It opened offices in Delhi where their names were registered.⁵⁴
- iii. **Railway Vendors Association:** The displaced railway vendors from Pakistan represented their case to the railway authorities through this association.⁵⁵

⁵² HT, 5 December 1947, p. 3.

⁵³ HT, 6 December 1947, p. 3.

⁵⁴ HT, 14 December 1947, p. 4.

⁵⁵ HT, 26 December 1947, p. 3.

- iv. **Free India Sikh League:** It was formed on 18 October 1947 after a meeting of prominent Sikhs from West Punjab. It aimed at studying the rehabilitation problem of Sikhs and bringing about a close understanding between the Sikh community and the government. The meeting elected Sardar Durlabsingh of Lahore as the General Secretary.⁵⁶
- v. **The Refugee Association:** This was formed on 16 October 1947 in a general meeting of Delhi refugees held in Connaught Circus. It set as its goal to provide all possible help and relief to refugees. The diverse measures decided upon were finding employment for refugees, running kitchens for refugee destitutes, distribution of blankets and clothing, and formation of volunteer corps to evacuate the remaining refugees from Pakistan. In the meeting it was also decided to send a representative to the Advisory Committee to the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation.⁵⁷
- vi. **Refugee Lawyers:** Uprooted refugee lawyers from Pakistan held a meeting to consider ways and means to find employment for refugee lawyers.⁵⁸
- vii. **Arya Samajist Refugees:** the displaced Arya Samajists from Pakistan decided to organise themselves by calling upon all of them to register their Delhi addresses and their immediate necessities with the Arya Samaj of Diwan Hall in Delhi.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ HT, 21 October 1947, p. 3.

⁵⁷ HT, 21 October 1947, p. 3.

⁵⁸ HT, 31 October 1947, p. 3.

⁵⁹ HT, 6 December 1947, p. 3.

- viii. *Hawkers and Vendors Association*: This was formed at Connaught Place to struggle against the forcible eviction of the refugee hawkers and vendors undertaken by the government.
- ix. *The Western Punjab Protection Board*: This was set up with a view to secure compensation from the government for the refugees “through recourse to law if other means would fail”.⁶⁰

Due to the limitation of sources, though, I have not succeeded in describing in detail the nature of the organisation, structure and mode of working of the associations. But they seem to have been very active. They were reported to have been organizing regular meetings among themselves. Their activities were meant to signal their dissatisfaction with the government’s working. For example at a conference of representatives of various refugee associations of Sind, Baluchistan, NWFP and West Punjab held at Delhi the “handling of refugee problem by the government” was criticized. The stressed the need of co-coordinating the efforts of all refugee associations so that something substantial could be achieved.⁶¹ The above example makes evident the maturing of these associations for they were not confined to one association and one state. There was an effort to establish links with other similar associations so as to consolidate their efforts, and put more pressure on the government. Similar ideas would have been in the minds of the over two dozen refugee traders’ organizations that joined to form a *Central Purusarthy Beopar Mandal*.⁶²

⁶⁰ File no. 68/47, Confidential, Weekly Diary of the Suptd. Of Police, for the week ending 8th May, 1948.

⁶¹ HT, 18 May 1948, p. 3

⁶² HT, 26 May 1948, p. 3

These associations served as a platform for those with related interests to contact the representatives and express their needs and problems. In other words these associations also acted as a rallying point where those in similar situations could come together and feel empowered. They provided a medium, apart from the government, who could take up the issues of the need of the refugees and there were instances when such associations took initiatives to come forward and help their people. For example an association named the All India Refugee Students' Committee, which functioned in Delhi, helped the needy refugee students by offering free books. Those who applied for free books could get them by contacting the Secretary of the Committee.⁶³ This association used the medium of newspapers to reach out to the refugees and inform them about the steps being taken for them by it. In a press notice issued by this association, all refugee students who could not appear for the Matriculation Examination due to communal disturbances could contact the Secretary, to see what options were available.⁶⁴

As I have already mentioned, the representative character of the refugee associations was recognized by the government and although there was hardly any official statement issued regarding this, the attitude of the authorities did reflect this. For example there were instances of these associations sending their representative to negotiate with the concerned authorities, of government leaders addressing meetings organised by them, and of the authorities' actually working in unison with them to reach out to the refugees. For instance, for allotment of houses to the Sindhi refugees in Muslim localities, the Custodian of Evacuee Property had contacted the Delhi Sindhi Association. The latter

⁶³ HT, 27 June 1948, p. 3.

⁶⁴ HT, 3 September 1948, p. 3.

had been delegated the responsibility to contact those Sindhi refugees who had submitted their applications for a house as the Custodian had been able to secure a few houses and wanted these to be available to those who had applied.⁶⁵ Thus these associations also provided the authorities a medium to take stock of refugee grievances. And they sometimes facilitated, as the above instance shows, the process of making relief available to the refugees.

Refugees In Confrontation With The Government

The entire issue of refugees organizing themselves into associations and resorting to different modes of protest to express their resentment and get things done was a complicated one. It just did not involve the refugees and the government in one-to-one confrontation. The original inhabitants of Delhi were another factor whose presence sometimes made matters more complicated.

Soon after their arrival, the refugees took over anything that could make for a shelter. They lived on the food and clothing disbursed by the government, the local residents and various organizations. Some were lucky enough to have brought in money and did not have to beg. However for all refugees the need soon arose to have some means of making a living. Those lucky enough to be government servants started taking steps to joining in India the kind of posts they had held in Pakistan. However most refugees had no option other than to start a small stall, by investing whatever little capital was left with them.

⁶⁵ HT, 19 August 1948, p. 3.

Due to numerous camps and temporary shelters of the displaced, Delhi had become congested and the mushrooming of refugee stalls here and there had made matter worse. However in the case of refugee stalls the issue was not confined to just congestion and sanitation: the issue was sensitive because of the serious competition which the settled shopkeepers faced from the refugee hawkers, who sold goods much cheaper. The latter could do this, as V. N. Datta argues, “because of superior initiative and enterprise...He wanted quick returns and needed money to meet his daily needs; but the resident, not so pressed for money, would wait and delay. On the one hand there was drive, patience, and competitive spirit; on the other, conservatism, smugness, and caution. One gave smiles, the other, scowls”.⁶⁶ Also the refugees could afford to sell goods cheaply as they had neither to pay rent nor to employ well paid salesmen. In a way, they helped in checking black marketing in New Delhi. For instance they bought a dozen tooth paste tubes in the market for Rupees 16 and sold them for Rupees 17-4, at Rupees 1-7 each. Sugar which used to be sold at Rupees 1-2 a ser in shops was sold by them at Rupees 1 or even 15 annas a ser.⁶⁷ The older shopkeepers had therefore to lower their prices to sell their own goods.

So the new atmosphere was of tension and bitter competition. It was now the older shopkeepers on one side against the petty hawkers who had come to occupy the space outside their shops. These new rivals slowly and steadily began to dominate Delhi's

⁶⁶ Datta, 'Panjabi refugees', p. 453.

⁶⁷ HT, 8 January 1948, p. 3.

business scene. The local trader was initially sympathetic, but “when he found that the refugee was becoming a strong rival in his business, his attitude changed”.⁶⁸

Khari Baoli area in Delhi was occupied by unauthorized refugee stalls. This was resented by the local businessmen there, who approached the government for the removal of the stalls. A letter sent by a group of fifty shopkeepers and merchants to the government which expressed their reasons for resentment against the refugee stall holders:

Since the influx of refugees from West Punjab, like other places, the pavements as well as the main road of Khari Baoli, Delhi, has been overcrowded with the refugee traders. It has been experienced that the refugees squattered on the pavements. Create troubles both to the shopkeepers and to public when they went to cross the pavement. There have been several quarrels. Several times between the refugee squatters... rush in Khari Baoli has been so great that but for the Tramway line and a yard on each side the entire space has been occupied by them. Consequently, almost everyday one or the other accident takes place in the Bazaar... Cases of pick pocketing have been of frequent occurrences.⁶⁹

To put pressure on the authorities the Khari Baoli traders including those of Kirana (the name of a nearby place) and adjoining markets observed *hartal* on 16 November 1949. They also organised themselves into an association called the Khari Baoli Beopar

⁶⁸ Datta, 'Panjabi refugees', p. 453.

⁶⁹ File no. 3 (37)/ 49, Min of R and R, D. A.

Mandal. Further, after a resolution passed in a general meeting of the association, it also served a notice to the Municipal Committee for as damages of fifteen lakh rupees for not removing the squatters.⁷⁰

The government responded with a proposal to shift the refugees to G B Road, Lajpat Rai Market and Amrit Kaur market. This was unacceptable to the refugees. The G B Road, they said needed construction to make it fit as a commercial centre and the latter two markets were unacceptable because, they felt, these had failed “three times” as business centers. There were 493 refugee shopkeepers who were earning their livelihood in Khari Baoli. The refugees, who organised themselves into the All-India Purusharthy Beopar Mandal, observed a hartal on 4 February 1950. They were however, subsequently removed to G B Road. There were numerous appeals and telegrams that the refugees sent the government. Later on, there were reports of the removed squatters reoccupying the Khari Baoli thoroughfare against government orders.⁷¹

This issue, which was prolonged for more than four months, is an interesting example of the government being drawn into a tussle between the local traders and the refugees, and coming into confrontation with the latter. Such situations where the authorities were seen to be adopting an attitude more favorable to the local residents alienated the authorities in the eyes of the refugees.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

The nervousness on the part of the local traders was quite natural as it was a matter of surviving in business. And this fear in no time transformed the feelings of sympathy into antagonism. For the refugees the situation was about their daily survival rather than merely business profits. The refugees were living a tough life and most of them took great pains to set up a small *khokha*.

