

**LIFEWORLDS AND SOCIAL SYSTEMS OF  
HINDU PUNJABI REFUGEES IN DELHI:  
Caste, Class and Power**

*Thesis submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University  
in fulfilment of the requirements  
for the award of the Degree of*

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

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**2002**



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**CERTIFICATE**

This thesis entitled **Lifeworlds and Social Systems of Hindu Punjabi Refugees in Delhi: Caste, Class and Power** has not been submitted previously for any other degree of this or any other university and is my original work.

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We recommend that this thesis be placed before the examiners for evaluation for the award of Ph.D. degree of this university.

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## *Acknowledgements*

*I owe a sense of deep gratitude to my supervisor, Prof. T. K. Oommen for his constant guidance in the preparation of this work. I am thankful to him for he took time off his academic and other preoccupations to thoroughly supervise my work, right from the conceptual to the final stage of completion of this thesis. I could not have achieved this but for his continuous encouragement.*

*During the preparation of this thesis my family members also provided me tremendous support and encouragement. It was their belief that I could accomplish this task which provided me the much-needed moral support. I specially thank my father for he always showed keen interest in my research work and provided me with constant and useful feedback. I am also thankful to my mother for her unflinching support and her confidence in my abilities.*

*This work could not have taken its present form but for the discussions I had with my friend Kavitha, over endless cups of tea. I thank her for she saw me through both the troubled as well as happy times during the preparation of this work.*

*I would also like to thank all my other friends and well wishers whose consciously or unconsciously spoken words and gestures encouraged me during the difficult phases of preparing this thesis.*

*Last but not the least, I acknowledge with gratitude the valuable assistance provided to me by the faculty and other members of the Centre for the Study of Social Systems at the Jawaharlal Nehru University.*

*Sonia Kapur*

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**CHAPTER I**  
**A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The phenomenon of refugees in the international realm is as old as the emergence of the state. It was with the birth of the nation-state anchored to religion, race or secular ideology that the phenomenon of forcing people away from their established and known habitat emerged. In this process, minorities (religious, racial) and those groups who did not conform to the ideological tenets of the dominant section were persecuted and pushed out by the new, aggressive and in many respects totalitarian state (Muni and Baral 1996:1).

Today, as we are moving into the twenty-first century, it has been pointed out that we are approaching a post-national era that recedes nationalism and relegates the nation-state into the background, and which therefore would result in the creation of transnationals (Stack 1981:6). However, even today one can find instances of intense conflicts due to the demand for the creation of nation-state. This tends to pose a hindrance to the process of creating post-national states. Thus, until now there are no signs of lessening of ethnic and nationalistic fervour. And till this happens, there will be the constant problem of refugees, which will then continue to remain an important area for research.

While refugee flows have been a constant feature of societies since times immemorial, at an international level, it was only in the twentieth century that efforts have been made to formulate certain universal standards for the protection of such people. Earlier efforts were adhoc and

local in nature (UNHCR 2000:1). It was only in 1950-51 that the office of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) was established. The estimated number of refugees who fall under the mandate of UNHCR as on January 1, 2002 is shown in table I.1.

Most refugee problems have occurred because of identification of people to a particular aspect of identity such as religion, race, secular ideology etc. Refugee problems are created when attempts are made to create a nation based on the invoking of these different factors. Consequently, those with attributes other than the one on the basis of which the nation-state has been created often feel threatened by the attitudes of the 'Other'. Oommen (1994:161) has pointed out that it is social categorization that is the beginning of constructing the 'Other' who are assumed to be different, based on religion, language, caste, gender, age, class, lifestyle etc. Thus, in the case of identity based conflicts the 'Other' can be constructed on any one or more of the identity basis and both the groups see the members of the 'Other' collectivity as different and invariably inferior. Many communities attempt to create nation-state by advocating the values and traditions of their group as that of a nation. In this context when there is an official recognition of cultural difference some of the identities get politicized (Cordell 1999:3).

**Table I.1 Number of Refugees in the Various Continents**

<b>Continent</b>	<b>Total Population (in millions)</b>	<b>Number of Refugees</b>	<b>Number Per Thousand</b>
Asia	3,720	8,450,000	2.271
Africa	818	6,072,900	7.424
Europe	727	5,571,700	7.664
North America	316	1,047,100	3.313
Latin America and Caribbean	525	575,600	1.097
Oceania	31	76,000	2.452
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,137</b>	<b>21,793,300</b>	<b>3.551</b>

**Source:** <http://www.unhcr.org> and World Population Datasheet, 2001, Population Reference Bureau

Religion is the most important factor in constructing the external and feared 'Other' in India. When a particular religious collectivity claims to be a political community and poses a threat to the larger polity, it comes to be defined as the 'Other'. Thus in post-partition India, the Muslims are one such religious collectivity that becomes the most despised/or feared 'Other'. Therefore they have been viewed as the 'outsider-unequal Other' who are not only cognized as inferior but also defined as external to the society (Oommen 1994:162). It is the conceptualization of the 'Other' that plays a major role in Hindu-Muslim relations and had even led to the partition and its subsequent events, which is the main focus of this research and will be discussed later in this study.

This chapter has been divided into three parts for better understanding and greater clarity of the theoretical framework that forms the background of this research work. The first part of the chapter deals with the theories of some of the scholars in conceptualizing nation and state formation and their applicability in the Asian case. The second part of the chapter deals with the factors that create refugees in large numbers along with a discussion of the term 'refugees'. The third part of the chapter studies the factors that create religious nationalism in the Indian case. This will provide an understanding about the manner in which refugees are created whenever attempts are made to invoke religious identity of people for state formation and therefore whether this can be a legitimate and sustainable basis for claims as homeland on a particular territory.

## I CONCEPTUALIZING NATION AND STATE FORMATION

While scholars have extensively researched on the topic of nation and nationalism a lot of ambiguity remains about the concept of 'nation' itself. Ernest Renan (1991) in his article '*What is a nation*' holds the view that 'a nation is a soul, a spiritual principle'. Renan has provided a psychological-moral definition of the nation. He has based his definition solely on subjective factors, with little regard for the objective criteria that constitute an important part in defining and creating a nation.

Max Weber (1948:176) on the other hand defines the nation 'as a community of sentiment which would adequately manifest itself in a state of its own; hence, a nation is a community which normally tends to produce a state of its own'. Weber's definition is inherent with certain flaws. According to him, every nation must build up a separate state and that the nation's identity can only be manifested when it attains a separate state for itself. While in the European case, the principle of 'one nation one state' was used to create nations, India on the other hand provides a good example of how different nations can co-exist within a state and that it is not necessary for them to build a state of their own to preserve their identity. Weber also holds the view that a nation is not identical with a community speaking the same language. Here too, he has failed to recognize that one of the most important attributes of a nation is that people should have a common medium of communication. Both Benedict

Anderson (1983) and Ernest Gellner (1983) have pointed out the need of building a homogeneous society, and that one of the means of doing so is through a common language.

Like Weber, Karl Deutsch (1969) too has been unable to make a clear separation between the concepts of the nation and state. He holds the view that nations are formed when the people who make it acquire the power to back up their aspirations for a separate state. According to him, a nation consists of a group of people who have a state of their own. Thus, he too falls in the same trap as Weber and fails to recognize the existence of a number of nations that do not have a separate state. In fact many nations have not aspired to attain a separate state for themselves.

Anthony D. Smith (1986) is another scholar who has failed to view a nation without it necessarily having a state of its own. Thus he too like the scholars mentioned earlier fails to account for the existence of various nations without a state of their own.

Unlike Ernest Gellner, Max Weber, Karl Deutsch and Anthony D. Smith who have conflated the terms of nation and state, Walker Connor (1994) has been able to register a distinction between the concepts of the nation and state (Oommen1997:55). According to Connor 'nation' creates a psychological bond with a strong sense of belonging associated with a particular territory, considered to be its own, while state is a territorial



political unit. Thus he has rightly pointed out that where the state and nation coincide with each other, the result is the nation-state.

Having critically analyzed the work of some of the scholars in the field of defining and conceptualizing the nation, it is now imperative to conceptualize the nation taking into account the empirical experience in creating nations.

According to Oommen (1997), nation refers to a group of people who have a sense of belonging to a common territory and share a common language. Thus for any nation to exist there must be fulfilled at least two basic conditions, that of a common territory and the existence of a common language among the people. Nation is a psychological-moral entity. The state, on the other hand, is a politico-legal entity and refers to a geographical territory where the political authority has the right to exercise legitimate power. When the nation and state coincide with one another what results is the nation-state. However, a nation need not always aspire for statehood and neither a state need always consist of only one nation, but rather may be a conglomeration of nations as exemplified by the case of India and the United Kingdom (Oommen 1997:20).

The above conceptualization makes the terms, national and citizen clear to us. While the two may co-exist, there are instances where this need not necessarily be so and national citizens would only emerge in cases where the nation and state coincide. All those residing in a territory and

fulfilling certain conditions laid down by law may be regarded as citizens and thus provided equal rights as are provided to other citizens of the state. To be nationals, on the other hand, there is a need to fulfill certain moral-psychological conditions, such as a sense of attachment and belonging to the nation apart from the conditions mentioned earlier.

Having conceptualized the nation and state, it is now important to focus attention on the processes that help in creating a nation. A large number of theories have come up which try to arrive at an understanding of how nations have come to exist. We would like to review here the views of three important scholars, those of Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson and Anthony D. Smith. While it is generally presumed that these scholars have presented global approaches to the study of nation, it is important to see how their work constrains the understanding of the Asian case.

Ernest Gellner (1983) presented a distinction between the agrarian and industrial societies. According to him nationalism comes about in the early stages of industrialization and fades away as society becomes more homogeneous and industrial. He considers education as an important factor that helps in creating a homogeneous and standardized society. Thus for the emergence of a nation, education plays a crucial role. He also presents a typology of nationalism and his first model is called the 'Habsburg' or the 'Balkan' for which he cites the example of Africa, south of the Sahara. The second model comes about if the powerless get access to

education and are able to coalesce into an ethnic majority within a culturally divided society, which is the classical liberal western nationalism as exemplified by the cases of Italy and Germany. The third model is one where only the rest or some have access to education while the others do not. Finally, he points out a situation where neither party enjoys the benefits of such access.

If one tries to apply Gellner's theory to the Asian case, one finds a number of limitations. His theory presents a picture that the Asian and African nationalism are just delayed forms of European nationalism. Thus, Gellner fails to account for the role played by local cultures and also the capacity of standardized systems of education in pre-industrial societies.

The second scholar, Benedict Anderson (1983) whose theory is considered a global one, puts forward the view that the nation is an imagined political community – imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. According to him, this community comes into being because of the important role played by print capitalism. He classifies the three types of nationalism as Creole, Linguistic (vernacular) and Official. These models according to him first took shape in Europe and then spread to Asia and Africa. Thus he too denies any originality to Asia and Africa in constructing their own models of nationalism; rather he speaks of these continents as 'pirating' the European models.

Anthony D. Smith (1986) in his model puts forward the view that modern nations have ancient ethnic origins and were not invented or imagined. While many scholars share the modernist view, Smith does insist that nations have roots in pre-modern ethnic communities.

The approaches to the study of the formation of nations have been classified into the modernist, post-modernist and ethno-culturalist (Tonnesson and Antlov 1996:13-19). While the modernist scholars are of the view that nationalism would encapsulate the local cultures and create the modern society and that would ultimately lead to the creation of a global culture, the post-modernists disregard historical facts. Therefore, in this approach nations would lose the little regard that modernists have for history. The third approach, that is, the ethno-culturalist approach, roots nationalism in pre-modern times. Thus here a full account is taken of historical facts. Therefore in trying to understand the case of Asia we need to adopt a synthetic approach and not any one single approach.

Nation and Nationalism had first emerged in the western world, in America and Europe. It has been pointed out that for some it was Christianity that prepared the way, while for others it was education and the printing press. A large number of theories are thus ethnocentric, based on western experience where nations emerged with the process of modernity. But in the case of Asia and Africa it was more a result of colonialism and imperialism. Thus these theories seem inadequate if one

applies them singly, but would provide a better understanding when applied in combination to understand the case of Asia and Africa. It is now important to turn one's attention to the factors in identity construction that are an important basis in nation creation and play a major role in creating refugees, that is outsiders, in large numbers.

## II

### **FACTORS THAT CREATE REFUGEES AT AN INTERNATIONAL LEVEL**

It has been pointed out earlier (see table I.1) that Asia followed by Africa and Europe have the largest refugee population in that order. It is when attachments related to primordial factors gain predominance and pertain to the non-rational domain of human attributes that it leads to social turbulence and violence.

In Europe the post World War I settlements based on the principle of national self-determination assigned tens of millions of people to nation-states other than 'their own'. Millions of Germans were left as minorities in the region's new or reconstituted states, especially Poland and Czechoslovakia. Though they were citizens of these new states by national identity they still belonged to the powerful external national homeland. Similarly, many Hungarians became national minorities in Romania, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. Bulgarian and Macedonian minorities were assigned to Yugoslavia, Greece and Romania but were linked by shared aspects of nationality to Bulgaria. Ukrainians and Belarusians in Poland

were linked to larger populations in the Soviet Union (Brubaker 1996:6). Thus in all these cases while people were linked by citizenship to one state they shared identity links and attachments with people in other states as well. Thus there came about dissociation between citizenship and nationality in a large number of cases.

It is useful to highlight the case of Albanians in Kosovo and those in Albania. These groups had identity ties that cut across state boundaries. But with the break up of federal communist rule in Yugoslavia after Tito's death Kosovo came under increasing Serb repression with the result of Albanian alienation from Serbia. Therefore, what is required is a framework, which recognizes both the validity of Serb interests in Kosovo and the aspiration of the Albanian community to govern itself and to develop relations with other Albanian communities (Miall 1999:135).

In the absence of the unlikely event of such reconciliation of different interests taking place, there will be much greater emphasis on one basis of identity, which demands for the creation of nation-state. This therefore leads to majority-minority conflicts. It is then the majority-minority issue that plays a crucial role in determining the presence of refugees in large numbers. In the case of Macedonia one finds that when Macedonia became independent in 1991, it was declared to be 'a national state of Macedonian people', this turned the Albanian and Turkish people into a minority group

threatened by inter-group relations (Miall 1999:140) of different identity associated collectivities.

It must be pointed out here that identity of one kind may be used as a predominant factor in certain contexts. Some identity factor may be used for collective mobilization of one kind at one time and others at another time for another kind of collective mobilization. Thus there may be context-related changes (Gupta 1996:1) with regard to the basis of identity. This has been especially true if one looks at the case of creation of Pakistan and subsequently that of Bangladesh. In 1947 both these states were a unified unit where religion was considered as the binding factor and by emphasizing their Muslim identity they wanted to separate from India. Yet, a little over twenty years later, language became an important factor leading to their separation. It must be pointed out here that two factors became dominant in the separation of Bangladesh from Pakistan. The first was that the two parts of Pakistan were divided by more than a thousand miles, thus the geographical contiguity between the two areas was missing. The second fact was that there was an attempt to impose Urdu on East Pakistan. This was a means to club together the linguistic and religious dimensions as Urdu was identified with Islam in the Indian subcontinent.

Thus as the context changed there was a change from religion over to language as the basis of identity. Invoking the aspect of a shared language has created most nations in Western Europe. Therefore here a

coterminality is established between language and territory in cases such as Italy, Germany etc. However in Eastern Europe, it was the religious factor that has played an important role. The persecution and mass displacement of Jews in Europe during the Second World War is a well-known example. The number of Jewish refugees was in time greatly reduced by emigration to Israel by uprooting the Arab population of that new state. This in turn created a large refugee population in the Middle East with the two conflicting groups being the Arabs and the Jews (Nutting 1969:51).

De-nationalization has also been there in Yugoslavia where the warring groups are the Catholic Croats, the orthodox Serbs and the Bosnian Muslims. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbs forced Muslims to flee the area so that 'Greater Serbia' could be carved out (Griffiths 1993:38). This all started when Muslims announced the creation of an Islamic Republic in the heart of Europe. Thus religion has been one of the important aspects in nation and state formation. Sometimes a coterminality of religion and language may be used to create nation-states as is happening in the case of Srilanka.

In the island state of Srilanka there has been a situation of conflict between the two major religious and linguistic groups, the Buddhist Sinhalese and the Hindu Tamilians. One set of Tamil rebels has been demanding a merger of the northern and eastern areas, which are the



Tamil majority areas into one province with greater autonomy for themselves. While another set of them demand a separate 'Tamil Eelam', that is a sovereign Tamil state. This religion-language coterminality has therefore resulted in a section of Srilankan citizens to take refuge elsewhere.

A similar process has been going on in Africa, especially Ethiopia. Many individual interactions are organized around an identity idiom and the government has redrawn the map of Ethiopia in order to fit more properly with perceived ideas of identity and sense of belonging. Therefore in tune with this, people are being reinstated in their 'home' areas to make the regions homogeneous in terms of identical identity aspects (Poluha 1998:31). Here more than one set of identity factors are important – religious as well as cultural.

It needs to be pointed out that ideological difference over the issue of communism versus capitalism has also generated refugees. Those who had non-communist propensity found themselves persecuted in the Asian communist countries such as Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. In East Asia, the partition of Korea in 1948 as a result of ideological conflicts led to large migration between North and South Korea. This was compounded by the 1950-53 Korean war when some 3,60,000 Koreans from the North sought refuge in South Korea (Muntarhorn1992:4). Concomitantly, there was a

large-scale movement of people from North to South Vietnam as a result of armed conflicts and the partition of the country (Muntarbhorn 1992:4).

Further if one turns one's attention to the case of United States, one finds that a number of groups such as Blacks, Hispanics, Jews etc. are present. Here again, different factors such as physical type, national origin, religion etc. have been responsible in accounting for their presence (Oommen 2002:128).

In studies of refugees (Muni and Baral 1996:9) the following causal factors have been identified as responsible for creating refugees:

1. Anti colonial wars and self-determination movements.
2. International conflicts.
3. Revolutions, coups and regime changes.
4. Ethnic, communal and religious conflicts.
5. Creation and restructuring of state boundaries.
6. Secular ideology.

Refugees may be created due to any of the above mentioned reasons. The International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences (Sills 1972) describes them as involuntary migrants, victims of politics, war or natural catastrophe. Thus, every refugee is naturally a migrant but not every migrant is a refugee. Here it is important to refer to Keller's (1975:5) work. He has tried to develop a typology of refugees based on a number of variables. The first are those who have become refugees due to economic causes, the second are those who became refugees due to war and thirdly,

according to him, are those who owe their refugee status to political, religious or ethnic reasons.

However, Keller's typology suffers from a flaw as the first category in his classification are not really refugees for they are voluntary migrants and not forced by circumstances which made their existence at the original place of habitation life-threatening. Here a personal motivation on the part of the migrants to move is also present along with the anticipation and time for preparation for movement which is unlike the case of refugees forced by political, religious or war-like situations to move. In fact, it must also be pointed out that the psychological-moral condition of the economic refugees of Keller's classification is different as compared to the latter two. In the case of the former the anticipation for a better future and lifestyle makes people leave their original place of habitation. There is also present an attitude of hopefulness and 'looking forward to the future' in this case which is far from present in the latter two and therefore makes for a faster psychological rehabilitation in the former case.

Therefore what needs to be emphasized here is the fact that economic causes for migration can also be of varied nature. Here the first category could be of those who migrate due to life-threatening situations posed by natural catastrophes such as droughts, earthquakes etc. and for them the above-described conditions do not hold true. The second category includes those who migrate for better economic prospects and for whom the

previously described conditions are applicable. In fact, the former could return when normalcy returns, while the latter generally do not return and continue to stay in their new place of habitation.

Based on the above factors (Muni and Baral 1996:7) one can identify the movement of refugees into India due to partition as a result of a combination of the fourth and fifth factors. In fact, the refugees of the present study may be classified as 'political refugees' (Buehrig 1971:3) who have been defined as the product of an incompatible juxtaposition whether of faction, class, religion, ideology or nationality.

United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) in its 1951 statute (Subba 1988:8) has defined a refugee as any person who: '...owing to well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country...'

In the light of the above definition, the migrants who came to India from Pakistan due to partition upon whose case this work is based are no longer strictly speaking refugees because, they have been granted citizenship of India. However, the cause for their fleeing from Pakistan was purely one that can be identified with refugees and thus they continue to be called and defined as such by the host community. Therefore, they are viewed as refugees in this work.

### III

## UNDERSTANDING RELIGIOUS NATIONALISM IN THE INDIAN SUBCONTINENT

The attempts to create a nation are based on the invoking of a large number of factors such as language, religion, race, tribe etc. In the case of Asia and especially India, which is a multi-religious country, we find the growing emphasis on religion to create a nation.

Oommen (1998) has identified seven ways in which nation in South Asia has been defined. These are as an ancient civilizational entity; a composite culture; a political entity; a religious entity; a geographical/territorial entity with a specific cultural ethos; a collection of linguistic entities and lastly, as a unity of great and little nations. The first three according to Oommen are predominantly pre-partition conceptualizations, while the last three are largely conceptualizations that belong to the post-partition period. It was the fourth one that initiated the impulse of partition and is still used by some collectivities to claim that they are a nation. Hence their claim for a separate state on that basis stands as legitimate to them. The claims in the Indian case have been articulated by three major religious collectivities – the Hindus, the Sikhs and the Muslims. However such claims are untenable because of a lack of coterminality between religion and territory. No religious collectivity can demand an exclusive territory for itself, as other religious collectivities too have an equal claim over the same territory as their homeland.

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The demand by the Hindus for a Hindu *rashtra* (nation) is unsustainable, as there are various ways in which Hindu identity can be defined. The first and foremost is the geographical dimension where the Hindus claim that they are the original inhabitants of India. According to this view all the people who inhabit the geographical territory of India are to be considered Hindus. Second is the view that India is the homeland of those who profess religions of Indian origin. Thus here a distinction is made between the Indic and non-Indic religions. Therefore, a coterminality is assumed between the territory of India and the Indic religions. The third conceptualization considers Hindus as those belonging to the 'Aryan races' and here the people of Dravidian South are excluded. Also, in this conceptualization there is no place for the ritually unclean castes of North India. Further, the practice of ritual purification, that is, *shuddhi*, is not applicable in the case of the Dravidian clean caste Hindus. Thus when the very definition of Hindu is ambiguous, with various ways of conceptualizing, one can imagine that the creation of the Hindu nation would in itself be inherent with contradictions (Oommen 1998:7).

The case of Sikhs too needs careful analysis as they claim to be a nation based on religion. Their claim for a separate state is untenable as no coterminality exists between territory and religion. The Sikhs including those who migrated to India from Pakistan have claimed that Indian Punjab is their homeland, and on that basis they want to secede from India by creating the state of Khalistan. But as religion was not acceptable as a



basis for state formation in India, the Sikhs invoked language to carve out a Sikh territory. Since in this case Punjabi language (written in Gurumukhi script) and Sikh religion are coterminous, their attempt to build a Sikh homeland was considered legitimate by some. However in actuality the inhabitants in the state of the Punjab are people belonging to both Hindu and Sikh religions, and so if the creation of Khalistan is undertaken the Hindu population in the Punjab would be turned into 'outsiders' by disinherit their right on the Punjab, as their homeland. If the Punjab is declared the Sikh homeland, it would imply an imposition of the culture of one set of religious collectivity on those belonging to the other religious collectivity inhabiting the same geographical territory (Oommen 1990:40).

The claim by the third religious collectivity, the Muslims, has had serious implications for understanding nation and nationalism in South Asia. This collectivity claimed a separate Muslim state for itself before independence and thus in 1947, Pakistan, the Muslim state was created.

However this very state created on religious lines could not sustain itself for long due to lack of geographical contiguity and the fact that religion failed to bind together the people of East and West Pakistan. In fact, the linguistic factor became significant in their separation. Secondly, while Pakistan was conceived as the Muslim state and large number of non-Muslim population was turned into outsiders, the Muslim section of the population who migrated from India to Pakistan are also not accepted

as natives and remain 'Mohajirs'. Thirdly, even to this day religion cannot bind together the people of Pakistan, as they are divided on linguistic lines and also because there is no one single Muslim identity as pointed out by the constant tension between the Shia and Sunni sections of the population. The partition of India did not resolve the demands of the Muslims, as they claim Kashmir too as their homeland. This results in turning the Kashmiri Pandits who are Hindus into 'outsiders' even though they too have an equal claim over Kashmir as their homeland (Oommen 1994:463).

Callard (1957:235) has pointed out that the Ulema opposed the creation of Pakistan because they believed nationalism was incompatible with Islam. Pakistan was for them too narrow an aim since it was not to include all Muslims, not even all the Muslims of India. Now that Pakistan is in existence they are trying to narrow the effective composition of the state to exclude all but the body of true believers. Thus they wish to establish loyalty to the 'one true God' through the state of Pakistan, and this in effect means that it would leave no place for those who are loyal to the state and nation alone.

Thus all the three attempts to build religious nationalisms and then claim a separate state on that basis are carried on but, on analysis, one finds that these claims are untenable and unsustainable in the long run because of the following three reasons:



Firstly, there is no coterminality between religion and territory not only because people of different religious collectivities occupy the same territory but also because they are spread in different parts of the world.

Secondly, there are more significant factors other than religion, which play an important role in creating a nation. These are language and territory as exemplified by the case of Bangladesh and the European experience.

Thirdly, in the event that any one religious collectivity is able to stake claim over a territory as its homeland, it would try to gain hegemony over other religious collectivities and attempt to homogenize the culture, which would be against the democratic ethos.

Thus when religion was invoked to create Pakistan, it first of all turned all Hindus into aliens to the land that was officially declared as the Muslim state. Consequently, the Hindus did not feel safe in an area where they were turned into a minority group and communal riots broke out. The Hindus therefore had to flee the territory of Pakistan and move into India in order to save themselves from the threat to their lives and this thereby turned them into refugees. Conversely, a section of Muslims left the Indian territory because of the insecurity they faced, although India did not become a Hindu state. This study focuses on the refugees who came from Pakistan to India.

**CHAPTER II**  
**OBJECTIVE, METHODOLOGY AND AREA OF**  
**FIELDWORK**

The partition of India that took place in 1947 marked both a culmination and a new beginning of the divide between the Hindus and the Muslims. While the consolidation of political power by both groups was the main objective, the quest for the maintenance of their identity gave rise to the two-nation theory, which resulted in the creation of Pakistan, the Muslim state and the Indian union, a Hindu majority state.

The decision to partition was a political one and hence the boundaries created were political too. While this decision was an act of political will for political power, it must be pointed out here that the expression of 'political will' to create Pakistan was confined to the ideologues of the Muslim League, scattered in various regions of the undivided country. In contrast, the Muslims associated with the Congress had a different view. Therefore, it needs to be examined as to what was the will and aspirations of the common people on both sides of the border and what happened to the vast majority as a result of the act of partition. The focal point is, what were the social and political conditions at that time and how far were the lives of ordinary people affected; how 1947 marked a significant change in the lives of many.

It was the communal frenzy and violence, which marked this period that caused Hindus to move across into the Indian side of the border and the Muslims to move across to Pakistan. While people belonging to different socio-economic groups moved into and settled in India, it is pertinent to

analyze the consequences of this moving in terms of the three dimensions of stratification – caste, class and power. It is important in this context to understand whether or not in terms of these dimensions of stratification, partition had a differential impact on the people. Several studies (Khosla 1950; Saksena 1961; Rao 1967; Keller 1975; Butalia 1998) have been carried out to analyze the experience of people whose lives were disrupted due to partition. These studies have, however failed to analyze the differential experiences the refugees had due to different life conditions to which they were subjected to and how these life conditions changed for the refugees. Hence the need for such a study. The important point of this work is that while it is a study of refugees, it focuses on units such as the caste, class and groups that wield power.

While this study will focus on the partition refugees, for a better understanding it is important to first explain some of the basic orientations that guide this work. These have therefore been dealt with in this chapter.

### **HISTORICAL ASPECT OF PARTITION**

If one looks at the historical background of partition, one finds that the withdrawal of the British from the territory of India marked a significant event in South Asian history. The partition of India brought to the forefront the great divide between the two major religious communities – the Hindus and the Muslims – in the Indian subcontinent. It was the growth of religious nationalism that led to the creation of Pakistan. For an

understanding of its growth one has to look at the historical events that helped shape it. Thus, it is important to analyze in this chapter the historical account of the rise of religious nationalism in India, beginning from the early twentieth century, with the partition of Bengal (1905) to the period upto 1947, when the partition of India took place.

The community consciousness has been present among the Hindus and the Muslims from way back in the historical period. The awareness about the divide had come early on and the Hindus and Muslims had become conscious of their separate identities before the era of modern political awakening brought in by the British rule. Thus as Peter Van deer Veer (1996:20) points out that it would be wrong to see the 'foreign hand' as the only explanation of the origin of religious nationalism. One can say that the British rule only gave a concrete political shape to the age-old conflicts between the Hindu and the Muslim communities.

The emergence of Hindu and Muslim nationalism was a result of several factors: the economic divide between sections of the two communities; the intellectual and emotional environment of the Muslim elite in the second half of the nineteenth and early decades of the twentieth century; the rising tide of Hindu revivalism and nationalism during the same period; the ethos of Indian nationalism and also the British policy of playing off one community against the other (Prasad 1999:92).

Thus while early on the communities had realized that there were certain divisions that existed among them, these were gradually given shape in the political sphere and greater political participation by the members of the two communities took place to advance the cause of their communities.

Going back to the historical political antecedents one finds that it was the establishment of the Mohammedan Anglo Oriental College in 1875 which produced many important leaders of India's Muslim community. It was a section of the Muslims from amongst those leaders who formed the Muslim League in 1906. Even as both the Indian National Congress, primarily viewed as a Hindu organization and the Muslim League were in pursuit of self-government in India, the differences between the Hindus and the Muslims widened.

The partition of Bengal in 1905 into East and West Bengal led to divisions among the Hindus and Muslims and resulted in the formation of the Muslim League in 1906. The first major achievement of the League was to make the British concede to its demand for separate electorates for Muslims through the Government of India Act of 1909, popularly known as the Minto-Morley Reforms. This gave rise to the growth of centrifugal forces not only between the Hindus and the Muslims but also among Muslims of different classes as this demand was vested to only some Muslims, at first only a small minority of propertied Muslims (Hardy 1972:148). Thus this

Act undid the process of unification and amalgamation among Hindus and Muslims which had been going on for centuries.

However, during the period between 1911 to 1922 there was an atmosphere of friendship between the Congress and the Muslim League. Muslims were disillusioned with the British because of the annulment of the Partition of Bengal in 1911 and the British attitude to Turkey during World War I (1914-1918). At the Lucknow session held in 1916 both the Congress and the Muslim League signed the Lucknow Pact and passed resolutions for a joint programme of constitutional reforms. They reached an agreement to cooperate in the political field on the basis of a common programme.

For sometime after the signing of the Lucknow Pact, the Hindus and the Muslims cooperated with each other and worked together in the Anti-Rowlatt agitation (1919), Khilafat and Non Cooperation Movement (1920-1922). However due to the withdrawal of the Non-Cooperation Movement by Mahatma Gandhi because of the Chauri-Chaura incident in 1922 once again a divide was created between the Hindus and the Muslims. Thus a period of Hindu-Muslim unity beginning with the Lucknow Pact of 1916 came to an end and there was an increase in communal riots in succeeding years all over India (Nene and Barde 1947:67).

The Aligarh movement started by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan was opposed to the idea of Muslims participating in politics. It was only with the

Partition of Bengal in 1905, which gave Muslims a province in which they had an overwhelming majority that they began to be aware of the importance of political power.

The centrifugal tendency was reinforced by the incorporation of separate electorates and reserved seats in the reforms enacted through the Government of India Act of 1919. Separate electorates were first conceded to Muslims in the Minto-Morley reforms and later extended to Sikhs and others by the Lord Southborough Committee on franchise. This practice of recognizing separate constituencies for some communities and separate interests was to atomize the political world into smaller particles. Thus the building blocks of constitutional politics provided a number of foci for centrifugal tendencies. They fostered communal politics and mutually conflicting groupings based on vested interests. The fact that the Muslims and the Sikhs were granted separate electorates and the reservation of seats on the basis of caste affiliation encouraged caste political formations at the expense of Indian nationalism. All this created further divisiveness (Samad 1995:15).

Communal riots and bloodshed marked the political atmosphere in the country around 1928-1929. At this time there was the appointment of the Simon Commission in accordance with the Government of India Act of 1919 to inquire into the working of the Act and propose reforms. However the all-white composition of the Commission caused great moral outrage



among Indians. Thus the Indian leaders were asked to produce their recommendation for a new constitution under the chairmanship of Motilal Nehru (Nene and Barde 1947:131). However, instead of reviving the Hindu-Muslim alliance, the Nehru Report of 1928 polarized relations between the two communities, as Jinnah's earlier demands, elaborated in the Delhi Proposal of 1927 were only partially met. His view that a third of the seats in the central legislature should be reserved for Muslims was rejected. The differences between the Congress and the non-Congress Muslims essentially revolved around two major issues – the nature of the central government and the electorate. The Nehru Report of 1928 recommended a unitary structure at the centre and the replacement of the separate electorates by weightages for minorities with joint electorates and reserved seats. Thus the ultimate implication of the report was to take back all the concessions that the Muslims had gained since 1909 without giving anything in return. Consequently, the Muslim opinion rallied around the All-India Muslim Conference, an organization articulating the interests of the regional parties that had emerged under dyarchy. The Conference demanded the retention of separate electorates and a federal centre with residuary powers vested in the provinces. Thus only a handful of Muslims were members of or supported the centralist parties. Neither the Congress nor the Muslim League could claim to have a substantial following among the Muslims. The devolution of power to the provinces reinforced strong

sub-nationalist groupings that were keen to consolidate and expand provincial autonomy (Samad 1995:20-28).

