

**PARTITION REFUGEES IN DELHI: DISPLACEMENT
AND RESETTLEMENT**

*Thesis Submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University in Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Award of the Degree of*

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

SHASHI BHUSHAN DEO



**CENTRE FOR HISTORICAL STUDIES
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI- 110067
2019**



Chairperson
Centre for Historical Studies
School of Social Sciences
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi - 110067, India

9 July, 2019

DECLARATION

I, Shashi Bhushan Deo, hereby declare that the thesis entitled **Partition Refugees in Delhi: Displacement and Resettlement** submitted by me for the award of the degree of **DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY** is an original work and that it has not been submitted in part or full, for any degree to this or any other university.

Shashi Bhushan Deo
Shashi Bhushan Deo

CERTIFICATE

We recommend that the thesis may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

Sucheta Mahajan
Prof. Sucheta Mahajan
Supervisor

Sucheta Mahajan
Prof. Sucheta Mahajan
Chairperson

 Centre for Historical Studies
School of Social Sciences
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi - 110067

 Chairperson
Centre for Historical Studies
School of Social Sciences
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi - 110067

CHS, 329 SSS III, Office Phone : (011) 26704456, 26704457

E-mail : centreforhistoricalstudies@gmail.com

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I owe my sincere gratitude to a number of people who have helped in variety of ways to complete this 'dream project'. First of all, the God almighty for giving me the will and the strength to undertake this task. I can hardly find words to express my gratitude for my parents Sunita Devi and Satish Chandra Deo for making me what I am and for letting me dream big.

My greatest thanks to my guide, Professor Sucheta Mahajan, for reposing faith and confidence in me since 2007, the first year of my M.A. It is all due to her that I have been able to complete this work. Thank you Ma'am for teaching everything that I know of history. With profound gratitude I also remember my co-supervisor Dr. Arvind Sinha whose suggestions have enormously enriched this work. I also thank all my teachers at the Centre of Historical Studies. Special thanks to Dr. Jyoti Atwal for her invaluable inputs during my 9B interview.

I would also like to thank all the staff of JNU central library, the DSA library, Delhi Archives and NMML. Many thanks to my childhood friends, the Makauni Party family (Abhimanyu, Abhinash, Abhinav, Ashish, Bagish, Bibhu, Gaurav, Himanshu, Nishant, Mohit, Pushpendra, Rahul, Ritesh, Romit, Saurav, Shambhu, Shubham, Subodh, and Vicky), Lohit family and friends: Ankur, Arvind, Rita, Pankaj, Atul, Nitish, Shalini, Trisha, Anupama, Chandan Gupta, Santosh Kumar, Supriya, SauravVaishya, Daniel, Amit Kushwaha, Chander, Abrar, Kamlesh, Usha, Manasa, Awanish, Veeru Bhaiya, Preeti Bhabhi, Mrunmay Bhaiya, Monalisa Bhabhi, Gaurav Pathania, Rakesh, Vijay Pratap Gaurav, Sanjay ji, Deepak ji, Rakesh ji, Anju Ma'am, Shashi, Sandeep and Dhananjay. With heartfelt gratitude, I remember Late Neelendra, Sanjay Gupta, Ajay Gupta and my grandfather Sri Krishna Chandra Deo.

I am at lack of words to express my love and gratitude to my family members without whom this journey would not have been possible: Jyoti Deo, Varsha Deo, Bashundhara Deo, Amitesh Mehta, Kavya, Aahana, Adrija, Suman Shaw, Abhay Kumar, Ashok Shaw and Lalita Shaw. I also express my immense gratitude to my wife, Punam Shaw, for continuing believing in me when many others had almost given up on me.

CONTENTS

LIST OF IMAGES	I
LIST OF TABLES	II
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	III
LIST OF MAPS	V
MAPS	vi
INTRODUCTION AND HISTORIOGRAPHY	1-22
CHAPTER 1. VIOLENCE AND ENSUING MIGRATION	23-80
1.1 Direct Action of Muslim League and Its Impact	26-34
1.2 The Repercussions of Calcutta Riots: Spiral of Violence	34-46
1.3 Communal Flare Up Reaches Delhi	46-48
1.4 The 3 rd June Plan and the Coming of Independence: The Violence Intensifies	48-52
1.5 Conditions in Delhi: Post- Independence	52-58
1.6 Migration: The Long Journey and the Tale of Woes	58-63
1.7 The Largest Migration in Human History: As It Happened	63-80
CHAPTER 2. INFLUX OF REFUGEES IN DELHI AND THE INITIAL RELIEF EFFORT	81-110
2.1 Life in Refugee Camps	85-96
2.2 The Initial Relief Provided by the State in Delhi	96-102
2.3 Class Difference Among the Refugees	102-110
CHAPTER 3. WOMEN AS VICTIMS OF PARTITION	111-144
3.1 The Fate of Abducted Women	120

3.2 Recovery of Abducted Women	120-129
3.3 The Struggle of Women Victims of Partition	129-144
CHAPTER 4. STATE AS THE AGENT OF REHABILITATION	145-198
4.1 Housing	145-157
4.2 The Evacuee Property Issue	157-161
4.3 Providing Compensation to the Refugees from West Pakistan	161-166
4.4 Training-cum-Employment Programmes	166-179
4.5 Government's Effort to Rehabilitate Various Classes among the Refugees	179-181
4.6 Efforts towards Promotion of Education among the Refugees	181-196
4.7 An overall Assessment of Government's Efforts in the area of Relief and Rehabilitation	196-198
CHAPTER 5. DELHI'S TRANSFORMATION POST-PARTITION AND LIFE AS IT UNFOLDED FOR PARTITION REFUGEES	199-224
5.1 Delhi's All-round Transformation Post-Partition	199
(a) Physical and Economic Changes	199-203
(b) Changes in Food Culture	203-205
(c) Changes in Delhi's Politics	205-207
5.2 Life: As it Unfolded over the Years for the Refugees	207-216
5.3 Nostalgia for the Lost Home	216-224
CONCLUSION	225-247
BIBLIOGRAPHY	248-260

LIST OF IMAGES

Image 1. Workers Removing the Corpses of People who were murdered in the Streets

Image 2. A Convoy of Refugees on Bullock Carts

Image 3. A Foot Convoy of Refugees

Image 4. A Train Overloaded with Refugees

Image 5. Kingsway Camp

Image 6. A Hapless Child Refugee at the Purana Quila Camp

Image 7. Humayun Tomb Camp

Image 8. A Refugee Woman Consoling the Other in a Refugee Camp

Image 9. Central Rehabilitation Advisor Mehar Chand Khanna Showing an Under-Construction Refugee Quarter at Lajpat Nagar to British Politician Aneurin Bevan on February 13, 1953.