Most of the pavement hawkers of Connaught Place were former cloth merchants, school teachers, book sellers, timber merchants and students of Lahore, Gujranwala, Lyallpur, Kohat, Hyderabad and other towns. Some of them were even University graduates. Their investment in business varied from Rupees 500 to Rupees 1500.⁷²

In the entire complicated affair it was the government which was capable of controlling the situation and finding a viable solution. But the problem was not resolved. The authorities must have been under tremendous pressure from both sides. Under such circumstances, when the government had limited resources and choices to make, finding a solution acceptable to both sides often proved impossible. In this particular instance, and similar other situations which the government often faced, the obstacle to finding a solution was more due to the inherent intractability of the problem itself, than to other reasons which put government's sensitivity and efficiency in doubt.

In such cases, however, while the local residents gradually moved out of picture, it was the government and the refugees who were brought into open confrontation. As

⁷² HT, January 8, 1948, p. 3.

mentioned above, in spite of numerous appeals and telegrams the government refused to respond. This in turn further alienated the government in the eyes of refugees and the resistance on the part of the latter grew stronger, for example when the removed squatters were reported to be re-occupying the Khari Baoli market.

Similar eviction drives were undertaken by the police in different parts of Delhi to relieve the city of congestion. In most cases the administration could clear the congested areas, but it could not provide a solution that pleased the evicted stall holders. It was not the unwillingness on the part of refugees to get transferred to a new place; they were not offered an alternative site with good arrangements. The resolution passed in the meeting of the All India Purusharthy Beopar Mandal said:

We are ready to clear off the Bazaar if the shops are provided in Queens Garden... The place in G. B. Road is acceptable to us if the stalls are to be made there. We are also ready to go outside Ajmeri Gate if a pucca market is built there.⁷³

As several instances show, the refugee stall holders were removed mostly to a new place where business prospects were bleak. Since the already settled business areas were threatened with the refugee presence, new areas had to be found and the fledgling businesses of the refugees were transferred there. The refugees of Chandini Chowk who

⁷³ File no. 3 (37)/ 49, Min of R and R, D. A.

had been shifted to the Lajpat Rai market were very unhappy with the new place. They were worried that the new place would hardly attract customers for their business.⁷⁴

There was another side to this issue. The unwillingness on the part of refugee stall holders was not always because the government failed to provide a good alternative. The resistance could also be because their business had become lucrative in the meantime as in a duration of two-three years they had attracted regular customers. Shifting to a new place would mean taking further pains to restart the business and attract new customers. This could take years, and sometimes the business would not fetch the same profits as it did in the older place. In the Khari Baoli case, the refugee stall holders initially had valid reasons for not getting shifted, as the new place lacked arrangements for a good business: but later, when proper facilities were provided, they still refused to shift. In G. B. Road the administration had constructed platforms and 300 shops at Lajpat Rai market and 48 shops at Amrit Kaur market at Paharganj were reserved for the squatters of Khari Baoli.⁷⁵

In the case of eviction too, the role of the local shopkeepers aggravated the charged atmosphere. The shopkeepers in Chandini Chowk and various other areas not only felt jubilant over the action of the government but also expressed it very openly. They openly said that the government had done right in removing the refugees which further enraged the refugees.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ File no. 1/48, Confidential, Fortnightly Report for the 1st half of December 1948, D. A.

⁷⁵ File no. 3 (37)/ 49, Min of R and R, D. A.

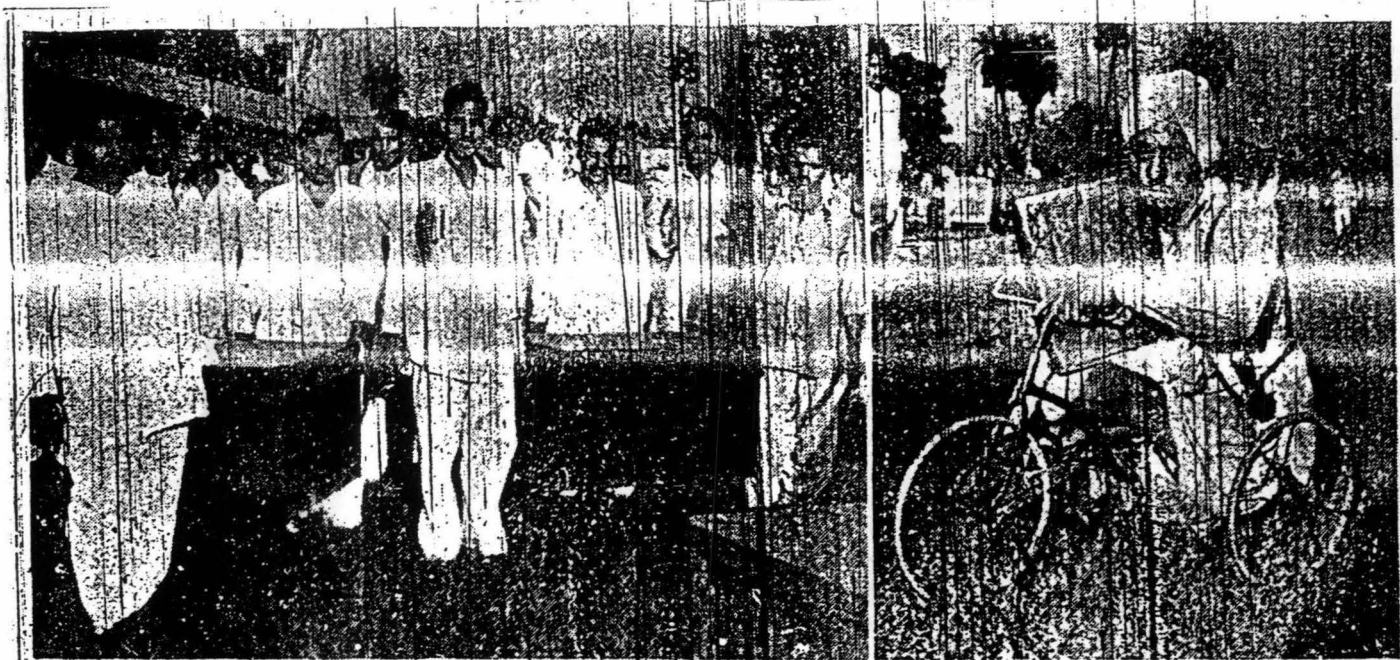
⁷⁶ File no. 55/48, Confidential, Source Report by the Inspector General of Police, Delhi, dated, April 3, 1948, D. A.

Details about the eviction drive in Chandini Chowk would provide further insight into the government's handling of the issue. Chandini Chowk was evacuated of the refugee hawkers in the last week of August 1948. Some of them were allotted stalls in the Lajpat Rai market. The remaining shopkeepers, who could not be accommodated, were temporarily removed to the Parade Grounds. These refugees, who had not even properly settled down, were 'chased out' of the Parade Grounds by a military officer without informing the local administration.⁷⁷ Although later they were brought back to the place, the incident betrayed an utter lack of co-ordination in the working of the administration. The amount of discomfort caused to the refugees can well be imagined. Further these refugees were reluctant to return as they wanted to get shifted to the Queen's Garden on account of its proximity to the Cloth Market and the railway station.⁷⁸

The rents charged by the government were another matter of discontent among the refugee stall holders. For example the refugees at Tis Hazari complained about the exorbitant rents that were charged for the shops erected for them. They stated that the government should have incurred the expense itself rather than calling upon a financier to

⁷⁷ File no. 68/47, Confidential, letter by Randhawa to Shankari Prasad, dated, September 2, 1948, D. A.

⁷⁸ Ibid.



The refugee pavement stall-holders who were ejected from Chandni Chowk and moved to the Parade Ground are now taking their goods to Queen's Garden. Right: A disabled refugee goldsmith taking a consister on a tricycle.

invest.⁷⁹ Similarly, about 2000 stall holders of the Lajpat Rai Market, which was the biggest refugee market in Delhi, submitted a memorandum to the Rehabilitation Minister, urging the reduction in the rents of their shops.⁸⁰

The evicted refugees often resorted to hartals and marches to get themselves heard. To protest against high rates of rent and the ejection of refugees from the pavements a crowd of 700 refugees marched towards the bungalow of the Deputy Commissioner of Delhi. After ventilating their grievances they marched towards the Town Hall where they held a public meeting. In the meeting they threatened to take drastic measures if their demands were not accepted.⁸¹ In another instance, about 25 refugee stall keepers of Sabzimandi observed a *hartal* on the 15 May 1948, as a protest against the increase in the rent of stalls.⁸² The refugees complained that the Municipal Committee had adopted an adamant attitude in not reducing the rent of the stalls.⁸³

The vociferous protests of the refugees perturbed the officers to a great extent, as is evident when one reads the official correspondence. The discontentment among the refugees and the angry mood that prevailed, particularly in the case of the eviction of the refugee stall holders, had the potential to metamorphose into a serious law and order problem. This was very well understood by the officials. The following excerpt of a report by the Inspector General of Police expressed the anxiety:

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ File no. 3 (37)/ 49, Min of R and R, D. A.

⁸¹ Ibid, Weekly Diary of the Suptd. Of Police, for the week ending 8 May 1948, D. A.

⁸² Ibid, Weekly Diary of the Suptd. Of Police, for the week ending 15 May 1948, D. A.

⁸³ Ibid, letter by Randhawa to Khurshid, dated, 17 May 1948, D. A.