Again, one finds that reforms introduced through the Government of India Act of 1935, reconfirmed and consolidated the centrifugal developments initiated explicitly or implicitly by the reforms of 1919. Through this Act there was to be a bicameral federal legislature in which the states were given disproportionate weightage. Moreover, the representatives of the states were not to be elected by the people but appointed directly by the rulers (Chandra 1990:251). Thus the consequence of the constitutional advance from the reforms of 1919 to the India Act of 1935 encouraged in the Muslim majority provinces powerful centrifugal forces based on community and regional identity. The breakup of the Hindu-Muslim alliance was due to the use of religious and cultural symbols to mobilize the respective communities.

However Muslims under the leadership of Jinnah began to organize themselves into a strong force in politics. They received the support of the British government and demanded the creation of Pakistan. In his Presidential address to the League in 1940, M A Jinnah propounded his two-nation theory which became the basis for the demand for Pakistan. Islam and Hinduism, Jinnah declared, were far more than religions in the strict sense of the word; they were two distinct social orders, two different civilizations based mainly on conflicting ideas and conceptions. Each had

its own religious philosophy, social customs, legal system, literature and sources of history. According to him, it was 'a dream' that the Hindus and the Muslims could ever evolve a common nationality and to yoke together two such nations under a 'single state' could only lead to disaster (Smith1963:142). Jinnah did not put forward clearly the nature of the new state to be created. Consequently, this ambiguity allowed the coexistence of both the Punjabi (where language was put to the backseat and religion became the dividing factor) and the Bengali (where religion was put to the backseat and language was seen as a uniting factor) interpretations which were popular rallying calls in their respective provinces. This explained Jinnah's demand that Pakistan had first to be conceded in principle before it was precisely defined (Samad 1995:67).

One finds that there was the creation of religious nationalism around the two major religious communities – the Hindus and the Muslims – during the period of the British rule. Religious nationalism that was strongly encouraged during this period ultimately led to the partition of India and the creation of Pakistan, the Muslim state.

Though the boundary making process was a complex and problematic exercise, it was completed in less than two months. The newly created borders were a source of several problems one such being that of 'refugees' (Yong Tan and Kudaisya 2000:78).

## **OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY**

A good research work is impossible without a proper methodological perspective. For a researcher to arrive at relevant facts from meaningful research findings, the proper choice of methodological orientation is crucial. In this work, the important link between macro and micro (Knorr-Cetina and Cicourel 1981:259) dimension is crucial. On the one hand there is an opposition between macro and micro perspectives (between sociologies of large-scale social structures and of interaction respectively), on the other there is a close interrelationship between these two aspects. While the two levels cannot be reduced to one, the element of borrowing and sharing between the macro and the micro is crucial in this work.

The macro-structure (social systems) is a function of the microstructure (lifeworld) and it is an analysis of this interrelationship between the social system and lifeworld that this work is trying to understand (see below). The first and foremost objective of the study is to understand the caste, class and power structures of the refugees. In this work, the three dimensions of caste, class and power have therefore been understood in terms of lifeworlds and social systems. It intends to understand how people's everyday interactions and assumptions with regard to caste, class and power have an impact on how these three dimensions function in the society.

The second objective of the study is to analyze the situation of refugees when they arrived in India and to determine the factors that influenced their change and mobility. With change in the social and material conditions of people, there comes about a change in the social ranking also. Because of displacement and resettlement people lost land, other assets, jobs and businesses. Quite a few of them had also become instant urban dwellers. These conditions led to certain short and long term consequences that required analysis and interpretation. Thus, it was both problems of social adjustment and cultural assimilation of displaced people into the new areas, which brings us to the third objective of the study, to understand the problems, possibilities and degree of integration of the refugees into the new society.

In this connection, it would be useful to postulate a typology of the degree to which refugees have been integrated into the new society. Firstly, the refugees may be classified on the basis of having assimilated themselves into the new society. Assimilation refers to the process whereby the refugees become indistinguishably integrated into the host society. According to Lundberg (1968) assimilation is the process of mutual adjustment, through which culturally different groups gradually obliterate their differences to the point where they are no longer regarded as socially significant or observable (Singh 1997:26).

The second category could be those who adapted; adaptation refers to a process of adjustment. Thus the overt expressions of hostility are avoided and certain compensatory advantages – economic, social or psychological are gained by both sides, while leaving the source of conflict unresolved (Mitchell 1979:3).

Finally, one may consider a third condition, which could be that of alienation, whereby the refugees may have been unable to come to terms with their new environment and thus do not feel as a part of the new society.

The methodological framework within which the data has been collected and analyzed in this work is phenomenology and intersubjectivity, thus falling in the realm of interpretative social science. For the phenomenologist, society cannot be studied separately from the individuals who comprise it, neither can the individuals be understood without reference to society, for it is the interaction of people that produces both the group and the awareness of self in the individuals (McNeill and Townley 1981:45).

This study involves the understanding of the everyday interaction of individuals in society. It is through this interaction that individuals arrive at an understanding and formulation of common perceptions and meanings and thus understand the social systems (caste, class and power) that exist in society. Thus this work takes into account peoples' views on

how caste, class and power systems function in their society. This type of subjects' assessment of the functioning and operation of their social systems is important for it may provide an insight into the criteria in terms of which people make social divisions in their society. It may also help to locate new social classes, castes or power groups that are on the move. Further, it may help to identify the perceived barriers to channels of social mobility. Lastly, it may reveal the friction and conflicts between different social layers (Bopegamage and Veeraraghavan 1967:9).

Thus interpretative approach holds that human action has little inherent meaning. It acquires meaning among people who share a meaning system that permits them to interpret it as socially relevant. Further, for interpretative researchers social reality is based on people's definitions of it. A person's definition of a situation tells him or her how to assign meaning in constantly shifting situations (Neuman 1994:69).

Since this study is of a qualitative nature it must be pointed out at the outset that statistical figures and quantitative data are only of a minor significance here. Rather, it is the diverse experiences of informants, which is of relevance. This work is a life-history kind of study and has been presented in a narrative style.

Since the study also aims to understand how belonging to different strata in society made people experience partition differently, it necessitates the use of the comparative method. Through the use of this method a

comparison has been drawn of the experience of partition and resettlement of the different caste, class and power groups among the refugees from Pakistan.

This study is intended to be a contribution to the field of stratification and migration, by analyzing the interrelationship between the dimensions of stratification and the process of migration. The study intends to unfold that stratification systems may play a vital role not just in stable societies but also for migrant groups moving into new communities. These systems may help to determine the degree and manner integration or the lack of it for the refugees into the host society.

### **UNDERSTANDING THE INTERRELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE LIFEWORLD AND THE SOCIAL SYSTEM**

The interrelationship between the lifeworld and the social system is one of the key areas in this research work as noted above. The study aims to understand the lifeworlds and social systems of the Hindu Punjabi refugees in terms of the dimensions of caste, class and power.

The term 'lifeworld' refers to the 'taken-for-granted' stream of everyday routine, interactions and events that are seen not only as the source of individual experience but also give shape to groups and societies (Schutz 1976). Thus Schutz's contention was that people must have similar stocks of knowledge to share meanings (Altheide 1977:137). According to



Habermas (1987) we live in a lifeworld in which we coordinate our actions through communication. The lifeworld guarantees the unity of the objective world and the intersubjectivity between its members (for action coordination) thus promoting the process of understanding and consensus. According to Habermas, lifeworld consists of the set of background assumptions and stocks of knowledge that communicative action or interaction presupposes (Turner 1995:202). Thus lifeworld comprises that vast stock of taken-for-granted definitions and understandings of the world that give coherence and direction to our everyday actions and interactions (Pusey 1987:58).

Also operating in any society are 'social systems'. The concept of social system as propounded by Talcott Parsons (1951) is a plurality of individual actors interacting with each other in a situation that has at least a physical or environmental aspect. Actors who are motivated in terms of a tendency to the optimization of gratification and whose relations to their situations, including each other, are defined and mediated in terms of a system of culturally structured and shared symbols. Its major structural units are considered to be collectivities or roles and the major patterns linking these units are values and norms. Habermas points to a more basic division between two major dimensions of modern society, namely, the system and the lifeworld. He argues that the system and lifeworld each have a distinctive operating logic and in the context of modern society may not be integrated successfully at all. Habermas argues that our values and

belief systems depend on communicative reason and in this way constitute our lifeworld, while the system has its basis in instrumental reason. Thus Habermas is critical of Parsons who views the existence of society in terms of differentiation into subsystems while he himself views the development of modern society as depending on the uncoupling of the system and lifeworld.

It is this relationship between the lifeworld and the social system that becomes a crucial focal point of this study. The relationship shared by the lifeworld through emphasis on communicative reason influences the manner in which the social systems exist, even though it has been pointed out that it is instrumental reason that is the logic for the existence of the social systems. With the process of modernity there is the uncoupling of the lifeworld and the social systems. In actuality, there is a shared consensus between the lifeworld and the social system and to see these two, as differentiated parts of a society would not be correct.

Since the lifeworld comes about through the basis of communicative action it results in a shared set of beliefs and values. It is thus through the process of intersubjectivity at the interpersonal or micro level that there is an impact at the level of social systems. Similarly the macro level social systems too exert an influence on the shaping of the lifeworld. It is this give and take relationship between the lifeworld and the social system that is important from the point of view of this research work. Therefore, in this

work the three dimensions of caste, class and power will be understood in terms of interrelationship between the lifeworlds and the social systems.

### **WHY FOCUS ON HINDU PUNJABIS?**

The partition of the Punjab was a much more difficult question as compared with the partition of Bengal because of the communal problem. It was the existence of the three communities – Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs – that made the Punjab situation a more complex one. According to the census of 1941, the Sikhs comprised about thirteen percent of the total population followed by Hindus who comprised thirty percent and then the Muslims with the largest, that is, fifty-seven percent of the total population (Kapur 2000:62). In the face of the Pakistan demand getting stronger, the idea of partition of the Punjab began to weigh heavily on the mind of the Sikhs. In the prospect of partition there were Sikh demands for 'Azad Punjab', 'Khalistan', 'Sikhistan' or a 'Sikh state' articulated in the 1940s in response essentially to the Pakistan scheme of the Muslim League.

While both the Hindus as well as the Sikhs experienced displacement in large numbers as a result of partition, the focus of this study is on the Hindu Punjabi refugees settled in Delhi.

It must be emphasized that the Sikhs are not included within the scope of this work due to the fact that they experienced different politico-historical events since the pre-independence days. Looking back at these

events one finds that a section of the Sikhs had been demanding a separate homeland for themselves. Oren (1974:413) points out that in early 1943, Master Tara Singh, the leader of the Sikh party, Akali Dal, had attacked the Hindu Punjabis for trying to include Sikhs in the category of Hindus. Further, he added that the Sikhs did not wish to be dominated by the Muslims or absorbed by the Hindus. However with independence Sikhs were only granted a minority community status.

The movement for 'Khalistan' did not subside. The 1984 anti-Sikh riots and the fact that the movement took a militant form, may have given a section of the Sikhs a sense of collective alienation. Although the demand for a separate homeland for the Sikhs has subsided, these events have led this section to create a strong identity for itself, separate from that of the Hindu community. The Sikh case is qualitatively different from that of the Hindus because a section of the former demanded and led a movement for a separate sovereign state based on their specific religious identity. Moreover, in the case of the Sikhs, the strong physical indicators of identity (that is the 5 K's) are manifest. In fact it is often casually mentioned by both the Sikhs and the Hindus alike that the Sikhs were greater sufferers in the process of partition and its subsequent events due to the visible aspects of difference. Further while the Hindu Punjabis were migrating to a polity dominated by co-religionists, the Sikhs from West Punjab came to a polity where they were a minority community. Hence, their case requires a separate study and cannot be accommodated within the framework of this

work, which focuses on assimilation, adaptation and alienation. Therefore this study focuses only on the Hindu Punjabi refugees.

### **AREA OF FIELDWORK: WHY DELHI?**

The area of fieldwork for this study is Delhi. Large number of people from West Punjab migrated and settled in different parts of India, like Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, East Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Bengal, Rajasthan etc. (Saksena 1961:2). Delhi itself experienced the arrival of a large number of migrants from West Pakistan due to partition. In fact the statistics on Delhi (see table II.1) show that the population of Delhi increased substantially during the decade 1941-1951. During this decade the population of Delhi increased by about ninety percent which was largely due to large-scale influx of refugee population from Pakistan.

Table II.1 shows that the population of Delhi has shown an increase since the turn of the century. The growth of population during the decade ending 1941 was a little over forty-four percent. The partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947 brought an influx of refugees into Delhi. The census figures show that by the end of the decade, in 1951, the population of Delhi had increased by ninety percent, the highest for any decade during the period 1901-2001. After 1951 the growth rate of Delhi's population is stabilized at little over fifty percent. This study, therefore, focuses its attention on the Hindu Punjabi refugees who came to Delhi during the decade 1941 to 1951.

This section of the population can be categorized into two groups – first, those who came during the period 1941 to 1946, that is, before the partition took place and second, those who came between 1947 to 1951, after the partition had occurred. This classification is necessary in order to understand whether the time frame/period of migration, made the experience of migration and resettlement into a new area, also important.

If one looks at the statistical figures for the trends of urbanization in Delhi for the period 1901-2001 (see table II.2) one finds that while comparing the decadal growth rate of urban population since 1901 it is seen that the urban population which recorded a growth of 11.13 percent during the decade 1901-11 rose to 27.94 percent during the decade 1911-21. The urban population has shown an all-time high growth of around 106.58 percent between the period 1941-51. This high growth in urban population during this period suggests that a majority of such migrants settled in urban areas of Delhi. In the subsequent decades the increase in urban population has been much lower. While analyzing the average annual growth rate of urban population in Delhi, it is evident that from 1911-1951 the same has shown increasing trends where it has risen from 1.1 percent to 7.3 percent. The reason for abnormal increase in annual growth rate of urban population of Delhi between 1941 and 1951 is attributed to large-scale immigration of people after partition of the country. Again, in subsequent decades the annual average growth rate has declined as seen from the figures.

**Table II.1: Decadal Variation in the Population of Delhi since 1901**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Decade variation</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1901	4,05,819	-	-
1911	4,13,851	+ 8,032	+ 1.98
1921	4,88,452	+ 74,601	+ 18.03
1931	6,36,246	+ 1,47,794	+ 30.26
1941	9,17,939	+ 2,81,693	+ 44.27
1951	17,44,072	+ 8,26,133	+ 90.00
1961	26,58,612	+ 9,14,540	+ 52.44
1971	40,65,698	+ 14,07,086	+ 52.93
1981	62,20,406	+ 21,54,708	+ 53.00
1991	94,20,644	+ 32,00,238	+ 51.45
2001	1,37,82,976	+ 43,62,332	+ 46.30

**Source:** Census of India, 1991 and 2001, Delhi: Directorate of Census Operations.

**Table II.2: Trends of Urbanization in Delhi: 1901-2001**

Year	Total Population	Total Urban Population	Decennial Growth		Annual Average Growth Rate
			<i>Absolute Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	
1901	4,05,819	2,14,115	-	-	-
1911	4,13,851	2,37,944	+ 23,829	+ 11.13	1.1
1921	4,88,452	3,04,420	+ 66,476	+ 27.94	2.5
1931	6,36,246	4,47,442	+ 1,43,022	+ 46.98	3.9
1941	9,17,939	6,95,686	+ 2,48,244	+ 55.48	4.4
1951	17,44,072	14,37,134	+ 7,41,448	+ 106.58	7.3
1961	26,58,612	23,59,408	+ 9,22,274	+ 64.17	5.0
1971	40,65,698	36,47,023	+ 12,87,615	+ 54.57	4.4
1981	62,20,406	57,68,200	+ 21,21,177	+ 58.16	4.6
1991	94,20,644	84,71,625	+ 27,03,425	+ 46.87	3.8
2001	1,37,82,976	1,28,19,761	+ 43,48,136	+ 51.33	4.1

**Source:** Census of India, 2001, Delhi Directorate of Census Operations.



Thus, one finds that it was the decade 1941-1951 that marked a demographic change for the city of Delhi. In fact according to census figures of 2001 the population of Delhi is 1,37,82,976 that comprises of 75,70,890 males and 62,12,086 females. The substantial demographic change of Delhi during the decade 1941-51 was mainly on account of the partition of the country and the consequent influx of refugees.

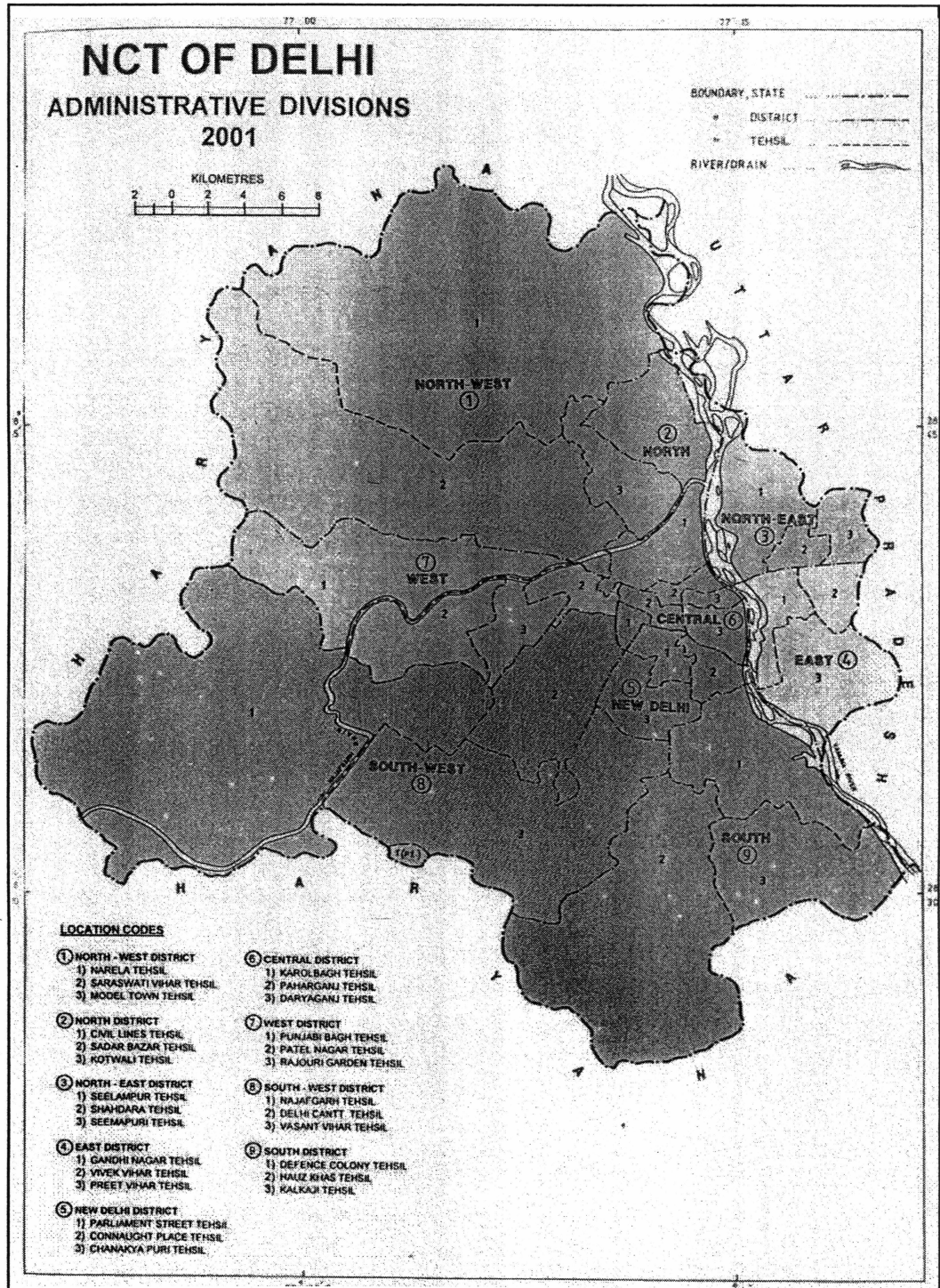
Delhi being the National Capital Territory (NCT) and the seat of the Union government attracted many refugees. In addition, it was in close proximity to West Pakistan and hence refugees came in large numbers to Delhi. Moreover, most of the refugees had relatives or friends in Delhi and in a situation where they had left everything behind, it was natural to look for some kind of psychological-moral support of relatives and friends. Hence many came to stay with their relatives and friends here. There were also many who got posted to Delhi and many more came because Delhi they thought provided them with better job opportunities. In fact many of the government's rehabilitation programmes such as vocational training, educational programmes etc. were first started in Delhi and then carried to other parts of India (Rao 1967:65). Thus from a centre of Islamic culture with a large number of Islamic structures, Delhi became a city of refugees. This led to significant alterations in the social and cultural profiles of the city, hence it was important to focus on Delhi and how it provided an avenue for refugees to resettle and rehabilitate within its confines.

Today the NCT of Delhi comprises of nine districts – North-West district, North district, North-East district, East district, New Delhi district, Central district, West district, South West district and South district (see Map II.1).

From within the NCT, informants have been selected from three areas/localities. The selection of localities is based on the classification of areas into three: an upper/affluent class locality, a middle class locality and a lower class locality or a slum area. In accordance with this classification, the three areas that were selected were Greater Kailash that represents the upper; Kalkaji, the middle class locality and Tilak Nagar, the lower income area. Both Greater Kailash and Kalkaji fall in the South district while Tilak Nagar falls in the West district (see Map II.1). While this classification is based on the class group predominantly residing in these localities, elements of other class groups are also present in each of these areas. Thus no locality is strictly speaking upper or lower class. In fact, elements of upper, middle and lower class are present in varying proportions in each of these three areas.

It must be pointed out that while the selection of areas based on such a classification provided important data with regard to the class factor, it was also a source of data collection for other factors such as caste and power since all these dimensions are interrelated and cut across one another.

**Map II.1 Various Districts in the NCT of Delhi**



**Source:** Census of India, 2001, Delhi: Directorate of Census Operations.

While refugee settlements were set up in various parts of Delhi (see chapter III) the areas selected for this study are not strictly speaking refugee settlements. While Kalkaji and Tilak Nagar figure in the list of areas of refugee settlements in Delhi until 1950, Greater Kailash is not one such colony, but it houses many refugee families. This points out to the fact that no refugee colony was established exclusively for the affluent category. Greater Kailash is a colony of those refugees who were either affluent before they came or those who became affluent after arrival and then moved into the colony. In fact, Datta (2000:275) points out that as the refugee colonies expand, their well-to-do inhabitants move out to healthier and more select localities such as Golf Links, Vasant Vihar, Greater Kailash, Ring Road, New Friends Colony and Defence Colony.

The selection of these areas was a matter of both subjective as well as objective dimensions. Firstly, these areas house a large number of refugee families and secondly, from the researcher's point of view there was an easy access to these areas.

The selection of Greater Kailash as a locality for study was important as it represents that section of the population who were affluent and also those who experienced considerable upward social mobility in their life and hence moved out on their own into this area which came up in the 1960s. This area is one, which today represents an upper class section of Delhi. In

both the other two research sites of this work, allotments were made based on the refugee status which was unlike the case in Greater Kailash.

In Kalkaji large-scale allotments were made to the refugee population. However, Kalkaji today is unlike what it was many years ago when allotments were made. This difference is mainly on account of the rising cost of land in this part of Delhi that has led to the perception that many of the families in this area fall in a better economic class. Most refugee families in this area came from camps. They had been allotted land in Kalkaji when they had been staying in camps; in fact, many of the informants from this area had come from Purana Qila camp. Therefore, their case provides a different perspective to our research as compared to those in Greater Kailash, most of who never stayed in camps. Many of the refugee residents of Greater Kailash stayed mainly with relatives or on their own, but without government help, before settling down in their present locality.

The study of the third area, Tilak Nagar helped to understand the case of refugees from a third perspective, that of those who generally belong to the lower income group. In Tilak Nagar fieldwork was done extensively in the slum area. This is an area inhabited by people from the lowest caste and class group. They are an important section to be studied for their outlook and experiences are different from those belonging to the other two sections of society. The position a social category occupies in terms of any

of the dimensions of stratification has an important bearing on its perceptions and experiences of events. Therefore, it is important to give a brief description of the three dimensions of stratification that is caste, class and power around which this work is developed.

## **UNDERSTANDING KEY CONCEPTS OF THE STUDY**

### **Caste**

The term 'caste' is often used to denote large-scale kinship groups that are hierarchically organized within a rigid system of stratification. In such a system a person's social position is determined by birth and marital connection outside one's caste is prohibited. Early Hindu classics describe a society as divided into four varnas: Brahmin (poet-priest), Kshatriya (warrior-chief), Vaishya (traders) and Shudras (menials-servants). The 'Untouchables' are outside this classification. These categories are ranked with the Brahmins at the top followed by Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras.

Such a ranking of caste groups in terms of the model of pure and impure (Ghurye 1961; Dumont 1988) provides a ritual ranking and refers only to the broad categories of society. However, the study of local caste structures have revealed that the caste system is a dynamic one, because often castes are able to change their rankings in the caste hierarchy by acquiring economic and political power (Srinivas 1987:30), even though

this process may take a long period of time. Additionally, the influence of external forces of change on the caste system rule out the possibility of it remaining merely homo-hierarchichus (Sharma 1994:2).

Despite the universality of the Brahmin, India cannot be said to possess a single caste system, but a number of regional systems (Gough 1960:11). The manner in which the caste system operates among Hindu Punjabis is quite unique and interesting. Among the Hindu population of the Punjab, Brahmins do not hold a prominent position. In the rural areas, it is the peasant castes (such as, the Jats who are mostly Sikhs), who are the dominant caste (Jats are Shudras who are above the pollution line, while there is also another category of Shudras who fall below the pollution line). In the urban areas it is the non-agriculturist castes such as the Kshatriyas and Vaishyas who are the socially and politically important caste groups (Narang 1982:120). In fact one of the important reasons for the dominant position of these middle ranking castes of the ritual hierarchy is that they were the most advanced in urbanization and literacy (Brass 1975:308-9).

Ibbetson (1916) had classified the Punjab castes according to their occupational structure into the land owning and agricultural castes, which are the Jats and Rajputs. The second category are the professional and mercantile castes such as the Brahmins, Khatri and Vaishyas and lastly are the menials and artisans which includes the scavengers, weavers,

leather workers, potters, carpenters, washermen and the like. Many of these caste-occupational groups came to Delhi after partition, and there could be instances of these groups abandoning their hereditary occupations and acquiring diverse occupational skills as they got opportunity for economic change and prosperity. Therefore the question of congruence/incongruence between a caste group and its hereditary occupation has been researched and analyzed in this work.

The different caste groups had to be studied to understand as to what extent belonging to different caste groups meant a different experience of partition and the process of resettlement. For example, the Rehabilitation Ministry had set up special relief plans for the 'Harijan refugees' and created a separate section for their implementation in February 1948. This section was abolished in June 1949 and its work transferred to a Displaced Harijan Rehabilitation Board established under the aegis of the All India Harijan Sewak Sangh (Rao 1967:81). Thus it was important to understand whether this section of the population did or did not benefit from government measures. This also helped in drawing up a comparative picture of whether a similar kind of rehabilitation work was done for the upper castes. It further helped to understand whether the process of resettling in a new environment has retained the caste identity as a vital factor or other identities and interests have overridden the caste identity.



## **Class**

Class in the broader sense refers to the position that individuals occupy in the economic sphere. In fact Marx describes class in terms of ownership or non-ownership of the means of production/property (Giddens 1973:27). Marx's definition cannot be strictly applied to the case of refugees in Delhi, as in urban areas property is only one of the factors for determining the class position of individuals. The occupational position and the concomitant income that provides an easier access to material goods and services that help one to have a certain lifestyle, become important. In this connection Weber's formulation is significant and can be applied to this study to a certain extent. Weber (1992:458) describes class as a group of individuals who share a similar position in the market situation. Weber also puts forward the notion of 'status groups', which are normally 'communities' and built upon criteria of grouping other than those stemming from strictly market situation, and thus connotes those involved in consumption, in the form of specific 'styles of life' (Giddens 1973:43). In this work for analyzing the class position of refugees, property, occupation, income, education and lifestyle are considered to be important criteria.

It may be pointed out that in trying to understand the degree of change in class position of refugees, the important point is that success can be of different kind. For many of the refugees it was the case of a changed lifestyle. While earlier there was more emphasis on extended

families and joint holding of property, with movement into new areas and the disruption of family trading activities, there emerged a situation wherein some have retained trading activities, others have got into the service sector and for many there came about a greater awareness of the need for education. In fact all this resulted in a change in the consumption patterns of the refugees thus leading to a changed social and cultural lifestyle for them and this has been inquired into in the work.

To arrive at an understanding of the above-mentioned area of study, it was important to take into account the everyday judgements made by people about occupations and investigate how people perceive and evaluate occupation and lifestyle. Therefore, it is important to understand peoples' images of society (Coxon and Davies 1986:2).

Thus the work tries to study how the class structure has crystallized among the refugees after partition and whether there has been a change in the class position of individuals and families due to the conditions created by partition. On the other hand, it also tries to understand whether class can facilitate easier access to certain opportunities and privileges.

### **Power**

Power refers to the capacity to influence others in society. According to Weber (1948:32), it is 'the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his will despite resistance'.

Thus power is different from coercion as the latter has a dimension of illegitimacy attached to it. There are differences in the way power is distributed amongst individuals, groups or other units. Power may be relatively concentrated or diffused and the share of power held by different individuals, strata or classes may be relatively greater or smaller (Sills 1972).

The aspect of power has assumed great importance because of the concept of universal adult franchise. The power elite is the product of the political process of the society. It includes those individuals who participate in the process of formulating policy and decision making. Their power depends either on their ability to take decisions or on actual participation in the decision-making process itself (Pareto 1963; Mosca 1939; Mills 1963). Thus an inquiry into the formation of power elite among those with refugee background had to be made. Further, it also had to be analyzed whether Hindu Punjabi refugees have been able to assert themselves in the political context.

Power is not confined to the political sphere, but is also essential to the economic and cultural sphere. It is in this context that an examination of the perception of informants about elite in society becomes relevant. There are various ways to mark social status, one such being that of membership of clubs. Membership of a club is generally a mark of social status and may be sought after by people who are or aspire to be socially

significant and exert an influence in society. Further, it also had to be analyzed whether a particular caste group is preponderant among Hindu Punjabi refugees and does that preponderance prove to be an asset in asserting themselves in the political context.

Keeping these considerations in mind the study also analyzed the refugees' present status with regard to power which helped to arrive at an understanding of the degree of power exercised by them, and whether they are an influential power group.

### **CLASSIFICATION OF INFORMANTS**

In order to understand the diverse experiences of the informants of this work it was essential that information was gathered from the informants across their varied socio-economic backgrounds. Since the study is of a qualitative nature, the views expressed by the informants had to be collected and presented in a form to bring out a comparative dimension. Thus the classification of informants has been undertaken in terms of four dimensions, that of, caste, class, gender and occupation.

The Brahminical model has been used here, whereby the Brahmins are being considered as the upper caste, the Kshatriyas and Vaishyas have been clubbed in the middle caste. The Shudras in our study are 'the Untouchables' who form the lower caste. This is so because the clean caste Shudras such as cultivators and artisans are mainly present in rural areas,

while the so-called 'Untouchables' can be located in urban settings. These caste groups have been denoted by the following terms:

U – Upper Caste (Brahmins)

M – Middle Caste (Kshatriyas and Vaishyas)

L - Lower Caste (Untouchables)

The second dimension is that of class. Broadly, three class groups have been identified among the informants of this study. This is based on the classification of informants according to their locality of residence. Those in the affluent locality were considered to be the upper class, those in the middle class locality as the middle class and the ones in the slum locality as the lower class. The following terms have been used to denote these class groups:

U – Upper Class

M – Middle Class

L – Lower Class

Another criterion used to classify informants was that of gender identity, that is, in terms of males or females. This is important for informants may perceive their social systems and society accordingly, based on their gender identity. These have been denoted as thus:

M – Male

F – Female

Another criterion that has been used to provide a classification of informants is that of the occupation pursued by them. Here the placement of informants into different occupational groups has been denoted as follows:

P – Professional/Academician  
B – Businessman  
O – Officer  
N – Non-Officer  
F – Farmer/Landlord  
W – Worker  
M – Menial Worker  
U – Unspecified (also includes housewives)

It is important to point out that in order to keep the classification simple, no distinction has been made between those who are already in service and those who lead a retired life. Lastly, it needs to be pointed out that each informant has been accorded a number mentioned as the last figure on the classification list. This number is based on the class/locality and is being used to distinguish between informants who have the rest of the criterion in common.

### **EXPERIENCE OF CONDUCTING FIELDWORK**

Before moving into the field it was important to understand and prepare oneself for fieldwork so that proper, useful and meaningful research work could be done. The first step therefore involved the preparation of the broad outline about which information had to be collected from the informants. For a study of such a kind where an understanding of the life-history of individuals is needed, it is important to explore various aspects of a person's life – the various incidents that have occurred not only in the recent past and their views about their present

situation, but also of incidents as they occurred at the time of partition more than fifty years ago.

This kind of research work, therefore, had to make adequate use of the researcher's ability to make the informants remember incidents as they occurred so long ago. Some of the incidents had been vanished from memory, the sequence of some of the incidents and events were haphazard and many times the informants took quite a long time to remember some of these. They were also incidents that covered all kinds of emotions of informants from fear to anxiety, to happiness, to relief, to an extreme sense of psychological trauma and helplessness. In order to understand such varied emotions of individuals a survey method was considered an inadequate one, for it would have failed to account for such psychological states of mind. Therefore, for this research work it was thought that a study of life-history of informants would help to arrive at rich qualitative data.