LIST OF TABLES

1. State wise Distribution of Displaced Population (Western Zone)
(As on 31st December 1958)
2. Distribution of Refugees According to the Source of Migration-
Location and Rural-Urban Character of the Place from which they
immigrated to Delhi
3. Statement Showing General Health of Refugees in Each
Camp, March 1949
4. Statement Showing the Number of Persons Desirous of
various Occupations
5. A List of Works and Rehabilitation Centres in Delhi State in 1951
6. Number of Persons Housed in the Refugee Colonies
7. Refugee Settlements in Delhi, 1950
8. Distribution of Stalls among Refugees
9. Number of Schools opened by 1948
10. Schedule Showing the Amount of Loans to be Taken on the
Basis of Courses Studied
11. Progress Report regarding the Grant of Educational
Loans to Refugee Students and Trainees from Pakistan
12. Statement Showing Expenditure on Grant of Educational
Loans and Stipends to Displaced Students from West Pakistan
in the State of Delhi During the Years 1947-48 to 1952-53
13. The Number of Students Benefitted from the Educational
Loans and Expenditure on Them

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AICC	-	All India Congress Committee
AIML	-	All India Muslim League
BJP	-	Bhartiya Janta Party
BOAC	-	British Overseas Airways Corporation
CC	-	Chief Commissioner
CUP	-	Cambridge University Press
CWMG	-	Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi
DA	-	Delhi Archives
DDA	-	Delhi Development Authority
DHRB	-	Displaced Harijan Rehabilitation Board
DLO	-	District Liaison Officer
EPW	-	Economic and Political Weekly
GoI	-	Government of India
HSS	-	Harijan Sewak Sangh
HT	-	Hindustan Times
INA	-	Indian National Army
JP	-	Janta Party
LSG	-	Local Self Government
MCD	-	Municipal Corporation of Delhi
MEO	-	Military Evacuation Organisation
MoHA	-	Ministry of Home Affairs
NAI	-	National Archives of India
NCT	-	National Capital Territory
NCR	-	National Capital Region
ND	-	New Delhi

NDMC	-	New Delhi Municipal Corporation
NGO	-	Non Governmental Organisation
NMML	-	Nehru Memorial Museum and Library
NWFP	-	North Western Frontier Province
PCC	-	Provincial Congress Committee
PM	-	Prime Minister
PUCL	-	People's Union for Civil Liberties
Pvt	-	Private
PWD	-	Public Works Department
R&R	-	Relief and Rehabilitation
RSS	-	Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh
SWJN	-	Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru
UK	-	United Kingdom
UNICEF	-	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UP	-	United Provinces/ Uttar Pradesh
USA	-	United States of America
Vol	.-	Volume