Much panic has prevailed among the refugee stall holders in Chandini Chowk, and other places as a result of the attitude of the local authorities in getting the various bazaars, particularly Chandni Chowk, cleared of refugee hawkers... The feelings have, therefore, risen high against the Government and the refugees are openly spreading discontentment against them. It is therefore believed that with the slightest provocation the city of Delhi may once again face the disturbed conditions in the near future.⁸⁴

The refugee associations were often seen by the government authorities as a means adopted by the refugees to coerce the government into getting their demands met. A report by the Superintendent of Police of Delhi said:

Uttam Chand, Mangal Sain Sarhadi and Dr. Desraj have formed a new body known as Central Hindu Sikh Minority Protection Board with the apparent object of safeguarding refugee interests though the ulterior motive is reported to be blackmail the government.⁸⁵

Similar feelings were expressed by Nehru:

You may have heard in the newspapers about a refugee demonstration in front of my house. Some thousands of refugees from two of our camps, Kurukshetra and

⁸⁴ File no. 55/48, Confidential, Source Report by the Inspector General of Police, Delhi, dated, April 3, 1948.

⁸⁵ File no. 68/47, Confidential, Weekly Diary of the Suptd. of Police for the week ending August 21, 1948.

Faridabad, which is sixteen miles from Delhi, marched up and sat in front of my compound. I have always made myself available, as far as time permitted, to see the refugees and to help them. In fact, I have probably given more time to the refugee problem than to any other. But this kind of mass invasion, though perfectly peaceful, was evidently meant to coerce us in some undertakings for the future. I was not prepared to be coerced in this way and I made it clear to them that I would not even go to them or discuss the matter with them. At the same time, I asked the police not to interfere with them, so long as there was no misbehaviour. For about twelve days this continued... Ultimately their patience gave way and they apologized to me and decided to go back to their respective camps.⁸⁶

As this letter shows, the Prime Minister chose not to respond to refugee resistance as he felt that it was a kind of 'mass invasion' and meant to 'coerce' him; and finally the refugees left when nothing could be gained. However, if one looks at news report, there is a different story. There were about 4000 refugees from Kurukshetra, Faridabad and Humayun tomb camps who were squatting in front of the PM's house and everyday their number was swelling. The authorities had to employ military police to stop the arrival of more batches. The demands of refugees were "immediate permanent rehabilitation anywhere between Ambala and Delhi or between Saharanpur and Meerut, and grant of individual loans".⁸⁷ As regards the departure of refugees, Nehru avoids mentioning the fact that the refugees left only after Meher

⁸⁶ Nehru to Chief Ministers, 15 August 1949, in G. Parthasarthy ed., *Jawaharlal Nehru, Volume 1*, p. 437.

⁸⁷ HT, 10 August 1949, p. 22.

Chand Khanna, the Advisor to the minister of Rehabilitation, promised to meet refugee representatives and consider their demands. Also three special trains were arranged for the departure of the refugees.⁸⁸ Thus the departure of refugees was not an unceremonious one as has been described by Nehru and their resistance did not go in vain too; the government had to consider their demands.

This was not a lone example of refugees finally succeeding in getting themselves heard. In another incident the squatting refugees were given railway tickets and one rupee each for expenses during the journey by the administration. They were assured by the Rehabilitation Secretary to the Chief Commissioner that their problems would be resolved.⁸⁹

The above discussion makes it clear that the Delhi refugees did succeed many times in getting themselves heard and that the government had to soften their stance when confronted by adamant refugees. This was not the case in West Bengal. When compared with Bengal refugees, the Delhi refugees were more successful in bargaining with the government. This was because in Bengal the struggle against the government was carried on a different plane; for the Bengal refugees the fight was over the very question of making the government recognize that their demand for a proper rehabilitation was a legitimate one, that it was their right. In Delhi, there was no ambiguity over the question of rehabilitation being a legitimate right of refugees and a duty of the government. The government, right from the beginning, recognized its responsibility to permanently

⁸⁸ HT, 15 August 1949, p. 3.

⁸⁹ HT, 10 August 1949, p. 22.

rehabilitate the refugees. However in the case of Bengal, the government till the early 1950s had not accepted the irreversibility of the migration. The basis of Nehru-Liaquat pact signed in 1950 was to create “a sense of security among the minorities to discourage their further exodus from either side by jointly reaffirming the right of equality in matters of citizenship”.⁹⁰ Thus in Bengal the battle was over what Joya Chatterjee calls “right or charity”.⁹¹ The Bengal government did not consider the rehabilitation of refugees as their responsibility; as a corollary to this, the refugee demands of relief and rehabilitation were not considered their right. This was the basic reason for the indifferent attitude of Bengal authorities to refugee resistance, in contrast to government’s approach towards refugees’ struggles in Delhi.

The above narrative which puts the government under scrutiny, however, tells only a part of the story. The refugees were not always victims. Their attitude and behaviour did make the whole affair more vexed and thus the delivery of goods by the government more protracted. While the active involvement of refugees in the rehabilitation process made the government more responsive, where they got involved in deceit and disruption of law and order, the rehabilitation process suffered. The subsequent account seeks to tell the other part of the story where the refugees can be seen as indulging in various means to deceive and mislead the government, and in unlawful acts, that consumed much of the time and energy of the administration.

⁹⁰ Kudaisya, ‘The demographic upheaval of Partition’, *South Asia*, Vol. XVIII, p. 87.

⁹¹ Joya Chatterjee, ‘Right or charity? The debate over relief and rehabilitation in West Bengal, 1947-50’ in Suvir Kaul ed., *The Partitions of Memory: The Afterlife of the Division of India*, New Delhi, 2001.

Refugees Misrepresenting Facts

There were numerous instances where the refugees, including students, were found to be misleading the administration. This section brings to light a few such cases, thus opening up a new aspect of the resettlement process—the existence of an internal competition among the refugees, where one benefited at the cost of other.

There were cases of refugees acquiring extra plots, shops or houses. Several methods were devised by them to extract extra benefits. The refugees were found to be reproducing false certificates, getting extra allotments in the name of sons or brothers, bribing officials, etc. There were several petitions to government where refugees complained about each other and revealed such fraudulent acts. The government had issued orders that anyone who possessed an extra allotment should surrender it. It was also declared that those displaced persons who informed the authorities about such cases of double allotment would receive 'special consideration'.⁹² A letter from a refugee said:

The Advisor, Shri Mehr Chand Khanna has told the displaced persons many times that if any one informs the Government that a person has deceived the Government getting more than one house and shop allotted to him, his case will be given priority for allotment, he being the first informant.

Accordingly, I bring to your kind notice that one Dr. Amir Chand Narula, who had already a shop allotted in Rajinder Nagar, has again got a shop allotted in

⁹² HT, 15 September 1949, p.3.

Patel Nagar East, and moreover, he is also practising in Reharpur, Karol Bagh, Arya Samaj Road... I request that the allotment...be cancelled and I should be allotted the same.⁹³

This petition, apart from highlighting the kind of fraudulent means employed by refugees, also draws attention to the new role adopted by some disadvantaged refugees—that of “the first informant”. In the struggle for survival, while one set of refugees was using fair and unfair means, another set of refugees got engaged in ‘informing’ the administration of the unfair means.

There were cases of violation of rules by refugee students. For example, educational loans could be received for continuation and completion of the course undertaken by the displaced students before partition. However, a refugee, named Ms Raj Kanwal, who was given a loan of 1,065 rupees in 1948 for completion of the MBBS course, was actually found to be a student of B.Sc at the time of migration. Therefore further grants to her were stopped by the government.⁹⁴

In a similar example when the police arrested a refugee from Rawalpindi, Ajit Singh, on the charge of cheating the Central Government by securing a loan of Rupees 25,000 for industrial rehabilitation by false representation and misstatement of facts.⁹⁵ Although

⁹³ File no. 3 (17)/50, Min of R and R, D. A.

⁹⁴ File no. 8 (37)/50, Min of R and R, D. A.

⁹⁵ HT, 13 October 1949, p. 3.

the details of the case were missing in the news report, one can infer that refugees indulged in falsification to get profits.

The circulation of bogus ration cards in the camps was widespread. The government had launched a vigorous campaign to check such practices. In the Kingsway camp the authorities undertook surprise checks of ration cards. This method yielded encouraging results and by stoppage of issue of rations against the recovered bogus cards there was a saving of 63 ½ maunds of flour and rice, 35 ¾ maunds of milk and 7 maunds of vegetables per week. There had been a proportionate saving in other articles too like sugar, fuel, etc. ⁹⁶

Similar conditions prevailed in the Kurukshetra Camp too. The camp, the biggest in India, was established in October 1947. In February 1948 it was handed over to the East Punjab government from the army. In July 1949 it was handed over again to the army. Mahatma Gandhi was very much impressed by the efficient management, discipline and cleanliness under the army control. Here too, the practice of bogus ration cards was rampant. Following the transfer of the administration of the camp to the army, as many as 4297 bogus ration cards had been detected, against which rations were being drawn by the inmates of the camp. ⁹⁷

More similar cases came to light, finding a place in both government files and newspapers. These cases do not only show that the refugees were cheating the

⁹⁶ File no. 1/48, Confidential, Fortnightly Report for the 1st half of October 1948, D. A.

⁹⁷ HT, 17 July 1949, p. 9.

administration; they also show that there was a kind of internal competition that existed among the refugees. One refugee was benefiting at the cost another. Those who could use devious methods, money power or contacts benefited, but this also delayed the delivery of goods to fellow refugees.

Refugees And The Law And Order Situation

The situation in Delhi after partition was far from being normal. It was tense and there were incidents of attacks on each other among different communities. A refugee in these conditions was both a victim and a perpetrator.