First a 'pilot study' was conducted whereby two to three informants from each of the areas were contacted. The 'pilot study' was important for it helped to understand whether the kind of study that the researcher was planning to undertake could be accomplished through fieldwork conducted in this manner.

In any study the selection of the sample size is very important. If the sample is too small or drawn from a single social category it will not be a

representative one. As this study had to focus on collecting qualitative data about the partition experience and its impact on the people, in-depth information was required from the informants. This could not be collected through administering an interview schedule or questionnaire. Therefore about twenty-five informants were selected from each of the areas adding up to a total of seventy-five from the three areas of study. This sample size was deemed to be adequate enough for a qualitative study of the present kind. The informants from a particular age group had to be selected as the partition occurred more than half-a-century ago. In this case the snowballing technique was used to contact informants. The initial informants were approached, either through personal contacts (as the researcher herself has a background of belonging to one such family that had migrated to India at the time of partition) or by establishing one crucial link that then became an influential key to contact other informants for the study.

While the set of questions were set sequentially in accordance with the kind of information that had to be collected, it must be mentioned that in all cases the sequence of questions was not followed. Also, certain information was extracted during long discussions. In this case a personal relation and rapport was established between the researcher and the informant and the entire information could be collected only over a number of sessions. Since there was the sharing of information about certain very intimate and deeply felt incidents, many times the researcher had to allow



the informant to just keep talking, without interrupting the informants' thought pattern at a particular point of time. During fieldwork it was important that the informants were made to feel at ease. On the researcher's part it was important to keep in mind the fact that academic language differs considerably from the language of everyday life. Therefore all along the choice of words used to extract information was very important.

The experience of conducting fieldwork in a slum area is unlike that in a middle or upper class locality. In the latter areas informants were contacted through the snowball technique. In the slum area of Tilak Nagar it was necessary to establish contact through a local level political worker residing in the area who was generally referred to as 'Pradhan'.

In a slum area the experience of conducting fieldwork is different as compared to the other areas for several reasons. Firstly, the presence of a stranger in the area is immediately noticeable, but this also had its advantages as within a few days the researcher was well known in the area and when the researcher was seen interacting freely with some, many others were willing to talk openly. In fact, most of the times the discussions and narrations were not conducted in one to one sessions, rather in groups unlike in the other two areas of study. This had its advantages because many times group interviews can lead to healthy discussions where everyone participated openly and contrasting experiences of different individuals could be articulated in this manner.

This is in contrast to what happened in the upper and middle class localities where informants were met at home with prior appointment. Here again there were mixed groups of men and women informants. In many of the cases where women were interviewed it was often seen that men tried to guide them on what to speak, yet there were also cases where both men and women sat together to jointly provide a better perspective. At times, it was also difficult to gain the confidence of the informants, but this problem was overcome to a large extent because of the fact that firstly, the informants were contacted through certain known people and secondly, by the fact that over two to three meetings the informants gained confidence in the researcher's intentions. Thus while there were cases of non co-operation, majority did co-operate.

Finally, it must be pointed out that during fieldwork, especially so in the slum area, a constant question asked of the researcher was whether the government would do something for the 'refugees'? In spite of endless endeavors to explain the purpose of the study, the response came in the false hope that the researcher was here to recommend their case to the government. This naturally raised in the researcher's mind a moral-ethical issue with regard to fieldwork. However, this was short lived as the researcher over a period of time was convinced that even if one could understand and analyze truthfully the case of these 'refugee' people it would address their concerns to a certain extent which the policy maker can profitably utilize.

**CHAPTER III**  
**ASPECTS OF DISPLACEMENT AND RESETTLEMENT:**  
**AN OVERVIEW**

August 15, 1947 marked the country's independence from the two hundred years old British rule. However, this day for many in the states of the Punjab and Bengal was a turning point in their lives as it signified the partition of the provinces and the consequent violence, fleeing from their original place of habitation, resettlement and rehabilitation into a new area. Thus, while millions were celebrating 'freedom', many in these provinces were caught up in the upheaval that the communal tangle brought into their lives.

The partitioning of the country was a very complex process as it inculcated the demarcation of boundaries. The creation of boundary immediately brought to the forefront the issue of 'our' and 'their' land. At one level, the boundary creation process could be largely seen as a politico-administrative measure, yet at another level it had more to do with its impact on the lives of the common people as the issue of 'minority' and 'majority' in terms of religious identity became the area of focus.

It was the process by which the Indo-Pakistan boundaries were created from June 3 to August 17, 1947, when the Radcliffe award defining the borders between India and Pakistan was announced that a turning point occurred in the two provinces of the Punjab and Bengal (Yong Tan and Kudaisya 2000:79). The plan to partition India and Pakistan in August 1947 is famously known as the Mountbatten plan of June, 3 named after the last British viceroy of India who came to divide and quit India and thus

free it from British domination (Das 1982:98). It must be pointed out here that Muslims did not want partition of the provinces of the Punjab and Bengal but Hindus and Sikhs vehemently demanded it. As Mountbatten aptly remarked, the Congress used the same argument for demanding the partition of the provinces as the Muslim league used for demanding the partition of India (Waseem 1996:205)

In fact the West Punjab Assembly representing Muslim majority districts voted against partition (99 to 27), while the East Punjab Assembly representing non-Muslim majority districts voted for it (50 to 22). Similarly, the members of the Bengal Assembly belonging to the Muslim majority districts rejected partition (106 to 35), while their counterparts from Hindu majority districts voted for it (58 to 21). This was followed by the formation of two boundary commissions one for the Punjab and the other for Bengal (Waseem 1996:206).

Cyril Radcliffe, considered an impartial man, arrived in India in July 1947 and undertook the task of creation of boundaries. He completed his project by August 1947. The creation of boundaries resulted in grave consequences in terms of communal tension and violence in the areas of the Punjab and Bengal.

The situation in the provinces of the Punjab and Bengal were different in their own respects. Boundary demarcation for the province of the Punjab was a more controversial and complicated decision as compared

to that for the province of Bengal because of the existence of three religious communities in the Punjab (Mansergh 1999:220) as compared to two in the province of Bengal. The intensity of feelings evoked and the consequent level of violence was much greater in the case of the Punjab compared to that in Bengal. A closely related phenomenon in the Punjab was the deep commitment with which religious minorities were persecuted and pushed across borders by religious majorities, ostensibly to put an end to religious diversity.

The difference between the political attitudes of the Punjabis and Bengalis vis-a-vis non-Muslims can be traced down to the fact that migration in the Punjab was near total in character, leaving hardly any trace of Hindus or Sikhs, while migration in Bengal was selective in nature, leaving a large Hindu minority in place. It was this stronger vision in the Punjab, of a society based exclusively on one's own religion that led to extreme cases of violence in the Punjab province (Waseem 1996:209-10). As the present study focuses on Hindu refugees in Delhi who came from the Punjab, the partition of the Punjab needs to be discussed.

### **THE PARTITION OF THE PUNJAB**

The Punjab as it stood at the time of independence contained twenty-nine districts grouped into five divisions: Multan, Rawalpindi, Lahore, Jullundur and Ambala. The total population of the province was 28.4

million of which 16.2 million were Muslims and 12.2 million were Hindus and Sikhs (Das 1982:154).

Of the five divisions, Multan and Rawalpindi were predominantly Muslim with nine million Muslims as against two million Hindus and Sikhs. Lahore division was far more problematic with four million Muslims and three million Hindus and Sikhs. Jullundur and Ambala were predominantly Hindu and Sikh areas with three million Muslims as against seven million non-Muslims.

**Areas Covered in each of the Divisions of the Punjab** (Singh 1972:3)

- LAHORE DIVISION – Gujranwala, Sheikhpura, Sialkot, Gurdaspur, Lahore, Amritsar
- RAWALPINDI DIVISION – Gujarat, Lyallpur, Jhelum, Rawalpindi, Attock, Mianwali, Shahpur
- MULTAN DIVISION – Montgomery, Jhang, Multan, Muzafargarh, Dera Ghazi Khan.
- AMBALA DIVISION – Gurgaon, Rohtak, Karnal, Hissar, Ambala, Simla.
- JULLUNDUR DIVISION – Kangra, Hoshiarpur, Jullundur, Ludhiana Ferozepur.

Radcliffe's Boundary Commission was instructed to demarcate the boundaries of the two parts of the Punjab on the basis of ascertaining the contiguous majority areas of Muslims and non-Muslims. It was also instructed to take into account other factors in doing so. In this task, Radcliffe was assisted by four learned and experienced High Court Judges

on his Punjab Commission. They were Justice Mehr Chand Mahajan, Teja Singh, Din Muhammad and Muhammad Munir (Das 1982:183). The Punjab Boundary Commission sat from July 21 to 31 1947, hearing evidence from the Muslim League, Congress, the Sikhs and others (Tinker 1977:699).

The Radcliffe Award gave to East Punjab the whole of Jullundur and Ambala divisions and the Amritsar district of the Lahore division together with a few tehsils of the Gurdaspur and Lahore districts. East Punjab obtained control over three of the five rivers of the United Punjab: the Beas, Sutlej and the upper waters of the Ravi. About thirty-eight percent of the area and forty-five percent of the population were assigned to East Punjab. West Punjab, on the other hand, obtained about sixty-two percent of the area and fifty-five percent of the population, together with a major share of the sources of the income of the United Province (Menon 1957:403).

It must be pointed out here that there was justification for awarding the two Muslim majority tehsils of Gurdaspur to India if the two Muslim majority tehsils of Ferozepur district were awarded to Pakistan or vice-versa. Gurdaspur was linked almost irretrievably with Amritsar by the upper Bari Doab system, but Ferozepur was equally vital to the canals of the Sutlej Valley Project, overwhelmingly in Pakistan. Alternatively, if Radcliffe had regarded the majority population argument as more important than the economic argument then he ought to have allocated



Gurdaspur minus its Hindu majority tehsil to Pakistan. In fact, Radcliffe's solution was right overall, in relation to the greatest of the canal systems (the triple Canal Project) in preserving its unity within West Punjab (Tinker1977:696).

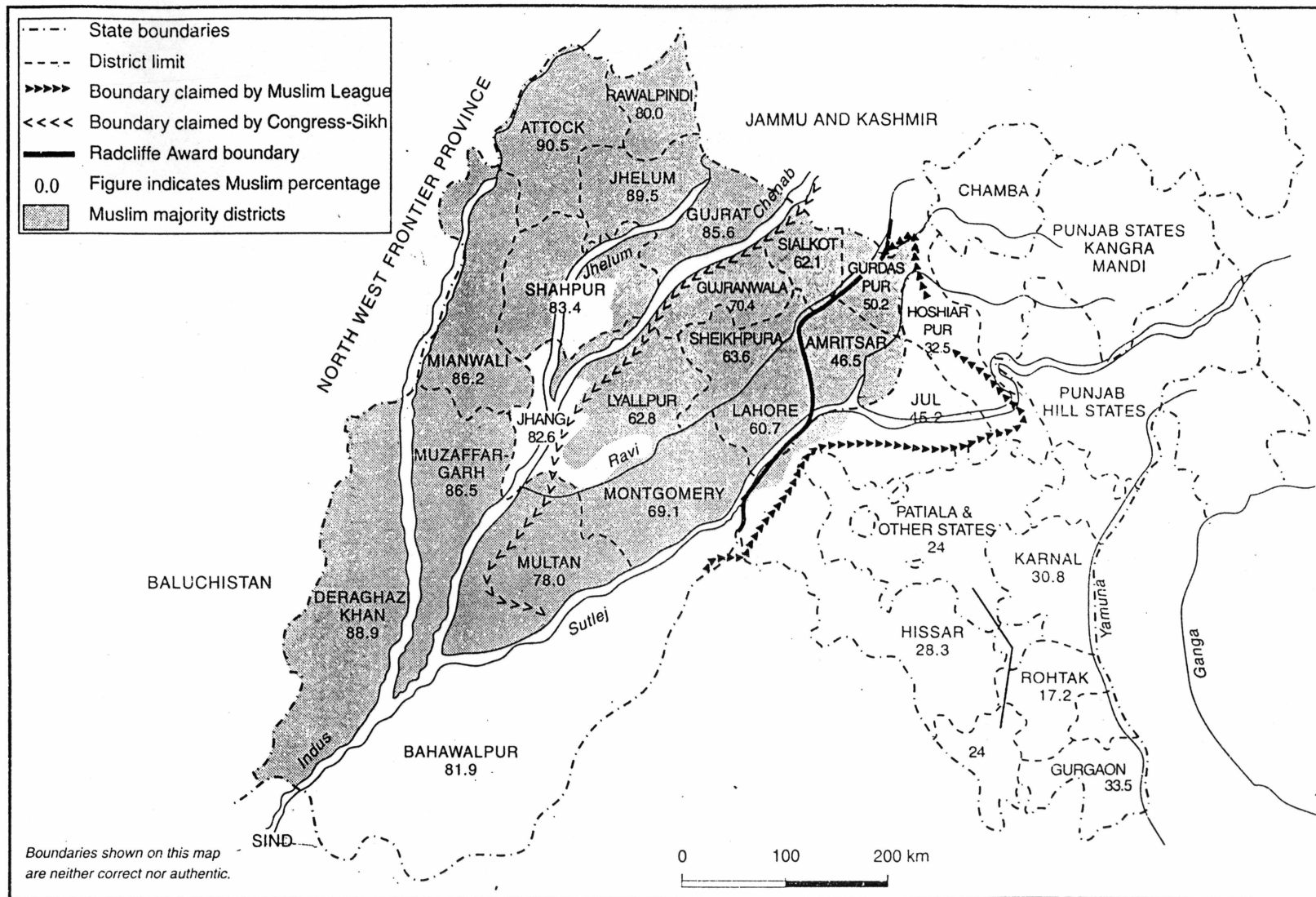
The Award of August 1947 led to a resettlement in which Muslims were established on one side of a line with Sikhs and Hindus on the other. This kind of boundary demarcation therefore tried to keep in mind factors other than just the economic argument. It helped to preserve the 'unity' between the different religious communities than would have been there had this situation not been kept in mind. Then, in all anticipation the degree of violence would have been much greater than it was now.

Thus while boundaries were created keeping in mind several factors, this still resulted in huge displacement of the population. In fact, powerful leaders like Sikandar Hyat Khan Tiwana, the premier of the Punjab and Unionist Party leader in the Punjab could well anticipate much in advance the kind of violence that the creation of Pakistan would entail.

To quote Moon (1964:97):

One day in October 1938, during a conversation with Sir Sikandar, I began talking to him rather enthusiastically about the merits of the Pakistan idea and suggested that after all it might be the best way of dealing with the communal problem. Sir Sikandar usually so calm and suave, after listening for a few

**Map III.1 The Partition of the Punjab**



**Source:** Tai Yong Tan and Gyanesh Kudaisya, 2000, *The Aftermath of Partition in South Asia*, London: Routledge, p.97.

minutes turned upon me with indignation and took me to task in these words; 'How can you talk like this? You have been long enough in Western Punjab to know the Muslims there. Surely you can see that Pakistan would be an invitation to them to cut the throat of every Hindu bania.

The transformation of the Punjab in the year 1947 is of particular importance. First, the Punjab differed from the rest of India in that there were three – Hindu, Muslim and Sikh communities rather than two communities. Second, in 1947 the Punjab was to be the site of the most widespread massacres connected with partition. Third, during the 1937-1946 period the Punjab was noticeable as the province had great success at the level of provincial government. Fourth, it was the only province in which direct British rule did not have to be imposed. It is therefore important to understand the political situation in the Punjab from 1923 onwards when the Unionist Party was formed and which had a stronghold on the Punjab politics upto 1947, by which time Jinnah and the Muslim League had gained a stronghold in the Punjab politics. Since the state of the Punjab was now 'controlled' by the Muslim League, Jinnah tried to present himself as the sole spokesman of the Indian Muslims. This was the time when India was granted independence and the consequent partition of the Punjab took place.

The Unionist Party was organized in 1923 around the interests of the landowning rural classes and cut across religious lines. It was a provincial party based on a pro-rural agriculturist ideology and led by the landed leaders of rural society. It dominated the Punjab politics for almost a quarter of a century before 1947 (Gilmartin 1993:205). With the elections of 1937, the Unionist Party was successful as it won 101 seats out of 175 in the legislature, while the Congress won 35 seats and drew most of its support from the Hindu section of the urban areas. But this situation changed in favor of the Muslim League by the 1946 elections whereby the Muslim League won 75 seats, while the Unionist Party won only 20 and the Congress won 51 seats (Weiner 1968:441). It is interesting to note that the partition of India was not a serious item on the political agenda until 1937. But in 1947 it had become a political reality (Parekh 1985:303).

The League's prospects had greatly improved after the collapse of the Jinnah-Sikander Pact in April 1944. Its political strategy coupled with an intensive propaganda campaign along religious lines paid off. Informant UMMP 16 pointed out in the course of fieldwork:

*...As children we did not understand the implications of the demonstrations conducted for demanding partition and we too would participate in the slogan shouting. A famous slogan of the time was: 'haq hamara Pakistan, lad kar lenge Pakistan, mar kar lenge Pakistan, Khizr Tiwana harami dana' (If Pakistan was not to be had on demand, we will have it by force).*

The landlords and Pirs also overwhelmingly supported Jinnah and the intensive propaganda that accompanied the elections of 1945-46. This further set the Muslims and non-Muslims against one another (Hasan 1995:16) which only made the demand for the partition and creation of Pakistan more vociferous.

While in most cases the anticipation of partition was there, the consequent violence, as an aftermath of partition was not thought of. Most informants' pointed out that while they knew that partition was going to take place, they never thought they would have to flee their homes. Thus migration before August 1947 was very limited. While people would hear of Hindu-Muslim conflicts taking place, they never thought that they would be affected so greatly by these. In fact, for centuries the Punjab had been invaded by different conquerors who became rulers. These invasions never displaced the local population, therefore, many thought that even if partition was to take place they would not be displaced for they thought that '*Raj badalte hain, Praja nahi badalti*' (Kingdoms change but people do not). However they soon realized that partition was different in this respect because it ultimately led to massive displacement of the population.

Refugees in informal gatherings often refer to several aspects of their life in Pakistan. The nostalgia looms large on them about the partition days and a sense of pride overrides them because they visualize their success today as important. It was their attitude of hardwork, determination and

perseverance that helped them to achieve success even after facing so much of hardships. While remembering the pre-partition days, the aspects about which the refugees discuss are their homes in Pakistan in terms of its physical features, their common set of relatives and friends, the narration of tales of how they escaped from their original place of habitation and managed to reach India safely. In this process, they discuss the difficulties that they and others known to them underwent and how they managed to escape and rebuild their lives once in India. In fact while referring to these there is a sense of pride in their eyes, which is justified, for though they suffered their spirit remained as unshakable as the earth.

This chapter looks at some of the incidents and tales narrated by the informants as to their experience in moving out of their original place of habitation in Pakistan to India. Though the informants had different types of experiences, only some interesting and relevant ones are being reported here. It is these that are sociologically important and therefore relevant for our kind of study and will be dealt with in this chapter.

### **THE EXPERIENCE OF MOVEMENT FROM PAKISTAN TO INDIA FOR THE REFUGEES**

A few cases in relation to the different aspects of experience of movement to India have been analyzed in this section. This has been followed by a brief mention and analysis of some of the important aspects related to the dimension of movement of the refugee population.

The movement from their homes in Pakistan to their arrival in India entailed a number of difficulties for the refugees. Many of them had life-threatening experiences. For most refugees even the thought of movement before August 1947 was inconceivable. In fact till the very last minute they did not realize that they would never be able to visit their homes in Pakistan again. Most refugees still want to go and see their homes in Pakistan at least once. Many of them packed their household items, left them behind and locked the house up so that once they would get back they would find their belongings safe. A few families even gave the keys of their homes to Muslim neighbours for safe-keeping till their return.

Very few families could move out prior to August 1947. These were those families and individuals whose foresight was sharper in that they could anticipate the level of disruption and displacement that would take place after August 1947 and they had the resources to move. It is important to mention here the case of one such family, who because of high level political connections could manage to reach India earlier than most other refugees.

INFORMANT UUMO 4

The informant pointed out that:

*We had shifted to Lyallpur from India in 1946 and had bought a big bungalow there. Khizar Hyat Khan Tiwana had appointed my father as his property estate manager at Sargoda. In March 1947, Tiwana asked my father to sell off the property. He even found a buyer for our*

*property. To my knowledge even my father did not realize why Tiwana had suggested so. However, since the deal was a good one we sold off the property. In June 1947 Tiwana told my father to move to India with his family and even gave us his car and police escort. In India, we stayed at Tiwana's bungalow at Tilak Marg. Once riots erupted and people started moving in large numbers we realized we had moved forever.*

This case clearly points out to the fact that some individuals and families could anticipate the level of violence and most political leaders were well aware of it. Had this family too, had no high level political connections, they too would have suffered the same fate as thousands of others. The aspect of moving forever was also something that most refugees said they did not realize till they saw that such large number of people had been displaced from their homes. The next two cases also present a similar picture.

INFORMANT MUFO 24

The experience of movement in the words of the informant were thus:

*My father had been posted from Kasur district to Lahore around the first of August 1947 as a member of the three-member commission set up called the 'Special Tribunal' to try riot cases. However, since within about two weeks the situation had become worse he had to move to India. He came safely with the military. Since my father was staying in a posh government locality of Lahore there were no incidents of violence there.*



*I, in the meantime, was in Kasur with my sister and grandmother but since it was an all-female household my aunt advised us to move to stay on with my brother who was working in India. So we moved safely to India.*

#### INFORMANT UUFP 15

*We moved from our house at Jabbar to a refugee camp at Sacha Sauda, where we stayed for a month. There was a rich family with us who owned some trucks. It was in one such truck that we started moving to India. As night fell, we were looking for a place to rest. A Sikh walking on the road directed us towards an old house that had belonged to a British officer. On reaching the bungalow we encountered Muslim police. It was then that we realized that the man was actually a Muslim posing to be a Sikh. The police made us line up and threatened to kill us. The driver of one of the trucks took permission from the police to go out to relieve himself. It was then that he jumped into the river to cross over to the other side. This scared the Muslim police and they made us deposit all our belongings in exchange for our lives.*

In case of informant MUFO 24, the informant's father was at a high level government job and therefore was given protection. They stayed in a good locality where enough security was available. The army also provided for their safe transfer to India. In the case of informant UUFP 15 however, it was the high class connections that played an important role in their evacuation. Thus, the economic (class) factor was predominant in saving their lives. However, at one juncture the Muslim police did catch hold of them but left them later when they got scared of the fact that their

activities might be reported. The informant reasoned that the police left them because in those days the rule was 'if you will kill *our* people, then we will kill *yours*'. Keeping this in mind one can say that the community feeling was very strongly engraved in the minds of the people.

The following case is that of an informant from a middle class locality whose family moved due to the fear of their daughter losing her honour.

#### INFORMANT MMFN 10

*My father's senior at office, Liaquat Ali Khan who later became the Prime Minister of Pakistan, kept telling my father before August 1947 to move to India. However my father paid no heed to his words. It was later when Muslims came and picked up a Hindu girl from our neighbourhood that my father decided it was time for us to move to India. This was on August 11, 1947.*

It must be mentioned here that it is the control over the sexuality of women that works on the ideology of perceiving women as reproducers of the boundaries of ethnic and national groups. It is in this context that the recovery operations conducted after partition, to facilitate the return of abducted women to their families became important. From the very beginning the concern with abducted women went hand in hand with alarm at forcible conversions. It was viewed that, there was the loss of Hindus to Islam through such conversions in addition to the loss of territory. It was this double burden of abduction and conversion that was felt by the Hindu community. The recovery of one's women if not of land,

became a powerful assertion of Hindu manhood. However, concern like this was not evident with regard to the abduction of Hindu women by Hindu men and Muslim women by Muslim men, presumably because here no offense against community or religion had been committed, nor anyone's honour compromised! (Menon 1998:22).

#### INFORMANT MMFU 9

*My husband was in the army and posted at Ferozepur. At the time of partition we had gone to Peshawar to meet our parents. In the train some Muslim ladies were travelling with me in the ladies compartment. They told me "Bibi, you are a Hindu. Are you not scared that we might kill you?" I replied: "It is your wish. I can do nothing if you decide to kill me". Inside I was terrified and really scared. Later after staying at Peshawar for sometime we moved to India along with the others.*

This case brings forth the point that even though some people were on this side of the border, in a tense situation they went back to their ancestral homes. Therefore, for many there was no anticipation of the degree to which their life would get altered.

#### INFORMANT MUMO 5

*We did not get to know that the situation had become so violent and massive that people would have to leave their homes. It was around nine at night when we were preparing dinner that we heard of our neighbours leaving the area. Since everyone was leaving we too decided to follow them. Thus till the very last minute we were carrying on our normal activities and did not know we had to leave.*

#### INFORMANT UUFU 8

*Although we had not planned about moving, we were the first ones from our area to move. This was so because one of our relatives who was in the military came with military trucks and men to evacuate us. They all stayed at our house for a night and the following morning we left for India. All our neighbours told us that we were leaving them behind unsafe, but what could we do?*

Thus many people tried to help their relatives and friends in some way they could. People did all they could to help rescue those close to them but at the same time there were also situations where one's safety was the predominant factor. In the latter situation where one could do nothing for others, was also described by some informants.

#### INFORMANT LLMM 23

*My father was posted on military duty outside our hometown. The Muslims attacked and looted our house and we could not even raise an alarm for fear of being killed. We were rescued by the army and put into the train moving towards India. At one place the train stopped and my brother moved out to get some water. He was killed there. We carried his body in the train with us and then threw it into the river Sutlej later. Somehow we reached India and then had nowhere to go for it had been many years since we came to India. At the station we were mistaken for being Muslims because of our dress pattern. The Hindus at the station tried to threaten us thinking we were Muslims. However, it later turned out that one of these Hindus was my cousin and then we were taken good care of.*

This case has highlighted trauma in its highest possible degree for they lost everything. Their house was looted and members of their family got killed in front of their eyes. They had some relatives in India but since for years they had been staying in a far away place and had a low economic status, the contact with relatives on this side had not been maintained. Thus illiteracy, low class and caste position made them most susceptible and vulnerable to the trauma and tragedy that partition brought about.

Most refugees had very traumatic experiences in terms of movement from Pakistan to India. While some of the refugees could move with less difficulty for they were interacting with kin and friends who helped them in this situation of crisis; for many others it was a 'battle' they had to fight alone. Only certain types of experiences have been presented here, but it must be pointed out that the experiences of many others too, reveal that they suffered immensely.

#### **UNDERSTANDING THE NEED FOR PARTITION AND HINDU-MUSLIM RELATIONS FROM INFORMANTS' PERSPECTIVE**

Majority of the informants of this study when asked if there was a need for partition or was it avoidable or had it become inevitable pointed out that partition had its basis in the manner in which Hindu-Muslim relations existed at the socio-cultural level of everyday existence. Out of our informants, sixty-one percent pointed out that partition had become inevitable, twenty-two percent are of the view that it could have been

avoided, while seventeen percent could not formulate their opinion clearly. Those who hold the opinion that it was inevitable or could be avoided trace their formulation mainly to the nature of Hindu-Muslim relations. Secondly, some others also point out that the decision about partition was made really at the political level.

Those of the opinion that partition was inevitable point out that Hindu-Muslim interactions were on the surface cordial but deep inside there was discrimination maintained between members of the two communities. By and large, there was ill treatment meted out to the Muslims at the hands of the Hindus rather than the other way round. This critical view regarding the attitudes of co-religionists towards members of the 'Other' community suggests that the informants now try to understand partition and its related issues in a more rational and objective manner. When analyzing the reasons for partition they see their own treatment of the Muslims as an inegalitarian one. However, in the same breath they try to justify this by providing a stereotypical construction of the Muslim 'image'. Thus the rationalization is that the Muslims deserved to be discriminated.

Therefore if one tries to understand the reasons for the partition of the country one may point out that there are broadly two perceptions. The first is that partition is the handiwork of the British. For the purpose of better governance the British used the 'Divide and Rule' policy which

created divisions between the Hindus and the Muslims. However, this is a view from above. The educated, from upper sections of society hold this view as a reason for partition along with the second one that cited by those at the bottom. The second reason as pointed out, is the manner in which Hindu-Muslim relations were carried out at the social level of everyday existence. In fact, the former and the latter are intertwined and to understand partition only in terms of one of these perspectives would be a fallacy. It is important to note here that one aspect only gave a sharper focus to the other, thus strengthening the need for partition.

The two-nation theory has often been upheld as the root cause of partition. According to this explanation, partition was inevitable because of inherent differences between the Hindus and the Muslims (Keller 1975:18). But, it must be pointed out that there were remediable differences in terms of education and economic factors (inequality) and socio-cultural factors, which were innate (identity) and the factor of being a minority/majority group (power). That is unlike Keller thought, these are not separate factors, rather the two-nation theory subsumed all of them. In actuality the difference between these two religious communities was compounded because of all the three sets of factors.

It is generally perceived that the Muslims have all along been educationally less qualified on account of the fact that, in comparison to the Hindus they took to English education much later. True, the Hindus

were more educated than the Muslims, which resulted in Hindus taking to government jobs in larger numbers. Thus, they gained substantially more in terms of economic factors. The informants of this study repeatedly pointed out that the Hindus had always been better off as they were large landowners and moneylenders, while the Muslims worked as agricultural labourers on the lands of the Hindus.

Prasad (1999:101) citing the work of Aparna Basu (1974) has shown on the basis of official statistics that in Bengal and the Punjab where the bulk of Muslims were agriculturists they were backward. This educational and economic backwardness of the Muslims made them feel inferior to the Hindus. Over a period of time, they started demanding better educational and economic facilities as the consciousness arose among them that it was the superiority in terms of these factors that made the Hindus dominate in most aspects of life. This arousal of consciousness was the handiwork of some of the elite from among the Muslim community who could take advantage of better education and hence saw it as their task to bring about a reformation in 'their' Muslim community. The strongest intellectual and emotional support for Muslim nationalism was provided by Mohammad Iqbal (1877-1938), one of the greatest poet-philosophers produced by the Indian subcontinent. He dominated Muslim elite's thinking in the first half of the twentieth century, just as Syed Ahmad Khan (1817-1898), had done in the second half of the nineteenth century.



From people's perspective the view was that the Hindus and the Muslims were always on cordial terms and there was brotherhood and prevalence of good relations between members of the two communities. In fact, according to them there was hardly any enmity or feeling of bitterness. However, this was mainly at the manifest level, for in the same vein, they also point out that there was not much of intermixing in terms of visiting each other's homes frequently. It was only on certain ceremonial occasions such as marriage or death that one visited the houses of the members of the 'Other' religious community. Again, even when such functions were attended to, there was a judicious selection of the kind of food items one could consume from their 'Other'. The informants of this work were Hindus and the stereotypical 'image' of a Muslim as constructed by them is 'poor, illiterate, dirty, too religious, fanatics, with little regard for the religion of the members of the 'Other' religious group'. In fact informant MMFU 9 even pointed out that *'Muslims eat religion, drink religion and sleep religion'*. It is important to mention here that this image of Muslims is not only a version earlier to partition but they hold the same image of the Muslims even now.

Most of the informants of this study were very young around the time of partition and they point out that the elderly women were very particular about not intermixing and interdining with the Muslims. The older women would often take a bath even when touched by the shadow of a Muslim. In fact, most interactions between members of the two communities were mainly at the level of the menfolk. It must be pointed out that at public

places such as railway stations there was a mention on the water booths as 'drinking water for Muslims' and 'drinking water for Hindus'. The issue of '*jhataka*' and '*halal*' meat was also a contentious one in the context of Hindu-Muslim relations.

*Jhataka* meat is the meat of an animal killed with a single stroke as prescribed by the Hindu rituals, while *halal* meat is the meat when the animal is killed in several strokes and is viewed as the Muslim way of killing. Uprety (1980:146) points out that the Muslims objected to the *jhataka* meat partly because the animal was not killed according to Muslim rites, but mainly because the *jhataka* mode was an offering to the Hindu idol, Kali. The Hindus objected to buying meat from Muslims not only because it was *halal* meat but also because they feared it was mixed with beef.

Many informants try to reason that it was this issue that prevented them from interdining with the Muslims. The informants also pointed out that the Muslim religious identity was a strong factor, but the factor of economic class was also important for lesser interactions between the Hindus and the Muslims.

It should therefore be emphasized that the notion of good relations between the Hindus and the Muslims was a myth and what prevailed was a latent hostility. As pointed out earlier, most informants admitted the fact that partition had become inevitable because of the treatment that the

Hindus meted out to the Muslims. Most Muslims, when they visited the houses of Hindus were given separate chairs or made to sit on the floor but not beside oneself. Again, the utensils used when serving food to the Muslims were different and kept separately from those used by the members of the family. Most Hindus never ate at the house of the Muslims and in general Muslims gave a better treatment to Hindus than the other way round. A similar kind of a relation also prevailed between the higher and lower caste Hindus. Thus, it may be correct to point out that the Muslims particularly the lowly placed ones by caste and class were treated as Untouchables. Informant UUMO 4 recalled that:

*When my father's friends would come home to have food, they would tell my mother 'bhabhi, we have come to have food, please bring out our utensils'.*

This points out that even the Muslims were conscious of the fact that there was certain discrimination maintained against them. This attitude of discrimination over a period of time was crystallized into one of hostility and has contributed to the inevitability thesis about partition of the country.

Here it is pertinent to refer to the point raised by Furnivall (1948:308) that different racial groups with their own culture, ideas and ways of life may live together but separately within the same political unit, which he designated as 'plural society'. According to him, this coexistence is not voluntary, but is brought about through force (see Oommen, 2002:2).

However in the case of the Punjab though the groups were professing different religions, had different cultures and ways of life, they lived separately and at the same time mixed with each other in certain aspects of life. But the role of external force was absent; they coexisted together in a harmonious fashion.