LIST OF MAPS

Map 1: India before Partition

Map 2: India after Partition

Map 3: The Radcliffe Line in Punjab

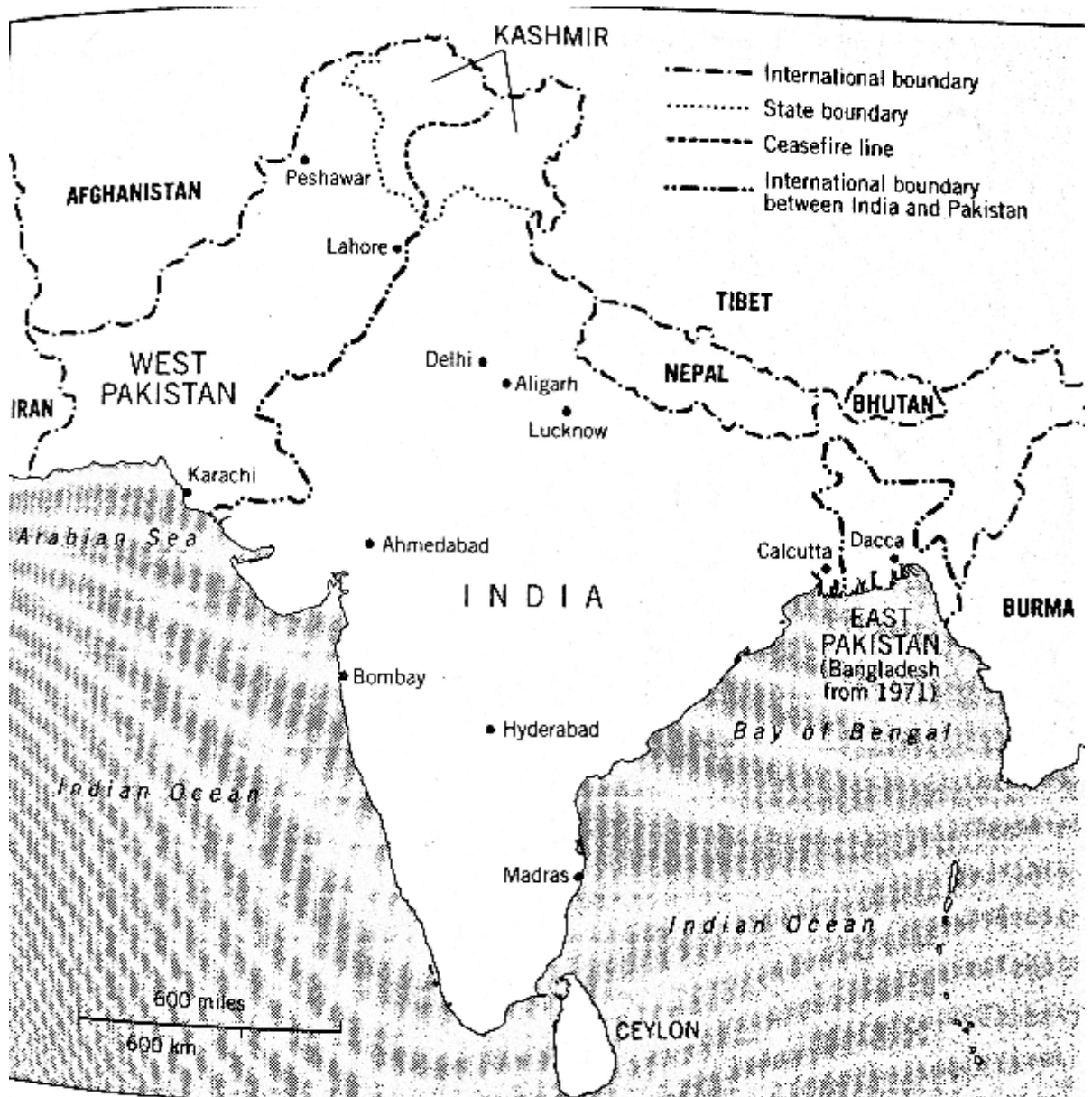
Map 4: The Radcliffe Line in Bengal

Map 1: India before Partition



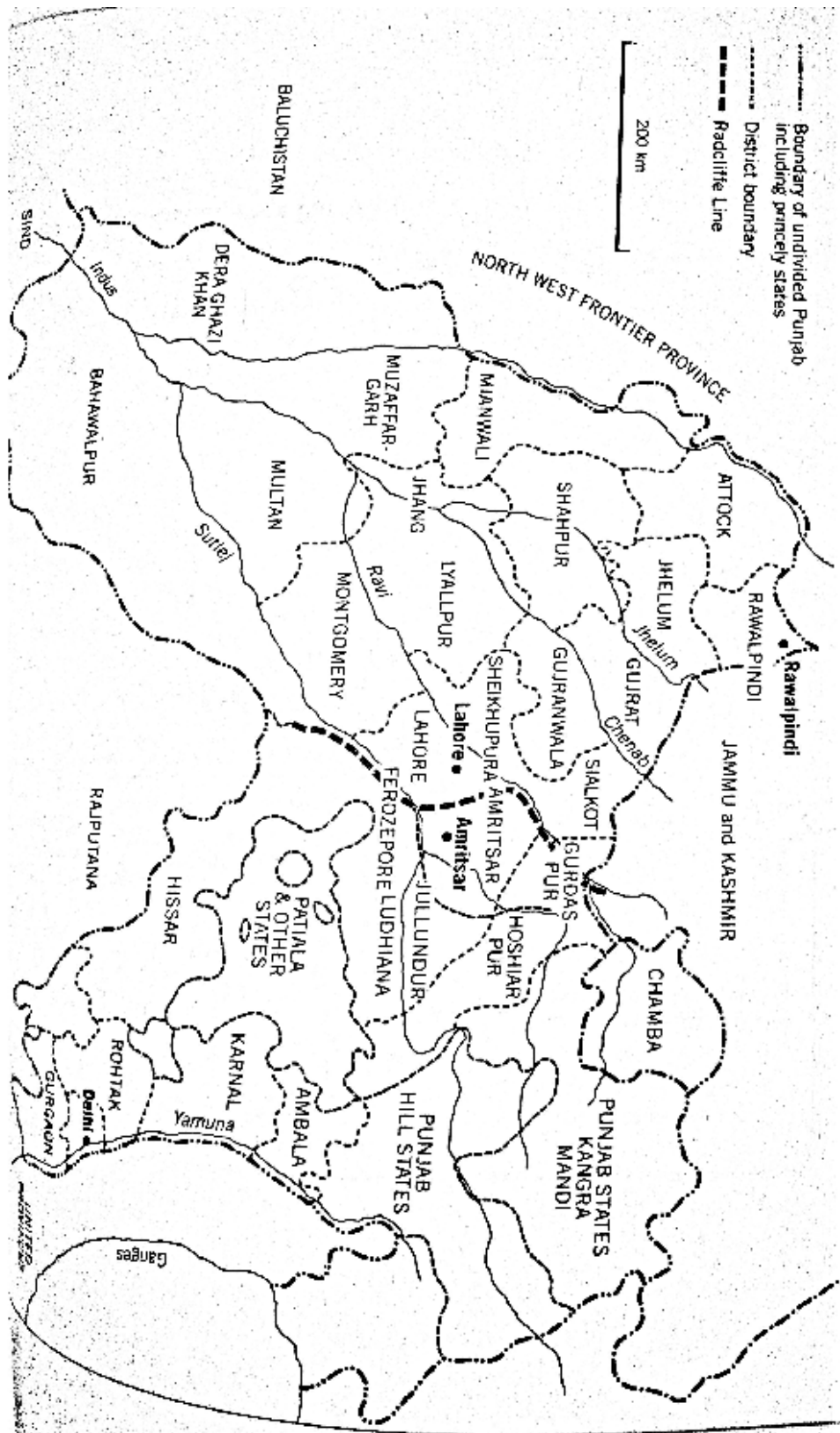
Source: Yasmin Khan, *The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan*, Penguin Books, New Delhi, 2007, p.xxiv

Map 2: India after Partition



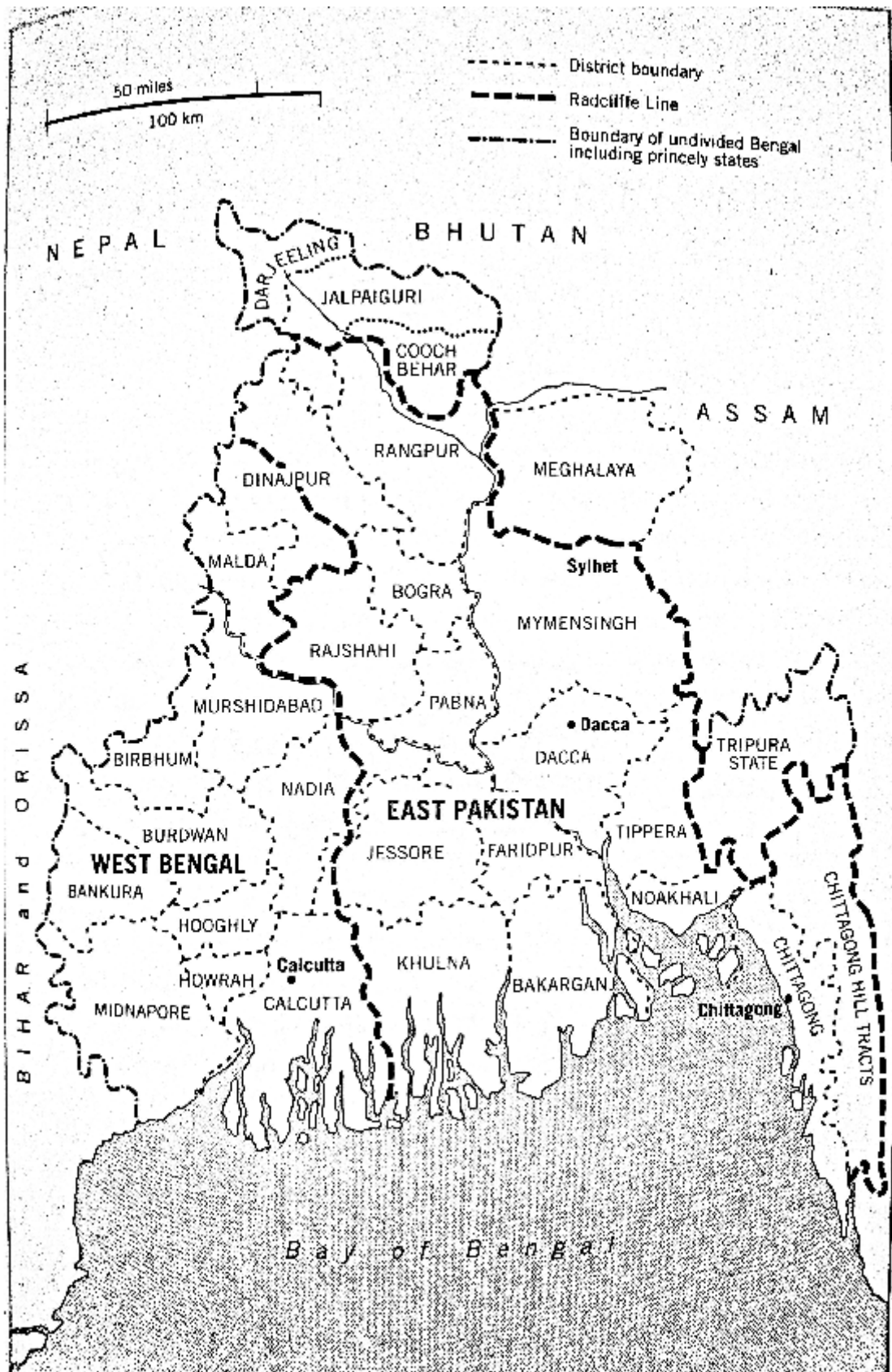
Source: Yasmin Khan, *The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan*, Penguin Books, New Delhi, 2007, p.xxv