The refugees were accused of telling harrowing tales about the plight of their co-religionists in other places and spreading rumors that created alarm among the already terrified and charged people of Delhi. Such tales had the potential of inciting further communal outbursts in the city. The Deputy Commissioner of Delhi issued a warning to the incoming refugees:

They shouldn't abuse the hospitality extended to them by indulging in acts of lawlessness or inciting other people by circulating harrowing tales.⁹⁸

⁹⁸ HT, 27 August 1947, p. 6.

The activities of the refugees were not confined to spreading rumour alone. There were numerous cases of attacks and counter attacks on the locals and forcible occupation of evacuee houses by refugees.

Certain Hindu and Sikh refugees attacked a lorry carrying Muslims at Ajmeri Gate, Delhi. They looted the lorry and injured some of the occupants. In another incident a truck full of Congressmen which was passing through Ajmeri Gate were surrounded by refugees “who began to abuse the Congress and Gandhi”. It was also reported that some of the Congress workers were assaulted. Another similar incident happened in the same area when a lorry carrying Muslims was returning as they could not get accommodation on a refugee train bound for Pakistan. A cyclist collided with the lorry and this gave the refugees the excuse to attack the Muslims. They also snatched their blankets, beddings and utensils.⁹⁹

Their illegal activities, apart from creating law and order problem also aggravated the communally charged atmosphere. As M.S.Randhawa, the Deputy Commissioner reported to the Chief Commissioner’s office:

These places (Karol Bagh, Paharganj, and Sabzimandi) have a mixed population of Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs. Rioting, looting, murder and arson took place on

⁹⁹ HT, 15 January 1948, p. 3.

a wide scale in this area during the last fortnight...Persons who are most to blame are penniless refugees from the West Punjab and the mill hands.¹⁰⁰

However it was not the case that such disturbances were created by refugees alone. The same file speaks about how in the Sabzimandi area the Muslims fired automatic weapons from their houses. large amounts of arms and ammunition were recovered from them in their houses. But from the refugees “not much can be recovered”.¹⁰¹

Those were the days when the communal atmosphere was charged. Riots and looting of a communal character continued unabated. The involvement of the refugees in unlawful acts has to be seen in the backdrop of the communally sensitive environment. Moreover it was they who had lost everything and experienced horrific tragedies. They carried a sense of insecurity and fear with them when they entered Indian side of border. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel seemed to understand the plight of refugees:

I fully realise that many of them have gone through tragedies of indescribable horror... But they have to remember that any attempt at retaliation or revenge would only direct our energies from the all embracing task of relief.¹⁰²

In this context it is relevant to quote what a self critical refugee had written to the editor of the *Hindustan Times*:

¹⁰⁰ File no. 73/47-Confidential, D.A.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² *The Times Of India*, 4 September 1947, p. 1.

Had we, refugees, behaved in a disciplined manner, much could have been done for us by the Indian government. We have been rather obstruction and have created obstacles for the Government... The mistake that the refugees made was to create disturbances... Another factor which impedes Government effort in this direction is lack of discipline and cooperation on our part.¹⁰³

The government also alleged the involvement of refugees in thefts and burglaries. It was also stated, however, that the increase in such cases could be mostly attributed to refugees who had not been properly rehabilitated.¹⁰⁴ It was very true that a major cause for the rising cases of untoward acts committed by the refugees was the inadequacy and delay in rehabilitation measures. The relief measures failed to reach all the refugees in time and in satisfactory proportion. A sense of frustration at their own predicament and indignation against the administration and locals was very natural. This was largely accepted among the government circles too. M.S.Randhawa stated:

The refugee rehabilitation problem was the key of the law and order problem in Delhi and the more quickly they are rehabilitated the more speedily the situation will improve.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ HT, 9 December 1947, p. 4.

¹⁰⁴ File no. 1/48, Confidential, D.A.

¹⁰⁵ File no. 1/48, Confidential, D.A.

Government Discontentment With The Refugees

The rehabilitation process was a prolonged one-both due to its enormity and complexity and due to the manner in which the government worked. But these were not the only reasons. There were occasions when the refugees themselves hindered the rehabilitation process by not cooperating with the government and by putting forward unjustified demands.

There were situations when the authorities were left with few choices. Under such circumstances, when the refugees were unwilling to cooperate with it, the situation became very difficult to manage. For instance, 50,000 non Punjabi evacuees residing in the Kurukshetra Camp refused to go to Matsya Union for permanent rehabilitation.¹⁰⁶ It was decided by the government that the migrants from the West Punjab would be left to the care of the East Punjab government. Those who came from NWFP, Sind, Baluchistan, and Bahawalpur and were living in the Kurukshetra camp would be the responsibility of the Centre who would make arrangements for their settlement. It was decided by the government that the vast areas that had been left vacant by the Meos in Alwar and Bharatpur would be allotted to these refugees. However they refused to go and settle in these lands.

There were several reasons why the government insisted on their resettlement in these areas. Firstly, the state of UP had become overcrowded with the arrival of refugees beyond its capacity of absorption. Secondly, the government did not want the next kharif

¹⁰⁶ HT, 7 June 1948, p. 4.

crop in Alwar and Bharatpur to be lost. Thirdly, as long as the refugees stayed in Kurukshetra they would not be eligible for rehabilitation loans. Moreover the camp was also not in a good condition and was liable to flooding during the rainy season. Hence the government was keen that these refugees were rehabilitated as soon as possible. However owing to the latter's reluctance to move to an entirely new area, the government was faced with a big problem. The government had spent "considerable amount of money" to make arrangements for the settlement of refugees in the Matsya Union.¹⁰⁷

The onus of delaying the resettlement process thus rests not on the government alone. The refugees, sometimes through their unscrupulous methods, and sometimes by adopting a rigid stance by not coming to a compromise for something less than favourable, made the process more complicated and protracted. This gives us insight into relationship between the government and its subjects. The subjects believed that the government had immense potential and only by being vocal and active could they wrest their due. For the government it was not always possible to satisfy the subjects and this could be due to many reasons—the bureaucratic delays, corruption at different levels of administration, intractability of problems at hand, lack of resources, etc. Under such situations the government always failed in the eyes of the subjects, in spite of making effective arrangements many times. When this continued for long the frustration increased on the part of the subjects and also increased the apprehension about the government's intentions.

¹⁰⁷ HT, 2 August 1948, p. 3.

This element of apprehension in the relationship between the government and its subjects towards each other is very much evident in the case of refugees. For instance, there was a government decision to convert the out houses of the Commander in Chief's residence, where the refugees were staying in a refugee camp, and place them under the supervision of the Commandant of Safdarjang. This move was interpreted by the refugees as the government trying to eject them from that area.¹⁰⁸

The growing discontent and subsequent mobilization of the refugees made the government wary of their behaviour. There were other elements which perturbed the government. The government kept an eye on those who could provoke the refugees into action against it. There was an apprehension that prevailed in the minds of the official circles about the influence of Communism among the refugees. M. S. Randhawa reported to Khurshid:

The situation in the Kingsway Refugee Camp continues to be tense. There are five refugees with communistic leanings, who are inciting the refugees and creating discontentment.¹⁰⁹

In the case of the eviction of the refugee stall holders from the Chandini Chowk market, too, the authorities were concerned about the presence of socialist elements among the

¹⁰⁸ File no. 68/47, Confidential, Weekly Diary of the Suptd of Police for the week ending September 11, 1948, D. A.

¹⁰⁹ File no. 68/47, Confidential, letter by Randhawa to Khurshid, dated, 24 May 1948, D. A.

refugees who they feared would ignite the indignation of the discontented refugees. The weekly report of the Superintendent of Police expressed the anxiety:

In their efforts to secure a redress of their grievances, the stall holders are aided by the local socialists who have threatened a 'no tax' campaign against the Municipal Committee if the situation doesn't improve soon.¹¹⁰

The presence of political elements, who took advantage of the situation by exploiting the insecurity and discontent among the refugees, further complicated the rehabilitation process. The Hindu fundamentalist forces were also very actively involved in exploiting refugee sentiments for gaining political mileage in Delhi. It is curious that their involvement has not found a slightest mention in government files; nor was any statement issued by Congress leaders. This is all the more curious in view of the fact that one of the work and relief centres under the Women's Section was running in the Hindu Mahasabha Bhawan (See Appendix II).

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to present the government and refugees in active engagement with each other. The course that the rehabilitation process took was greatly affected by this interaction. Each of the two players both reinforced and hindered the process. As this chapter shows, the refugees did not choose to accept whatever was

¹¹⁰ File no. 68/47, Confidential, Weekly Diary of the Suptd. of Police, for the week ending December 11, 1948, D. A.

offered to them by the government. They wanted their say in the way the process was carried out. Thus it took a course that was not designed by government alone. The refugees and the government constantly contested and negotiated with each other to define the manner in which rehabilitation progressed.

We have seen the amount of dissatisfaction with the government that existed among the refugees. This was in spite of the fact that the government was actively involved in the rehabilitation process. Many times the refugees preferred not to recognize the ways in which they benefited from the government efforts. I mentioned that the refugees who were interviewed mostly denied receiving any kind of help from the government. These instances reinforce the argument that the government is generally absent in the popular narratives about partition and rehabilitation. The oral accounts deliberately hide the role of the government. During my field work I interviewed about twenty refugees. Out of them there were only three who spoke about the active presence of the government in their rehabilitation. Ravinder Kaur, in her field survey, found that half the respondents claimed to have received no assistance from the government and only 42 per cent acknowledged government help in establishing their homes, despite the fact that the survey was conducted in colonies established by the government.¹¹¹

We also saw the kind of rivalry that existed among the refugees who tried to take extra benefits both in collusion with the officials and by misrepresenting facts. This adversely affected the prospects of other refugees in getting relief. Thus the rehabilitation process brought the refugees in confrontation with not only the local residents and the

¹¹¹ Ravinder Kaur, *Since 1947*, p. 61.

government but also with each other. A tension existed in all the relationships that the refugee created in the new place. He or she was involved in several contests while creating space for a new life.