While at the level of the community hostility had started to crystallize, at an individual level, many Hindus were helped by their Muslim friends. Informant UUFU 21 pointed out that...

*On the morning of the day we left our house in Pakistan, my husband had gone to his office where his Muslim colleagues had advised him that we should leave for India as there was possibility of our house being put on fire. It was then that we decided to move.*

In the same vein, informant MMFN 18 narrated an incident as follows:

*Around August 15 when I went to the bank, a Muslim friend whose son I used to teach told me to either convert to Islam or else leave for India immediately. It was he who had later arranged for my air ticket to India from his own financial resources.*

In fact at times the bond continued between those on either side of the border. In the words of informant MMMN 15:

*Even after coming to India I kept very close contact with my teacher, Master Qureshi who was in Pakistan. Till about five or six years after partition we used to write to each other in Urdu. Then the Indian police asked me to discontinue this contact for they were suspicious of my intentions as I was a government servant.*

Similarly informant UMMB 24 pointed out that:

*My Muslim servant who stayed back in Pakistan after partition wrote to us that even though his new masters were from the same religious group as his, their and his culture was not compatible and he longed so much to be with us.*

Thus, it was at the macro level of the community that one found incidents of open antagonism between the Hindus and the Muslims, but at the level of one to one individual relationships Hindus and Muslims had many interactions or close personal ties depending upon their caste and class status.

#### **GOVERNMENT MEASURES FOR SETTLING THE REFUGEES**

The government extensively worked for the benefit of the refugees by initiating a number of measures to ensure that proper settlement of the refugees could be achieved. As pointed out in chapter II the government started many of the programmes first in Delhi and then based on the experience of success of these measures, they were replicated in other parts of India. These fall in the category of rehabilitation programmes precisely because of the reason that they were not short lived as relief programmes are, but were aimed at providing for settlement on a long-term basis. Many of these programmes provided educational and training facilities that helped the refugees to earn a livelihood later. Relief measures on the other hand, are temporary, for a short duration to provide immediate support to cope with the existing problems. In the case of refugees from Pakistan the government took adequate measures for both their relief as well as

rehabilitation. The relief measures included the immediate provisions for food, clothing and shelter for the refugees.

To provide measures to rehabilitate the refugees in an organized manner, the government established on September 6, 1947, the Ministry of Rehabilitation with K C Neogy as Minister (Datta 2000:270). The programmes of urban rehabilitation consisted of providing a house or a plot to every displaced family in need of accommodation (see table III.1), arranging for employment, technical and vocational training, provision of educational facilities and assistance by way of loans to re-establish in business or industry (Mukherjee 1996:43).

The Ministry formulated a three-point plan to meet the situation. The three essential features of this plan were:

Firstly, to attempt to secure direct employment for those accustomed to service. Secondly, provision of facilities for technical and vocational training, particularly for younger people. This was to enable the refugees to equip themselves with new skills and earn an independent living. Besides, it was to serve to redress the imbalance created in certain sectors of the economy by the mass migration of Muslims to Pakistan. Thirdly, there was to be the grant of liberal financial aid to persons desirous of re-establishing themselves in business or industry. This was coupled with assistance in several other forms as, for example, the provision of business or industrial premises, special quotas of certain controlled commodities and licenses.

**Table III.1 Refugee Settlements in Delhi, 1950**

1. RAJENDRA NAGAR (old and New)
2. LAJPAT NAGAR
3. PATEL NAGAR ( East and West)
4. KIGSWAY
5. KINGSWAY EXTENSION
6. JANGPURA (A, B and Extn.)
7. PURANA QILA
8. AZADPUR
9. JUNG PURA NEIGHBOURHOODS (A and B)
10. TEHRA SCHEME
11. MALKAGANJ
12. KOTLA FERESHAH
13. KALKAJI
14. NIZAMUDDIN VILLAGE
15. NIZAMUDDIN EXTN.
16. REGHARPURA
17. SHEIKH SARAI
18. SWADESH HARD BOARD SCHEME (Near Red fort)
19. MORI GATE SCHEME
20. TILAK NAGAR
21. MALVIA NAGAR
22. ANDHA MUGHAL
23. VIJAY NAGAR AND EXTN.
24. NARELA COLONY
25. SARAJINI MARKET
26. MOTI NAGAR
27. HUDSON LINES

**Source:** Dipankar Gupta, 1996, The Context of Ethnicity. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.34

Among the centres of training conducted by the Ministry of Rehabilitation a special mention needs to be made of the Nilokheri Polytechnic and the Arab ki Sarai Centre through which training was imparted in different crafts such as spinning, carpet making, job printing, button making etc. (Congress Committee Report 1951:96). In these training centres, stipend was also given to the trainees. Even for educational facilities, the government gave certain scholarships to the refugee children.

However most informants did not make use of these vocational training programmes. Most of them went in for general education for they valued and attached a greater prestige to education as such rather than vocational training. Many were however admitted into schools and colleges due to their status of being refugees. One measure of the government that was extensively made use of was that of accommodation and compensation against lost property.

Finally, a mention may also be made of the fact that not only did the government start extensive programmes to help the refugees but help also came from other sources. Non-refugee families from various parts of India extensively supplied relief material and non-governmental organizations too came forward to help. At the same time big business houses like Tatas and Birlas also provided help to rehabilitate the refugees.



## **INFLUENCE OF PUNJABI REFUGEES ON THE CITY OF DELHI**

The out-migration of Muslims at the time of partition from Delhi was 3.29 lakhs, while the in-migration of Hindus and Sikhs was 4.95 lakhs (Rao and Desai 1965:56). The Punjabis came mostly from urban areas in West Punjab. Of the total of 495,391 refugees, 470,386 had been city-dwellers and came mainly from Lahore, Rawalpindi, Multan, Shahpura, Gujranwala, Lyallpur and Sialkot (Datta 2000:276).

It must be pointed out that the refugees who came to Delhi at the time of partition were in such overwhelming numbers that it was like an invasion by this section of the population on Delhi. On the other hand, Muslim population had reduced much in numbers through migration to Pakistan as a result of the conditions created by partition. Hundreds of thousands of refugees thronged the city of Delhi. These 'refugees' could be seen as individuals who had opted to become citizens of a new India, who had made the choice under desperate conditions at the price of being uprooted from their homes in what had become Pakistan. Their numbers and sheer visibility led to they being given whatever shelter could be mustered and permitted to occupy the houses of 'evacuees'. (Vidal, Tarlo and Dupont 2000:21).

Vidal, Tarlo and Dupont (2000) have argued that 'refugees did not see themselves as refugees'. However, this formulation seems to be wrong for the immigrants did actually view themselves as 'refugees'. In fact, even

today, those who came to India at the time of partition refer to themselves as refugees. In this context an important fact that must be mentioned is that while they refer to themselves as refugees, their attitude is very unlike that of refugees. Most of them tried to avoid government help when they could manage through their own efforts. This is unlike the case of refugees who generally rely on government measures to a much greater extent than happened in the case of the Hindu Punjabi refugees. This aspect has its roots in the attitudes and psychological-moral makeup of Punjabis who attempt to be self-reliant and avoid charity. It is this aspect that made the case of Punjabi refugees a successful one whereby they resettled at a much faster pace.

Delhi is also different from most other places as no nativistic movement has emerged here. Weiner (1978) has pointed out that 'sons of the soil' movement in certain regions of India made the original inhabitants of these states demand that they be given the opportunity to reap economic benefits from their states. This had created obstacles to economic prosperity of the migrant groups in these states. However, in Delhi no section of its population has ever claimed exclusive beneficiary rights in terms of economic and other factors. The fact that Delhi was a Union Territory and not a state (usually with a linguistic identity) should have been an important factor. This, therefore, has led to all sections being given an equal opportunity. The absence of such a movement in Delhi could

therefore not curb the prosperity and success of the Hindu Punjabi refugees.

Partition transformed several places due to large-scale displacement and resettlement of refugees. In fact, Delhi itself transformed not only in physical terms but also in socio-cultural terms. While physically the city changed due to the fact that a large number of colonies came up to resettle these refugees, there was also the setting up of satellite townships such as Faridabad around Delhi.

Cities and towns transformed in varied ways. The first one was physical, due to the expansion or contraction which cities and towns experienced as a result of population movements and the changes imposed by the new boundaries. The second was the social and cultural transformation of the cities brought about by change in the composition of the city's inhabitants. Thirdly, the cities were also transformed in a metaphysical sense, as people were uprooted from places where they had been born and nurtured and where they had families, properties and associations. Places then existed only in memory and came to be embedded in the consciousness of the uprooted people (Yong tan and Kudaisya 2000:24).

A large number of refugees as pointed out in chapter II were attracted to Delhi for several reasons: the presence of kin and friends, the fact that it was a capital city, getting posted to Delhi, the fact that it was in close

proximity to Pakistan and that many rehabilitation programmes were initiated here. In fact, informants (23%) of this study had first settled in areas such as the Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh before they came to Delhi. Thus, for this group what took place was twice-migration. This twice-migration was mainly on account of the fact that Delhi provided much greater opportunities for resettling than were available at other places. Thus not only did the character of Delhi changed with the arrival of a large number of refugees but the arrival of refugees and their settlement here, changed their fate for they had to adapt in a different way than most other refugees settled elsewhere in India.

#### **RELATION BETWEEN THE LOCALS AND THE REFUGEES**

Due to the influx of refugees into Delhi at the time of partition, the percentage of the original inhabitants to the total population of Delhi was reduced much in numbers. However initially the locals were cooperative in receiving and welcoming the refugees by providing their help in the form of shelter, food, jobs and psychological-moral comfort. But gradually a situation of competition and rivalry crystallized at the economic level, when over a short period of time the refugee section started to become economically better off.

The economic prosperity of the refugees has its roots in the attitude towards work, an instinct for survival, hardwork and a determination to rebuild life once again. In fact, most of the refugees even took to the most

stigmatizing work. In this context, the ideas of 'good' and 'bad' work ceased to exist, rather what remained was the question of livelihood and survival. Most of these refugees even took up jobs such as selling groundnuts, cigarettes, working as assistants in shops, to setting up roadside shops on pavements etc. These jobs were often considered degrading and below one's dignity by the locals.

The character of the city also changed. As Gupta (1996:31) has pointed out, there was a 'Punjabi invasion' on the city of Delhi. Delhi today strongly reflects this Punjabi culture, so much so that it is often difficult to imagine a time when Delhi was not Punjabi. The cultural change of the city took place with the arrival of refugees from West Punjab. In fact most local residents in the beginning resented this Punjabi culture. As some of the informants noted, the locals referred to refugees being very 'advanced' and 'broad-minded' in a pejorative sense. In the beginning, these 'qualities' were not appreciated by the locals. However over a period of time, the success of Punjabi refugees in most aspects of life turned these qualities into those that came to be valued by the local inhabitants of Delhi.

Apart from the above-mentioned factors, a difference between the locals and refugees could also be seen in terms of their lifestyle. For example, the refugee women would wear '*salwar-kameez*', while the local women mostly wore *sarees*. This was a contentious issue between the locals and the refugees.

As informant UMMN 13 pointed out that...

*Punjabi women would wear 'salwar-kameez'. My sister too would wear it, but this was not liked by the local inhabitants in the neighbourhood.*

This dislike for a particular dress pattern was on two accounts – firstly, on the ground that this pattern of dress of the Punjabi refugees was similar to that of the Muslim dress of *sherwani*. Secondly, it was also a dress that symbolized gender equality to a much greater degree than that in the case of *sarees* that were worn by the local inhabitants.

Gradually over a period of time, this situation of resentment between the locals and the refugees has taken a reverse turn. Today, most socio-cultural and economic aspects of the life of the people in Delhi are influenced by Punjabi culture brought by the refugees from Pakistan. Most locals tried to adopt the food and dress patterns of the Punjabi refugees.

In the words of informant MUMO 5:

*There was a family from Uttar Pradesh in our neighbourhood. The girls of that family asked my sister to lend them her salwar-kameez. Even the food habits of the locals and the refugees differed. While, we refugees would have rotis on tandoor, the locals would prepare it differently. But what has happened today is that the locals have tried to change themselves in the direction of the Punjabi culture.*

On the other hand, one cannot deny the important role that the locals played in helping the refugee section to resettle in Delhi by providing

them help on a number of fronts as mentioned earlier. Thus an attitude of helpfulness and cooperation on the one hand and that of hostility and rivalry on the other were two sides of the relationship between the locals and the refugees.

At the time of partition people were caught up in the politics of hate and violence. It is therefore important to understand the feelings, experiences and hardships of the ordinary people who were caught up in this transfer of population due to partition. While religion was the dividing factor in the partition process, other aspects which significantly altered and affected the lives of people once they settled in Delhi, were the three dimensions of stratification: caste, class and power. Therefore the next three chapters will deal with these three dimensions in greater detail.

**CHAPTER IV**  
**RELEVANCE OF CASTE AMONG HINDU PUNJABI**  
**REFUGEES IN DELHI**



In the previous chapters we discussed some of the theoretical and general orientations to the study of partition and its consequent effect on the population in terms of displacement and resettlement. In this chapter an analysis of caste is undertaken to explore whether caste could be among one of the dimensions that plays an important role in the aspect of resettlement of the displaced population and to understand how this social institution functions among the Hindu Punjabi refugees in Delhi.

Most sociologically oriented studies of India cover the understanding of caste. It is one of the bases of stratification and differentiation of individuals and groups. Stratification systems play an important role for they are the basis of gradation and ranking. But they can also take a negative connotation when these gradation systems and bases of differentiation lead to social stigma and strong notions of inferiority and superiority in terms of the position one occupies in them.

In trying to understand the role of caste among the migratory groups, one may point out that, firstly, the factor of caste could play an important role in the resettlement of most displaced groups. Secondly, it may also be a crucial dimension in order to understand its long-term effect in terms of helping to grasp the aspects of lifeworld and social system among the Hindu Punjabi refugees who came to Delhi at the time of partition. Caste has been an integral feature of Indian society and is considered an important determinant of the status of individuals and groups. However,

first of all it is essential to briefly present an overview of the caste system among the Hindu Punjabis.

### **AN OVERVIEW OF THE CASTE SYSTEM AMONG THE HINDU PUNJABIS**

It is important to understand in broad terms, how caste functions among the Hindu Punjabis. The case of the Punjabis in relation to the caste system is unlike that of most linguistic communities in other parts of India. This difference is mainly on account of the fact that while Brahmins are ranked at the top in the caste system in most parts of India, this is not the case in the Punjab where the middle ranking castes of the varna scheme hold a prominent position.

Talbot (1988:26) points out that the low status of the Brahmins arose mainly from the fact that the Brahmins not only had to compete with the Muslim Pirs and Sikh Gurus for religious leadership, but because they also lacked the economic power which the large Hindu temple complexes gave their brethren elsewhere in India. In the absence of a powerful Brahmin caste, Hindu social leadership had first rested with the Rajput princes but after their power had been smashed by the Mughals, it had devolved on the commercial castes of Khatri and Aroras.

Thus since early times society in the Punjab did not entirely conform to the traditional hierarchical pattern. Holding of land and economic prosperity has a lot of prestige attached to it in the Punjab. In accordance

with this, the importance and prestige of the various caste groups is determined. It is the land holding Jats and Rajputs in the rural areas and the trading Khattris and Aroras in the urban areas who are considered important and socially relevant caste groups. Thus the Brahmins do not enjoy the favoured position assigned to them by tradition or enjoyed by the Brahmins elsewhere in the country (Dungen 1972:37).

Talbot (1982:74) points out that western regions of the Punjab were dominated by large landowners who maintained links with their estates because of the fact that social status derived from land. There is a certain prestige and status attached to the fact of possessing and owning land. Thus in the rural areas it is the Jats and Rajputs who have large agricultural holdings and therefore are important caste groups. Land has a high value due to the fact it is a good source of income and therefore leads to a high economic status. Further, there has very often been a well-established relation between the economic and political aspects and so it adds to the dominance of these caste groups.

A similar kind of a situation could be seen in the urban areas where it is the trading and professional groups who have a good economic status and are also advanced in other areas such as education. In fact Sharma (1996:27) has pointed out that in the Punjab social status was based on the evaluation of a caste or occupational group in terms of 'high' or 'low'

which broadly corresponded to control over resources and skills and the economic benefits ensuing from it.

This favoured position of the Rajputs, Jats, Khattris and Aroras has to be understood in terms of the concept of dominant caste enunciated by Srinivas (1987). According to him, a caste is dominant when it preponderates numerically over the other castes, when it also wields economic and political power. However, what is significant to note here is that the concept of dominant caste cannot be applied to a multiplicity of castes. Therefore, when a number of caste groups hold importance in a society they can only be said to be socially relevant groups, which in the case of the Punjab are the Khattris, Aroras, Rajputs and Jats. Therefore, these castes are those which may not be ritually very high but enjoy a high status because of wealth, political power or numerical strength or a combination of these factors. One may speak of these caste groups as being significant due to their important position in certain realms of society. Due to this, one of the striking features of caste system in reality has been the vagueness of the hierarchy.

The Hindus in the undivided Punjab formed a minority being only about thirty-five percent of the total population, but enjoyed an enviable position among the middle classes. In the Punjab majority of the cultivators were Muslims. The Hindu commercial community formed a majority as town-dwellers. Hindu strength was mainly visible in the financial departments of

administration, in commerce and in the priestly and literary occupations (Tinker 1967:5). They mostly belonged to the intermediate castes such as Khatri and Aroras with trade and money lending as their main professions.

The establishment of British colonial regime created opportunities for urban Hindus to establish their ascendancy in education in comparison to Muslims. The Hindus dominated the professions of teaching, law, medicine, engineering and journalism. In trade and banking and agricultural fields too they were at an advantage. A section of Hindus associated with trade and commerce also maintained strong linkage with the rural areas and bridged commercial transactions between rural and urban sectors. The artisans in the Punjab were universally considered socially low. Among them the Sunars, Tarkhans, Lohars, Kumhars and the Julahas were regarded as higher in status as compared to the Chamars and Mochis (Ibbetson 1916:3).

The caste system current among the Hindus of the Punjab divides them broadly into three: agricultural caste groups of Jats and Rajputs found in rural areas; the non-agricultural but socially and politically important caste groups of Khatri and Aroras, the business groups concentrated in cities; and finally the Scheduled Caste groups found both in rural and urban areas. It needs to be pointed out here, that this is only a broad classification. In actuality, one finds the existence and persistence of

members of different caste groups among different occupational categories. Thus, one may note that the aspect of gradation on the basis of ritual criterion is not the one that is followed in actual existence, but social, political and economic criteria are important among the Hindu Punjabis.

Having looked at the caste system among the Hindu Punjabis it is interesting to note the role that Arya Samaj played in the Punjab. The Arya Samaj had an influence on the caste system in the Punjab especially so with regard to the so-called middle caste groups of the caste hierarchy.

### **THE ROLE OF ARYA SAMAJ IN THE PUNJAB**

The Arya Samaj as a socio-religious reform movement had a major impact on the Hindu population of the Punjab province. There were religious reform movements also among other communities such as the Muslims and the Sikhs. The revivalism of Arya Samaj played a role not only in demarcating the religious particularism of Hinduism but also heightened a sense of pride among the Hindus (Tuteja 1997:126-7).

To a large extent the Arya Samaj had its impact and influence on the manner in which the caste system operated among the Hindu Punjabis. Unlike the Brahmo Samaj and other reform movements, the Arya Samaj had a wide recruiting base, ranging from the highest Brahmins to the low castes. Sharma (2000:100) points out that the Arya Samaj contrary to the Sanatan Dharma adopted an open door policy. It succeeded in gaining

membership of the low castes, including the Untouchables. In the beginning the Arya Samaj was purely an urban phenomenon which appealed more to the educated and the high caste. Later, when the Shuddhi movement gained ground many low caste groups were raised to the status of the twice born and brought into its fold (Dua 1999:21). This could have had a serious implication, as over a period of time many high castes detested the organization for its role in the Shuddhi movement.

Even today, most Punjabis are proud of being Sanatanists, in opposition to Arya Samajis and vice-versa. Thus, later it was the aspect of maintaining differentiation between the high and the low castes that played a significant role in the decision to join or not join the Arya Samaj movement. In fact even within the Arya Samaj, its ideology could not mitigate the differences based on caste (Dua 1999:21).

In the beginning the Arya Samaj had its influence in a major way on the urban middle caste groups. The Arya Samaj stood for a reformed Hinduism and downplayed the role of the Brahmins as the sole interpreters of the sacred texts and performers of sacred rituals (Gupta 1996:24). The influence was with respect to the aspect of education and the inculcation of progressive and rational ideas.

It was the Arya Samaj that provided a new and modern ideology to the emerging Punjabi professional classes. Its revival of Vedic rituals in a modern form, without a temple or a priest appealed to a restless,

questioning generation of educated Punjabis (Tandon1961:32-33). Arya Samaj shaped the political attitudes of Hindu Punjabis giving them an interpretation of India's past and providing a vision of and pride in the Hindu nation (Barrier 1967:365).

The Punjab's urban middle class was tantamount to Hindu merchant castes and a Hindu identity could effectively constitute its consciousness separate from other urban economic classes. Of those reported as Aryas in the 1901 census, sixty percent belonged to the major merchant castes, the Khatri and Aroras. The fact that the Arya Samaj had a major influence in the urban areas as compared to the rural areas is also brought out by the fact that in 1901, Jats and Rajputs, the major cultivating castes of the Punjab, composed only five percent of those reported as Aryas and in 1911, they made up only fourteen percent (Jones 1976:76). The success of Arya Samaj in rural areas was with respect to the low caste village menials. This in turn alienated the higher castes from the Arya Samaj movement. Therefore one can say that caste was an integral feature of Indian society in the past and it did play an important role in societal life in the Punjab too.

Arya Samaj appealed more to certain caste groups and had its recruitment from certain sections. However it propagated values and belief system that to a large extent had their impact on the people of the Punjab province as a whole. The areas of education and occupation were greatly influenced by the role of Arya Samaj in the Punjab.



It was the ideology of the Arya Samaj that appealed to a cross section of the Hindu middle classes comprising merchants, moneylenders, small entrepreneurs, professionals and service persons. They availed themselves of the fresh opportunities thrown up by the colonial set-up and soon acquired a dominant position in the Punjab society. In the sensibility of these middle class persons and the mode of existence in which they were rooted, many pre-capitalist features had persisted. This was particularly the case in small urban centers. The aspirations and ideals of such middle caste groups could not get articulated in a fully developed bourgeois form; they had therefore to express themselves through a reconstructed and modified version of their traditional identity. It can be argued that the reconstructed Hindu ideology of the Arya Samaj and the material interests of the middle classes coalesced in the Punjab (Tuteja 1997:127).

Thus, it was the middle caste and class groups whose interests coalesced and it was this section of the population of the Punjab that greatly benefited from the activities of the Arya Samaj. It was again this section of the population that advanced in areas of education, professions, trade and industry as pointed out earlier (see section on caste among Hindu Punjabis).

Thus Arya Samaj was a movement which came about to propagate a return to traditions and Vedas but was opposed to the caste system. It wanted to inculcate Vedic teachings and that is what appealed to the middle caste-class groups.

In a certain sense there can be traced a relationship between the Arya Samaj, the appeal of its traditions to the middle classes of the Punjab and the development in the economic field to the relationship described by Weber (1904) between the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism. Weber highlighted the heightened capitalistic development to the sphere of religious beliefs, ethics and practices. A similar relation could be seen to exist between the traditional values of the Arya Samaj of returning to the Vedas and the pre-capitalistic mode of existence in which the middle classes existed, which got a boost through it and made the middle classes progressive over a period of time.

With the Land Alienation Act of 1900, the British policy of hiring more Muslims into colonial administration and more government control in the field of education, the position of the urban middle class was threatened. However it is significant to note that while the Land Alienation Act, 1900, was passed primarily to prevent urban caste (Khatri and Arora in the main) from investing their capital in rural pursuits, it could not curtail their efforts towards development in industry and high finance (Puri 1985:76). The Arya Samaj carried and matured the consciousness of the urban middle class to a certain point. Then the movement split into one group striving for a greater class consciousness through anti-colonialism and another searching out a more devout religious practice through proselytizing and conversion (Fox 1985:209). But howsoever it shaped up later, it did have an impact on the middle caste-class groups of the Punjab.

## **INFORMANTS' BACKGROUND WITH REGARD TO CASTE**

In order to comprehend the caste dimension among the Hindu Punjabi refugees, here it is necessary to understand the informants background with regard to the factors of education, occupation and their settlement patterns in terms of their residential distribution in the three areas of study. Along with the informant's (GII) education level is presented the informant's father's (GI) and first son's (GIII) education level. Where there were no sons, the education level of the eldest child has been taken into consideration. A similar pattern has been followed in the case of occupation in table IV.2.

From table IV.1 it is clear that the informants from the upper and middle caste groups are well-educated. Fifty-seven percent of the informants of this study are educated upto the level of higher secondary/matric or above. In a comparative analysis of the educational level across the three generations, one finds a considerable degree of increase in the educational level of informants with each successive generation in the three categories of caste groups.

Table IV.2 reveals the occupational background of the informants of each caste group. Here one finds a large number (38%) of informants from the upper and middle caste groups are officers. This is followed by business (20%). The lower castes are largely confined to the category of menial workers with eighty percent of the informants in it.

**Table IV.1 Classification of Persons according to Education Level**

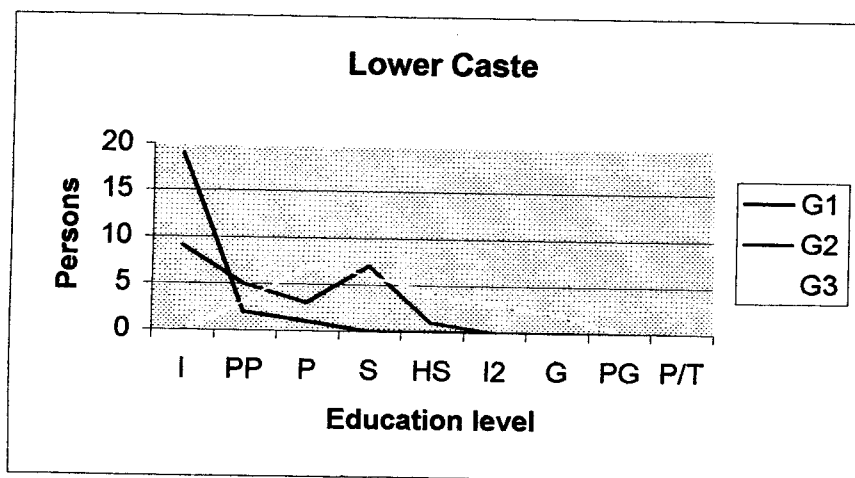
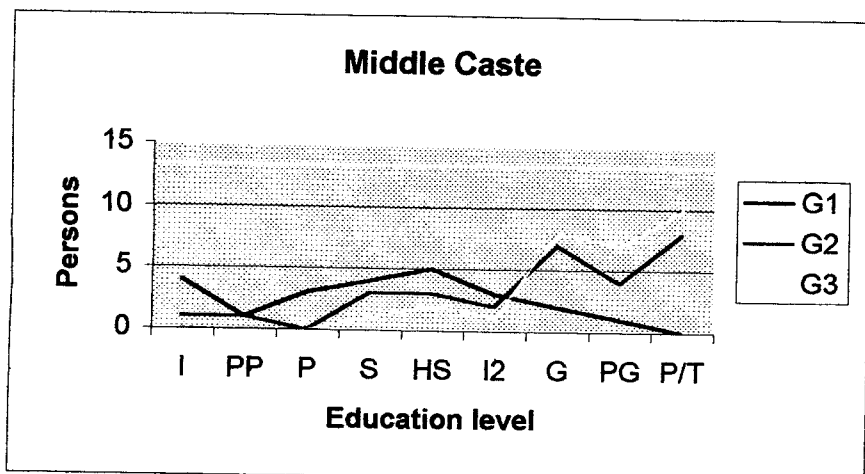
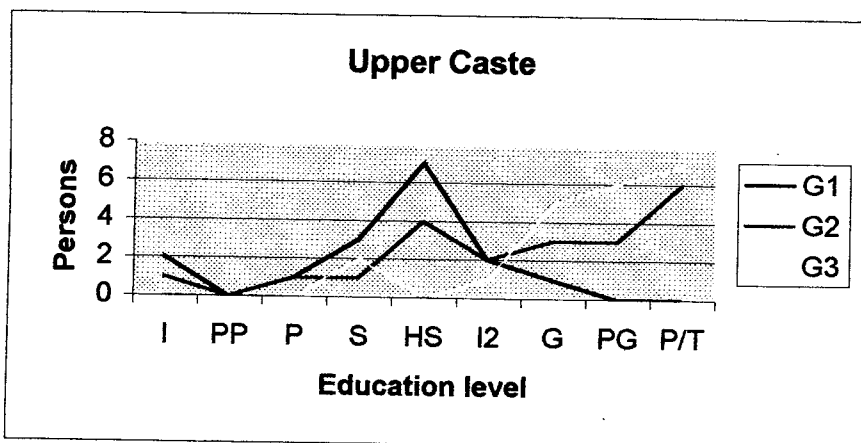
Education Level	Upper Caste			Middle Caste			Lower Caste		
	G-I	G-II	G-III	G-I	G-II	G-III	G-I	G-II	G-III
Professional/Technical		6	7		8	10			
Post Graduate		3	6	1	4	7			
Graduate	1	3	5	2	7	8			2
Intermediate	2	2	1	3	2	1			3
Higher Secondary/Matric	7	4		5	3	2		1	4
Secondary/Middle	3	1	2	4	3	1		7	6
Primary	1	1		3			1	3	7
Pre-primary				1	1		2	5	3
Illiterate	2	1		4	1		19	9	
Don't Know	5			6			3		

G-I Generation 1

G-II Generation 2

G-III Generation 3

**Figure IV.1 Education Level of Persons according to Caste Group**



I - Illiterate  
 PP - Pre-primary  
 P - Primary  
 S - Secondary  
 HS - Higher Secondary  
 I2 - Intermediate  
 G - Graduate  
 PG - Post Graduate  
 P/T - Professional/Technical  
  
 G1 - Generation I  
 G2 - Generation II (Informants)  
 G3 - Generation III

**Table IV.2 Classification of Persons according to Occupation**

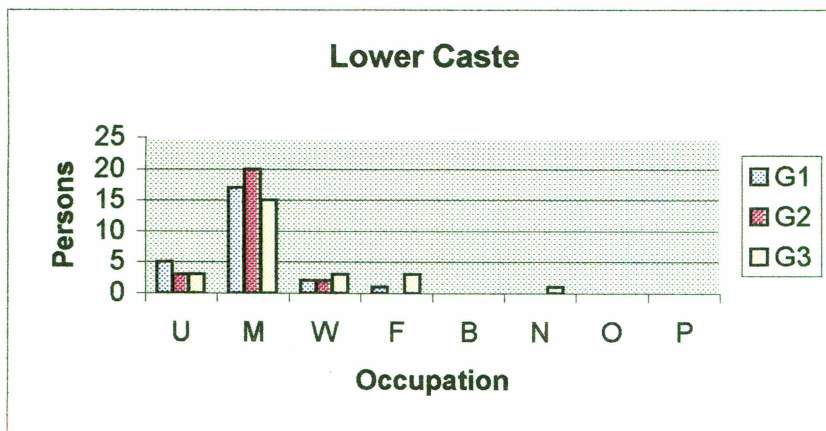
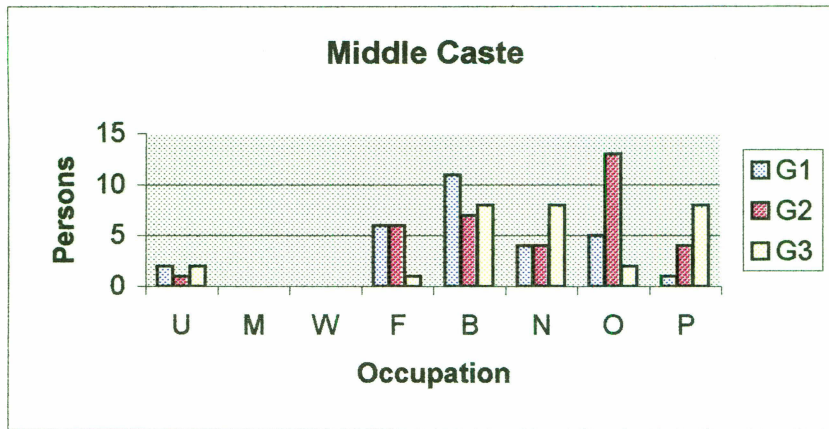
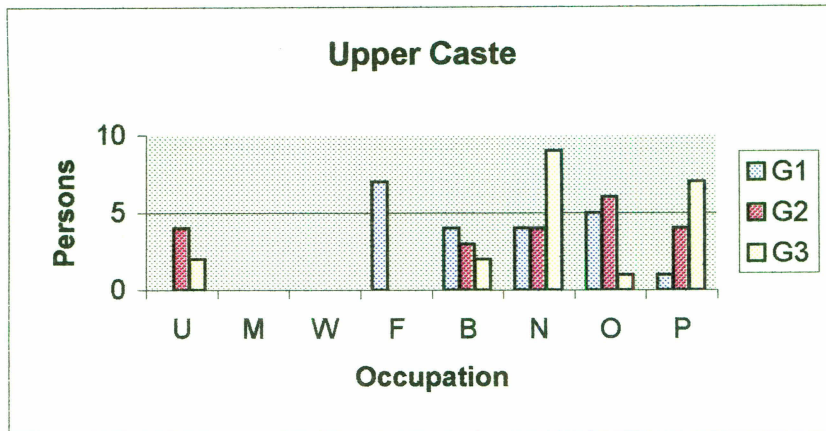
Occupation	Upper Caste			Middle Caste			Lower Caste		
	G-I	G-II	G-III	G-I	G-II	G-III	G-I	G-II	G-III
Professional/Academician	1	4	7	1	4	8	0	0	0
Officer	5	6	1	5	13	2	0	0	0
Non-Officer	4	4	9	4	4	8	0	0	1
Businessman	4	3	2	11	7	8	0	0	0
Farmer/Landlord	7	0	0	6	0	1	1	0	3
Worker	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	3
Menial Worker	0	0	0	0	0	0	17	20	15
Unspecified(including housewives)	0	4	2	2	1	2	5	3	3

G-I Generation 1

G-II Generation 2

G-III Generation 3

**Figure IV.2 Occupation of Persons according to Caste Group**



U - Unspecified  
M - Menial Worker  
W - Worker  
F- Farmer/Landlord  
B - Businessman  
N - Non Officer  
O - Officer  
P - Professional/Academician

G1 - Generation I  
G2 - Generation II (Informants)  
G3 - Generation III

It would be interesting to analyze the residential patterns of people belonging to different caste groups. During the study it was brought out that certain caste groups resided in specific localities. Most upper and middle castes were found in the upper and middle class localities of Greater Kailash and Kalkaji. The lower castes were found to be residing in lower class locality, which was the slum area in Tilak Nagar.