Map 3: The Radcliffe Line in Punjab



Source: Yasmin Khan, *The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan*, Penguin Books, New Delhi, 2007, p.xxvi

Map 4: The Radcliffe Line in Bengal



Source: Yasmin Khan, *The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan*, Penguin Books, New Delhi, 2007, p.xxvii

INTRODUCTION

Partition of India has been a watershed in the history of India. It has had a tremendous impact on the shape and form that the Indian subcontinent took in the years to come. Partition created two independent dominions which later became the Republic of India and the Islamic republic of Pakistan¹. Pakistan, which came into existence with the declared objective of establishment of a separate homeland for Muslims, however, could not stay united and in the year 1971, a new independent state of Bangladesh emerged on the issue of Bengali nationalism. In a sense it refuted Jinnah's concept of religion being the sole criterion for creation of a nation-state.

That partition affected the country as a whole and continues to do so is evident from the impact that it has had and still continues to have on the geo-politics of South Asia². The political animosity between the countries of India and Pakistan continues till date and both the countries have engaged in two major wars in 1965 and 1971. In addition to that, a number of skirmishes and conflicts have taken place since 1947. The Kargil War of 1999 and the attack on Indian parliament in December 2001 had almost brought the two nations on the verge of an all-out war. That the two nations have become nuclear powers in quick succession and that there is always an undeclared arms race leading to a culture of high defence spending and militarisation of South Asia is also a legacy of hostility and ill-will that partition generated³. Kashmir has become an intractable problem, the solution to which does not seem at hand in the near future. The insurgency in Kashmir and terrorist activities since 1990s has further widened the gulf between the two neighbours. The trust deficit between the two countries, which has been the legacy of partition, has prevented the two countries from fully utilizing the enormous trade potential. The expenditure on wars, military preparedness and other related matters has led to the diversion of precious

¹ India became a republic when its constitution came into force on January 26, 1950. The constitution of Pakistan was passed on 29th February, 1956 and was promulgated on 23rd March 1956. It proclaimed it as the Islamic state of Pakistan.

² The Kashmir issue is the thorniest of all the problems that partition created. It played and continues to play a vital role in shaping the geopolitics of the region. For a detailed analysis of it, see: Naseer Ahmed and Shaheen Showkat Dar, 'Geopolitical Significance of Kashmir: An Overview of Indo-Pak Relations', *IOSR Journal of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, Volume 9, Issue 2, March-April 2013, pp. 115-123, e-ISSN:2279-0837, p-ISSN:2279-0845. Also see: Harjeet Singh, 'Pakistan: A Geo-Political Analysis', <https://www.claws.in/images/journals-doc/1399528680Harjeet%20Singh%20CJ%20Winter%202009.pdf>

³ Yasmin Khan, *The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan*, Penguin Books, New Delhi, p.182.

resources of country, which could have been otherwise utilised for the betterment of its vast poor population.

Furthermore, the sporadic incidents of communal rioting post-independence had not let the ghosts of partition die. India has been reminded of the bloodshed of partition many times over the last seven decades since independence, by further episodes of communal violence. The first such major outbreak of communal violence took place in Delhi in early November 1984 after the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on October 31, 1984. The anti-Sikh riots that followed the assassination, claimed the lives of about 3000 people, mostly Sikhs and in such a horrific manner that reminded many of the violence of partition. It was 'partition-revisited' for those Sikhs who had made Delhi their homes after their migration from West Punjab in 1947. The people who worked later to provide relief to these people, recount being told time and again by the victims, that they had never imagined that they will have to undergo partition-like violence again in their own country. Urvashi Butalia, who was among these relief workers, recalls, "Often older people, who had come to Delhi as refugees in 1947, would remember that they had been through a similar terror before. 'We didn't think it could happen to us in our own country', they would say. 'This is like Partition again⁴.'"

On 22 May 1987, at Hashimpura (in Meerut district) 42 men from the minority community were allegedly shot dead by the Provincial Armed Constabulary personnel. This was followed by another outbreak of serious communal rioting which engulfed the entire Meerut for a period of two months. About 350 shops were gutted and nearly 400 people lost their lives in the violence⁵. Two years later, in October 1989, began month-long riots in Bhagalpur, Bihar which were triggered by the alleged police atrocities on members of a particular community. At the end of large scale violence and arson about 1000 people lay dead while about 11,500 houses were torched, leading to displacement of about 50,000 people⁶. Again, following the demolition of Babri Mosque on 6th December 1992, serious communal violence took

⁴Urvashi Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence: Voices From the Partition of India*, Penguin Books, New Delhi, 1998, p.5

⁵ For an inside account of the Hashimpura massacre, See: Vibhuti Narain Rai, *Hashimpura*, Penguin Books India Pvt Limited, 2016. Rai was posted as the Superintendent of Police, Ghaziabad District, when the Hashimpura massacre took place.