CONCLUSION

Refugee rehabilitation is a long and complex process with its own trials and tribulations. For independent India, the first experience in handling this task came soon after independence. The price paid for freedom was not just a division of the country: independence brought in its train a huge mass of refugees who had to be made a part of the newly formed nation.

The partition refugees, as they are called, had come here to stay, to make India their home, unlike the usual categories of refugees. They did not fit the general definition of refugees – where the repatriation of the migrants to the place of their origin is the solution. It was a ‘one way exodus’¹ and there was no looking back to the place they had left. Many realized this fact only after coming to this side of the border. They never imagined that this exodus would be a permanent one. Soon they reconciled to the fact of rebuilding their home in a new, although not entirely strange, place but with hardly any assets. It was here that the government came into picture. It came donning a positive attitude towards refugees, calling them a ‘national asset’. A comprehensive set of policies and schemes was drawn up. They were meant to touch almost every sphere of refugee rehabilitation and resettlement. This Government, however, was not without its own weaknesses and a set of constraints that in the end hindered the rehabilitation process.

¹ Augustine Mahiga, Foreword to Ranabir Samaddar ed. *Refugees and the State*, p. 11.

Reasons For Loopholes In Government Functioning

After independence, the Indian Government was working within a set of constraints that impaired its efficiency. It was a fledgling Government, with little experience in handling crisis. The partition, accompanied by the communal holocaust and a flood of refugees, presented an enormous problem. This had to be handled along with the regularization and stabilization of a newly formed nation's administration and governance. The refugee problem came at a time when the government machinery was far from being put in place. There was chaos after the hurried exit of the British. There was a reshuffling of officers between the two new dominions. In Delhi, the local government was under strain as many of its Muslim officers had opted to serve in Pakistan. More than fifty percent of the police force was drawn from amongst the Muslims and all of them had opted for Pakistan.² So, the dearth of officers in the administration further made the task difficult.

The problems were accentuated enormously by the sensitive communal atmosphere. We have seen how refugees themselves were involved in aggravating the situation. Under such circumstances the administration had to be wary of taking decisions and implementing them. As we have seen the refugees did not belong to one community. The returning Muslim refugees from Pakistan, and the internally displaced Muslims, also formed a part of the refugee population. Catering to the requirements of one alienated the other. The communal atmosphere was also inflamed. The Government was walking on a tight rope and this took a heavy toll on its efficiency and performance. These roadblocks

² Patel, *Rites of Passage*, p. 81.

were accompanied by some more complicated problems which required the same degree of attention as was given to the refugee issue. The deteriorating Kashmir issue that engendered a war with Pakistan and the issue of the Hyderabad acquisition were the two significant ones that did play a role in affecting Government's handling of the issue. Pandit Nehru admitted this in his speech at a gathering of representatives of refugee organisations and camps on 1 August 1948:

The question of giving aid to the refugees cannot be isolated from other problems that we are trying to tackle. Prices are rising. Due to the recommendations of the Pay Commission, the Government expenses have gone up by about Rs. 30 crores³... Besides this, there are military and political problems of Kashmir and Hyderabad in which the country is involved at the moment.⁴

Keeping these constraints in mind we shall analyze the loopholes in the following paragraphs.

We have seen that there existed a disparity in government policies and their implementation. The government ultimately failed to satisfy the refugees in general. But this is a problem which every Government and every administration faces, irrespective of time and place, and was not something unique to the case of refugee rehabilitation. However what drove me to engage with this issue were the tall claims made by the pro-

³ The First Pay Commission recommended revised pay scales for Central Government Employees in 1947, cited in Selected works of Nehru, Second Series, Volume 7, p. 26.

⁴ Ibid.

government voices. For example U. B. Rao in his book has glorified the role of the government. He has stretched his account to such an extent that for a person who has known the various instances where the Government failed to do its duty, such glorification seems exaggerated. M. S. Randhawa, then Deputy Commissioner of Delhi, who has been found to be vociferously critical of the handling of the process in the official correspondence, shies away from bringing the darker side of Government performance to light in his book. My attempt in this work is not, however, to point fingers at the Government's conduct but to assess its role. I have attempted to see the other side of the picture which shows that the government and the administration couldn't insulate itself from the inherent weaknesses of bureaucracy and governance.

There was corruption at various levels of administrative machinery. I have enumerated many instances in the preceding chapters. The corruption, however, was not limited to taking bribes and helping those who offered them. It also took the form of discrimination in favour of those who were well connected and part of government. Life was easy for those who could take a shorter route and get things done for themselves before others. This, on the one hand, put the empty handed and powerless among the refugees at a disadvantage. On the other hand, the delay and non fulfillment of needs due to such reasons alienated the government in the eyes of the refugees. Further the frustration among the deprived refugees also manifested itself in a covert competition among the refugees themselves. This competition was accentuated by limited resources.

Efforts were made to rein in the menace of corruption. As mentioned earlier, there was a Refugee Welfare and Vigilance Committee that was working to keep an eye on corrupt practices. But that, they failed becomes evident from the examples that refugees continued to be harassed. The higher authorities failed to keep a vigilant eye on the lower rung officers. However, here, the assumption that the higher authorities can be exonerated from such corruption charges would certainly be wrong. There were charges leveled against M. S. Randhawa and Datar Singh about having used their office to get profits for themselves. Nehru expressed concern over such charges:

I was told there (in Chhatarpur) that adjoining this farm (a cooperative farm started by the refugees) was a large area of several hundred acres which had been given, presumably by the Custodian of Evacuee Property, to Randhawa, who was till lately the Deputy Commissioner here. I was further informed that another several hundred acres had been given in the same way to Datar Singh...

Some one told me that this was done by some kind of exchange for land in Pakistan. That does not seem to be a sufficient justification.⁵

In the absence of sufficient sources it was not possible to go into the veracity of these charges. But the incident does suggest possibilities of involvement of different grades of officials in unscrupulous acts. The corruption was accompanied by inefficiency and laxity in the administration. There were delays in the facilities to reach the entitled refugees. Long queues, the prolonged process of applying for a house or job, delays in getting returns for claims, the non realization of various genuine claims, etc, formed part of the

⁵ Selected Works of Nehru, Second Series, Volume 7, pp. 31-32.

administration's way of working. The refugees had to bear with that. The higher authorities could be faulted in the lack of vigilance and losing contact with the refugees. The practice of making on the spot preparations and doing temporary patchwork just before an inspection by a higher functionary or a political leader existed in those days. This was very well described by a refugee who recounted those instances when inspections were undertaken in the camps: the hurried preparations that were made for rations and blankets just before the arrival of the inspecting authority.⁶

One may think that the achievement of a long awaited independence would have filled the officials and leaders with a new zeal to work for the country's reconstruction and kept the administration honest. But to presume so is ingenuous. On the contrary, as B. R. Nanda affirmed, during the years of war and partition "the discipline and integrity of some of the lower public officials have considerably deteriorated".⁷ The zeal of getting freedom and the extraordinarily serious crisis could not effect positive changes in the government's usual daily functioning. Thus the administration was functioning as in normal times when it came to catering directly to the masses; the machinery could not overcome its inherent weaknesses of bureaucratic inflexibility, red-tapism, laxity, delays and corruption.

However, one needs to keep in mind that corruption in administrative machinery feeds on the unscrupulous ways of the public who interact with it. If the officials took bribes and gave preferences or favours, there were refugees who existed to give those

⁶ Based on an interview conducted with Ram Swarup in Old Rajinder Nagar on 20 November 2006.

⁷ Nanda, *Witness to Partition*, p. 115.

bribes and get the favours. So blaming the administration alone gives an incomplete picture.

Another roadblock in the path of refugee rehabilitation was the lack of efficient methods to channel the resources. For example, there were provisions for admission in Medical and Engineering colleges for the refugee students who were studying in any such institution in Pakistan before partition. There were also provisions for loans to such students. But for availing those benefits the refugees had to furnish proof that they were studying in such institutions. There were many students who had lost their certificates or never brought them to Delhi. Such students failed to get the benefits. The Government on its side cannot be blamed as it had no other option but to ensure the qualification of refugee students before giving them the opportunity since it had to work within the constraints of insufficient resources. One can argue that the administration in a way became the victim of its own set of rules and regulations. Similarly, the scheme of compensation against claims made for immovable property had its own weaknesses. As B. R. Nanda explained:

The simplest and the most equitable arrangement would appear to be for Pakistan and India to make compensation to evacuees from their respective territories but this is hardly likely to be accepted by Pakistan since it would only increase Pakistan's debt to India. Nor is it likely that the refugees would get adequate compensation for what they left behind even through the 'custodians' appointed by the government. For one thing, the movable property may have already moved

away before the custodian came on the scene. For another, the market price of the immovable property depends upon the interplay of demand and supply.⁸

Thus the government was experimenting as there was neither a ready-made plan nor a past experience to manage a crisis of such magnitude. Any government has to, and it always does, work adjusting with such similar aforesaid problems. The failure or success of administration lies in how efficiently such problems are taken care of and how the best option is chosen.