Only one case of a lower caste family residing in an upper class locality was noticed. This is a Scheduled Caste family staying in the vicinity of most upper and middle caste groups. This family does not have a refugee background and in fact the head of the family is the niece of a famous, well known and upper class Scheduled Caste political leader. Moreover, the fact that the members of this family have acquired high education and got into the medical profession which is considered as highly prestigious could have been a factor that helped this family to reside in an upper caste-class locality. This also brings out the fact that the congruence between the dimensions of caste and class is usual.

An important aspect of the resettlement pattern for the refugees that needs to be mentioned here is that the place of residence was not chosen on the basis of caste identity. Mehr Chand Khanna, the Rehabilitation Minister of the time was very careful in settling one set of people together at one place. Thus, for example, people from rural areas in Pakistan were settled in rural areas in India and those from the urban areas were settled



in the urban areas of India. As informant UUFP 15 pointed out, the people from Jhang and Multan areas of Pakistan who were mostly involved in dairy farming were settled in Haryana, while those from Peshawar and Mianwali had a different lifestyle and were settled in Faridabad. Those from Jhelum and Rawalpindi were flourishing people and hence settled in Delhi. This kind of resettlement was therefore a way to keep the culture of the people intact leading to the replication of their communities in the new habitat.

### **ROLE OF CASTE IN THE PROCESS OF DISPLACEMENT AND RESETTLEMENT**

It is important to point out that the factors of caste and class identity were important for their consequences for the refugees in terms of displacement and resettlement. While the class aspect will be looked into in the following chapter, here we attempt to look into the caste aspect. It needs to be mentioned that caste factor has to be looked at from the point of view of the lower castes. This is due to the fact that the lower caste identity of the informants proved to be a disadvantage for them. While the factor of class has to be understood from the point of view of the higher class as their identity was advantageous for those who belonged to it.

The role that caste played in the displacement and resettlement of the refugees has to be understood in terms of the following factors:

1 Deciding factor for movement

2 In the context of measures for rehabilitation

### **Caste as a factor in the process of movement**

It is interesting to note the role that caste played as a factor in the decision to move into India. However, it needs to be pointed out that this choice has to be seen in the light of the manner in which the caste system was practiced in West Punjab before partition.

From the point of view of the lower caste informants, there was widespread practice of the caste system even before partition, especially evident in the practices such as untouchability, separate colonies for the lower castes, poor living conditions, no interdining or intermarriages between the members of the lower and higher/middle castes. As informant LLFU 3 pointed out:

*There has hardly been a change for us. Even in those days (that is before partition) we used to live in a similar kind of situation and now also it is the same for us.*

However, it is interesting to note here that the ritually clean Hindus never treated the Untouchables as 'Hindus' for they were always considered as the outcastes. The Muslims, on the other hand, were trying to lure them to stay back, which would in turn have meant the process of their conversion through embracing Islam.

As informant LLMM 16 said:

*Muslims would tell us to stay back. They told us that for many years Hindus had ill-treated us for the fact that we were Untouchables. They reminded that if we were to go to India this misery would continue for us. They ensured us that in case we decided to stay back in Pakistan, we were going to be treated well.*

Thus for the lower caste Hindus, the decision to move was really one that needed careful analysis. For if they were to move to India, they were to lose even the little material possessions they had and at the same time be ill-treated even at their new place of habitation. On the other hand, if they decided to stay back, it would have been like losing their religious identity in favour of a religious identity that for centuries had been perceived by them as alien.

Even in this situation, where they faced a dilemma, whether to go across to the Indian side of the border or to stay back on the Pakistan side, lower caste informant LLMM 23 pointed out:

*The Muslims could not lure us to stay back for the simple fact that most of us preferred being treated the same way rather than give up our religion in order to become a Muslim.*

Another informant, LLMM 25 noted:

*There were some people who did convert to Islam. They justified this on the ground that in this way they would atleast be ensured a life full of dignity. However, I feel these people were cowards. How can one give up one's religion so easily?*

Thus the change of religion was the last thing that many of those who came to India could even think of. In order to avoid forcible conversion to Islam, the informants pointed out that they decided it was better to move on to India rather than stay back in Pakistan. This was a fact common for both the high and the low caste informants. But for the higher caste the choice for staying back was based on the fact that this way they could ensure that they did not lose out in material terms which was unlike the case of the lower caste informants. As informant LLMW 15 pointed out:

*The Muslims had all along ensured us that good care would be taken of us and we would not be harmed in case we decided to stay back. In fact during one such propoganda programme in our colony I overheard the conversation between two Muslim leaders. They said that they would make us eat beef. Till this time I was in a dilemma whether to move or not, but when I heard this, I immediately decided that I had to move to India immediately.*

Thus, one finds that the caste identity of the lower castes made them vulnerable. On the surface there were promises by Muslim leaders that the lower caste members would be treated well. What is significant is that, most of this was only to ensure that these people convert to Islam. However, in the light of the situation of the Muslims who went as refugees from India to Pakistan at the time of partition, only to be referred to as 'Mohajirs', serious doubts can be raised about the treatment that these lower caste Hindus would have been meted out to, had they stayed back and embraced Islam.

What comes out clearly from all this is that the Muslims tried to cash in on the caste identity of the lower caste Hindus. Thus in a situation where the factor of religion was used to carve out boundaries, the further divisiveness in the form of caste within religious identity had also come to play an important role.

### **Caste in the context of measures for rehabilitation**

It is now important to understand whether caste played any role in the process of resettlement by analyzing its relation to the rehabilitation programme of the government.

Eighty-four percent of the informants thought that caste identity was not relevant in the process of their resettlement. It was mainly friends, relatives and acquaintances who came forward to help for whom caste identity was not the topmost element in extending help. As informant MUFO 25 wondered:

*Who is bothered about caste when one does not even know where the next meal is coming from?*

However, what is interesting to note here is that when the refugees were asked to identify the caste identity of the friends who helped them (at a personal level) once they were in India, it is found that these friends mainly belonged to the same category of caste groups as of those helped.

While the informants insist that they got help from all those to whom they went seeking for help, it is important to note that, they went only to those whom they knew, which was mainly people from a similar kind of caste group as theirs. As informant MMMB 8 reasoned:

*After all I could not have asked a stranger to help me. I asked some of my relatives who were already in Delhi or were in a better situation than me to help. This naturally meant that they were from a similar caste group as mine.*

What emerges from this is that while at a personal level the informants were helped by members of their own caste group, this was not done consciously. Thus even when help was being extended or being sought it was never with an awareness of caste identity on either side.

Finally, if one tries to analyze the measures undertaken by the government to rehabilitate refugees from different caste groups a mention needs to be made of the Harijan Rehabilitation Board (HRB), which was set up to ensure and facilitate the rehabilitation of the Harijan section of the refugee population. However when the informants from this section were asked about HRB and the help they received from it, they expressed their ignorance of the fact that such an organization had been set up. This therefore raises an important point that the section of the population for whom such an organization had been set up were themselves unaware of it. Here it must be mentioned that there was no such organization set up for the resettlement of the higher caste members.

Though most refugees are aware of the caste system and viewed it as important in certain contexts, they in general point out that caste factor was not that important a fact in terms of rehabilitation programmes. They point out that the government supported and helped all those who were in any kind of need. However, the role that caste played in terms of movement from Pakistan to India can be gauged from the above discussion.

### **INFORMANTS' PERCEPTION OF THE CASTE SYSTEM**

The perception people have of society and its various aspects is influenced by their place in the social structure. Understandably, there were varied responses when informants were asked whether they believed caste to be an important aspect of life.

There are two divergent views as regards the extent to which caste system was practiced in West Punjab prior to partition. According to one view, generally held by higher caste informants, caste system was not practiced in a rigid manner in those days. Informant MUFO 22 justified this by saying:

*In those days there was an organization called the 'Jat Pat Todho Mandal' that regularly published a monthly magazine with photographs of newly married couples where the partners were from different caste groups.*

Another informant MUMO 6 pointed out in much the same vein that::

*Caste was not practiced in Pakistan nor was it practiced in India in those days, that is in 1940s. It is a creation of the government after the 1960s for securing vote of the people. Thus, it is a creation for political reasons, for caste serves as a vote bank.*

The other view was expressed by the lower caste informants who vouched that caste system was practiced even before partition. Informant LLFU 12 pointed out:

*Even in those days untouchability was practiced. The higher caste people never wanted to see our face. They would turn away their heads on seeing us. We were separated from the mainstream and made to stay aloof in separate colonies.*

Saberwal (1973:244-245) notes that although the caste hierarchy in the Punjab has long been more flexible than that of farther South, the basic framework requiring the lower castes to live and eat apart from the higher castes, persisted essentially unchanged in the 1940s.

Turning one's attention to the present situation, one again finds there are two different views on the issue of the practice of the caste system. Sixty-two percent of the informants denied the role of caste as being an important one in everyday life and existence. This non-belief they expressed was on account of the fact that they are an educated section of the population and so responded that for them caste does not hold much importance. However, it was found that in certain aspects of life they regarded the caste system as being a predominant factor.



The above mentioned view was expressed by many of those from among the higher caste-class group. Those from the lower caste agreed on the view that caste was still very much an important aspect and their belonging to a low caste group was a fact they had to come to terms with almost everyday. An informant LLMM 18 mentioned:

*There were two-three occasions when I went to the barber shop. The barber refused to provide any of his services to me on account of the fact that I am from a lower caste group.*

In the same vein another informant LLMM 2 from the same locality pointed out that:

*In Delhi untouchability is practiced to a much lesser degree but when we move away to small towns and villages, untouchability can be seen to exist in a blatant form.*

He narrated the following incident:

*When we went to attend a marriage function to a small village on the outskirts of Delhi, the marriage party stopped to have tea at a shop before proceeding to the bride's house. The shopkeeper inquired about our caste identity to which a member of the group replied that we were Khattris. The shopkeeper served us tea and snacks. However, in the meantime, someone from the bride's family came looking for us, when the shopkeeper realized our caste identity. He ordered that all utensils used by 'us' to be broken immediately as they had been polluted.*

This clearly points to the fact that even though untouchability is legally abolished and its practice in any form is punishable, the society has not got rid of it. An important point to be noted is that while there is no

open admission by the upper caste informants about practicing untouchability, there is still a restriction in free interactions with those below the pollution line. Even low caste members are discreet in this context. Informant UMMB 4 articulated the position thus:

*Restriction is not one-sided. If you observe carefully the behaviour of the sweeper who comes to your house for work, you will find that they too are very careful to avoid physical contact with members of the higher caste. Thus, the attitude of restriction and avoidance is not one sided but is prevalent on both sides.*

While the upper caste members did deny the practice of caste system, repeated discussions on caste revealed that in certain aspects caste still occupies a prominent place and is relevant in certain contexts. The first reaction of most informants is that they do not believe in caste. This is probably due to the fact that lower caste has negative connotations and caste system is viewed as one that perpetuates inequality by attributing certain characteristics to lower castes. It is a system that is considered undemocratic and therefore caste system is not held in high regard. Understandably, there is no open admission of the belief in the caste system.

This point raises an important question. If those from the upper caste claim that they do not practice untouchability and those from the lower caste experience it, where does the answer to this contradiction lie? In fact, it is important to note here that most upper caste informants

pointed out that there is not much scope for them to interact with members of the lower caste. But where the situation demands they do so. At the same time, they argue that even if the lower caste person is of a similar socio-economic status, the thought that he/she is from a lower caste comes to one's mind.

One finds that this psychological feeling of discomfort based on membership in caste groups is a hindrance to the development of a harmonious and healthy relationship in intercaste interactions.

In terms of obtaining loans, employment, admission in educational institutions etc., many upper caste members (42%) agreed that in these contexts their caste identity has been a fact that has worked to their disadvantage. However in their opinion, it is the lower castes that are greatly patronized by the government with respect to these facilities. Many a times the upper caste informants said that the government policy was really not justified, for if the lower castes want equality it should be applied in all contexts. An informant, MUMP 11, asked:

*Where do our children stand a chance of getting admission to government run educational institutions or jobs. A large number of seats are reserved for candidates from special categories.*

Another informant, MMMO 5, pointed out:

*The policy of reservation has been continuing for several years now. If this is going to continue, what will be the future of higher caste people in government jobs? If you really want the upliftment of the lower*

*castes, one needs to provide them equality at the basic level and then put them in a situation where they openly compete with general category candidates.*

On the other hand, the lower caste informants questioned the fact of them being favored. They said that had they been favored they would not have remained as helpless as they are now. The fact that most lower caste members have remained within their traditional hereditary occupation and are constrained to taking up menial work indicates that only certain privileged individuals/families from amongst them were the ones who took advantage of these policies. For many of them there was hardly any awareness with regard to the measures for their upliftment. Many, of course today, lay great importance on education and there is universal agreement among members of all caste groups that what would really lead to their betterment is good education which would lead to a good job which in turn would result in their economic betterment.

This clearly points out that a high status in the economic ladder is what most informants keenly desire. Thus these days greater emphasis is being laid on the achievement-oriented aspect of class rather than the ascription oriented aspect of caste. This points to the fact that the change in status through the process of sanskritization is not what is emphasized. Most lower caste groups are not trying to bring about a change in their status through sanskritization processes such as giving up meat-eating,

consumption of liquor or imitation of higher castes in terms of dress patterns, food habits or rituals.

In the case of most lower caste groups, on an average, neither has there been an intra-generational mobility nor an inter-generational mobility (Saberwal1976:39) in terms of the occupation that they pursue. However, in terms of educational qualifications there has been inter-generational mobility as their children are educated upto a certain level (see table IV.1).

In fact, it is important to point out here that in an urban area like Delhi, dress patterns and food habits of lower and higher castes are similar. At any rate it is difficult to know the caste background of persons in urban settlements. Therefore, real change for most of these caste groups is seen through economic, educational and occupational betterment. Thus social status, especially so in a place like Delhi is gradually shifting from the caste to the class dimension.

An interesting feature pointed out by the informants is the stereotypical image construction of the varna groups. People have a notion that food habits and value systems of each varna group differ. However this is true only for a certain section as westernization of food, dress habits and lifestyles have been taking place for quite a while. Now, with globalization people are open to explore more options, whether in terms of dress patterns or food habits.

## **DO CASTE FEATURES PERSIST AMONG HINDU PUNJABI REFUGEES IN DELHI?**

Earlier we provided a brief description of how informants perceive of the caste system. It is now necessary to understand how far the features of the caste system can be found among the Hindu Punjabi refugees in Delhi.

Ghurye (1961) has outlined six features of the caste system as under:

- 1 Segmental Division of Society
- 2 Hierarchy
- 3 Restrictions on Dining together and Social Intercourse
- 4 Civil and Religious Disabilities and Privileges of Different sections
- 5 Specific Occupations
- 6 Fixed Rules

In trying to understand the extent to which the features of the caste system can be found among the Hindu Punjabi refugees in Delhi, it is necessary to examine the relationship that caste system shares with hereditary occupation. In fact, in the caste system certain occupations are prescribed for certain caste groups. According to tradition, the Brahmins were supposed to take up priestly and literary functions, the Kshatriyas that of rulers and warriors, the Vaishyas were to be merchants and traders and the Shudras, artisans that included weavers, carpenters, washermen etc. The Untouchables were those who did menial work and were not accounted for in the chaturvarna scheme. While discussing the

occupational aspect of the caste system it is important to refer to the jajmani system, which is a hereditary, personal relationship, based on division of labour whereby each kamin family is expected to render certain standard services to families of jajman castes.

However, in a city like Delhi, the strict adherence to traditional caste based occupational structure is no longer possible. In fact, it is important to point out that this is especially so for the higher varna groups. The Brahmin, Kshatriya and Vaishya varna category no longer follow the occupations prescribed for them by the caste system. In fact there are instances of cross-varna traditional occupational shift. For example, a member of the Vaishya community is a future teller, a work associated with the priestly function traditionally assigned to the Brahmins.

Informant UUMO 14 reported:

*I always had an interest in astrology and used to practice it as a hobby. However, once I decided to do social work, I turned this hobby into a means to earn money. Through this work, whatever money I collect I use it for social work activities. Nowadays, people pursue occupations that help them to earn money.*

Similarly, there are many instances of members of the Brahmin group having taken to business and trading activities. However we could cite only a few instances of high caste members who took to the occupation of the so-called Shudra or Untouchable group (mentioned below).

Here, it is interesting to note that when the refugees came from Pakistan to India, they took up various kind of jobs for livelihood and survival. In this context an informant MUMO 5 from middle caste admitted:

*I along with my cousins would go about collecting dead animal skins that we would sell to make a living.*

He also cited the case of his relatives who too belonged to the caste group of Khatri as himself, who took to this work of collecting animal skins and making leather products. He said that:

*In the beginning there was some opposition to this occupation from the extended family members. However today the same family has really prospered in their business and are not seen with despise for having taken up such an occupation.*

This case demonstrates that the sole objective was survival and this work was taken up much against the initial opposition from many, but it has paid off and today the high economic position of the family who took to this work overrides the nature of their occupation.

As mentioned earlier jajmani system was an important feature of the caste system. However, it is a feature that works well in a small geographical area of a village. In a huge city like Delhi there is no system by which an entire caste group shares a sense of social obligation. The relations are individualistic and not based on the social relationship of a *Jajman* (patron) and *Kamin* (client).



It has been pointed out that the caste system is a hierarchical one with each caste group having a certain specific place in the overall hierarchical system. The caste groups are ranked in accordance with the principle of purity and pollution and the occupation that it pursues.

With regard to this feature of the caste system, one finds that in actuality in most aspects the three varna groups, that of Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas, are regarded as more or less equals. Members of each of these varna group think of themselves as superior to the other two, while there is a universal agreement about the inferior position of Shudras. However, the important fact is that there are various jati groups among each varna group, wherein once again each jati competes with the other for a higher and superior position. Moreover, the ritual hierarchy of caste is different from the hierarchy based on the economic and political factors, which then accords a different status to different groups based on these criteria.

As far as interdining and social intercourse are concerned one finds that there is again flexibility with regard to eating with members of the other, higher caste groups. However informants (66%) from upper caste-class groups maintain that there should be some kind of compatibility with regard to certain factors such as social status in terms of economic or occupational criteria. As informant MUMP 23 asked:

*How can I feel comfortable with people who have a different behaviour and cannot speak to me in a sophisticated manner. You can interact with people who are similar to you in most respects.*

Most members of the upper three varna groups had no objection in interdining amongst themselves. However they did express their reservation in eating with the Shudras and Untouchables. Some of them tried to justify this by pointing out that the reason was hygienic because most of the members of these groups are into occupations that are not clean from the point of view of hygiene. Informant UUFU 7 expressed this in the following words:

*There is some truth in calling the lower caste people dirty. After all, they deal with dirt and live in unhygienic conditions, so one has to be careful. I give tea to my sweeper everyday but in a separate cup to ensure that my family members do not catch any disease.*

There were still others who openly professed the idea that if for some formal/official reasons they had to interdine with members of these caste groups they would do so. They however also pointed out that the caste identity would linger at the back of their mind. But for reasons of courtesy they would not let this feeling of discomfort come to the surface.

One context where the varna and jati identities has a prominent place is that of marriage. Most informants pointed out that, ideally there should be gotra exogamy and caste endogamy. Endogamy and exogamy are

aspects that prescribe the preferred set of individuals whom one may marry. Preference for fixing marriage alliances within one's own caste group is important for most of the informants. Where the marriages have been fixed by individuals themselves and are outside the caste group, an attitude of resignation is adopted and many older members pointed out that they were in a helpless position in these cases. Informant MMFN 10 explained:

*Marriages should take place within our 'own' set of people because then it is easier for the boy and the girl to adjust. But if they decide, there is no point in objecting. Nowadays children do not listen. We can only tell them, if they do not listen, what can we do?*

Only a single case was cited where the daughter of informant UUFU 21 has married a Muslim. In the beginning the informant was rather reluctant to reveal this, but continuous probing made her come out with this fact, even against her husband's wishes.

She revealed that:

*Personally I am not very happy that my daughter has married a Muslim but my son-in-law is a good human being and allows my daughter to practice all the customs and traditions of the Hindus. Moreover, the fact that my daughter's first marriage was a failure and this was only a second marriage for her, made me reconcile to the fact that she had married a Muslim. However in general, from the collectivity and community point of view, I do not have much fondness for Muslims.*

A survey of the matrimonial column of a national daily over a four-week period reveals that the advertisements are classified and placed in terms of the jati groups. In eighty-two percent of the advertisements, the advertisers have clearly specified their caste identity. This, therefore, points out that in majority of the cases the emphasis on caste persists and caste is an important fact for fixing marriage alliances.

However today, there are many factors that have become important in marriage alliance such as the economic status, education, mutual consent of individuals, compatibility of interests, tastes, likes and dislikes etc. Informant UUFP 15 admitted:

*I was not too keen when my daughter wanted to marry a person from another caste group, but then sometimes you are helpless.*

The fact is that a metropolitan and urban area is a melting pot where cultures are becoming integrated to a certain extent for the fact of modernization and westernization. A cosmopolitan attitude is crystallizing and is being increasingly given importance by the successive generations. This is especially true of the upper three varna groups among whom intermarriages are taking place, rather than the lower caste Shudras. Thus where other factors are compatible, fixing of marriage alliances between different varna groups of Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas have lesser reservation as compared to fixing an alliance with members of the Shudra varna or the category of Untouchables.

An interesting feature of caste is that it does not become the basis of fixing marriage alliances between the members of the same caste group drawn from different geographical regions (Sharma 2001:18). For example, the common identity of a Brahmin is usually not used to fix marriage alliances between members of the Brahmin community from North and South India. Informant UMMN 1 concurred:

*We are Brahmins. My son has also married a girl from a Brahmin family, but they are Kashmiri Pandits. So even if caste is the same there are cultural differences. I told my son that it would be difficult for the girl to adjust. But he insisted and they got married. Of course they are happy now.*

One may mention that in an urban, metropolitan area like Delhi, the strict adherence to principles of separation of the members of the different caste groups is no longer possible, for it is difficult to know the caste identity of people from superficial interactions. For example, it is difficult to know the caste identity of the person sitting next to oneself in a public transport. This is so because there are no manifest differences maintained by members of different caste groups in terms of dress, haircut etc.

It needs to be pointed out that a majority of the communities in Delhi are aware of (91.84%) and recognize (74.83%) varna system. A substantial proportion (42.86%) claim to be Kshatriyas against the national average of 15.90 percent. Likewise, 19.73 percent communities claim to be Brahmins as against 7.81 percent. The communities claiming to be Shudra are

smaller, 17.69 percent in Delhi as against the all India average of 29.08 percent (Singh 1996: xxiii).

Thus one finds that caste is not an all-encompassing system, rather there are various other factors that have become important. Sharma (1997:78) has pointed out that new norms of status-evaluation signifying change in the traditional 'composite status' system have acquired legitimacy and acceptance. Class, occupation, education, income, power, mobilization capacity and networks are accepted today as the effective channels of upward social mobility.

The following chapter will look at the aspects of class among Hindu Punjabi refugees in Delhi. The disappearance of primordial identities such as that of caste is not going to take place until and unless the mindset of the people is changed. Change has to come from within and not from without. Thus caste will continue to be an important basis of identity till such a change comes about.

**CHAPTER V**

**CLASS AS A DIMENSION OF STRATIFICATION  
AMONG HINDU PUNJABI REFUGEES IN DELHI**

In the previous chapter we tried to examine the significance of caste among the Punjabi refugees in Delhi. It has been observed that in caste system inequalities are derived from the divinely ordained structuring of society. However bearing in mind the objectives of this research, it is imperative to understand the issues concerning Hindu Punjabi refugees along another crucial stratificatory dimension also, viz., that of class.

Previously, research on social stratification in India had focussed on caste as social scientists were largely engaged with the study of caste and other related issues such as jati and varna system. Understandably, caste became a predominant topic of research interest at the neglect of other evident forms of social stratification, especially that of class. However, it was soon realized that in order to comprehend the Indian social structure in totality, it is important that we adopt a holistic approach for its study by incorporating other manifest forms of social inequality especially class. Class is a major organizing concept in the exploration of contemporary stratification system.

When we talk of class in the Indian context what really distinguishes our case from the others is a certain overlap between categories of caste and class as forms of social inequality. However, here we make an attempt to focus exclusively on aspects of class that influenced the social life of Hindu Punjabi refugees in Delhi, which involves their relocation, resettlement and rehabilitation.



The aspect that assumes utmost importance is how the class structure crystallized among the refugees after partition. Further, we explore how the class factor influenced the social life of these refugees once they were relocated in Delhi. Thus this chapter tries to look at how class influenced an entire gamut of issues concerning the social life of the people ranging from their movement across the border, relocation in Delhi and further their resettlement and rehabilitation processes thereafter. Here, it is essential to highlight whether or not class structure that existed prior to partition among the people replicated within the new settings.

To begin with, it is essential to understand how informants perceive of social classes. It is necessary to explore the manner in which informants see the existence of social classes and the fact as to how there is a divergence of views among informants according to their class position.

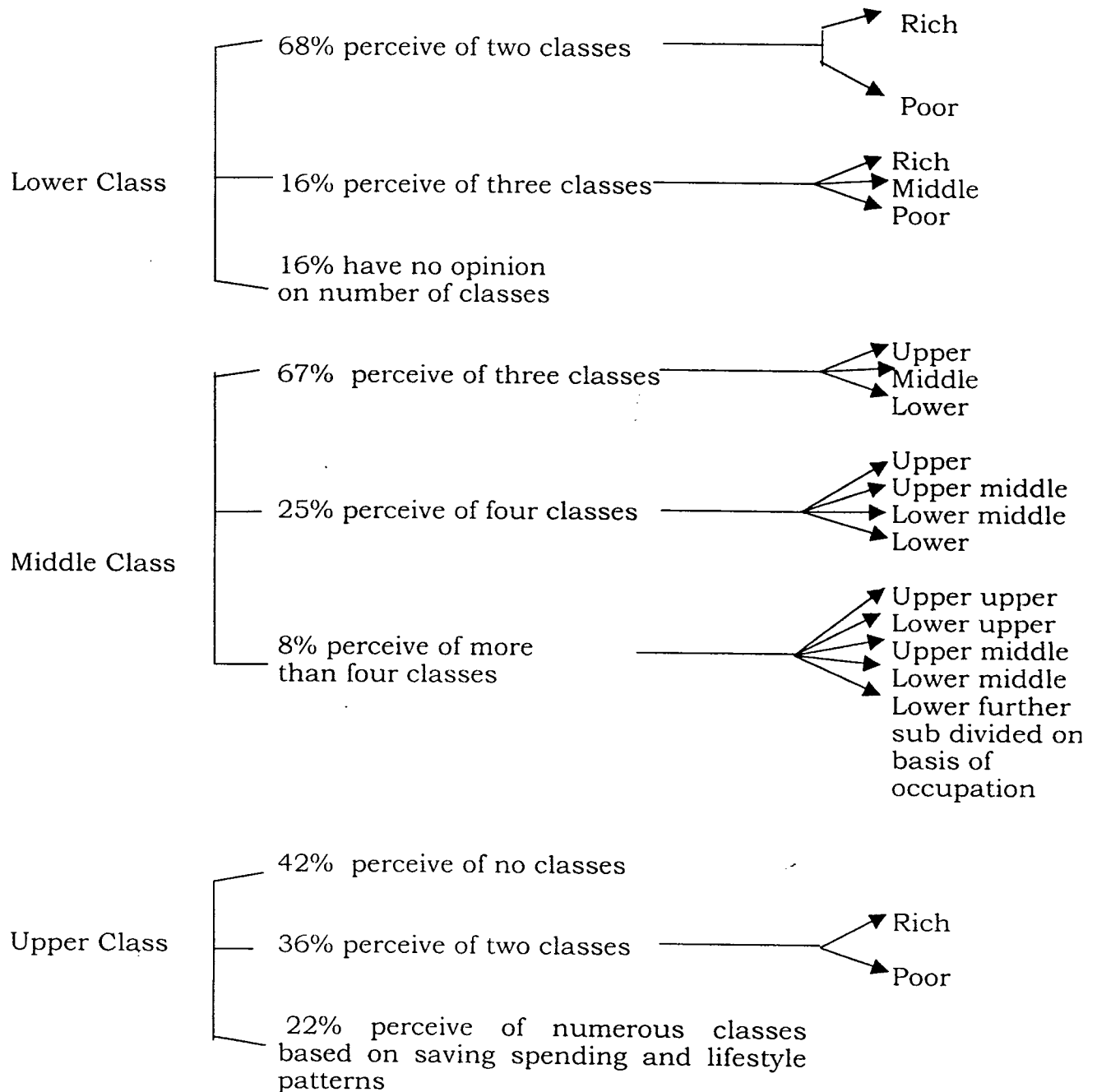
### **INFORMANTS' PERCEPTION OF CLASS STRUCTURE**

Informants in general classified class structure as comprising of three different layers – upper, middle and lower class. The general trend was that the informants (56%) placed themselves in the middle class category. In fact some even used the term ‘upper middle class’ to describe their class position in the two localities classified as an affluent and middle class one in this work. Those in the slum locality invariably placed themselves in the lower class category. However, informants did recognize the sub-division of these class categories further.

Informants from different class groups perceive of the social class structure in different ways (see table V.1). Among the lower class informants, sixty-eight percent perceive of only two social classes, that is, one of the rich and the other of the poor; while sixteen percent perceive of three social classes – poor, middle and rich. About sixty-seven percent of the middle class informants perceive of a three-class structure comprising of the upper, middle and the lower class. Twenty-five percent of the informants from the middle class category perceive of a four-class structure whereby, they further segregate the middle class group into two: the upper middle class and the lower middle class. Eight percent of the informants pointed out that there were more than four classes and that the lower class could be further segregated into many other categories based on other factors such as occupational status etc.

The upper class informants perceive of the class structure in a varied way than the informants from the other two class groups. Forty-two percent of the informants from the upper class category pointed out that there are no social classes and that all are equal. Thus they try to present an idealistic picture of society.

**Table V.I- INFORMANTS' PERCEPTION OF THE NUMBER OF SOCIAL CLASSES**



Their view is based on what a society should be like rather than what it is now. In the words of informant UUFU 10:

*Classes are not there. We are all human beings and therefore the same, so where are the classes? We all just need food and water to survive. All the rest are materialistic things and classes are not important. The most important thing is that individuals are satisfied and happy and satisfaction has to ultimately come from within. I do not believe in classes.*

Again about thirty-six percent of those from the upper class point out that there are only two social classes, one of the rich and the other of the poor. Thus, for the upper class informants two perspectives seem dominant, one, whereby they perceive that there are no social classes and the other is the one whereby they perceive only of two social classes. The former perspective is not shared by the informants from the other two social classes. The upper class informants' only view 'themselves and the rest' hence for most of them class structure comprises of only two social classes.

Thus the informants described the class structure in varied ways. When questioned on the aspect of how they came to formulate their opinion on the number of classes that exist in society, they responded that for this they relied on the fact of existence or non-existence of certain traits/characteristics among members of different social classes. At times, the informants perceived of social classes in terms of a single trait, at other

times, they perceived social classes in terms of a complex of traits. Broadly stated, four criteria/traits have been pointed out by the informants in perceiving social classes. These are that of income and property, occupation, education and lifestyle. Finally, it is also important to point out that informants relate social class to certain psychological factors that make up the attitudes of individuals and families which is related to all the above mentioned four factors.

One finds that the factors mentioned by the informants as important for understanding the class dimension are interrelated and each is a determinant of the other. The first dimension that of income and property, is a crucial aspect to ascertain the class position of individuals and families. In fact, for Marx an important basis for determining the class position of individuals was the ownership or non-ownership of property. According to him, when a class-in-itself develops into a class-for-itself, class-consciousness crystallizes and the emergence of class occurs. In contrast, Weber defines classes in relation to the market position, life-chances and lifestyles of individuals. Therefore, not only is property important but income which in turn help in owning property are important factors in understanding the class status of individuals.

Further, the interrelationship of these aspects is brought out by the fact that the level of income immediately places individuals and families into certain categories which determine other factors such as occupation

they are pursuing, their educational level, their pattern of lifestyle and their mindset and thought processes. Thus in order to study the class dimension among the Hindu Punjabi refugees it is required that one adopts a holistic approach rather than exclusively focusing on any one aspect of class. It is therefore necessary to focus on the background of the informants with respect to these four aspects to bring out the class structure among the Hindu Punjabi refugees in Delhi.

### **SITUATING THE INFORMANTS IN CLASS STRUCTURE**

In this section a brief attempt is made to understand the informants of this study along the four aspects pointed out as important by them to understand the class dimension. Thus, here an account of the informants along these four aspects is presented.