⁶"Chronology of communal violence in India", *Hindustan Times*, November 9, 2011. Also see: Asghar Ali Engineer, 'Grim Tragedy of Bhagalpur Riots: Role of Police-Criminal Nexus', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.25, No.6, February 10, 1990, pp. 305-307.

place in various parts of the country, particularly in Bombay in January 1993⁷. The Gujarat riots of 2002 were particularly gruesome in their nature and scale. It is considered particularly “horrifying not only because of its barbarity but also because it was viewed to have been ideologically driven and, therefore, bound to be replicated elsewhere⁸”.

In each of these episodes of communal violence we have been in ways more than one, reminded of the Partition and the hostility and suspicion it created between communities. The aggressors have, time and again, used Partition stories and memories selectively to justify their acts of violence against the ‘other’ community, “militant Hindus were mobilised using the one-sided argument that Muslims had killed Hindus at Partition, they had raped Hindu women, and so they must in turn be killed, and their women subjected to rape.”⁹

In fact, ever since independence, Partition has deeply influenced the shape of Indian polity, economy, and society. Partition mayhem had undoubtedly communalised the polity and society of the times and in such an atmosphere, to establish truly secular polity and society, as per the ideals set up during the Indian National Movement was not a mean task. It required a lot of effort and courage on the part of national leaders that India does not succumb to the pressure of communalists to declare India a ‘Hindu State’. Historian Sucheta Mahajan writes:

The partition of India opened up the question of the nature of the polity to be structured. Would it be a secular state, or a Hindu one? The Congress, as the ruling party, was pressurised by Hindu communal groups to declare the state a Hindu *rashtra*. The creation of Pakistan in 1947 gave Hindu communal forces a fillip. The communalised atmosphere created by the riots, migrations and massacres that accompanied partition was conducive for the growth of communalism. Strident anti-Muslim propaganda, instigation and organisation of riots, demand for a Hindu state, and the call to overthrow the government and hang the national leaders reached a climax in January 1948 in the assassination of Gandhi¹⁰.

⁷ For an insightful study of communal riots after independence, See Ramchandra Guha, *India after Gandhi: The History of the World's Largest Democracy*, Macmillan, 2007, pp. 633-659.

⁸ Ajaj Ashraf, ‘Why Memories of Gujarat 2002 Stay’, *The Hindu*, April 12, 2013. For more on Gujarat Riots, see: Siddarth Vardarajan (ed.), *Gujarat: The Making of a Tragedy*, Penguin India, 2002. Also see: Rana Ayyub, *Gujarat Files: Anatomy of a Cover-up*, 2016.

⁹ Urvashi Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence: Voices From the Partition of India*, Penguin Books, New Delhi, 1998, p.6

¹⁰ Tai Yong Tan and Gyanesh Kudaisya (ed.), *Partition and Post-Colonial South Asia*, Vol.1, Routledge, London and New York, 2008, p. 342. Also see, Sucheta Mahajan, *Independence and Partition: The Erosion of Colonial Power in India*, Sage Publications, Delhi, 2000.

Notwithstanding the pressure created by the communal forces, the founding fathers of our constitution chose to stick to the ideals of our freedom struggle, and worked relentlessly to establish a truly democratic and secular India. Prime Minister Nehru had time and again, made his vision of a secular India clear while addressing the general public in his numerous speeches and in his correspondence with his colleagues after Partition. For instance, while addressing mill workers and labourers in Delhi on 30 September 1947, he said¹¹:

As long as I am at the helm of affairs India will not become a Hindu state. The Indian National Congress always worked for the achievement of a socialist democracy where everyone would be given equality of opportunity. Just as it fought against the supremacy of one class, it will now oppose the supremacy of any one community. The very idea of a theocratic state is not only medieval but also stupid. In modern times people may have their religion but not the State.

Sardar Patel was also vehemently opposed to the idea of India being declared 'Hindu State'. He opined, "I do not think it will be possible to consider Hindustan as a Hindu State with Hinduism as the state religion" and emphasised further that, "We must not forget that there are other minorities whose protection is our primary responsibility. The State must exist for all irrespective of caste or creed¹²."

For making the atmosphere conducive to it, the foremost need was to act decisively and in a prompt manner to reach out to those who had been impacted by partition. Hundreds of refugees from Western and Eastern Pakistan had been pouring into India ever since the outbreak of partition riots. The flow of refugees had increased drastically since the declaration of the Radcliffe Award. To provide immediate relief to these refugees and subsequently plan for their permanent rehabilitation was in many ways the first task of disaster management in newly independent India, a task extremely vital for laying a strong foundation of the new nation. Such an enormous task was to be undertaken by a severely depleted official (and non-official) machinery, after the meltdown it witnessed during the partition mayhem and in near-famine like conditions owing to the failure of the monsoons last year and a weak monsoon in year 1947. Naturally, it put tremendous administrative and financial burden on the new state. What added to the enormity and complexity of the task was

¹¹*The Hindu*, October 2, 1947.

¹²Patel to B.M. Birla, 10 June 1947, Durga Das (ed), *Sardar Patel's Correspondence 1945-50*, Vol. 4, Navjivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1966, p.56.

not only the sheer numbers of the refugees but also the fact that the incoming population was quite a heterogeneous one, whose socio-economic composition was very different from the population that it replaced. It was a diverse set of population comprising of the erstwhile big landlords, petty landlords, landless people, businessmen, traders, agriculturalists, artisans, handicraftsmen, doctors, hakims, *vaid*s, teachers, lawyers and many more groups. In effect, it meant that the government's approach towards their resettlement had to be specific and varied. Clearly, the task at hand was enormously complex and time-taking. It could not have been a one-time affair ending with the provision of immediate relief to the refugees. Having lost everything in the partition mayhem, these people had to be provided the wherewithal to sustain themselves and stand on their own feet, so as to enter the socio-economic mainstream. Proper policy planning as well as implementation was very much necessary to do so.

An attempt has been made in this work to study how the Indian state responded to this enormous task in its capital Delhi and the transformation the city witnessed due to the huge refugee influx in the wake of partition.

Partition of India deeply impacted all aspects of development of the Indian sub-continent, a subject which has hardly been the focus of historians working on the partition of India. The focus of most of the writings has been on the event itself and the politics that went into it, on what is now called the 'grand politics' of partition. Beginning the 1980s, the focus of historians has, however, increasingly shifted to the study of the 'human cost of partition'. This work is an attempt to uncover some aspects of it through a study of the refugees who settled in Delhi and their struggle against various odds. As we shall see in the course of this study, the identity of being a 'refugee' has still not left many, even after almost seven decades after partition. This study also looks at their story of rebuilding of their lives and the 'nostalgia for lost homes' and urge (if any) to revisit the lands of their fathers and forefathers, by the first generation and the present generation of the 'refugees'.