However, the fact that there was a constant effort to tackle the problem, as is evident from the correspondence among the administrative officials, should be seen as a positive element in its working. Further one should not emphasise the shortcomings of the Government. It is very true that in Delhi the rehabilitation and assimilation of refugees was a tale more of refugee grit and enterprise than anything else. But denying Government's contribution to the enormous task is not tenable in view of the data that speak a lot about its achievements in this area. The enormity of the impending crisis was realized right in the beginning and the Indian state decided to take up the challenge when it formed a separate Ministry to manage the process. This was a step that matched the gravity of the situation – the government decided to form an independent Ministry and not a Department under an existing Ministry. Numerous schemes and plans were chalked out that sought to cater to almost every need of the refugees. We have already seen the efficient working of Women's Section. By December 1950, three lakhs of refugees had

⁸ Nanda, *Witness to Partition*, pp. 105-106.

been housed, 1, 90,000 in evacuated houses and 1, 00,000 in the new construction.⁹ The Annual Report (August 1948 to December 1948) shows how expeditiously loans were given. A loan of 4,462,075 rupees was sanctioned for refugees of which 2,431,150 rupees was given. These loans resulted in the settlement of about three lakhs refugees.¹⁰

The government was visible in the entire rehabilitation process. Its absence in the oral accounts of refugees who deny any benefit from the government side speaks about the general perception of the subjects about the government. There is always unwillingness on the part of citizens to recognize government's positive efforts and as B. R. Nanda asserts "it is not unoften that a refusal of a special concession or a particular favour is bruited abroad as a gross injustice".¹¹

The refugees in Delhi have assimilated and become a part of its socio-economic fabric. If one takes assimilation of migrants in a new place as a yardstick to define the success or failure of a rehabilitation process, Delhi indisputably witnessed a completion of the process. For the administration the process reached its conclusion in the late fifties and finally in the year 1965 the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation was closed down and the remaining work was given to the Ministry of Home Affairs.¹² Ravinder Kaur rightly points out:

⁹ Datta, 'Panjabi refugees', p. 445.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 449.

¹¹ Nanda, *Witness to Partition*, p. 111.

¹² Ravinder Kaur, *Since 1947*, p. 195.

There is a symbolic message in the closure of the ministry...The refugees no longer needed a separate governmental agency to specifically look after their affairs... The refugees were no longer required to fill out separate forms or state their refugee status, which had earlier differentiated them from the local populace. These administrative changes had profound implications for the social identification process whereby the refugees felt more integrated.¹³

Long Term Impact On Delhi

The refugees played a significant role in the transformation of Delhi after 1947. As V. N. Datta argues, the hardy Punjabi “has made a world of difference to the development of Delhi.”¹⁴ One of the fundamental changes after partition was in the composition of the religious communities in Delhi. Due to the mass exodus of Muslims from India, the Muslims left in Delhi were marginalized. The space created by outgoing Muslims was taken by Hindu and Sikh refugees driven out of Pakistan to India.

Another significant impact was the growth of slum population in Delhi due to the massive population growth and constant demand for commercial space. A report on “Slums of Old Delhi” presented in 1958 calculated a slum population of 50,000 in *katras* and of 12,000 in four shanty areas within Old Delhi.¹⁵

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Datta, ‘Panjabi Refugees’, p. 442.

¹⁵ Krafft, *Shahjahanabad*, p. 98.

Due to the sudden increase in the population of Delhi there was unplanned and uncontrolled settlement and commercial growth. That is why it has often been considered that the foundation of contemporary problems of urban land management was laid in the 1950s.¹⁶ Thousands of houses and pieces of property changed ownership during the days after partition. We have seen that there were illegal takeovers and allocation of evacuee properties. Even today there is confusion over the actual ownership of numerous buildings and pieces of property. A large number of property ownership disputes are still pending in several courts. Many of these were instituted by the Delhi Wakf Board alone.¹⁷

In addition to this, there have been some interesting changes in the general life-style of Delhi which are worth mentioning. Urdu went into a steep decline to be replaced by Hindi and spoken Punjabi. Mushairas became rare, being replaced by kavi sammelans. Mujras patronized by the rich of all communities disappeared. Also trades like zari, embroidery, making silver and gold leaf paper in which Muslims specialized died out. Dhabas sprang up and restaurants started serving gourmet tandoori chicken and fish, dal makhni, sarson ka saag and makai ki roti, gazar ka halwa and kulfi falooda. Wedding manner changed- practices like groom coming atop white mare, women doing bhangra and brass band playing Hindi film tunes were started.¹⁸ Again, as a refugee informs us:

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 96.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 95.

¹⁸ Khushwant Singh, 'A historical sketch', in B. P. Singh and Pawan K. Varma ed, *The Millenium Book on Delhi*, New Delhi, 2001, p. 41.

Women started wearing the colourful clothes that they were used to in Lahore, and men wore pants with the latest fashion cut. Custom tailors sprang up everywhere. People started going to picnics at Okhla and Kutub Minar, and Lodi Gardens, and all of a sudden there was life in these places. Delhi was becoming a desirable city, not just the capital of India.¹⁹

The basis of the socio cultural impact of refugee influx, as I have highlighted above, can be found in two reasons. One of them is the very composition of the refugees, most of whom belonged to an urban and literate class. Also as the *Hindustan Times* reported, the registration of refugees had revealed the existence of a large number of highly educated, qualified and experienced refugees suitable for being placed in employment all over the country.²⁰ Secondly, being drawn in good numbers from the urban areas these refugees wanted to recreate their life in Delhi. A deep contrast existed between city of Lahore, which the refugee left, and Delhi. As a refugee pointed out, “Lahore was the cultural and fashion capital of India, and it had all these things that Delhi lacked”.²¹ It was the urge to reshape their life in Delhi as it was in the place which they had left, that went a long way in transforming the face of Delhi. There are instances of refugees opening shops in Delhi with their old names that usually carried the name of the place to which they belonged. An example that deserves mention here is the ‘Volga’ restaurant in Connaught Place which was actually a famous restaurant in Lahore. It was revived in

¹⁹ An account given by Gurdip Sidhu, a doctor based in United States who intimated his experiences through an e-mail.

²⁰ HT, 30 November 1947, p. 4.

²¹ Gurdip Sidhu’s e-mail.

Delhi by the same refugees who used to run it there in Lahore. Even the furnishing had been done by a refugee firm which was working in a temporary structure in Delhi. M. S. Randhawa, on the inauguration of the restaurant, had rightly stated that the standard of catering in Delhi would improve as a result of the influx of refugees.²²

The influx of refugees also affected the political equations in Delhi. The Hindu Mahasabha could organize mass mobilizations in Delhi for the first time. The Hindu Mahasabha and the RSS projected themselves as the saviour of the refugees. The Hindu Mahasabha opened a refugee camp near a railway station and the Hindu Mahasabha Bhawan was opened to refugees. We have seen in the third chapter the prolonged tussle between the refugee squatters and original traders of Khari Baoli. The meeting of All India Purusharthi Beopar Mandal was held in Hindu Mahasabha Bhawan on 6 February 1950. Although I could not trace a direct involvement of the party, this gives a hint that it was trying to exploit the situation to win refugees' hearts.²³ The communal sentiments of refugees and their resentment of Congress' so called 'appeasement policy towards Muslims' were also exploited. This did help the Hindu fundamentalists to strengthen their position in the city. However, to assume that the refugees took to fundamentalist ideology after partition inspired by the fundamentalist forces would be wrong. Most of the refugees who supported the Hindu fundamentalists were already in some way influenced by the ideology before coming to Delhi. But the partition and propaganda by

²² HT, 21 May 1948, p. 6.

²³ File no. 3 (37)/ 49, Min of R and R, D. A.

fundamentalist forces did reinforce such ideology thus helping the party emerge as a strong contender to Congress in the city.²⁴

Refugee-Resident Relationship

The dissertation has highlighted the constant struggle that existed between the refugee and the original inhabitants of Delhi, as the former started seeking refuge in the city. The residents of Delhi, though sympathetic in the beginning, later started looking at the refugees as their rivals. This struggle pervaded different spheres of life- economic, social and cultural. The face of Delhi had changed for the worse immediately after the arrival of refugees, and remained disfigured for many years later. The general congestion, the scattered filth, the straining resources etc, were resented by the locals. However the most potent cause of the antagonism between the two was the gradual socio-economic domination of Delhi by the incoming refugees. This alienated the local residents; the refugees coped with this alienation.

The assimilation of refugees in Delhi, which took almost a decade to run its course, is responsible for the transformation and further urbanization of Delhi. The refugees, mostly coming from the urban and educated backgrounds, chose not to lose their identity, culture and behaviour in the new place. They chose to recreate in Delhi the life they had left in Pakistan. And that they could do this so well gets proved by the fact that Delhi today is

²⁴ For details, see Christophe Jaffrelot's 'The Hindu nationalist movement in Delhi: from "locals" to refugees—and towards peripheral groups?' in Veronique Dupont, Emma Tarlo and Denis Vidal ed., *Delhi: Urban Space and Human Destinies*, new Delhi, 2000, pp. 181-203.

known as a city of Punjabis. Also, what is more important is that those who brought about these changes are not seen as refugees today. They are very much a part of Delhi as the original inhabitants are. Thus they hegemonised Delhi in many ways and at the same time they succeeded in becoming a part of Delhi too. This saga of success, particularly in the case of socio cultural transformation, had very much to do with the gradual economic prosperity of the refugees. This gave them a stronger position in society and thus made them capable of living as they wanted.

Refugee- Government Relationship

Independent India was led by a Government formed by the Indian National Congress, a party that took pride in waging a long drawn freedom struggle. A positive energy to make efforts at nation building must have inspired the leaders and those in administration. It was with this inspiration that they devised the option of perceiving in the refugees a potential of contributing to national reconstruction; of working in co-operation with them in the task of nation-building. However as we have seen in this work, as time elapsed, it became clear that the relationship between the government and the refugee was not this simple equation. It was beset with complications and negative attitudes towards each other.