The first aspect that of income and property is a crucial one to ascertain the class position of individuals. However, as the informants' point out and the researcher observed there is no foolproof method to determine the income of individuals and groups, so this is generally gauged by the standard of living that they maintain. It is observed that the informants maintained discreteness in revealing the details about their income and property which made it necessary to understand these, based on other factors. While the saving and spending patterns and tastes in consuming certain items are important to ascertain the class position, this is a subjective dimension and as a sole criterion is ineffective in understanding the class factor. Hence what is required, is a combination of

this factor along with other factors such as occupation, education and lifestyle.

Occupation along with education plays a crucial role in analyzing the class standing among the Hindu Punjabi refugees. Occupation is recognized as an element of social class. In all societies occupations are differently rewarded and social prestige attached accordingly. Income is obviously an important determinant of material possessions, style of life and place of living in societies based on cash nexus.

Since income is for nearly everyone the main source of wealth, occupation is a good indicator of the economic situation of a person and a family. Furthermore, pursuing an occupation takes up considerable amount of people's time and typically places them in a situation where they interact with particular groups of people in particular ways. Thus, the experience of similar kind of work moulds people's worldview, attitudes and opinions, to a certain extent, in a similar fashion.

Table V.2 presents the classification of the informants according to their education level. Along with the informant's (GII) education level is presented the informant's father's (GI) and first son's (GIII) education Level. Where there were no sons the education level of the eldest working child has been taken into consideration. A similar pattern has been followed in the case of occupation in table V.3 This was necessary in order to understand the inter-generational occupational change.

**Table V.2 Classification of Persons according to Education Level**

Education Level	Upper Class			Middle Class			Lower Class		
	G-I	G-II	G-III	G-I	G-II	G-III	G-I	G-II	G-III
Professional/Technical		8	12		6	5			
Post Graduate	1	5	6		2	7			
Graduate	1	5	5	2	5	8			2
Intermediate	3	3	2	2	1				3
Higher Secondary/Matric	6	4		6	3	2		1	4
Secondary/Middle	5			2	4	3		7	6
Primary	1			3	1		1	3	7
Pre-primary				1	1		2	5	3
Illiterate	3			3	2		19	9	
Don't Know	5			6			3		

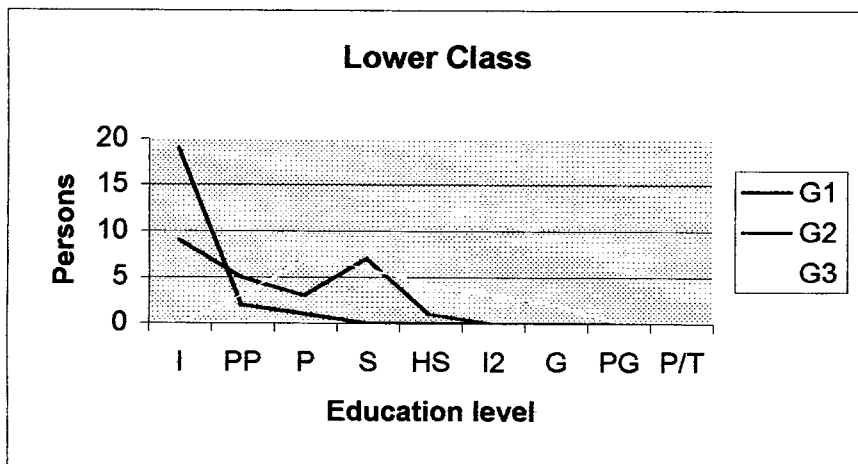
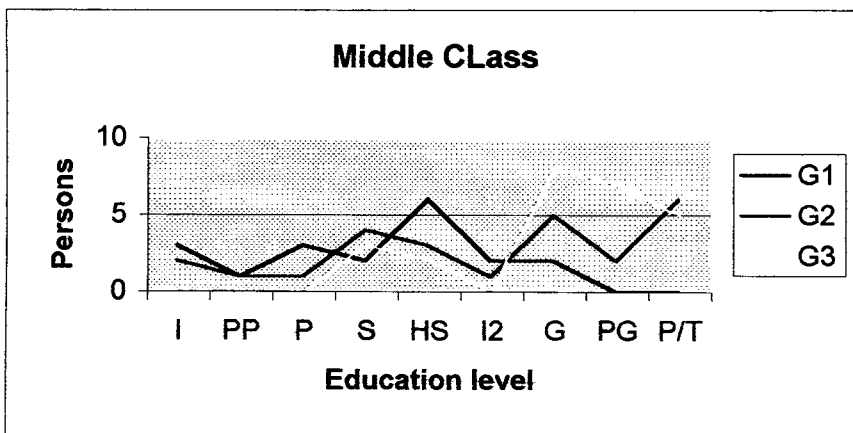
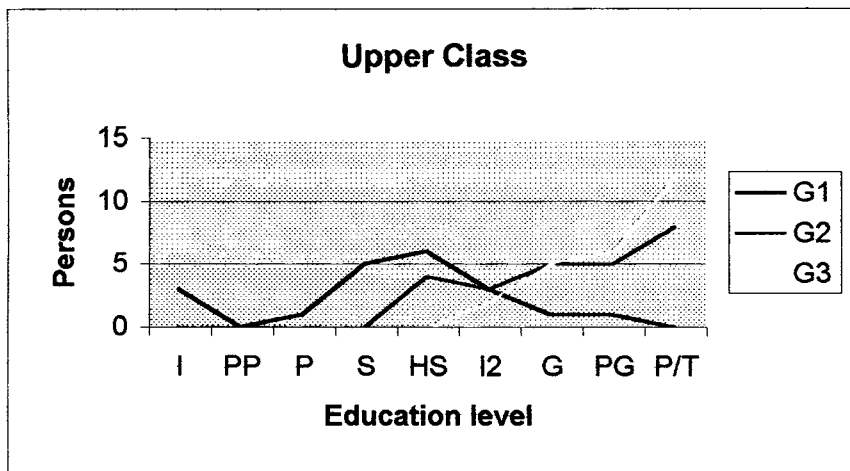
G-I Generation 1

G-II Generation 2

G-III Generation 3



**Figure V.1 Education Level of Persons according to Class Group**



I - Illiterate  
 PP - Pre-primary  
 P - Primary  
 S - Secondary  
 HS - Higher Secondary  
 I2 - Intermediate  
 G - Graduate  
 PG - Post Graduate  
 P/T - Professional/Technical  
  
 G1 - Generation I  
 G2 - Generation II (Informants)  
 G3 - Generation III

**Table V.3 Classification of Persons according to Occupation**

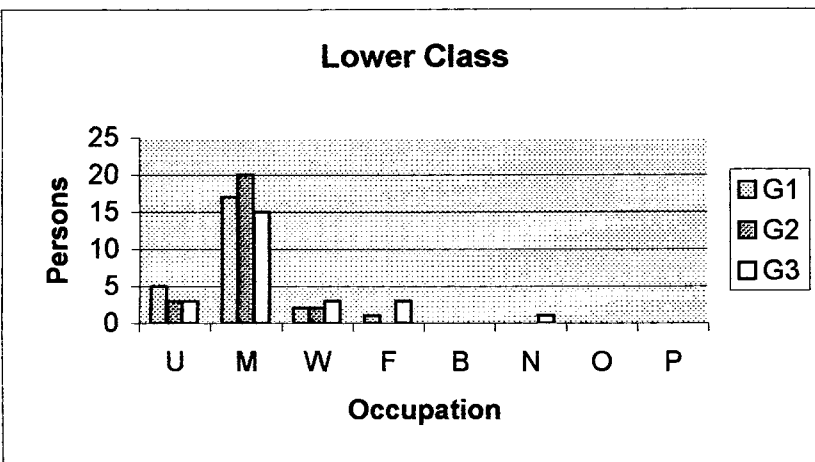
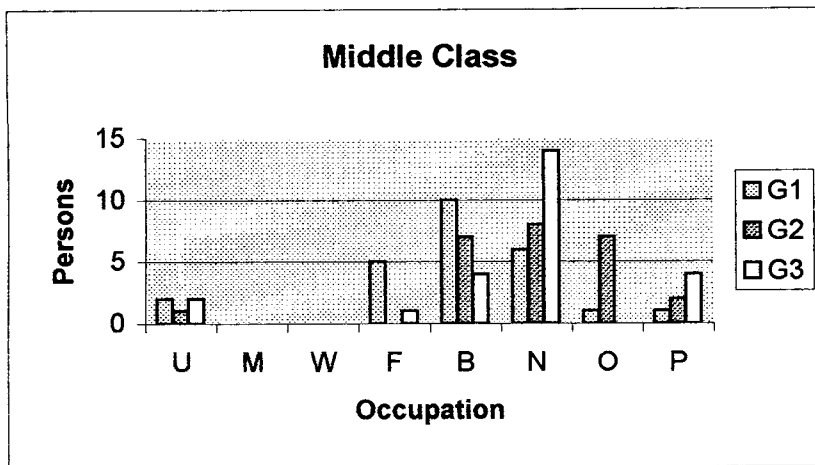
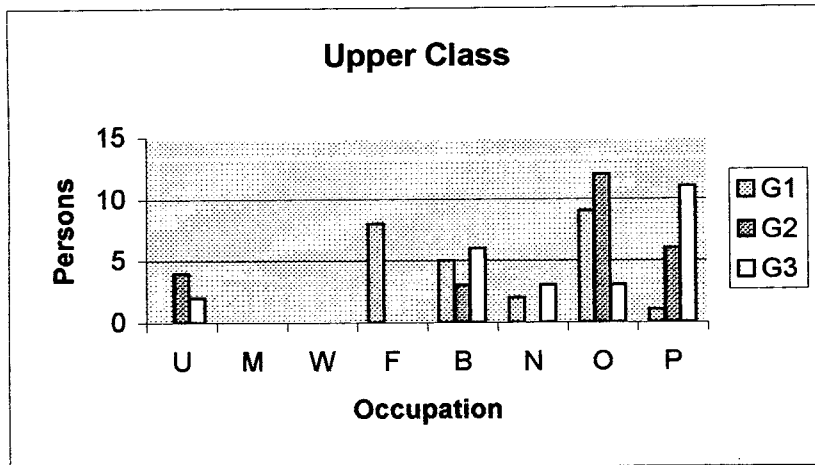
Occupation	Upper Class			Middle Class			Lower Class		
	G-I	G-II	G-III	G-I	G-II	G-III	G-I	G-II	G-III
Professional/Academician	1	6	11	1	2	4			
Officer	9	12	3	1	7				
Non-Officer	2		3	6	8	14			1
Businessman	5	3	6	10	7	4			
Farmer/Landlord	8			5		1	1		3
Worker							2	2	3
Menial Worker							17	20	15
Unspecified(including housewives)		4	2	2	1	2	5	3	3

G-I Generation 1

G-II Generation 2

G-III Generation 3

**Figure V.2 Occupation of Persons according to Class Group**



U - Unspecified  
M - Menial Worker  
W - Worker  
F- Farmer/Landlord  
B - Businessman  
N - Non Officer  
O - Officer  
P - Professional/Academician

G1 - Generation I  
G2 - Generation II (Informants)  
G3 - Generation III

From table V.3 it is clear that in the informants generation from the upper class there are a large percentage (48%) officers. They are also highly educated as seen from table V.2 In fact, over the generations among the upper class there has been a considerable shift (44%) to professional/academic occupations. The middle class pursue business activities of a medium scale and in their case the change from the informants' generation to the following one has been from officers to businessmen. A majority (80%) of the lower class informants are into cleaning and sweeping jobs. For the lower class individuals there has not been a change in their own status due to the congruence of lower caste and class categories.

However they do point out the case of a resident of their area belonging to the same low caste group as theirs, whose daughter became an engineer. With higher education and improved economic standing, this family could move out to stay in a better residential colony. Thus, one finds that one's educational achievements and qualifications largely determine the occupational status, as there is a correlation between occupation and education.

From table V.2 it is clear that the upper class informants have higher levels of education, while the middle class informants are scattered

throughout the different educational ladder and the lower class informants have the lowest educational level.

Finally, one may point out that the above three factors, that of income and property, occupation and education places one in a situation which helps/hinders individuals to maintain a certain lifestyle. In fact today this is considered as the real indicator of the class position of individuals. The issue of lifestyle immediately focuses one's attention on the consumption processes. The tastes in consumption are a result of one's upbringing that is determined by the kind of social interactions that the individuals have. Further, the social interactions are themselves largely a product of the education one has and occupations the individuals pursue.

### **OVERVIEW OF THE IMPORTANCE OF CLASS IN THE RESETTLEMENT PROCESS OF THE REFUGEES**

In a situation where life was threatened due to the persisting violence caused by partition, the first and foremost thought in the minds of people across all dimensions of stratification was how to reach a place where their safety and life were ensured. In such life threatening situations, basis of differentiation and stratification such as caste, class and power may recede into the background at the manifest level. However, one cannot deny the role that they may play even in these situations, even if in an implicit manner. Hence the need to understand the role and importance of class in the process of resettlement.

The role that class played in the resettlement of the refugees has to be understood in three different yet interrelated contexts:

1. Movement of refugees from Pakistan to India.
2. As an advantage/disadvantage for refugees to re-establish.
3. In the context of measures for rehabilitation.

In trying to understand the role of class dimension in the above contexts, it is important to point out that these will draw one's attention to the fact of how the class position of refugees at their point of departure has an influencing effect in the process and the pace of resettlement.

### **Class in the context of movement of refugees**

Many of the refugees who belonged to the upper sections in terms of class factor were in a greatly advantaged position. This was due to the fact that the privileged class position of these refugees immediately placed them in a situation where they were also well informed. Hence, it is mainly from the higher classes that people managed to come to India prior to partition as they were constantly keeping in touch with the latest political developments for they had the ability to anticipate and foresee future developments.

Associated with urban living patterns (for a majority of the refugees settled in Delhi came from urban areas) and their class position, the factors such as a good educational background which was helpful for them to be

well-informed, their contacts at high levels, that is in other words the 'social capital' especially in terms of social network that they possessed, better organizational skills etc. which were an outcome of the fact of belonging to certain classes made them plan and execute the plans regarding movement and settlement in a better manner.

In this context an interesting fact brought out during field research was that those who had the vision and resources, were trying to ensure much in advance that if circumstances were such that they had to move to India, they had something to fall back upon. As informant MMMB 22 pointed out:

*My brother had come to Delhi along with our mother in advance to set up some kind of business activity here. He had also bought a house here in Delhi much in advance and we were to follow later. In the meantime, partition took place and we had to rush to Delhi. But we were very lucky for my brother had already bought a house here at a cheaper rate, as with huge influx of refugees into Delhi, the prices of property too shot up manifold later.*

Thus due to their far sightedness as well as resources, this family like some others sent members of their family to India much in advance to set up some business here. For some families this was the most important aspect in terms of resettlement. It indicates that once settlement in terms of economic factor is ensured, many other related issues and aspects would automatically fall in line, for economic settlement immediately brings about a sense of security. For such families the risk level with regard to

movement was limited as they did see a ray of hope in terms of easier resettlement.

The sense of security was also enhanced by the knowledge of the fact that they had well-to-do relatives and friends in India who were ready to extend their co-operation. As informant UUFU 21 confessed that:

*To leave so much behind was not easy, we had a big house there, plenty to eat, drink and wear. Our heart was crying when we were moving. However, there was only one satisfaction that our life was saved and we knew that once we reach Delhi, we would be taken care of because our relatives here were very well-to-do. In fact before partition when they would come to visit us we would take good care of them and similarly when we were in need they took good care of us.*

However, the above words of the informant reveal why her relatives were ready to help her. She conveys through her words that this was a reciprocal gesture on their part – ‘*once we took good care of them, now it was their turn*’. But she failed to realize that coming as a ‘visitor’ for a few days is different from coming as a ‘settler’

She agreed that good care was taken of her. However, if one tries to analyze this aspect one finds that the family when in Pakistan was able to take care of their relatives only because of it belonging to a rich strata. Once this family was in India their previous privileged position in the class structure was facilitating to ensure them a good treatment and care when they were in need.



The economic position of informants was not only helpful in ensuring that they could re-establish themselves economically, but had also ensured that they were safely moved from Pakistan to India. It was because of contacts at the higher level that some of the people from the higher classes were escorted by the military to reach India safely. Alternatively, they had the means to afford airfare to come to India quickly and safely. Informant MMBB 17 pointed out that:

*I was a strong Congressman in those days and had a good contact with the politically active people. While it was even difficult to secure an air ticket due to heavy rush of people wanting to come to India, my friends who were politically influential ensured that this was done and I reached India safely.*

In the case of this refugee, it was both economic resource as well as political power that was helpful in ensuring that he reached India safely. Therefore, one finds that at times it is the congruence of different types of resources that is essential and important, especially so in the case of refugee movements.

Thus here one finds that the legacy of belonging to a rich family in Pakistan was advantageous to many in the new context. However, in actuality the material condition of these families was not the same once they were in India. Yet such families have achieved a lot and their class position has substantially improved from what it was when they first arrived in India. In contrast, many of the low caste individuals and families

have remained in the low class categories after their arrival here. Finally, there are also instances of individuals and families who have experienced only moderate downward mobility from a situation of high class to middle class. Thus one finds that there are diverse experiences and not a single type of experience in the process of resettlement.

It is also important to analyze as to why certain individuals achieved tremendous class mobility, while many others could not. Therefore it is necessary to understand the advantage of the class factor in facilitating certain refugees to re-establish themselves in the new context.

### **Class as an advantage in the context of re-establishment**

The legacy of their class position prior to partition was carried by the refugees in the new context. The sense of belonging to a high class prior to partition and belonging to a group with high status could have made these individuals and families desire for the same high status once they were in India.

These refugees were enterprising people who worked hard to achieve success and made situations and opportunities turn in their favor. Thus success was partly on account of the psychological make-up of these refugee individuals and families. In fact, psychological make-up of individuals, attitudes and patterns of behaviour are related to one's socialization patterns and are governed by social conditions. In this

context, therefore even class as a system of stratification had its impact on this aspect of individuals and families. These ingrained patterns of behavior were carried to the new contexts and were used in making their resettlement process easier.

This is an interesting fact for it immediately turns our attention towards Bourdieu's focus on the ways various social groups employ their particular endowments of 'capital' – economic, cultural and social – to achieve their positions within 'social space'.

By 'capital' Bourdieu means the varied resources that have 'market value' in the struggle for privilege. 'Economic capital' refers to conventional market resources like wealth. 'Social capital' to social networks that provide institutional access, and 'cultural capital' primarily to the knowledge, tastes and personal style that can be used to establish socially recognized distinction. Thus money and manners can be used to create privilege and these mannerisms are a product of family upbringing and educational experiences (Kingston 2000:124-25).

For most of the refugees, 'economic capital' in terms of wealth and money was no longer there. However skills, education, social network, political connections and techniques of social impression management of certain classes of refugees were carried on in the new contexts and these played a vital role in the process of their resettlement in the new areas.

In some cases there may have been congruence in terms of these three different types of capital – economic, cultural and social. There could be a ‘composition’ between these aspects so that those who have one type of capital also possess another type of capital. There can also be situations where ‘decomposition’ has taken place. In rapid large-scale migration such as partition, such a ‘composition’ in terms of different aspects gave way to the aspect of decomposition (Wesolowski 1979:115) so that those with high levels of education found themselves with low level of income and certain other inverse relations between different aspects. In such a situation, individuals and families strive for ‘composition’, which could only be achieved gradually over a long period of time.

In most of the cases there was deterioration in terms of ‘economic capital’. Attempts were made through all means to restore it. For this the first need was to earn enough for survival and livelihood and hence the refugees took up all kinds of jobs. It was more a struggle for existence and therefore a principle of ‘survival of the fittest’. In fact at the time of partition the Muslim out-migration caused an economic gap which non-Muslim refugees could hardly fill. The occupational skills of non-Muslim refugees were vastly different from those of Delhi Muslims. The local Muslims were mostly artisans, petty traders, menial workers and labourers. Hindu Punjabi refugees were non-cultivating landlords, moneylenders, doctors, lawyers, teachers, traders and small shopkeepers (Datta 2000:276). Therefore, a change in the occupational pattern of Delhi occurred. In this

context the refugees took up jobs which were also new to them (Datta 2000:276).

In the light of the above discussion it is seen that these refugees were enterprising, hard-working and risk taking, ready to adapt themselves to changed situations. They also possessed an optimistic attitude and exhibited a great sense of self-esteem. This enabled them to achieve success through their efforts and traits.

This being so it is important to examine how the refugees took to government measures for rehabilitation and what role class played in the resettlement process?

### **Class in the context of measures for rehabilitation**

One of the greatest tasks in the wake of partition, for the governments on both sides of the border was to ensure proper rehabilitation for the millions of people who were rendered homeless and helpless as a result of the partition.

Rehabilitation involved measures for the proper settlement of the refugees in the new areas of habitation so that gradually over a period of time they could be at par and in a similar condition as the local population. This was necessary to ensure that they like the others had an equal opportunity and similarity of conditions in order to compete in a healthy manner to ensure their prosperity.

Therefore, the Government of India started a number of programmes for rehabilitation of the refugees, a mention of which has been made in chapter III. It is important to analyze here the extent to which these measures helped the refugees to re-establish themselves in their new habitat. Further, it is necessary to explore who benefited and in what context did they benefit from these programmes.

In fact a variation is found across different class groups with regard to how they took to the government programmes. About seventy-eight percent of the refugees were ignorant of most of the rehabilitation programmes of the government. However one government programme most upper and middle class informants extensively benefited from was the measure of 'compensation'.

The government extended its compensation programme extensively to the owners of immovable property. Under this system all those who had immovable property left in Pakistan, could file applications for compensation. However, full compensation could not be paid because there was a vast disparity between the property left behind by the non-Muslims in the Pakistan Punjab and what could be provided for in Delhi. Thus, a system of 'graded cuts' was introduced by which smaller claimants were ensured larger compensation (Rai 1986:148) and vice-versa. This therefore was an important measure for it ensured that those who had property in Pakistan were compensated for the same at a lower rate. This was also a

measure to ensure that there was not a wide disparity between the property given as compensation to refugees irrespective of the size of their property in Pakistan Punjab. Through this measure the government tried to ensure that refugees could resettle easily in the new areas. As pointed out earlier, there were a number of colonies in Delhi (see table III.1) where land was allotted to the refugees at concessional rates under the scheme of compensation.

However what is important to note here is the fact that there was allotment of certain specific area of land in each locality. For example, in Kalkaji there were allotments of 150 sq. yds plot and also of 200 sq. yds plot. In Tilak Nagar, the slum area where fieldwork was conducted there were house plots of 80 sq. yds each. While in Greater Kailash where no direct allotment was made, people bought land on their own, there are plots of different areas ranging from 200 to 500 and sq. yds and more.

The area of the plot of land on which one lives, is a mark of social status and is generally invoked by people to ascertain class position. In fact, in the context of our study it is an important determinant of one's social status. The above-mentioned factor, along with the locality in which one resides immediately places individuals in certain class categories. This can be related to Marx's emphasis on ownership or non-ownership of property.

Therefore, one can say that the government measure of compensation for rehabilitating refugees was to ensure that the settlement of the refugees could be done in a manner that did not disturb the old social order. The allotment of property was based on the size of property held by the informants in Pakistan. However as full compensation could not be paid and because of the fact that the government devised a compensation plan which tried to ensure a more equitable distribution to all, the total replication of the old class structure could not be ensured. However, this to a certain extent worked towards the replication of the old class structure as only those who had property in Pakistan could claim for property in India. But this does point to the interrelationship between the previous class position of refugees and the compensation measures adopted by the government.

The upper class informants did not accept most other government measures, especially so, the facilities to stay in camps, rations and other facilities in the form of clothing and shelter etc. Informant UUMO 12 noted:

*We did not want to stay in camps. People of very different classes stayed there. In fact we could not even think of staying in camps.*

This informant from an upper class background found it below his dignity to live in a refugee camp. This kind of feeling was seen to be prevalent among a large number of upper class informants. The comment by informant UUFB 20 confirms this:



*We did not want any help from anyone. We wanted to be self-reliant. After all we could not have lost our honor. We had lived all along due to our own efforts, so there was no reason now to seek help from someone. We did not want to be like beggars.*

On the other hand, lower class informants pointed out that the government should have tried to rehabilitate them in a better way by providing measures for them to come up in life. In fact a common complaint on their part has been that the government has not tried to help them in anyway. At the same time they were ignorant of most government measures for their upliftment. This also points out the lack of initiative on their part, tendency of total dependence and an attitude of expectation from the government for improving their lot, which was unlike the case of most middle and upper class informants. This is probably also a reason for their present class position.

Finally, a mention may also be made of the success that refugees had in the economic sphere in a short period of time, which also altered the relationship that they shared with the local residents. This was mainly on account of the fact that the refugees had superior initiative and enterprise in the sphere of business activities to which they took to extensively for their rehabilitation. The situation of the refugees did not permit them to hold back the business activity till they could earn a huge profit on them. Thus even though they could only earn a marginal profit they were ready to engage in business. This was unlike the case of the local residents. This

therefore resulted over a period of time in large quantity of quick transactions in business by the refugees, which facilitated them to earn greater profits and gradually improve their economic standing.

When viewed in terms of the above discussion, one finds that the privileged class position in the previous context was an extremely beneficial fact for the refugees as it helped them in their movement and in re-establishing themselves in the new area. Thus it was mainly in terms of the above described three factors that Punjabi refugees' settlement was made easier.

While comparing the class factor when in Pakistan and now in India, about ninety-six percent of the informants pointed out that there is a change in terms of the mindset of people with regard to the class factor. Privileges in terms of access to latest goods and lifestyles, membership of important social clubs and associations, education, occupation, residential areas etc. have gained significance now to view the status of individuals and families.

That is, once in India the replication of a similar kind of class structure could not take place as new ways of conceptualizing class have developed. This was also due to the fact that many were confined to certain traditional occupations while in Pakistan. But once in the changed context the refugees took up new occupations, they attempted to explore fresh options. Furthermore, refugees were greatly attracted to education. Thus

today it is important to emphasize that it is not an improvement or deterioration in terms of earlier lifestyle, rather what we find is a changed lifestyle.

### **CLASS AS A GOVERNING FORCE IN THE SOCIAL LIFE OF THE HINDU PUNJABI REFUGEES IN DELHI**

In the previous section we tried to explore the issue of how class as a dimension of stratification played an important role in the resettlement process of the Hindu Punjabi refugees. It tried to unfold the fact that the class aspect was carried on in the new area of settlement and did play a vital role. It is now necessary to examine how far the class identity of the refugees is important in the present day context and plays a crucial role in governing the social life of the Hindu Punjabi refugees.

Success in general terms is often spoken of with respect to the class factor, therefore the class position is often viewed as the most important basis to ascertain the success of individuals and families.

On the surface of things there is rarely an open admission by the informants that class identity is important in social life. Informants from the upper and middle class groups responded that their class identity is not a hindrance to their pattern of social interaction and that they can freely interact with people from different class groups other than their own, based on shared interests. Therefore in their opinion what is more

important is the fact that they share common interests which makes interaction of people from different class groups possible.

However in the same vein they point out that a person belonging to too high or too low a class position with respect to their own, would not share the same interests as theirs and would provide a feeling of discomfort because of different manners and patterns of interaction. This clearly indicates that though they do not profess an open admission of the fact that they are conscious of the class identity of people with whom they interact, subjective factors that characterize a particular class play an important role in social interaction. Hence the importance of class in social life.

The consciousness in terms of class identity though not openly professed by the informants, is evident in terms of factors such as selection of the place of residence, the individuals who form one's social circle, the continuous upgrading of lifestyle patterns to fit latest trends etc.

It is important to note here the aspect of marriage alliances where class is openly seen to be a dominant factor. This aspect has to be analyzed in terms of a comparison with respect to two factors. First, the aspect of caste and second, the aspect of class. As pointed out in chapter IV though caste is still a dominant factor for fixing marriage alliances, certain new dimensions have emerged in the interrelationship between caste and class identity with respect to fixing up of marriage alliances. It has to be

admitted that as far as the upper three varna groups are concerned, there is relaxed attitude as intermarriages between the members of these groups is becoming more and more prevalent. This is not the case where the Shudra or Untouchable groups are involved.

On the other hand, class is a more rigid dimension of stratification in terms of fixing marriage alliances. The matching of status in terms of the economic dimension is almost always the most predominant factor. Therefore where caste has sometimes receded into the background, class is always put on the forefront in the context of marriage alliance. As informant MUMP 3 reasoned:

*We should try to fix marriages of our children into families that have a similar class status as ours to ensure that our children remain happy, for otherwise their interests and tastes would not match.*

Another informant UUMO 19 put forward his views on this issue in the following words:

*We have to keep both caste and class aspects in mind when fixing matrimonial alliances because both are important determinants of social status.*

This points out the fact that where caste and class congruence can be achieved it would represent an ideal situation. However, in a globalizing world and an urban milieu, economic dimension is fast gaining importance.

Here it is important to mention that while comparing the class factor when in Pakistan and now in India about seventy-two percent of the

informants have maintained that there is a change in terms of the mindset of people with regard to the class factor. Lifestyle in terms of access to latest goods, membership of social clubs and associations, education, occupation, residential areas etc. have now gained significance to view the status of individuals and families in comparison to the more formally ascriptive dimensions such as the caste identity.

Thus one can say that the economic factor plays a dominant role in the aspect of social relationships. Informants pointed out that right in the initial stages of their settlement in India, there were situations where the economic position of people led to a change in social and interpersonal relationships. Here the experiences of the informants were of a varied nature. For some, the hardships for survival made them individualistic and put them into a spirit of competitiveness with little time for interpersonal assistance. As informant MMFU 9 pointed out:

*There was no question of helping others in those times. We had nothing ourselves, so where could we have helped others from?*

Another informant MMMN 20 narrated his experience in the following words:

*We came to Delhi where my maternal uncle and his family were staying. There were also a number of their other relatives staying with them. Though in the beginning they were very helpful, over a period of time we got the impression that we were being perceived by them as a burden, so we decided to shift out. But from then on, our relationship*

*could never be the same again. Therefore a relationship that had been nurtured with love for so many years, changed overnight.*

In fact the relationships did not get affected only due to the fact of unhelpfulness, but people also had experiences whereby the bitterness came because of purely monetary factor and the unequal division of property. Informant LLMM 13 described the situation thus:

*Relationships did change. My own brother, who was much elder to me and therefore more like a fatherly figure did not give me my share of the property we got as compensation against our ancestral property left in Pakistan. I never fought with him over this issue but feel that this was unfair on his part.*

In a similar experience informant MMMO 14 pointed out that:

*My mother was coming to India along with my uncle (father's brother) at the time of partition. My uncle told my mother that in order to enter India and ensure their safety they had to pay some money. Thus he took all the money and jewellery that my mother was carrying with her and assured her that after dividing all expenses equally, she would be returned her possessions. However, once in India this issue was conveniently forgotten. Only God knows whether he actually gave something away or kept the entire money and jewellery with himself.*

Thus, one finds that people had bitter experiences to narrate about how class or economic dimension can change kin relationships. In this connection it would be interesting to narrate the experience of another informant whose own brother could not stomach his success and therefore

discouraged him from leading a better lifestyle. Informant MUMB 16 recalled his experience thus:

*Initially my own brother used to discourage me to settle in an urban area like Delhi, while he himself settled in Delhi and got property which is worth lakhs of rupees today and has an improved class position.*

On the other hand, one also found instances of closeness in relationships as a result of the displacement of people due to partition, when people came forward to help others by providing them food, shelter and comfort in forms such as psychological or moral support. This help therefore fostered closeness in relationships. However, gradually with economic prosperity it is being seen that relationships within family are undergoing a change. As old family businesses got disrupted, people moved into new areas and took up diverse occupations, which no longer makes it necessary to stay in a joint family setting.

In fact it is necessary to note here that the diverse occupational skills (which is related to the economic dimension) that the individuals have acquired also have their impact on the manner in which people think and perceive of life. This is especially brought out when informants speak of the professionals and businessmen. Following are the views of five different informants:

As informant MUMP 2 noted that:



*Businessmen spend differently and live differently. There is no comparison. For most businessmen education is not important. Their children know from the beginning that they have to inherit the family business, so for them struggle to stand on their feet is not there, which is unlike the case of a professional's son.*

Informant MMFP 11 is of the view that:

*The women from business families are mostly confined to the household. There is no culture among them to work outside the house. Moreover, the educational level is also low among them. Girls and boys among business families get married at an early age. All this determines the kind of life and attitudes towards life that they have.*

Informant MMB 12 pointed out that:

*Education is not important. Can't you see so many educated people without jobs? The important thing is that one should be smart, know the ways of the world and we businessmen are sharp at that. For living you need money and we know how to make it. In this work we deal with all kinds of people, so we learn a lot.*

Informant UUF 20 asked the researcher:

*Let me ask you, if you get your degree will you get a job immediately? No, you will have to really struggle. So even after being so highly educated you will have to struggle to earn well. Education is a waste if you are unable to earn and are still economically dependent on others.*

Informant UMMB 24 is of the view:

*I could not study as I never had any interest in it. But now I am making my children study hard. I want them to become big officers rather than a shopkeeper like me. There is no fun in doing this work.*

Thus the kind of occupation one is pursuing to a large extent determines the kind of mindset and attitude one has. It is an indicator and a resultant of the style and standard of living that people maintain and the things to which they attach importance.

One finds that informants have different perceptions of different occupations. In fact the informants grade occupations differently on the basis of material benefits and social prestige. Table V.4 presents the informants' grading of occupations, firstly according to material benefit and secondly, to the criteria of social prestige.