Secularism, perhaps, is still an ideal which we strive to achieve. It is thus very essential to have a deeper analysis of what the state has done over the years to bring the 'refugees' into the social, political and economic mainstream and make them equal citizens of an independent country. Such a study could be immensely helpful in

the task of nation-building, which is an ongoing process. The wounds of partition have not healed completely, as is evident in the numerous episodes of communal violence, where the events around partition are selectively remembered. A comprehensive study of the events around partition and its aftermath could be helpful in presenting a full and accurate picture of it. Such knowledge besides adding to the historical record, makes it harder for communal groups on both sides of the border to distort the story and play them against each other. Again, a fuller knowledge from a considerable distance from the event might help to address the lingering trauma the event created, so that we can start to address the root causes of it. Additionally, the people who had suffered the trauma of Partition are now in their eighties or nineties and given the relative stability in their lives are now, probably, more willing to speak up now than before. Silence of the survivor is a complex issue which a historian needs to deal with and provide the interviewee the comfort and confidence to narrate their stories. This might be the last opportunity to explore the rich source of oral history that they possess which could definitely enrich and new perspective to the study of partition and its aftermath, beyond the conventional sources like the records in the government archives, private papers of Viceroys, politicians, autobiographies, and biographies. My own research work has attempted to utilise these sources to explore the event and its aftermath.

HISTORIOGRAPHY

The works on modern Indian history usually follows “a neat, straight forward trajectory that commences with the year 1757, building up to the narratives of the rapid British subjugation and expansion over the entire sub continent, before the Congress launched its nationalist struggle that culminated in freedom on 15 August 1947. This is where Indian History ends.”¹³ The chronology of history of India and Pakistan is, therefore, set up in such a manner that “their narratives reach a climax at independence and partition”. “Past events and movements are”, thus, “cast in a unilinear movement inching towards their ‘tryst’ in 1947”. The events before partition are “analysed not on their own terms, but as aiding or impeding the onward march towards nationhood. ‘Muslim’ politics is always seen through the prism of

¹³Anuradha Kumar, In Book Review of Gyanendra Pandey, *Remembering Partition: Violence, Nationality and History of India*, Contemporary Asia Series, Cambridge University Press, U.K., 2001 as quoted in *Seminar*, Issue Number 522, February, 2003.

‘separatism’ even though it may relate to a much earlier chronology of Indian history. Events are situated in a time-scale that ends in 1947; entire periods are labelled as ‘prelude’ or ‘foreshadowing’. Independence and Partition are seen as a ‘fruition’ or ‘consummation’ of processes operating for decades and even centuries before”¹⁴. 15th of August 1947 is the point where Indian history ends. 1947, however was more than the definitive year marking independence. It was in fact “the moment of rupture” as Gyanendra Pandey rightly put it.¹⁵

For nearly two decades after partition the writings on the subject were dominated by the reflections of the people who had participated in the ‘event’ in some capacity. Written in the form of biographies, autobiographies and personal memoirs, they largely dealt with the ‘High Politics’ of partition, the focus being the major political actors of those times, the politics and events that caused partition to take place in 1947.¹⁶The lack of access to primary sources, it seems, prevented the professional historians to undertake a more nuanced study of partition during this period.

Seemingly dissatisfied with these kinds of biographical and autobiographical writings, which appeared as “an endless stream of didactic” writings, on occasion of the twentieth anniversary of partition in 1967, a group of professional historians led by Sir Cyril Philips organised a conference to reassess the event. The conference had the effect of stimulating a more systematic study of event of partition. The subsequent release of official documents related to the transfer of power by the British government gave access to a minefield of resources to the historians. A 12 volume series edited by Sir Nicholas Mansergh titled *The Transfer of Power 1942-7* soon came out as a result of the release of these documents¹⁷.

¹⁴Tai Yong and Gyanesh Kudaisya, *The Aftermath of Partition in South Asia*, Routledge Publication, London, 2000, p. 17.

¹⁵See Gyanendra Pandey, *Remembering Partition: Violence, Nationalism and History in India*, Contemporary South Asia Series 7, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 2001, p.1.

¹⁶Tai Yong and Gyanesh Kudaisya, *The Aftermath of Partition in South Asia*, Routledge Publication, London, 2000, p. 8. The writings of Alan Campbell-Johnson, Penderel Moon, V.P. Menon, Maulana Azad and Choudhry Khaliqzaman are most important in this genre. See Alan Campbell-Johnson, *Mission with Mountbatten*, Robert Hale, London, 1951; Penderel Moon, *Divide and Quit*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1961; V.P. Menon, *The Transfer of Power in India*, Orient Longman, Bombay, 1957; Choudhry Khaliqzaman, *Pathway to Pakistan*, Longmans, Lahore, 1961 and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, *India wins Freedom*, Orient Longman, Bombay, 1957.

¹⁷*Ibid.*

Professional historians took over from here. The school of historiography that gained prominence now onwards was the Imperialist School, followed by the Cambridge School. Historian Amarjit Singh has divided these writings into five separate categories¹⁸. The writings of H.V. Hodson, Penderel Moon, Nicholas Mansergh, C.H. Philips and Hector Bolitho come under the first category among these writings. These studies, by and large; clearly reflect the colonial interests and attitude. In their opinion it was the omission and tactical errors on the part of the Congress that had the effect of alienating and antagonising the Muslim League, thus, putting them firmly on the path of separatism. In course of time, the forces of Muslim separatism grew stronger and ultimately led to the formation of a separate sovereign state for the Muslims in the form of Pakistan. These historians, however, identify different year or event as the 'turning point'. For example, Hector Bolitho has considered the year 1928 as crucial year as far as the question of politics of Muslim separatism is concerned. He opines that Jinnah tried his best to maintain and strengthen the Hindu-Muslim unity at the All-Parties Conference at Calcutta in 1928 but it was the Congress that was unwilling to pay any serious heed to his ideas and opinions. Such an attitude alienated Jinnah from the national mainstream and he began to pursue the politics of Muslim separatism on a higher plank¹⁹. For Penderel Moon, the year of turnaround was 1937 and events after the provincial elections that year. He argues that it was the Congress' refusal to ally with the Muslim League in forming a coalition government in United Provinces after the 1937 that led to the parting of ways between the League and the Congress²⁰. C.H. Philips has focussed on the Congress' decision of resignation of its ministries in October 1939 (against the unilateral decision of the British government to draw India into the Second World War) as the factor behind the strengthening of the politics of Muslim separatism under the League, finally leading to the partition of India²¹. Philips argues that such a decision created a further rift between the Congress and the British; and the latter decided to favour the Muslim League henceforth.