The relation the two shared was one of constant struggle. We have seen the frequent protests and hartals organised by the refugees to extract what they felt was due from the Government. The latter, beset with many weaknesses, struggled to cope with refugee

opposition. It sometimes gave in to the demands, sometimes tried to bring them to talk and sometimes suppressed refugee resistance. The two constantly bargained with each other to define the manner in which the rehabilitation process would take shape. To achieve the end, however, the refugees did not only use the power of resistance; unfair means were also often adopted to deceive the administration in the hope of getting extra benefits. This was often done in collusion with those in administration. Thus the refugees and the government had also sometimes devised a 'common ground' where they worked together for 'common good'. This kind of association between the two contrasts with the projected image of bureaucracy—impersonal and distant from the public. It seems the image of the bureaucracy alternated between being impersonal and personal according to circumstances. Further, the impersonal image related more to those who belonged to a less privileged category in terms of money and contacts.

The entire discussion in this work has helped form a picture of how rehabilitation was undertaken in Delhi. It has unravelled the intricacies of the process, its various ramifications, the role of different agencies and the complexity of the interplay among them. To conclude, I would say that, the refugee rehabilitation in Delhi is the story of a well laid out government plan, and the diversion of almost entire energy and potential of administrative machinery to it, but certainly with many shortcomings. It is about the Government's experiment in dealing with the new crisis and about gaining experience in managing the nation's affairs through trial and error. It is also about the constant contest and negotiation between the refugees and the Government. It is a story about the gradual transformation of Delhi, the change in already prevailing equations in different aspects of

Delhi's life, of development of new relationships and identities, of substitution of some old features with new ones and of making Delhi what it is today. It is also a story of the locals struggle to deal with changed circumstances, to define their relationship with the newcomers, to cope with the impending dangers to their economy and culture. But more than anything else it is a story of refugee courage, their zeal for a new life, their passion to take risks and fight for their needs.

My Contribution To Existing Historiography

As already mentioned, there were three agencies involved in the post partition rehabilitation and assimilation process. Although the present dissertation attempts to voice the concerns of all the three agencies, none of them form the subject of my research. I have chosen the rehabilitation process itself as my subject and have tried to see its course and final culmination.

The first chapter on government response to the refugee crisis, which delineates numerous schemes undertaken in Delhi, adds to the existing information about government efforts. The various measures that I seek to outline in this chapter have not been highlighted in the existing literature on the subject. The new information, thus, reinforces the argument that the government had emerged as an active player in the post partition rehabilitation process in Delhi and North India.

I have deeply explored the nuances of relationship between the government and refugees which remains a largely neglected area in existing historiography. In this exercise I have examined the experience of both sides and have thus desisted from giving a one-sided view on the subject.

I have also studied two more relationships that were formed in the process—the relationship between the refugee and the local residents and the interplay among the refugees themselves. This has illuminated how different sets of people react to situations of crisis and what survival strategies they evolve.

This work has tried to see government's working from a micro level, i.e., to look at how different branches of the Rehabilitation Ministry catered to refugees' needs at the ground level. In other words, I have explored the day to day functioning of the government. This has helped form a better understanding of the rehabilitation process and the state.

Finally, I have looked into the role of various refugee associations that were formed in Delhi—a subject that still remains unexplored. I have studied their working, the kind of relationship they shared with the government and how far they facilitated the rehabilitation process.

Scope For Further Research

The account of rehabilitation in this work suffers from a few weaknesses which could not be corrected due to constraints of time and the limitations of my primary sources. Firstly, my work does not give a gendered account of the rehabilitation process. Although I have enumerated government's women-specific schemes and policies, the response of women to them does not find space. I have also not highlighted the role of women refugees in the process of rebuilding which in most cases they had to do single handedly. Secondly, the present research voices the concerns and role of the urban and middle class refugees. Delhi also facilitated the rural rehabilitation for refugees with agricultural needs. An assessment of the extent of integration of this category of refugees is lacking. Further, refugees from lower classes and the illiterate among them, also found space in urban Delhi. They were those whose voice could not be heard in newspapers or petitions to government. Did the government cater to their specific needs? Did they find a place in the several refugee co-operative societies working in Delhi? Did the various refugee associations represent their voice? My work would have liked to give more space to their experiences and answer these questions. Finally, my argument about the commercial domination of refugees does not go further to answer questions like: what alternatives were devised by the residents who were left behind in the competition? Do they still nurture a grudge against the refugees? What is the present comparison of economic position between refugee and the original residents? I have looked into the new elements that found way into Delhi's culture but have not explored questions like what of pre-

independent Delhi's culture remains and what adjustments did the refugees make to become a part of Delhi's socio-cultural space.

These are few questions that I would like to explore as a part of my research work in future. I would want to open up few more themes. Delhi mostly presents an example of urban rehabilitation of partition refugees. A comparison with other urban areas in India, like regions in West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh or Tripura can give further insight into Delhi's situation. Tripura has witnessed long standing conflict between the refugees and original inhabitants and this has impacted the state politics.²⁵ A further exploration into refugee-resident relationship in the two regions can help unravel the various factors that determine the differences in ways in which different sets of people react to situations of crisis.

Similarly, like Delhi, West Bengal also saw a prolonged struggle between the refugees and the government. However the two were different in character. I have highlighted some aspects of differences in this work. A further comparative study between the two regions on this subject might help us better understand the complexity of the refugee-state relationship. It would also provide an insight into the nature of the Indian state during the immediate years after independence.

²⁵ Rahman and Schendel, "I am not a Refugee", *Modern Asian Studies*, p. 582.

APPENDIX I

**SUBORDINATE OFFICES UNDER THE MINISTRY OF RELIEF AND
REHABILITATION¹**

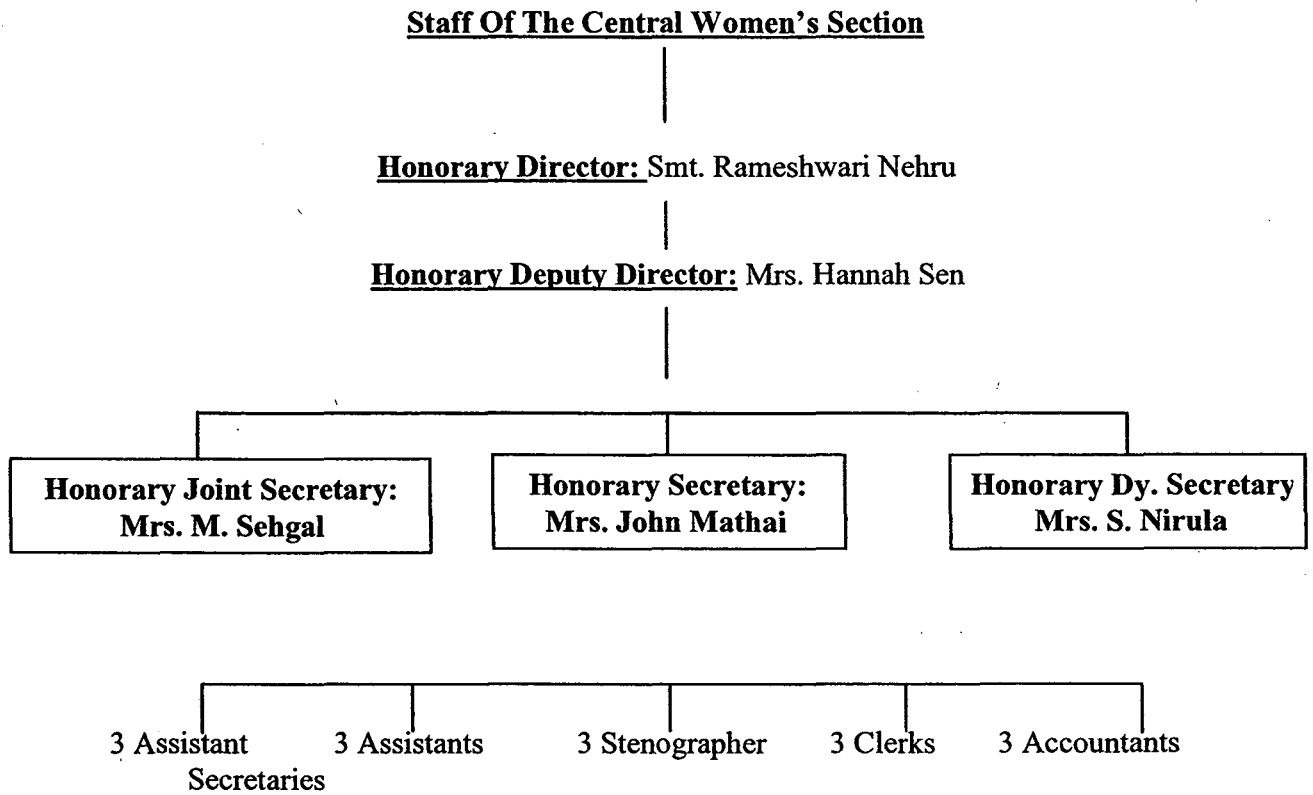
Offices	Gazetted Officers	Non- Gazetted Officers
1. Director General, Evacuation, New Delhi	9	22
2. Custodian of Evacuee Property, New Delhi	31	342
3. Registrar of Claims, New Delhi	8	47
4. Information Bureau, New Delhi	3	44
5. Rehabilitation and Development Board, Delhi	15	94
6. Fact Finding Office, Delhi	2	28
7. Missing Persons Enquiry and search Services	2	38
8. Registration of Refugees, Delhi	None	24
9. Advisory Committee, New Delhi	2	14
10. Special Employment Bureau, New Delhi	3	18
11. Director, Harijan Section, New Delhi	1	14
12. Director, Women's Section, New Delhi	5	13
Total number of employees	81	698

¹ Constituent Assembly Debates, 1948, as cited in Ravinder Kaur, *Since 1947*, p. 98.