Today many informants feel that they have entered a new era with a way of life, which is thoroughly different from that they experienced prior to partition or during their days of initial entry into Delhi. In fact, for them the experience is not just an economic but also cultural and more specifically moral one. Thus many have embraced the new consumption practices and lifestyle that are made possible because of an improved economic situation.

This greater emphasis on consumerist culture by refugees is often viewed by the local residents of Delhi as an attempt by the Punjabis to establish their superiority by 'showing off' their material success through indulging in uninhibited conspicuous consumption.

**Table V.4 Informants' Grading of Occupations according to Material  
Benefit and Social Prestige**

<b>Grading according to material benefit</b>		<b>Grading according to social prestige</b>	
<i>Rank</i>		<i>Rank</i>	
1	Business Men	1	Professionals/Technicians/Ac- -ademicsians
2	Professionals/Technicians/ Academicsians	2	Officer level workers
3	Officer level workers	3	Business Man
4	Middle level workers	4	Middle level workers
5	Workers		

Thus the consumption of goods has served not so much to satisfy true needs or to provide what Veblen chooses to call the 'fullness of life', as to maintain social prestige-status (Kellner 1989:148). This further suggests that consumer culture is gaining considerable importance among the families of Hindu Punjabi refugees. The informants often conceive this aspect of their saving-spending pattern as a matter of enjoying life and a means to be happy.

The change in attitudes to lifestyle has also given a boost to education. But for the informants, education is not just a tool for access to urban white-collar market and a prestige booster, but is also associated with lifestyle and social identity. That is, education can cause changes in mentality and established forms of sociability.

In conclusion, one finds that class is very much a governing force in the social life of the Hindu Punjabi refugees in Delhi, for it plays a significant role in shaping social relationships, attitudes and perceptions of individuals in society. This is a result of the fact that status has largely come to be understood in terms of the class position of individuals.

So far we have analyzed certain crucial aspects with regard to the role class played in the movement, resettlement and rehabilitation of the refugees. We further examined the role of class in the social life of the Hindu Punjabi refugees in Delhi. It is now essential to focus on whether class provides scope for all to improve their position within this system.

That is, to examine whether class is an egalitarian system that provides opportunities to all for mobility.

### **IS CLASS AN EGALITARIAN SYSTEM?**

In order to understand whether class is an egalitarian system, it is necessary to analyze the aspect of rigidity and fluidity of the class system (Driver and Driver 1987:26). An egalitarian system is characterized by the fact that there is equal opportunity for all to move up and possibility to come down in the social ladder.

When the informants were asked about the class system, an important aspect of the inquiry was to understand the extent to which they believed class to be an achievement oriented basis of stratification. The responses varied, ranging from viewing class as an egalitarian system providing equality of opportunity to all, to it being a flexible system accommodating most people and finally an inflexible system, disadvantageous to some. The egalitarian view of the class system was expressed by informant MUFO 25, thus:

*India is a democratic country. There are opportunities for all. Government does not stop anyone. The mindset of the people is also changing as there is an increasing degree of importance attached to education. We are moving towards a globalized era where there are a variety of job opportunities for individuals. With the opening up of education and job opportunities the possibility of change in the class system is there, making the system a fluid one.*

Similarly Informant MMFN 18 is of the opinion that:

*Government has reservation policies in both educational institutions as well as the job sphere. Therefore the son of a cultivator may be an engineer or vice-versa. So there are ample opportunities and chances available for individuals to improve their class position. In fact, today higher caste people are at a disadvantage because in all government jobs there is a huge reservation so there is hardly any scope for their children to enter government services.*

Informant UUMO 4 expressed his opinion differently:

*Earlier there was an intertwining of caste and class so that caste identity largely determined the class position of individuals. Today in an industrialized and globalized world, the scenario is changing and there is greater emphasis on class identity rather than caste or other ascriptive identities and one can find instances where some have everything and there are others who have nothing.*

On the other hand the informants also viewed the class system as being a highly flexible one where there are opportunities for drastic movement from one end of the continuum to the other. UUFU 7 is of the view that:

*You should know how to earn money. There is a knack to do that. You have to work hard, have ideas, then anyone can earn money. Look at us, we were not rich, we were middle class people but had the desire to work. You have to work hard to achieve things. Of course, God has been kind enough because if God does not help then all hardwork can also go waste. But if God wants, everything is possible.*

In the opinion of some other informants also, class stratification provides an example of a flexible system as it is an achievement-oriented device of stratifying individuals and families.

Finally informants articulated another view in the following ways.

Informant LLMW 15 pointed out that:

*Class cannot be changed. We are poor people, do not know the ways of the rich, so how can I become rich? We are doing the work of sweeper, we cannot do anything else and only know how to do this work. This is all a matter of karma. We cannot change it. God has made us like this and so we have to stay like this. This is God's creation but it is strange as we cannot understand his plans. In fact I often question him as to why he has made us poor? Since I cannot do anything about it, I try to convince myself to remain satisfied with what I have.*

Informant LLMM 19 doubts his chances for mobility given his caste background and expresses his views in the following words:

*Will anyone give me a good job being a Scheduled Caste? I will have to remain confined to doing menial work like sweeping because no one will let me enter their house to do other work such as cleaning the utensils etc. Therefore this is a useless question to ask.*

Similarly MMFO 6 pointed out that:

*Poor people are becoming poorer, rich are becoming richer. What is emerging is a more polarized system. But it is the middle class that is the worst struck because it is neither rich enough to improve nor poor enough to lower its standard of living. Therefore in a situation*

*where prices are rising, income is constant, it is the middle class that is in a bad situation.*

These informants view the system as being an inflexible one portraying great rigidity with regard to the chances for mobility in the class system. There is also a sense of resignation with regard to their class position. The lower class informants commonly express this view. It must be pointed out that in general, the middle and upper class informants do not share the same opinion.

Thus one finds that informants have varied perceptions of the extent to which class is a rigid or fluid system. It was revealed through our fieldwork that there is a wide spectrum across which people perceive of the class structure. It varied from people viewing it as an egalitarian system to a flexible system and finally to viewing it as a rigid system. Thus informants had a wide range of views on this issue, depending upon the combination of factors such as their present class position, perception of their chances for mobility, their own experiences and also of those around them. All these factors contribute to their perceiving class in terms of a fluidity-rigidity continuum.

Finally, it is important to point out that in reality class has been a rigid system for some and at the same time been a flexible system for some others. It did provide ample opportunities for a number of people to move up as well as down in the social ladder. Therefore, as the earlier class



position was significant in the new context, class could not have provided an equal opportunity for all. However, the new situation did offer scope for some people to move up irrespective of their class origin. But the situation turned into a complicated one because there was an overlap between lower caste and lower class. This is mainly so because there is an interrelationship between the different dimensions of stratification.

### **FUTURE OF CLASS AS A DIMENSION OF STRATIFICATION AMONG THE HINDU PUNJABI REFUGEES IN DELHI**

Studies by Bauman (1982), Clark and Lipset (1991) among others suggest that 'class' is no longer a significant sociological concept. But they agree that there is substantial evidence to show that strata (within class) are very much an important phenomenon and differences between various strata are emerging along consumption and lifestyle patterns. Therefore, the total negation of the sociological significance and the role of class seems to be a false notion. Perhaps what is required is new ways of conceptualization, theorizing and understanding the class dimension. Class has to be understood with regard to consumption and lifestyle patterns, as consumption processes are becoming more important than the production processes in shaping social identities and explaining social behaviour (Crompton 1996:113).

As consumption has become an important aspect in class analysis, it is necessary to recall that Baudrillard in the same vein as Bourdieu has

emphasized that we cannot operate entirely within a theoretical framework based upon 'needs', nor one based upon economic class or social status groups (Callewaert 2000:310). Consumption is in part the consumption of symbolic signs in his view. Thus postmodernist viewpoint puts forward the role of consumption in shaping social divisions and social identities. Therefore, consumption becomes an absolutely necessary element in the construction and/or articulation of a sense of identity. It is interesting to note here, as Baudrillard suggests, that we do not purchase items of clothing, food, body decoration or entertainment to express a pre-given sense of who we are. Rather we become that, which what we buy makes us. In the modern society it seems that the image is more important than the satisfaction of needs. Class status is increasingly being shown by careful and conscious consumption, as it has become a form of asserting and re-fashioning identity (Osella and Osella 2000:151).

The rapid economic development of a city like Delhi has substantially benefited those residing in it. A strong consumerist culture is becoming prevalent, as it is also a signifier of a prosperous life. The wealth of the city shows in the many upmarket shopping centres, restaurants, dozens of recently developed housing estates, avenues and channels of entertainment. This upward mobility and a strong increase in consumption levels of a section of the population of Delhi have become a common experience to an increasing number. Thus consumerist culture gets a boost from the increased exposure to images spread by commercial television

including transnationally owned channels that present images of a consumerist and westernized lifestyle.

Viewed in the context of this study, maintenance of a certain lifestyle, which also determines the consumption patterns are important. The emerging future generation according to the informants is a generation away from their own Punjabi cultural practices and lifestyle, moving towards the direction of a westernized form of living. Thus informants point out that their children have a cosmopolitan outlook towards life. This view is expressed by the upper and to some extent by the middle class informants. The lower class informants feel that they are at a disadvantage for they do not have the required income to maintain a lifestyle similar to that of the upper classes. At the same time the lower class despise the lifestyle of upper class being too open with little regard for Indian traditions and culture.

While on the one hand the lower class do not hold the lifestyle of the upper class in high esteem, on the other hand want to emulate their lifestyle and feel that they cannot aspire for a similar lifestyle because of being devoid of substantial income. It needs to be mentioned here that in reality it is not income alone that determines consumption styles for the 'tastes' are very much related to the 'cultural capital' of particular groups.

Finally, while individuals from different classes may attain membership of particular clubs or associations the interaction patterns

that develop within them are themselves determined by the socialization processes and a matching of mental levels which is also reflected in patterns of consumption. This is true even when fixing marriage alliances because, the compatibility between individuals is determined by class and various other related factors. Thus at all levels of interaction class will be a dominant fact. One can say that the structure of class among the Hindu Punjabi refugees in Delhi will have to be increasingly located within patterns of lifestyle and consumption in future.

**CHAPTER VI**  
**ASPECTS OF POWER AMONG HINDU PUNJABI**  
**REFUGEES IN DELHI**

The study of Hindu Punjabi refugees in Delhi along the dimension of power occupies an important place in understanding their lifeworlds and social systems. This specific focus on the aspect of power completes the agenda that we had set for ourselves at the beginning of this research, that is, to understand the lifeworlds and social systems of the aforementioned category of people along the major dimensions of stratification.

It is important to recall that there is a significant overlap between these dimensions, so that any one of them cannot be fully comprehended in isolation from the other two. Therefore, when we talk of 'power', both caste and class, to an extent could be seen as social formations that are related to power differentials. While in the previous chapters there has been a subtle discussion on the issue of overlap, here we make an attempt to understand these aspects exclusively from the perspective on power.

This chapter focuses firstly, on understanding the concept of power by highlighting some of the major approaches to its study. It is important to note here that we discuss power also because it is a concept that is an indispensable aid to understand the notion of elite. Thus we shall focus on the concept of elite and the approaches related to its understanding. Secondly, through our discussion of the concepts of power and elite, we shall try to formulate an approach towards the understanding of power in the context of this study. This might involve a combination of two or three approaches as no single approach could be complete in terms of its

suitability for the present study. The applicability of the approaches to the study of elite among the Hindu Punjabi refugees in Delhi has been dealt with while understanding it in terms of informants' perception of elite and also at other points where they seem to aptly fit the purpose of this chapter. Thirdly, all this will in turn enable us to identify the 'power holders' among our target group, that is, Hindu Punjabi refugees.

### **APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF POWER**

In social and political theory, power refers to social power. Social power can be described as an ability to do things, capacity to produce effects, which specifically derives from the existence of social relationships and organized social interactions (Sharma 1999:16).

As a starting point Bauman's treatment of power needs a special mention especially so because of its universal applicability to any of the realms of social activity, be it political, economic or even cultural. For him power works by making the predictability of behaviour the prerequisite of some groups as distinct from others. Or alternatively some groups can make themselves relatively more unpredictable for others, this gives them more power (Kilminster and Varcoe 1996: 219).

However Max Weber's conception of power was first and foremost approaches to the study of power. His work influenced modern social scientists the most. For him the power of an individual, or a number of

individuals, is very generally, 'the chance...to realize their own will in a social relationship' (Munvar 1985:13). For analytical convenience Weber separates power into three spheres of activity – economic, social and political. Within these three spheres, power is expressed in terms of class, status and party. It should be noted that Weber's classification is not a static one, each sphere completely isolated from the other. On the contrary, he considered the interactions and tensions between these spheres.

Weber's characterization of classes, status groups and parties as phenomena of the distribution of power in a community could be viewed in terms of the fact that individuals pursue structurally generated interests in the economic, social and political spheres. Secondly, in doing so they come into conflict with each other and finally, some of them due to their situationally superior resources, are more successful than others in getting what they want.

Talcott Parsons (1951) proposed the structural-functional approach to the study of power. For him, power is a generalized aspect of society and a necessary mechanism of system integration. It is a relational possession in the sense of rights of any actor to count on certain reciprocal action of others. Thus seen in this sense, all possessional facilities are possession of power, as it facilitates a control over the action of others. Parsons focuses on two types of power – economic and political. While economic power is quantifiable, political power is hierarchical, that is of higher or lower levels.



Power as a rational system is a system of reward-possession and hence it becomes an allocative problem of resources and facilities. The rewards may be both physical and cultural objects. Thus, power implies society's approval and responsiveness and to the power wielder it implies goal attainment and esteem.

Dahl (1961) defines power in terms of its effects, as the capacity that produces effects. It is an attribute of individuals that they exercise in their relationships with other individuals. He identifies it as that which secures compliance, thus power is equated with domination.

Bourdieu (1992) talks of symbolic power. He is basically concerned with the distribution of resources and the form of system of classification such as thought, conduct, feeling and judgement of social agents. He refers to social organization of political fields (Bourdieu 1992:170). It incorporates electoral politics and institutionalized political parties, and this is related to the theme of language and symbolic power. Symbolic power should be seen in terms of the differentiation of distinct spheres or fields of practices, each involving specific forms and combination of capital and value as well as specific institutions and institutional mechanisms.

Another important contribution to the understanding of power comes from G Lenski (1966), especially because of the relationship he draws between power, privilege and prestige. He argues that most human action is motivated either by self-interest or by partisan group interests, and this

suggests that power alone governs the distribution of rewards. Despite cooperation, power determines nearly all surplus possessed by a society, and privilege is largely a function of altruism. Thus most of the distribution of privileges in a society can be explained by determining the distribution of power (Lenski 1966:44-45).

The above discussion on the concept of power brings into sharp focus the concept of elite, which is widely used by social and political theorists. The concept of elite refers to individuals and social groups par excellence in different walks of life. Based on a distinctive superiority of a select few over large masses of people, elite find themselves at the top of the social hierarchy. Hence, elite are found in economic, cultural as well as political fields (Sharma 1999:34).

Mosca (1939) and Pareto (1963) were concerned with the study of the exercise of political power. Mosca observes that in all societies, two classes of people are found – a class that rules, and a class that is ruled (ruling class has several attributes; it performs all political functions, monopolizes power and enjoy the advantages of that power). Thus, Mosca explains the rule of the minority over the majority.

Pareto while emphasizing on the inequality of individual endowments in every sphere of social life focuses on the governing elite as the real subject matter of his study. According to him, there are two kinds of elite, the governing and the non-governing. He even spoke of the 'circulation of

elite' whereby one set of ruling elite is replaced by another and each has definite attributes and values attached to it.

Lasswell (1952) is of the view that political elite comprises the power holders of a body politic. The power holders include the leadership and the social formations from which leaders typically come and to which accountability is maintained during a given period. Thus Lasswell includes the idea of social formation to understand the social base of power elite. Similarly, Raymond Aron (1950) has also discussed the relation between elite and social classes. He emphasizes on the plurality of elite and the social influence of the intellectual elite on the system of political power.

Bottomore (1964:14) employs the concept of elite to functional, mainly occupational groups, which have high status (for whatever reason). He distinguished within the political class (ruling minority) a smaller group, the political elite, which includes those individuals who actually exercise political power in a society at any given time. The power elite would therefore include members of government, politically influential families of an aristocracy and leaders of powerful economic enterprises. The power elite may also comprise leaders of political parties that are out of office and all those who are active in politics as trade union leaders, businessmen and intellectuals.

Mills (1963) distinguished between three types of elite in the USA – the corporate heads, the political heads and the military chiefs. He delves

into the question of whether these three groups form a single power elite and also finds out what binds them together. These three in a way do form a single elite because they are drawn from an upper class, hence can be considered as a ruling class. Mills recognizes the upper class background of these elite, but he is not sure that such a class rules through the elite.

According to Mills, power is scarce and the means of power are centralized. He writes: 'The power elite is composed of men whose positions enable them to transcend the ordinary environment of ordinary men and women, they are in positions to make decisions having major consequences' (Mills 1963:3).

These are some of the important approaches to the study of power and elite, however in order to study power in concrete situations we need appropriate techniques of identifying those who wield power. These techniques are positional approach, reputational approach, decisional approach and non-decision making approach (Oommen 1984:90). Positional approach denotes power that an individual wields because of his position in an organizational context. Reputational approach refers to power a person wields on account of his reputation in society while decisional and non-decision making approach are related respectively to the capacity an individual has to make a decision or block it. However each of these approaches cannot be viewed exclusively from the other three.

These approaches rather than being viewed in opposition to one another could be useful for substantive research only when blended together.

In the context of this study it is essential to make note of three important concepts introduced by Oommen (1984:92). He employs the concept of 'power pool' to refer to all the persons involved in the power arena. It consists of 'power reservoirs', the individuals who may not occupy formal position of authority but are important enough to influence the decisional process. 'Power exercisers' are those who occupy formal power positions and thus have authority derived from office.

Having put forward some of the major approaches to the study of power and elite we now analyze the aspects of power among the Hindu Punjabi refugees in Delhi. However to begin with, we discuss the informants' perception of elite. Thus the question here is to understand who from the peoples' point of view are elite in the society?

### **INFORMANTS' PERCEPTION OF ELITE**

Until now we only tried to understand the aspects of power and elite from a theoretical and researcher's perspective, hence the need also to understand it from the informants' perspective. This would enhance our understanding in terms of experiences or the informants' perception of happenings in everyday life. This was a rather difficult task because of the fact that for a layman to comprehend the concept of elite itself is problematic. Thus the first task was to break down the concept into simpler

terms and language for gaining understanding of the way in which the informants perceived it.

There were varied views expressed by the informants. First and foremost is the issue of whom the informants consider to be elite? Forty-two percent of the informants are of the view that those who are economically and politically at a high place in society are the ones who are powerful. This is the positional approach when viewed from a sociological perspective, that is, those who wield power because of the positions (formal or informal) they hold in the society. However here it is important to note that at times people may not occupy such positions of power, yet be important by playing a role in either decision-making or decision-blocking processes. All of who together constitute the 'power pool'.

Informants recognize the existence of two predominant types of elite belonging to the economic and political realms. They expressed their view that the power of money and political position is strong enough to get most work done. Informant UMMB 24 pointed out that:

*If you have money, in a country like India most things can be done. But of course, I do not myself make use of my money power to get work done. I think we should not encourage such things.*

Another informant MMFO 6 noted:

*Those who are in high political offices can get a lot of things done for themselves. Many times they do things out of the way and through wrong means. This way they are unable to sustain themselves in the*

*chair for long. Whatever you do you have to pay for it in this birth itself.*

Viewed from people's perspective, the above kind of judgements in a way point to certain discrepancies that exist in electing our representatives who have a crucial role in law making and policy making. Thus when people say something like the above, it means that wrong people are getting into positions of legitimate power who in turn under its guise become corrupt for their selfish ends. Thus from people's point of view it is not a question of distinction between legitimate and non-legitimate power, but it is all about the positions of power falling into some deceptive hands.

Informants hold that economic and political power is the 'real power' rather than merely being symbolic. It is these types of power that in turn could give them power to dominate social realms. They do try to present a picture that in their own personal lives they do not use their money or influence in order to get anything done. But in case of dominance in the economic realm it has to be noted that, while at times it accrues real power to its holders, at other times it accrues mere symbolic power (such as enhancing status) to the people who dominate this sphere. However they do talk about people who dominate cultural realms such as art, theatre, music, cinema etc. and thus constitute 'cultural elite'. Here informants feel that it is solely an individual's talent that helps one to wield power in society. Still others refer to those who wield power more because of their exceptional personal attributes especially those concerning ethical qualities (such as being reputed for impartiality, integrity and ability to converse).

This is what is referred to as reputational approach when viewed from a sociological perspective. The recognition of different types of elite, however, is a view from the above. The lower class informants feel that a combination of both economic and political is what sustains elite. In fact, for them all the 'so called' types of elite are synonymous. Thus the opinion of the informants varied across different class groups.

From informants perspective three kinds of elite could be identified in society. These are the political elite, cultural elite and economic elite. Of course it is essential to note that there is a substantial overlap between these categories. Thus those who view the existence of different types of elite in society attach different kinds of prestige to them. Political elite are regarded differently as compared to elite from other realms. This is largely evident when the informants expressed their desire to be in the pool of economic elite. Informants do not hold political elite in very high regard. Sixty-nine percent of the informants pointed out that the political elite are guided by selfish motives and it is only the power of office that attracts them to it rather than a desire to do selfless work to bring about a change and betterment for the masses. Informant LLMW 8 is of the view that:

*Politicians only come to us during election time when they need our support. Once they are in power, they do nothing.*

Another informant MMB 21 pointed out:

*The MPs are all corrupt people and have one or the other criminal cases against them. How can they run the country efficiently when they themselves are corrupt.*



Though the informants are critical of those wielding political power and desire for a change in the system, they themselves do not want to take the responsibility of spearheading this change. Majority ruled out their possibility of becoming an elite in the political sphere by remarking that, 'politics is a dirty game so we better stay out of it'. However those informants from the lower class who expressed their desire to become political leaders, at the same time admitted that they have far too many inadequacies in terms of class, education, linguistic competence and social network that cannot ensure them a place of elite in society.

However, what is common to informants irrespective of caste and class is their desire for an improved and changed lifestyle through economic prosperity. Informants in general viewed the prosperity in the economic and social realms as correlated and co-terminus. Social realms could denote anything such as socializing groups (includes gyms, clubs, associations) and also being patrons of various art and aesthetic fields. It is important to note that all the above spheres of activity serve as status enhancing devices and moreover membership here can be gained primarily through a strong monetary position. That is probably the reason why prosperity in economic and social realms is viewed as correlated.

Here it is important to probe whether in the informants' opinion the elite performs a function in society, as Parsons (1951) pointed out. The informants feel that there is a section of elite, though a minority whether in

the political, economic or cultural realm who do perform a constructive function. Constructive function implies different meanings in different fields. In the political realm it has more to do with policy making which in turn could contribute to the well being of people. In the economic realm, industrialists can do their bit for the country by initiating major industrial and commercial projects, all of which could put the country on the road to modernization and development. And when it comes to the cultural realm, certain individuals through their mastery in their respective fields of art and culture could play the role of cultural ambassadors and thus bring about recognition for the country.

However, the informants articulated these views as given below:

Informant UMMP 16 is of the view:

*There are some leaders who do perform important functions like formulating policies and implementing programmes that are beneficial for the masses. Similarly, many big industrialists have taken our country towards the road to prosperity.*

Another informant UUFU 21 pointed out that:

*There are cultural ambassadors who represent India and perform a positive function of building up a good image of India abroad. The politicians also play an important role especially when they make policies for the benefit of the people.*

Thus viewed, power is a means to determine who gets what. As all are not equals, it is a way of stratifying individuals. Drawing from Lenski's (1966) work, one notes that some positions have prestige attached to them while others may have greater economic rewards. Informant LLMM 5 pointed out that:

*There is a law of balance. We are equal. God gives everyone something or the other. Everyone gets something that balances the relationship between what he has and what he does not.*

The informants feel that the path to become an elite may sometimes be through the ascriptive aspects and at other times through the achievement oriented aspects and at still other times through the combination of both, with one of the factors playing a manifest or a latent role. As informant UUFO 22 remarked:

*One finds the perpetuation of one family in Indian politics. Many times one finds that all the members of a family hold power at political level. They are born with a political legacy. This is especially true of the Nehru-Gandhi family in India.*

Similarly another informant MUMB 13 expressed his opinion in the following words:

*Sometimes people get power because of family heritage. If you are born into a family that wields power, your own chances of wielding power also increase manifold, such as those born into big industrial families or those born into families with high political connections.*

According to informant LLMM 10:

*All those who are rich, educated, upper caste and into good jobs have everything. They have everything that you are talking about.*

Informant MMMO 3 insisted:

*There are those who have got educated and are doing well professionally and they are earning well. I never ask anyone for any favours and do not bribe anyone to get my work done. If I need to get work done I contact people responsible for doing that work and if that does not happen I go to their higher ups also. That is because I am well educated and know how to get my work done.*

Thus one can conclude that informants thought of power in varied ways and there was not much similarity of opinion on any of the aspects dealt with in this section. However, having understood some of the important aspects such as who in the informants' view wield power and how they get this power, it is now important to focus on three major types of power wielders, that is the political elite, the cultural elite and the economic elite. It is important to bear in mind that there could be some overlaps between these three groups. However, here we try to focus exclusively on each one of them.

### **POLITICAL ELITE**

In order to understand the extent to which Hindu Punjabi refugees in Delhi have been able to occupy the center stage of the political realm, it is important to analyze the role of Hindu nationalist politics in Delhi. This is

important because the refugees were the product and victims of partition based on religious nationalism. To be in the pool of political elite in independent India, would then be facilitated by taking interest in Hindu nationalist politics.

As mentioned in chapter IV, the Hindu revivalist organizations played a significant role in the Punjab and appealed extensively to the masses of the Punjab. It is therefore essential to analyze whether the adherence to Hindu revivalism and nationalism was carried on into the new context once the refugees moved to Delhi. Further, these organizations were important for another reason; by emphasizing on Hindu nationalism, they alienated the 'Other' religious collectivity. This fact makes it necessary to study the role of these organizations because partition was also a result of an advocacy of the idea of religious nationalism.

Many significant leaders who were important activists in the nineteenth century Hindu social reforms, were influenced by Western education and they undertook a critical assessment of Indian society as a result of their exposure to Western ideas. Thus developed two kinds of reactions in the Indian society and the modernists and the revivalists came up. While the former adopted models of social and political change based on Western patterns, the latter looked to Hindu antiquity. They included those who wanted to preserve the traditional social order as well as those who sought to reform Hindu society as a way of strengthening Hindu

solidarity. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) has its origins in the roots to revivalism (Anderson & Damle 1987:7)

Thus an attempt was made by revivalist organizations to blend religion and nationalism. It was in the aftermath of the Khilafat movement when the Hindu-Muslim riots broke out that the RSS emerged in the 1920's. Religious nationalism grew rapidly during this period. It has been pointed out that the challenge to Islam in the early 1920's was viewed by many as a threat to their self-esteem. The emergence of Hindu sabhas and other defensive Hindu associations were reactions to the growing communal violence, the increasing political articulation of Muslims, the cultural Islamization of the Muslim community and the failure to achieve independence. It was the ideology of Hindu nationalism around which the various Hindu nationalist organizations such as the RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha came up. Since the RSS was an organization focussed around Hindu nationalism and had a major impact in the Punjab, most Arya Samajists were attracted to the RSS, which had been founded in 1925, (Malkani 1980:14) and became its members.

While in the early years after partition it was the Congress that emerged as the strongest political party in Delhi, the significant role played by political parties associated with Hindu nationalism cannot be negated. In fact, it has been argued that the strong adherence to Hindu nationalism

is largely because the RSS movement had grown rapidly in the Punjab in the 1940s (see Jaffrelot, 2000:200).

It is useful in this context to briefly recall how the various political parties fared in the Provincial Assembly elections of 1946. These elections were held in the Punjab in February 1946 for which nominations were collected in December 1945. The franchise in the elections was restricted by property and literacy which excluded about three-fourths of the adult people in British India for the reason that they were not literate or did not have enough property (Kuwajima 1998:21).

The results showed that the Muslim League had gained substantially in the elections of the Punjab. Talbot (1980:89) points out that the *Pirs* and the traditional channels of political mobilization through the *biradri* system and the use of religious appeal tried to advocate the idea of Pakistan right across to the rural areas. This was a move successful in making landlords change their affiliations in favour of the Muslim League. Thus a serious blow was dealt to the Unionist Party in the Punjab which always had a strong rural support.

The Congress, another major political player in the Punjab had a strong appeal and had support among the Hindu urban population. While the Unionists drew their support from the agriculturists and landlords, who were settled in rural areas cutting across religious lines, the urban Hindu population was in support of the Congress. At this point of time the

Congress was the only party that was seen as representing the interests of the Hindus. However, this was not the case after partition when other parties too tried to stake their claim as those working for Hindu interests.

In this connection it is important, having understood the role and support base of the major political groups to focus on the role that the Hindu nationalist organizations played in the political structure of Delhi right after partition.

In 1950s, Shyama Prasad Mukherjee along with other prominent citizens of Delhi and RSS activists formed the Jan Sangh. In fact, gradually a large number of refugees with RSS background such as Balraj Madhok, K. N. Sahney, V. K. Malhotra, Bhai Mahavir became its active members. What is interesting to note here is the fact that all of them are Khatri, the middle caste group. The presence of a large number of refugees in the RSS and the Bharatiya Jan Sangh (BJS) can be attributed to the fact that the symbolic appeal of these organizations being associated with Hindu nationalism helped them to cash in on support from the refugees. However, it failed to emerge as a political winner. The answer for its failure at the political level probably lies in the fact that the Congress unlike the BJS was more pragmatic rather than ideological in its approach. The extensive resettlement and rehabilitation programmes undertaken by the Congress government could be the major factor in garnishing support of the masses and staying in power. Moreover, before partition the Congress was viewed



as the only Hindu political party. According to Jaffrelot (2000:211), the BJS was never a party of the refugees but more a party of the urban Hindu middle classes that also included those with non-refugee background.

While the Hindu nationalist organizations could not muster enough support to be able to come to power during the early years after partition, they did attract a large section of those with refugee background. This was so probably because it provided a sense of comfort to these people who had been displaced only because they were a minority religious collectivity at their earlier place of habitation. Thus by supporting those who advocated Hindu nationalism they were able to give vent to their feelings of dislike for the members of 'Other' religious collectivity at whose hands they suffered.

During the very first election of 1952 the BJS, the earlier incarnation of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), polled twenty-six percent of votes as against forty-nine percent of votes polled by the Congress Party. Barring two elections (1957 and 1984), in all subsequent elections the BJS/BJP or the Bharatiya Lok Dal (BLD)/Janata Party (JP) secured more than one-quarter of the total votes polled in Delhi. As far as the number of seats is concerned, the BJS won six of the seven seats in Delhi in the 1967 elections. In 1977, the Congress drew a blank. All the seven seats were cornered by JP of which the BJS was a major constituent. As part of the JP, it polled thirty-eight percent of votes but won only one seat in 1980. However, 1984 turned out to be the worst election year for the BJP. After

1984, the BJP gained supremacy over the Congress in all subsequent elections. In alliance with the Janata Dal (JD) it won five seats in 1989 and in both 1991 and 1996 Lok Sabha elections it won five seats each. In 1998 elections, while both the major parties improved their share in votes, only the BJP benefited in terms of seats, winning six out of seven (Singh 2000:210). In the present, thirteenth Lok Sabha the BJP has bagged all the seven seats in Delhi. Thus even when the BJP could not come to power at the all India level it did substantially well in the politics of Delhi.

Thus at the national level, Delhi is represented by members of the BJP. Out of the seven Members of Parliament (MPs), three are those with refugee background. They are Madan Lal Khurana from Delhi Sadar, Jagmohan from New Delhi and Vijay Kumar Malhotra from South Delhi constituency.

Madan Lal Khurana was born in Lyallpur (present Pakistan) in 1936 and joined the RSS in 1943. He is a M.A. and B. Ed degree holder and is a businessman by profession. He served in various capacities, the prominent ones among which are as the General Secretary of BJS from 1965-67. He was also a member of Delhi Metropolitan Council from 1966-89. He served as the General-secretary (1980-86) and President (1986) of the BJP and became the Chief Minister of Delhi in 1993.

Jagmohan was born in Hafizabad (present Pakistan) in 1927 and was the first Lieutenant Governor of Delhi from 1980-81 and 1982-84. He is a

M.A. degree holder. He has held a number of important posts including being a nominated member to the Rajya Sabha and a Minister in the Union Cabinet.

Vijay Kumar Malhotra was born in Lahore (present Pakistan) in 1931 and holds M.A. and Ph. D degrees. He had been a member of the RSS before Partition. He served as a member of the Municipal Corporation (1958-67) and Metropolitan Council of Delhi (1967-72). Apart from numerous other posts held by him, he was the Chief Executive Councillor of Delhi (1967-72). He also served as President of the BJS (1972-77). He was made President of the JP (1977-80) and BJP (1980-84). He has also held post as Minister in the Union Cabinet.

One finds that forty-three percent MPs from the Delhi region in the Lok Sabha are those with a refugee background. They are prominent leaders and are quite actively involved in political affairs.

However in the present Legislative Assembly of Delhi, one finds the strong presence of the Congress. Out of a total of seventy seats, fifty-one are held by the Congress Party members. According to a rough estimate nineteen percent of the members of the Assembly are Punjabis. However, due to lack of availability of data on their social background, their refugee status could not be ascertained.

From the above discussion it is clear that in the case of national level political power in Delhi, Punjabi refugees seem to have done well for themselves. Having looked at political elite it is now essential that we also look at other kind of elite in society who can be located in the cultural and economic realms and also wield tremendous power but of a different nature.