¹⁸ Amarjit Singh, 'Muslim Communal Politics and Partition of India: Imperialist and Cambridge Historiography', *European Scientific Journal*, Special Edition No. 2, June 2013, pp.1-7. I have borrowed extensively from this work in my understanding of the Imperialist and Cambridge School of Historiography on the Partition of India.

¹⁹ See Hector Bolitho, *Jinnah: Creator of Pakistan*, Oxford University Press, 1954.

²⁰ See Penderel Moon, *Divide and Quit: An Eyewitness Account of the Partition of India*, Oxford University Press India, 1998. The book was originally published in the year 1962.

²¹ See C.H.Philips & M.D.Wainwright (eds.), *Partition of India: Policies and Perspectives, 1937-47*, Allen &Unwin Publication, London, 1970.

The second category of writing is led by historians like David Page, Peter Hardy, R.J. Moore and Farzana Sheikh who argue that “whatsoever be the assumptions of politics and political identity of Muslims of Colonial India, they were mainly directed by the forces of colonial policy and its constitutional measures which strengthened the politics of separatism and ultimately led to the partition of the country”. R.J. Moore argues that the Government of India Act of 1935 played a vital role in strengthening the politics of provincial autonomy and encouraged the Muslim League to convert the process of provincial autonomy into the process of the establishment of a separate sovereign state of Pakistan for Muslims²². David Page, on the other hand, undertakes an extensive study of the period between 1920 and 1932, the period which in his opinion was the one in which the political interests were consolidated around communal issues. He sees the introduction of separate electorates as the major reason behind the strengthening of communal politics which eventually led to the parting of ways²³. Farzana Shaikh, in her work on partition has put emphasis on the rise of community consciousness among the Muslims. She argues that this consciousness paved the way for the growth of political consciousness among the Muslims, resulting in the demand for separate electorate for the Muslims. Once the British conceded that demand, the logic of parity grew furthermore, ultimately leading to the demand for a separate sovereign state for Muslims. Farzana Sheikh emphasises the role of ideas in shaping the contours of the Hindu-Muslim politics between 1860 and 1947. For her, the ideas rooted in the traditions of Islam deeply influenced the development of Muslim political thought. However, her account lays emphasis on the role played by the *ashraf* elites and neglects the common Muslim masses²⁴. As David Gilmartin points out “what is needed, in addition is an analysis of how the idea of Pakistan took

²²R.J. Moore, *The Crisis of Indian Unity, 1917-40*, Oxford University Press, 1974. The book undertakes an analytical study of the period between the two World Wars, when the issue of constitutional progress dominated the political debates in India. Considerable attention is given to the debates and discussions that took part in the three Round Table Conferences in London in the early 1930s and the arguments put forward by the Indian Liberals and the princes. The process of devolution of political power beginning with Montague Chelmsford Reforms, he argues, generated the crisis of Indian unity, leading ultimately to the partition of India.

²³ David Page, *Prelude to Partition: The Indian Muslims and the Imperial System of Control 1920-32*, Oxford University Press India, 1999. The book was originally published in 1982.

²⁴Farzana Shaikh, *Community and Consensus in Islam: Muslim Representation in Colonial India 1860-1947*, Cambridge University Press, 1989.

on significance in counterpoint to the politics of local conflict and local division that continued to shape the lives of most Muslims²⁵.”

Another set of historians led by Paul Brass, Stanley Wolpert, Ian Talbot, and David Gilmartin see the emergence and growth of the politics of Muslim separatism, in terms of the adoption of religious symbols and idioms. Paul Brass argues that the political elite among the Muslims deliberately aroused identity consciousness among the Muslim masses on the issue of language and religion. In other words, they manipulated these two important symbols of group identity to achieve power and that the demand of Pakistan did not arise from below²⁶. Stanley Wolpert focuses on Jinnah as the central figure behind the creation of Pakistan and credits him for altering the course of history. Unlike Ayesha Jalal, who argues that the demand for Pakistan was just a ‘bargaining counter’ to win more Muslim representation in the central and provincial legislatures, Wolpert believes that right since March 1940, Jinnah was determined to create Pakistan. For this purpose he made a cynical use of Islam and its symbols, so as to get the support of Muslim masses behind him²⁷. David Gilmartin makes a detailed study of undivided Punjab and argues that to understand the development and growth of Muslim politics and its ultimate demand of a separate nation-state for the Muslims, the close interaction between the ideology and structure of the Raj and the rise of Islamic ideas, organisation and orthodoxy needs to be properly understood²⁸. Ian Talbot, like David Gilmartin, undertakes a detailed study of the Muslim majority province of Punjab. He considers Punjab as the focal point of British imperial interests and argues that it was the rural idiom of Islam that popularised the demand for Pakistan as the separate homeland for the Muslims. This demand got increasingly strengthened once Jinnah began establishing wide support among the landed elites, clan leaders, *Sufis*, *Pirs* and *Sajjada Nashins*²⁹.

²⁵ David Gilmartin, ‘Partition, Pakistan and South Asian History: In Search of a Narrative’, *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 57, No. 4, November, 1998, pp.1068-95, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2659304>.

²⁶ Paul Brass, *Language, Religion and Politics in North India*, Cambridge University Press, 1974.

²⁷ See Stanley Wolpert, *Jinnah of Pakistan*, Oxford University Press, 1985.

²⁸ David Gilmartin, *Empire and Islam: Punjab and the Making of Pakistan*, University of California Press, 1988.

²⁹ Ian Talbot, *Punjab and the Raj, 1849-1947*, Manohar Publications, New Delhi, 1988.

Historians such as Ayesha Jalal³⁰ and Asim Roy³¹ have focussed on the politics of the Jinnah-led Muslim League. By doing so, while they have traced the developments leading to the rise of communal politics and the demand for Pakistan, they do not agree that the establishment of separate sovereign state was the ultimate aim of Jinnah and his party. They argue that the demand for Pakistan was to be used as a bargaining counter to win more concessions for the Muslims at the centre and in the provinces.