APPENDIX II²

MINISTRY OF RELIEF AND REHABILITATION

WOMEN'S SECTION



² File no. 9 (52)/52; 13 (36)/ 49, Min of R and R, D. A.

ESTABLISHMENTS RUN UNDER WOMEN'S SECTION

1) Homes for Women and Children :

- Home for unattached women and children
- Home for aged and infirm women
- Home for children

2) Work and Relief Centers

3) Refugee Handicrafts

4) Training Centers

- Vocational Training Centre (under the Labour Ministry)
- Balniketan
- Gram Shiksha Kendra.

5) Residential Schools at Mehrauli for girls

6) Employment Bureau

7) The Recovery of abducted women

8) Marriage Bureau

9) Educational Scholarships to Children

10) Financial Aid

DETAILS OF HOMES AND CENTRES IN DELHI

Homes

- 1) **Home for non-Muslim recovered women and girls:** in Sat Narain Building, Denanath Road, Sabzi Mandi, Delhi.
- 2) **Home for disabled widows and children:** at Mehrauli, Delhi.
- 3) **Poor House:** at Kingsway, Delhi.
- 4) **Home for refugee women and children:** at Ram Bagh, Sabzi Mandi, Delhi.
- 5) **Home for destitute women and children:** in Lahore Sheds at King Edward Road, New Delhi.

Work and Relief Centres

- 1) Tibbia College, Karol Bagh, Delhi.
- 2) 8, Central Lane, Babar Road, New Delhi.
- 3) Paharganj, Delhi.
- 4) Connaught Place, New Delhi.
- 5) Sabzi Mandi, Delhi
- 6) Lodi Colony, New Delhi.
- 7) Udyogshala for refugee women at Mehrauli.
- 8) Bela Road.
- 9) Humayun Tomb, New Delhi.

School

- 1) Residential School at Mehrauli.

Sales Depot

- 1) Refugee Handicraft Shop, Connaught Place, New Delhi.

Marriage and Information Bureau

- 1) Marriage Information Bureau attached to the existing Women's Section.

DETAILS OF STRENGTH OF INSTITUTIONS IN DELHI

Homes

- 1) **Sat Narain Home for women and children:** 245 inmates (83 children and 162 women).
- 2) **Ram Bagh Home for children:** 88 children.
- 3) **Lahore Sheds Home for women and children:** 305 inmates (190 children and 150 women).
- 4) **Aged Women's Home at Mehrauli:** 121 inmates (75 women, 45 children and 4 old men).
- 5) **Middle School for girls at Mehrauli:** 55 girls.
- 6) **Balniketan and Gram Savika Shiksha Kendra (Poor House):** 332 inmates (92 women and 230 children).
- 7) **Vocational Training Centre on the Curzon Road:** 300 trainees.

Work and Relief Centres

- 1) **Sabzi Mandi Centre:**
No. of wage earners- 401
No. of trainees - 86
- 2) **Hindu Mahasabha Bhawan Centre:**
No. of wage earners- 315
No. of trainees - 154
- 3) **8 Central Lane Centre:**
No. of wage earners- 195
No. of trainees - 63
- 4) **Karol Bagh Centre:**
No. of wage earners- 500
No. of trainees - 230
- 5) **Lodi Colony Centre:**
No. of wage earners- 180
No. of trainees - 84
- 6) **Connaught Circus Centre:**
No. of wage earners- 91
No. of trainees - 292
- 7) **Bela Road Centre:**
No. of wage earners- 250
No. of trainees - 109
- 8) **Udyogshala at Mehrauli:**
No. of wage earners-160
No. of trainees -143
- 9) **Humayun Tomb Centre:**
No. of wage earners- 250
No. of trainees -100

APPENDIX III³

LIST OF REFUGEE CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES IN DELHI

<u>Name Of Society</u>	<u>Kind</u>	<u>Membership</u>
1) The Pioneer Cooperative Society	Store	24
2) Free India Cooperative Store	-do-	25
3) Women League Cooperative Industrial Society	Industrial	38
4) Ajad Hind Cooperative Society	Thrift and Credit	18
5) Azad Bharat Cooperative Society	-do-	10
6) The Refugee New Commercial Society	-do-	12
7) Shree Gurunanak Cooperative Society	-do-	13
8) Reliance Cooperative Society	-do-	17
9) Free India Cooperative Society	-do-	50
10) Poor Cooperative Society	-do-	12
11) Delhi Brick Kiln Cooperative Society	Industrial	20
12) All India Industries Limited	-do-	20
13) Shyam Sundar Yarn Works	-do-	21
14) Mahila Udyog Sahkari Sangh	-do-	300
15) Kashmir Dairy	Dairy	21
16) Rashtriya Cooperative Dairy	-do-	11
17) The Dirwal Purusharthy Cooperative Society	Multipurpose	78
18) Krishna Nagar Cooperative Society	-do-	104

³ File no. 5 (28)/ 48, Min of R and R, D. A.

APPENDIX IV

LIST OF REFUGEE ASSOCIATIONS IN DELHI

1. All India Refugee Students' Committee
2. All-India Purusharthy Beopar Mandal
3. Anand Parbat Refugee Association.
4. Central Purusarthy Beopar Mandal
5. Delhi Schools Teachers Association
6. Delhi Sindhi Association
7. Evacuee Press Association
8. Free India Sikh League
9. Hawkers and Vendors Association
10. Railway Vendors Association
11. Refugee Lawyers
12. Refugee Teachers Association
13. The Refuge Association
14. The Western Punjab Protection Board
15. Dera Ghazi Khan Refugee Relief Society

APPENDIX V

Copy of Dr. Gurdip Sidhu's e-mail

Memories of the Partition of India and the Interaction of the Refugees with the Indigeneous Population of Delhi.

Dear Amita,

I was only ten years old when we fled from Lahore and came to Delhi, so what I am about to tell you is what a 10-year old boy noticed. As is to be expected, I looked for things that a boy of my age would want to do. I noticed that they did not fly kites in Delhi, nor did they play with tops (laatoos), nor marbles, nor even Dhibrees (soda bottle caps). There was a season for each of these games in Lahore, but there were no such seasons here. There was no zoo, nor any museum. There was no boating, and there were no movie studios. Hardly anybody played cricket on the road or in the park.

Lahore, you must remember, was the cultural and fashion capital of India, and it had all these things that Delhi lacked. I later discovered that there were hardly any professional colleges, like for engineering and medicine, in Delhi. The only medical college was Lady Harding, which was exclusively for women. Lahore had a professional college of every kind; it had a bustling zoo; and an amphitheater with seating on a hill called Shimla Pahari where you sat and watched plays performed on a stage which was located at the bottom of the hill on a slightly raised area. There was a fort, just like Delhi; a river, the Ravi; and also a canal. There was a famous bazaar, Anarkali (Delhi did have Chandni Chowk), and the glittering mall Road. My friends and I used to go to the Mall Road in the evenings and look at all the parked cars of rich people—we compiled a list of almost 40 different makes of cars, including the latest Buick, a black car belonging to Khizar Hayat Khan, the chief minister of Punjab. It had the longest mudguards of any car, and they sloped all the way down to the rear wheels. There was Victoria's statue, and near it the Filetti's hotel where the English used to have parties, with live bands and dance music. And there were numerous cinemas, even some for Hollywood movies. I remember once seeing "Tarzan and the Leopard woman". In front of the museum, there was Maharaja Ranjit Singh's famous cannon, Zam Zama. In short, Lahore was a colorful, vibrant place.

Delhi, in contrast, was a sleepy old city. Connaught Place was dull indeed with staid shopkeepers who paid little attention to the customers. However, they were soon faced with competition from the small shops that arose on Queensway (now Jan Path), where the Punjabi shopkeepers from West Punjab would offer each serious customer Coca Cola and unfurl bundles of cloth cheerfully, and stay friendly even if the customer refrained from buying anything. The shopping area of Karol Bagh soon came up, and you yourself must have seen how alive it is with activity. Women started wearing the colorful clothes that they were used to in Lahore, and the men wore pants with the latest fashion cut. Custom tailors sprang up everywhere. People started going to picnics at Okhla and Kutab

Minar, and Lodi gardens, and all of a sudden there was life in these places. Delhi was becoming a desirable city, not just the capital of India.

The effect was an all-around improvement in services, with the native inhabitants of Delhi getting the message – be nice to your customers or perish. The change took time, but Connaught place became the place to walk around under the Gul Mohur trees in the evenings, watching the glitter of the shops as they began to get more and more frequented by people who loved life and were determined to create a Lahore here in Delhi. I was sent to boarding school in Shimla, but I used to come back home every winter and see the changes that had occurred.

In all this time, there was no rancor between the refugees and the local population. The refugees asked for very little, and they just went about their business of recreating the rich lives that they had in Lahore, or Rawalpindi, or the many cities of West Punjab. As for living quarters, they occupied the houses of the Muslims of Delhi who had fled to Pakistan, or were killed in the holocaust of partition. The Muslims in Pakistan took over the houses of the Hindus and Sikhs who fled to India or were killed there.

I'm afraid that I haven't been of too much help to you, but I am not privy to any other interactions between the two populations. The adults of the time are all dead, only the children like me are still surviving. My novel, *They Don't Kiss in the Movies*, discusses the actual events of partition as I saw them, but nowhere do I talk of the interaction of the local population and the refugees.

Sincerely yours,

Gurdip S. Sidhu, M.D.

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