### **CULTURAL ELITE**

The concept of culture for the present discussion includes the creations of the mind, of hands and of imagination that is the works of art, theology and philosophy. Here we also include performing arts. These creations occupy the space above the surface of everyday life and thinking. The access to this realm is not inherited but is gained through one's own talent and creative abilities through which one creates works of art. Thus cultural elite are those who dominate the cultural realm such as art and aesthetics (including everything ranging from painting, music, literature to performing arts such as theatre, dance, drama, cinema etc).

There are a number of Hindu Punjabi refugees such as Satish Gujral in the field of painting, Kuldeep Nayar and Mulk Raj Anand are known for their literary works and Balraj Sahni and Vinod Khanna in acting, among many others who hold prominent positions in this realm of society.

Thus these individuals were able to make a mark because of the talent and prowess that they exhibited in their respective cultural fields. The source of power for these cultural elite is nothing but their talent or prowess in their respective fields of art, literature and culture. Power in this context does not manifest itself in ways such as decision-making, decision blocking or as setting standards for others to imitate. Here it manifests itself in terms of creating a special place and bringing valuable recognition for its holders in society. Thus to put it simply it is talent that leads to recognition which leads to power in turn.

However, it must be pointed out that to this category of cultural elite also belong the patrons of culture, that is, those who patronize and promote various forms of art and culture. These people are usually the economic elite (and at times also political elite) who because of their strong economic position have substantial financial resources to patronize such arts. In fact, Bourdieu (1992:27) pointed out that there is interdependence of access to culture with economic, political and social position. This in a way helps them not only to enhance their status further but also get recognition in the society. It is thus cultural elite's taste that determines what is good in a society.

Only about sixteen percent of the informants of this study patronized cultural forms of art. In fact theatre, dance and musical recitals seem to be

most preferred forms of art for the informants. What is interesting to note here is the words of informant UMMN 13:

*I do not understand these things such as classical dance or music, but if there is a programme on popular songs or dance on movie numbers I do not mind going.*

What comes out from this view is that the informant was really talking about cultural tastes of the masses, which it must be pointed out is different from the tastes of the elite. Thus it is the difference in taste that is important when considering the cultural elite.

### **ECONOMIC ELITE**

The previous section on the approaches to the study of power and elite contended that in society there exists a distinct class in terms of 'power elite' in whose hands political, cultural and economic power is concentrated. Thus, elite are not just confined to the political realm alone, but are also present in the economic and cultural realms of the society. Thus, as Pareto (1963) emphasized that elite need not be synonymous with political elite only. His idea was of a class of people who have the highest indices of capacity or performance in every branch of human activity. This conception of elite by Pareto aptly fits the cultural and economic elite.

What is interesting to note here is the fact that the influence elite exercise over society in general can be overtly political or very subtle in the form of lifestyle and value preferences. Yet, where the elite are not

homogenous, those powerful in political terms may seem to undermine the political power of those who are powerful or influential in terms of wealth or status. However, there are situations where there is collaboration or in other words, elite integration as delineated by C Wright Mills (1963). This is especially true with regard to two types of elite – the economic elite and those who are elite in the social realm of society.

However, in examining the interrelationship of the two types of elite, one can point out that while the social elite are generally those who belong to the higher class group in the economic realm (as elite status in the economic realm helps to sustain one as an elite in the social realm), this need not be true the other way round. This is so because those who are economic elite, may be unable to bring about a substantial change in lifestyle patterns, values etc. to make them elite in the social realm of society. They use power primarily in setting standards for people in social realms. Therefore, both these types of elite – social and economic – are being analyzed together in order to understand them in an appropriate manner. Further, they are studied together because it is rather difficult to present a clear-cut distinction between the elite in these two realms of society.

Following Weber's (1992) analysis of class, it is necessary to point out that he sees 'class' as the characteristic of the economic sphere. In his analysis all people with similar economic interests and economic power

belong to the same class. For Weber, 'classes are pluralities of individuals of similar market power (that is, control over income producing goods and skills) and therewith of similar life chances in all those respects which are related to power'.

Thus economic elite are those who have considerable influence in the economic realm. Their power derives from the fact that their business deals and decision-making activities have a significant impact on the other players in the market. The other market players may have to alter their economic decisions in relation to those undertaken by the elite in the economic realm of society.

Weber also spoke of social power in terms of status groups. According to him all persons who enjoy in society's estimation similar honour or prestige and who follow similar lifestyle generally belong to the same status group. Its members share feelings of affinity toward each other and on that basis act to maintain social distance from outsiders whose 'honour' is considered inferior. In addition to lifestyle and patterns of consumption, levels of education, kinship and occupation are also used as the bases for evaluating status of persons in society.

The factors that play a predominant role in helping one to become an elite are those of education, occupation, maintenance of a certain lifestyle, psychologically related factors such as innovativeness and initiative etc. on their part. Along with these one also finds a relation with other primordial



categories such as that of caste. Here, it must be kept in mind that some power would necessarily dwell in each of the caste groups. Thus, there can be multiple sources of power. Further, power also derives from individual achievements and personal attributes (Oommen 1970:78).

It is interesting to note here as to what makes Hindu Punjabis socially and economically an important group in Delhi. The answer probably lies in the fact that they are quite open to new ideas and adapting to new ways of doing things and to the processes of modernization. In fact, as pointed out earlier they are an enterprising set of people who have initiative and drive to venture into new projects and activities. This attitude of the informants can be traced to their refugee background whereby most restarted from scratch. Since the refugees had to struggle and rise up from the base to find a secure place and standing in society they are not afraid to be pioneers in certain new projects. Examples such as Nandas of Escorts and Kapurs, the manufacturers of Atlas cycles illustrate the point. As informant MMFU 9 said:

*We had a lot of property, land and money in Pakistan. We were a rich family and we saved for our future. However our future later was much different and something we could not even think of in the worst of dreams. Therefore, we have learnt to live for the present and neither in the past that cannot be undone nor in the future which is beyond comprehension.*

This attitude is not only beneficial in the economic realm whereby the innovativeness of the refugees helped them to be economically successful

but also in adapting to new social and cultural lifestyle patterns. Hindu Punjabi refugees in Delhi have been quite open to experimenting with new ways of leading life. Informant UMMN 15 is of the view that:

*The way we have led our lives has been full of hardships so we are not afraid of anything. We have tried to rebuild our lives after partition whereby we had to take up even degrading occupations, live in worst of situations only to meet the need of the hour.*

This attitude has led to the prosperity of the Punjabi refugees. Another aspect that has played a crucial part in their success is their spending patterns. It is often viewed that the Punjabis have extravagant spending habits. However, careful analysis reveals that their lavish spending habits are also a means to ensure a high standing in the social realm. As informant MMMO 14 pointed out that:

*Punjabis are different. We try to balance our saving and spending which is unlike the case of 'Baniyas' in Delhi who focus mainly on saving.*

Another informant MUFB 20 is of the view that:

*Punjabis are known for their spending habits. We are the kind of people who know how to enjoy life.*

Thus the informants are themselves quite aware of their spending patterns, but at the same time view it as necessary in order to lead a 'good life'. They acknowledge the fact that it helps to enhance their status. After all today in their experience it is important to have a good status which is indicated by the lifestyle choices. Thus in this sense power could be merely

symbolic as it confers upon the individuals, prestige and a sense of social recognition due to their lavish ways of leading life. As informant UMMP 16 observed:

*I think it is important to maintain a certain standard. It is also a way to enhance my status in society. Everyone has to live upto his standard for which he has to spend accordingly.*

Another informant MUMO 1 is of the opinion:

*I have always lived in the best possible way. When I was in service I lived in a big house and was at a high position. Therefore, after retirement too, I have to ensure that I lead life in a similar fashion.*

Thus one finds that lavish spending patterns are a means to ensure a high standing in the social realm. This kind of spending pattern ensures the refugees an access to the latest set of goods and services which helps them to maintain a high standard and good lifestyle patterns. A combination of openness to trying new things and experimenting with new ideas along with a flexibility in spending habits is helpful in making the Punjabi refugees successful in the economic realm and socially an important group for exerting power in society through enhancing of status. Further, it needs to be pointed out that the success in the economic realm is a means to ensure 'success' in social realm.

It is also important here to analyze the aspect of club membership that is seen as a means to enhance one's status in society. In fact, not only has membership in clubs turned into the most sought after recreation but

more importantly is seen as a lifestyle statement and as a definitive status symbol (Vinayak 2002:83).

A large number of informants from the upper class group (76%) of this study have an association with some club; either directly or through their children. In comparison to the upper class, only thirty-two percent of the middle class informants (or through their children's membership) are members of a club, while among the lower class there are no instances of association with a club.

Here it is found that ninety percent of the informants from upper class locality were members of the locally run associations, Bharat Vikas Parishad and the Senior Citizen Club. Others are members of clubs such as the South Delhi Club, Panchshila Club etc. that are in the vicinity of their residential area. However only about eight percent from amongst the total informants are members of prestigious clubs such as the India Habitat Centre, Gymkhana Club and Rotary Club. Four percent of informants are also members of clubs such as Defence Services Officers' Institute and Country Club etc.

Informants have diverse views on the aspect of membership of clubs. Informant MUMO 9 pointed out that:

*After retirement I have become very active in the club. I am also a voluntary member of some social service organizations. I have time for such activities now and this is a good way to make constructive use of my time.*

Another informant MMFP 11 while speaking in favour of club membership noted:

*Clubs provide a good meeting place for like-minded people. Those who share similar interests can meet together at these places. They are a good source of meeting new and interesting people and making friends.*

Thus while thirty-nine percent of the informants feel that a club membership is significant as it does perform an important role in their lives, there were other informants (34%) who had a completely opposite view on the issue of club membership. Informant UUMO 14 expressed his opinion in the following words:

*I have the resources but never felt the need to join a club. I keep myself busy in other activities. I have friends in the colony and we meet in the evenings. There are some or the other lectures on issues such as health, nature, old-age problems etc. Therefore I have no time to go to a club.*

Among informants there was also a section of people who viewed club membership in terms of both moral-ethical and economic issues as unacceptable. Informant UMMN 23 thought that:

*Going to a club is not a good habit. In clubs people drink and gamble. We are simple, middle class people.*

Informant UUFU 8 provides a rationalization for her not being a member of any club thus:

*I am not a member of a club but my children are and they have taken me to the club a few times. Earlier I used to think it is not a good place, but after my children took me there, I changed my opinion. However I do feel that I am old fashioned for going to a club as am not well versed with social etiquette and mannerisms.*

For informant MMFO 6 it is a matter of affordability:

*If one wants to become a member of a club today, one would have to shell out thousands of rupees and then there be a regular monthly expense also. Even if we go to eat in the club only once a month then also it will amount to spending a lot more than we can afford. Moreover we don't have time to go everyday. Whenever we want a change we find places to go to, eat and spend time with friends etc.*

Among the lower class informants the idea of club and its membership is an alien issue for most of them do not even understand clearly what functioning of a club is all about. In fact, they have simple ways of recreation which are inexpensive and do not have much need for prestige.

Thus, for the upper class informants club membership is a good way of expanding their social circle and establishing contacts. Club is also a good place for recreation. For the middle class informants it is an expensive pleasure pursuit. They are in a dilemma for they aspire to get membership of clubs but at the same time cannot afford such a luxury. Therefore, they have to reconcile to the situation and they try to find other cheaper avenues for entertainment and activities such as gym membership in order

to enhance their social status. But both view membership in associations – clubs or gyms – as status enhancing devices.

Success in the economic realm is very often seen as a precondition to be able to make a mark in the social realm of society. For the upper class it is the power of money that helps to support their indulgence in socializing. This, therefore, is a good way of building up of social network. It is the techniques of socializing and the display of manners and etiquette that are important in increasing one's social circle and to have standing in it.

It can be pointed out that the success of Punjabi refugees has not been single or isolated cases of individuals and families who have prospered and have been influential. Rather, one finds that the widely held notion that the Hindu Punjabi refugees have done well for themselves comes from the fact that in their case it has been the prosperity of the community particularly the upper and middle classes. In fact, from the community and collectivity point of view the Hindu Punjabis seem to have done well for themselves. Moreover, many had to start from the scratch and therefore their phenomenal success stories make their case an interesting one with regard to refugee resettlement.

**CHAPTER VII**  
**CONCLUSION**



This study explores the circumstances that lead to the emergence of refugees in the creation of a nation. Whenever attempts have been made to create a nation by invoking identities anchored to religion, race and secular ideology, refugees result in huge numbers. The phenomenon of refugees is a world-wide one as has been brought out by analyzing some of the cases from across the globe in chapter I. However, the analysis has been pursued with special reference to the religious factor in this study.

It is argued that conceptualization of nation and nationalism anchored to religion is superficial, untenable and unsustainable. This is so because there is no coterminality between religion and territory, the latter being essential in the context of creation of a nation (Oommen 1997). Yet many have and many are advocating and are involved in the process of creating religious nationalism. It has been shown in this study that this trend has been a predominant one in the Indian subcontinent also where the three major religious collectivities – Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims – have been demanding separate homelands and sovereign states.

The idea of creating Pakistan was built by advocating religious nationalism. The growth of religious nationalism was pursued through the political processes. This has been brought out in chapter II through an exploration of historical events from the partition of Bengal in 1905 to the partition of India in 1947. The partition of the Indian subcontinent based on religion was a landmark in its history. The division between Hindus and

Muslims was engineered by arousing their religious consciousness. This not only resulted in creating new territorial boundaries but also adversely affected the lives of millions of individuals and families inhabiting the subcontinent, particularly the regions of the Punjab, Bengal and Jammu and Kashmir which were divided to carve out the state of Pakistan. However, exchange of population occurred only from the Punjab and Bengal resulting in refugee problem.

Partition created a situation whereby not only individuals and families were displaced, but families were also split across the India-Pakistan border. Many of those Hindus who stayed back in Pakistan grew up believing in Allah while those families who crossed the border continue to believe in Hindu Gods or Sikh Gurus as the case may be (Vinayak 1997:76).

The large-scale displacement and movement of individuals and families as a result of partition created refugees in large numbers. In this work an analysis of the refugee problem is undertaken and an attempt is made to understand the interdependence of the lifeworlds and social systems of the Hindu Punjabi refugees in Delhi with particular reference to the aspects of caste, class and power. In chapter II we discuss the rationale behind selecting Hindu Punjabi refugees as our target group and why with specific reference to Delhi as the area of fieldwork. Even though partition had a serious impact on the lives of the Hindus and the Sikhs, the case of

the latter has not been accommodated in this work in the light of the demand by them for a separate homeland and the fact that they were moving into a polity where they were to be a minority group. This affected the self-definition by Sikh refugees and others' definition of them, both of which came in the way of their adaptation and integration in the Indian polity. This work has been accomplished by undertaking the study of the life history of informants, along with the study of the historical account of partition in order to explore the thought processes that resulted in partition, migration and its consequences for the common people.

The analysis of the lifeworlds and social systems helps us to understand that there is reciprocity between these two realms. The conditions of partition resulted in the lifeworld of the Hindu Punjabi refugees undergoing a change in relation to the experience of displacement and resettlement. This in turn had its impact on the macro structures, that is, social systems (caste, class and power). Further, these in turn have had their impact on the lifeworld. The lifeworld influences the social system and vice-versa. This mutual relationship is a continuous and never-ending process, which is also a cause for dynamism in society and in its social dimensions of caste, class and power.

It has been shown that each of these dimensions plays a significant role in the lives of the Hindu Punjabi refugees in Delhi who were displaced at the time of partition. Depending on their position in each of the separate

yet interconnected dimensions of the stratification system, refugees had diverse experiences in their displacement and resettlement processes, that is due to the place the refugees occupied in the social structure.

In the context of decision to move or stay back, for the lower castes the situation was the same in that they did not gain in psychological-moral sense or in socio-cultural and economic terms. They were ill treated and discriminated at both the places. The main, if not the only, motivation for them was the retention of their religious identity in India. In comparison, the higher castes were in an advantageous situation in that it was a matter of keeping parity in their economic conditions and/or preserving their religious identity intact. Similarly, in terms of the class factor one may point out that the individuals from upper class were in a better situation whether in terms of movement or re-establishing themselves. Their privileged class position gave them 'social capital', which means to be well informed and having better organizational skills. This helped the upper class refugees in comparison to those from the lower class group who lacked these and thus were in a disadvantageous situation. In terms of the power dimension the resettlement of the refugees was facilitated by their adherence to Hindu nationalism in the political context. It is the 'so-called' middle caste groups among Hindu Punjabi refugees who played a significant role here. Power in the economic realm comes about through the spirit of initiative and enterprise that these refugees had. However what

unfolds from the discussion in this work is the congruence between these three dimensions of stratification.

In the present day context these dimensions have undergone a change due to the new ways of perceiving and defining the system of stratification by the Hindu Punjabi refugees in Delhi, which prompted us to investigate these changes.

The caste aspect assumes a much changed role. Many of its traditionally associated features are no longer applicable as a system and have undergone substantial changes. However, caste still seems to dominate in certain aspects of life of the Hindu Punjabi refugees especially in the aspect of marriage. Its features such as the practice of untouchability and occupational specialization, though have receded into the background, are manifesting through other channels due to the correlation of caste with other dimensions of stratification.

It is the conditions of urban living where heterogeneous groups of people have come together from different regions, which makes the practice of certain aspects related to the ascriptive dimension difficult. The ideas of social status and prestige are not confined to primordial categories any more. Therefore, emphasis is being laid on factors such as class manifested through consumption and lifestyle patterns as these have become important in governing the social life of the Hindu Punjabi refugees in Delhi. Class is significant in governing social relationships as is evident

from the fact that it is an important criterion in fixing marriage alliances. It is also important in determining the pattern of socializing, maintaining social interactions and in shaping the perceptions of individuals in society. Additionally, the aspect of power (whether political, cultural or economic) is also seen as a determinant of lifestyle. It is the capacity that power provides in influencing others that is significant here. The Hindu Punjabi refugees have done well for themselves in each of the above mentioned realms of power. The factors that have contributed in this process have been elaborated in chapter VI. The dimension of power has also become important factor for determining one's status in society. Thus one can say that many dimensions have been added and/or subtracted in the aspects of caste, class and power as can be seen from the discussion undertaken in chapters IV, V and VI.

It is the examination of the interrelationship between all the three dimensions of stratification that helps us to understand the manner in which the stratification system operates among the Hindu Punjabi refugees in Delhi. The hierarchies of caste, class and power overlap and also cut across each other. The social system has acquired a much more complex and dynamic character and there is a tendency for cleavages also to cut across one another (Beteille 1965:45).

For the Hindu Punjabi refugees the conditions of partition devastated their lives in a significant way, whether it was in terms of disintegration of

families, the change in lifestyle patterns, a change in their psychological-moral makeup or a breakdown in the relationship which they shared with old structures and institutions. They also had to cope with a situation where they had to get integrated into the host society.

It is essential to point out here that while partition created refugees leading to large-scale displacement and resettlement, these refugees were not flung into a completely alien environment in physical or cultural terms. They were, however, sufferers in economic and psychological terms and therefore had to recreate the lifeworld in the changed circumstances based on their own experiences of displacement and that of the specific dimensions of the social structure in which they were placed.

It is important to note that urbanization exposes the resettlement of migrant groups to a different milieu as compared to settlement in a rural area. This was also true for the thousands of refugees who came to Delhi from West Punjab at the time of partition. Thus, we find that a number of rehabilitation programmes as mentioned in chapter III were undertaken by the government for their easier settlement which the refugees viewed as instruments of change and mobility. However not only do urbanized forms of living provide conditions that are more conducive to those inclined to struggle for upward mobility, they themselves get transformed as happened in the case of Delhi due to the large scale influx of Punjabi refugees.

The study analyzed the processes of adjustment, assimilation and alienation in the case of the Hindu Punjabi refugees in Delhi. Since these concepts have already been discussed in chapter II, here we only attempt to understand them with respect to the findings.

In the case of the Hindu Punjabi refugees in Delhi the three processes of alienation, adaptation and/or assimilation in isolation cannot capture their experiences. This is so because the Hindu Punjabi refugees are not an alienated section. In fact, they are very much a part of the cultural mainstream of independent India. Further, their case has also not been one of total adaptation; the Hindu Punjabi traditions, values, customs etc. have been preserved and there has been mutual give and take between the Hindu Punjabis and the members of the other communities. Finally, the condition of assimilation too, does not hold true in their case as they are partly integrated into, yet are distinguishable from, the host society in socially significant ways.

Hindu Punjabi refugees in Delhi, it is widely believed, have integrated with those from other communities and form a larger whole along with them. But their's is not a case of total integration, rather it can be seen as 'selective assimilation' which signifies that they are not totally indistinguishable from the members of the other community living alongside them. This is so because the Hindu Punjabi refugees still preserve and maintain their own cultural identity, customs, values and



traditions in certain segments of life. At the same time they are getting influenced by the culture and traditions of those living alongside them and influencing others to adopt some aspects of the Punjabi culture and tradition into their way of life. While the members of other communities, especially non-Punjabi North Indians, have been seen to borrow much from Punjabi way of life, one cannot ignore the fact that Punjabis too have adopted some of the practices and way of life from them. Further, there is also a move towards a greater westernized pattern of living on the part of the urban population, particularly the families of Hindu Punjabi refugees in Delhi.

Analyzing the case of preservation of the traditions and values of Hindu Punjabi refugees in Delhi, it is important to point out that the refugees from different parts of West Punjab too try to maintain their specific customs and traditions. They do this by maintaining their differences from people belonging to other parts of the Punjab. Here the case of Multanis is a significant one. Multan is a part of the Punjab in Pakistan, yet for the Multani refugees settled in Delhi, their greater dread today is to have their identities confused with the larger mass of Punjabis. They are proud of their Multani identity preserved in their language, festivals and cuisine (Subramanian 2002).

What is important to note here is that for most of the informants (62%) there has been a feeling that they have done much better because of

their migration to India. There has been a substantial change in their lifestyle thanks to educational and/or better occupational facilities, which have been made available to them and which they were also forced by circumstances to take up. Ninety-two percent of the informants openly admitted that they feel they are a part of the new society into which they moved. However there is one wish that all of them share, that of being able to go back to Pakistan just atleast once to see their earlier place of habitation.

It is interesting to note that for the offsprings of Punjabi refugees, there is only a partial sense of belonging to the Punjabi culture. The daughter of informant MUMO 5 expressed her feelings thus:

*As a child when everyone at school would go to their native place during holidays, I could not understand why I had no native place to go to? I always grew up thinking I am a Delhite and failed to understand why I was even called a Punjabi?*

Therefore one finds that for the new generation the strong adherence to aspects of Punjabi identity is losing its grip. The traditional occupations are giving way to more savvy occupations. There is a move towards adopting cosmopolitan attitudes and lifestyles. It is only 'partial Punjability' that has been imbibed at the neglect and ignorance of the totality.

One finds that for the emerging generation there is also a sense of disorientation from the roots. While on the one hand, they are being held by ties and threads that bind them to Punjabi culture, on the other hand

they are also trying to form new ties due to the impact of westernization. For a majority of them their Punjabi identity only comes to the surface during festivals and ceremonies which are observed only as a matter of tradition. This is so because they have not been well informed to understand their meaning. In fact, in the case of many there has been no planned effort even to learn 'their' Punjabi language or culture. For most Hindu Punjabi refugee families in Delhi, the refugees are the last link through which their families have an association with the Punjab. However, this association with the Punjab is only through memories and experiences, which their elders narrate and discuss amongst themselves.

Finally, it is important to note that development and the building up of a global world cannot be achieved by limiting the role of individuals to that of signifiers of a religious community. When this happened in the case of partition, it resulted in the creation of refugees, who therefore had to undergo trauma and trials of a high magnitude as seen in this work. However, Hindu Punjabi refugees in Delhi present an exemplary case of how lives can be rebuilt and a pattern of resettlement achieved in a harmonious manner.

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## **APPENDIX**

## **Section I**

### **Biographical and Socio-Economic Details of Informants**

1. Present age and age at the time of migration:
2. Educational qualification and name and place of educational institutions:
3. Present occupation and occupation when in Pakistan:
4. Place from which you migrated from Pakistan (City/ District/ Village):
5. Year and time of migration:
6. Present monthly income and monthly income when in Pakistan:
7. Land and property owned now in India and earlier in Pakistan:
8. Family size at present and when in Pakistan (Joint / Nuclear):
9. Position held in the local power structure when in Pakistan and now in Delhi:
10. Indicators of lifestyle (owned/ not owned):

Place of residence(owned/rented):

Vehicle owned (car (model)/scooter):

Telephone/ cell phone:

Television:

Refrigerator:

Computer:

Airconditioner/cooler:

Generator/ Inverter:

Domestic help:

Recreational activities:

Membership of clubs/associations/gymnasium:

(Here the researcher would have to use his/ her observational skills in order to ascertain the standard of living of the informants. For e.g., the furniture, the decoration pieces, the



clothes/ jewellery worn by the family members and the general presentation of self by the informant).

## **Section II**

### **General Information**

11. Do you ever talk to your relatives or friends about partition and life when in Pakistan? What are the contexts about which you frequently talk to them (e.g. friends or people in Pakistan, the losses suffered, place and area where you lived in general, recreational activities, riots/looting, torture, molestation of women, powerful people, disintegration of family, the loss of relatives/family members etc.)?
12. Recall and describe particular events with reference to when the idea that Pakistan was going to take place and its subsequent effect on the population perceived by the people.
13. How, when and why did you finally decide to move to India? Did you perceive then that you were moving forever and would never be going back or was it thought of as a temporary measure?
14. Did migration of people started taking place before 1947? If yes, when did it start and from which areas or districts? Did those who perceive the consequences of partition (i.e. riots, transfer of population, looting etc.) and hence moved to India in an advantageous situation (maybe they could move with their valuables and settle in an easier way into their new society etc.)?
15. Describe the actual event of how you moved into and settled in India. (Describe the events/ time from when you moved from your house in Pakistan to your reaching some refugee camp or place in India). What was the kind of reception you received on arrival?
16. Did you come to Delhi straightaway from Pakistan, or did you make a temporary halt at other places such as the Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan etc. and then moved to Delhi? What were the factors (urban area, being the national capital, more government help, presence of relatives/friends, more job opportunities, better educational facilities, local rivalry at earlier place of residence etc.) that induced you to come to Delhi?
17. What was the initial reaction to partition, riots, losing relatives, property, cash, jobs etc. Did people accept all this or did they question the partition in terms of its need/inevitability/avoidability? Did the people in general have a feeling of enmity towards the 'Other' religious group?
18. Can you recall particular events that describe how violence was inflicted on the Hindu population in Pakistan? Which were the areas where people experienced violence and thus started moving?
19. Can you recall any events where the Hindu population inflicted similar kind of killing and atrocities as were inflicted on the Hindus in Pakistan?

20. Did you participate in anyway in these communal riots (being victims, spectators, actual inflictors of violence, indulging in protective violence)?
21. In such a situation where looting and violence was taking place, were there situations/events where people looted and killed their own family members for selfish motives or co-religionists killed each other for selfish motives?
22. What were the assets (cash, jewellery, social/political position/network, education etc.) that helped you in resettling or other refugees known to you?
23. After arriving in India, what activities did you undertake to resettle yourself? In the process of resettlement what help did you get from government and non-governmental organizations (religious, linguistic, caste, political parties, corporate organizations etc.)?
24. Did you get any compensation for property, land and money lost in Pakistan? On what basis and how much compensation was made to you?
25. Had you left apart from property/land, any cash or jewellery in Pakistan? Did you try to go back and get this? If yes, how and if no, why as some could manage to go back with police authorities to get back their valuables from their house in Pakistan?
26. Today after more than fifty years of partition, do you think you have adequately resettled in India (if no/yes, in what ways). Looking back at the last fifty years do you think you have achieved/failed to achieve something because of movement into India? Do you think the partition was avoidable? Would you like a unification of the two Punjabs – Pakistan and India? Do you think it is possible? Do you experience a sense of loss?

### **Section III**

#### **Caste**

27. Looking at the aspect of caste, one finds that it is sometimes perceived as an important factor for identity. Do you think that caste identity is important today in Delhi? How important was it during the days you were in Pakistan (For e.g. in the context of friendship and social interaction, marriage, business collaboration, obtaining employment, economic assistance, inter dining, residential pattern, obtaining loans)?
28. In what ways is caste a governing force in social life (in what ways do you attach importance to caste). What is your pattern of interaction with people (in terms of the above factors) of other castes/subcastes? Did people hold similar kind of attitude towards people of the other caste/ subcaste when they lived in Pakistan and during the initial days of moving into India?
29. Which caste/subcaste do you belong to? Do you have neighbors of the same group? Were they helpful or did you help caste members in selecting the place of residence? Did you consciously try to live in a neighbourhood wherein your fellow caste people were present?

30. Can you recall any incidents of your initial days in India, when you were helped by your own caste group members or other caste group members? Conversely, did you help members of your own caste group or other caste groups in the process of resettling in the new society (help in finding work, sharing food, psychological comfort-morale boosting, finding residential accommodation, helping in government paperwork, helping to trace relatives in India etc.).
31. Following your shift to India were there any changes in the operation of the norms of the caste system. If so, what changes? Were these changes in terms of superiority/inferiority, exclusion/inclusion, restriction on marriage, occupational specialization, acceptance of food, religious disabilities and privileges etc? (Here, maybe the psychological state of 'sailing in the same boat' of uncertainties forced many people to give up rigidities associated with the caste system).
32. Are there any incidents of intercaste marriage in your family or among your relatives/neighbourhood? If yes, give details.
33. An important feature of caste system is occupational specialization. To what extent did this principle match with the ground reality in Pakistan and now in India/Delhi?
34. Do you perceive that you were able to accrue benefits or were at a disadvantage because you belong to a particular caste? Do you think that the Brahmins, Khattris and Vaishyas etc. were favored/discriminated in the process of resettlement? Do you think such favoritism/discrimination was prevalent for the religious groups (Hindus/Sikhs)? Do you think the Scheduled Castes were discriminated/favoured?
35. Did the government make special programs to facilitate the resettlement of the refugees from the lower castes? What were the measures taken by the government (economic assistance/loans, subsidized items, vocational training, educational training, housing facility, assistance in finding work etc.)? Did these measures in your opinion reach the targeted population?
36. Who in your opinion are the dominant caste groups from among the refugees settled in Delhi? What factors do you think have contributed to their dominance (economic power, political power, numerical strength, education, social network, attitude and worldview etc.)?

#### **Section IV**

##### **Class**

37. How many classes do you think exist in society? How would you describe your class status – upper, middle or lower, within it?
38. To what extent does a person's class status, in terms of upper, middle or lower governs social interaction? For social interaction would you consider factors such as a person's income, occupation, education, place of residence, lifestyle (access to similar types of goods and services) etc?


39. Do your friends or people with whom you associate have a similar level of income, education, live in the same types of colonies, are in similar type of occupation, have access to similar type of goods and services, have membership of similar types of clubs/associations, indulge in same types of recreational activities etc?
40. Lifestyle (i.e. access to certain material goods and privileges, membership of important social clubs/associations, education, occupation, residential areas etc.) have become important indicators of class position. Were such indicators prevalent while you were in Pakistan too? If so, what were these? (Conversely it would be important to keep in mind that to acquire status and prestige, a wealthy man may get into clubs and groups).
41. When people moved to India, they lost everything they had and therefore the class position got blurred. In such a situation, were there any benefits accrued or disadvantages experienced based on their earlier class position when in Pakistan? (Here, while wealth may no longer be there, education, skills, social network, political connections or social impression management etc. of certain classes carried in the new contexts may have played a vital role).
42. Did the rehabilitation of refugees in Delhi incur local rivalry? What kind of competition was faced with the local population? (Maybe with regard to employment, business/trade rivalry, obtaining loans, getting licenses, allocation of land/shops, more political power and decision making in local bodies, social and cultural influence on the city etc.).
43. Can you recall particular incidents whereby the local population was helpful to the refugees (in providing shelter, psychological sympathy, help in government paperwork, helping to trace lost relatives, providing jobs etc.).
44. Do you think that education has been a key factor for some to achieve upward mobility in the class ladder? Do you think that it has played a major role in your economic mobility?
45. As compared to the educational level of your family members when they were in Pakistan, what is the educational background of people in your family now?
46. Has change in the economic situation of people led to a change in social and interpersonal relationships between individuals? If so, how? (Hardships may have made people individualistic, competitive, no time for personal relationships, attitude towards saving and spending may have taken a different form or conversely there may have been more attachment to the family and maintaining relationships in the new society, more give and take among relatives etc.).
47. Do you think that there should be a change in your economic position? What factors do you think can bring about such a change?

## Section V

### Power

48. To what extent are you a politically active person? If yes, are you affiliated to a political party/ organization, an active supporter of members of a political party or a representative of certain section in your residential area or in the work context? If not, do you desire to become one?
49. In your local residential area are you or your family an active participant in local community affairs (are u a member of your residential associations, are you consulted on issues of importance in your area, attend residential colony programs etc.)?
50. Did you or your family members hold any important position in the system of local self government while you were in Pakistan?
51. When you were in Pakistan, did you have an association with any political party or political issues (were you an active person in the freedom struggle/independence) and in the general organization, decision making in your area?
52. Do your neighbors or people in general in your residential area seek your opinion on matters concerning the larger community affairs and thus would you term yourself an influential person? (Here the respondent could be asked to cite a few examples to justify his response).
53. Do you personally know the M.P, MLA, Corporation member of your constituency/locality. If yes, do you interact with them?
54. List three most influential persons you know. Give their background. How did you come to know them?
55. Are you a member of any clubs, associations or organizations and what are your activities in these? Who are the other members of these clubs (in general their socio-economic background)?
56. Who do you think are the influential people in society? Do you desire to become one (in other words, elites)?
57. Do you think those who are influential in society perform important functions and in what way?



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