The writings of Anita Inder Singh, Narinder Singh Sarila and Yasmin Khan fall into another category as they see the interplay between the three major political forces, the Congress, the Muslim League and the British as responsible for the partition of India. They also see it as a well thought-out act of decolonisation on the part of the British. Anita Inder Singh while undertaking a detailed study of the period between 1936 and 1947 has discussed at length the interplay of forces among the major political actors of the time. She refutes the argument put forward by Ayesha Jalal that Jinnah was only using the demand of Pakistan as a bargaining counter and was not serious about it. She argues that in the period between November 1946 to February 1947, the Muslim League's obstructionist and uncompromising attitude towards the interim government, its brazen attempts to overthrow by force the ruling Unionist government in Punjab, its refusal to be a part of the Constituent Assembly and to accept the Cabinet Mission Plan of 16 May 1946- all prove that the demand for Pakistan was a serious one³². Singh while arguing that Jinnah was the major force behind the politics of separatism that led to creation of Pakistan does not absolve the Congress and the British from the responsibility for partition.

Yasmin Khan undertakes a detailed study of the period before partition and argues that the post-war years were crucial in a number of ways which ultimately led to the British decision to quit India and strengthening the demand of a sovereign state of Pakistan for the Muslims. She argues that in the eyes of the British, it was the first successful act of decolonisation in Asia or elsewhere. Through incisive research work, however, Khan has shown how such a claim was false due to the haphazard and irrational manner of partition -about one million people died and about 12 million

³⁰See Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan*, Cambridge, 1985

³¹ See Asim Roy, 'The High Politics of India's Partition: The Revisionist Perspective' in Mushirul Hasan edited *India's partition: Process, Strategy and Mobilisation*, Oxford, 1993

³² Anita Inder Singh, *The Origins of Partition of India: 1936-47*, Oxford University Press, 1947

people were uprooted from their homes, the repercussions of which can be felt to the present day³³.

Narinder Singh Sarila tries to explore new ground by arguing that the partition of India was the result of the politics of ‘Great Game’ played between the British and the Soviet Union. He sees the crucial link between the decision of British to partition India and its fear about the Soviet Union gaining control over the rich oil wells of West Asia. He argues that once the British understood that the Congress is unwilling to be its partner in this game, it chose to prop up Pakistan which it could manipulate as per its will³⁴. While critiquing various assumptions made in this book and what she calls “many ‘ifs’ of history” in Sarila’s book, Sucheta Mahajan, sees the attempt of placing partition within the context of present day “terrorism” as a far-fetched one. In her opinion “even the use of Afghanistan and Pakistan against the Soviet Union in the Cold War by the United States was very different from the strategic role cut out for Pakistan by the United Kingdom after independence³⁵.”

The Nationalist School of historiography on partition of India, in both the countries are similar in approach in appreciating the views and role of their own country and castigating the other. In India, this school apportions the blame of partition on either the Muslim League and its politics of separatism or the British and their policy of Divide and Rule. They refuse to accept the theory of intractable communal divide and continuous mutual antagonism between the two major communities and instead try to establish the inextricable intermingling of the two communities.³⁶It argues that the Congress very reluctantly agreed to partition only when owing to incessant communal

³³ See Yasmin Khan, *The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan*, Cambridge University Press, 2007. The hasty retreat of the British was to serve its selfish interests, as it did not feel strong and confident enough to control the deteriorating communal situation in parts of India, particularly Punjab. It did not want to take responsibility of its Indian affairs anymore. Yasmin argues that the Mountbatten Plan was tragically unconcerned with human safety and popular protection. It did not even begin to examine the fear and apprehension of Indians, or to take adequate measures to allay these fear of domination (p.88). The results of it were catastrophic. By August 15, 1947, she says, all the ingredients were in place for ethnic cleansing of Punjab: a feeble and communally polarized police force, the steady withdrawal of the British armed forces and their replacement with an under-staffed and ill-equipped Punjab Boundary Force, and , well armed population. The violence which preceded was grave, widespread and lethal. After August 15, 1947, it assumed a new ferocity, intensity and callousness (p.128).

³⁴Narinder Singh Sarila, *The Shadow of the Great Game: The Untold Story of Partition of India*, HarperCollins Publishers, 2005.

³⁵Sucheta Mahajan, ‘Nothing ‘untold’ About This Story’, *The Hindu*, March 05, 2006.

³⁶ See Tarachand, *History of Freedom Movement in India*, Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1961.

violence perpetrated by the League cadres, the prospect of a civil war loomed heavily. Sucheta Mahajan argues that the Congress, very reluctantly, gave up its ideal of a united India and accepted the plan of partition in the hope that it would finally help to put to the end the widespread communal violence which had been going on since the middle of 1946³⁷. The dominant school of historiography in Pakistan, on the other hand, sees the creation of Pakistan as the fulfilment of long cherished dream of a separate sovereign homeland for the Muslims for which Jinnah and the League fought long and hard.

These writings have still not come out from what, Ayesha Jalal calls, 'Made in India' and 'Made in Pakistan' mould³⁸. The scholarship on partition of the subcontinent has suffered as a result of such an antagonistic approach. In the words of Mahbur Rahman and Willem Van Schendel³⁹:

The study of Partition itself has been one of the principal victims. Over the past half-century, three rival nationalisms have fashioned and refined their own interpretations of Partition, and these are not compatible. On the contrary, they have powered the confrontational politics that continue to dominate interstate relations in South Asia despite many attempts at reconciliation. Few historians or other social scientists have been able to stay aloof from the dominant interpretation in their own country and they have, often unwittingly because of limited contact with their colleagues across the border, contributed to a veritable epistemological and historiographical minefield. It will take much intellectual effort to close this gap: it requires sustained dialogue, revisiting the most emotionally charged events, the unlearning of national reflexes, and the joint reworking of by now long-standing academic traditions. This effort is both urgent and important. Without it, the conceptual and political minefield that Partition represents in South Asian public and academic discourses will only become convoluted.

Thus, we see that there has been a great volume of work on Partition: the event & the factors, forces and personalities who were responsible for it. This "grand narrative of the history of partition concentrates on the politics and the main perpetrators, on deals and negotiations, on the exchange of territories and reckless redrawing of borders, ignores this crucial human aspect⁴⁰"[of partition]. Writing on the historiography of

³⁷ See Sucheta Mahajan, *Independence and Partition: The Erosion of Colonial Power in India*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2000. Also, one of the major factors that led the Congress leaders to agree to partition was that by that time they themselves had come to conclusion that the demand was based on "popular will".

³⁸ Ayesha Jalal, 'Secularists, Subalterns and the Stigma of 'Communalism': Partition Historiography Revisited', *Modern Asian Series*, Vol.30, Issue No.3, 1996, pp.681-737.

³⁹ Md. Mahbur Rahman and Willem Van Schendel, 'I Am Not a Refugee': Rethinking Partition Migration', *Modern Asian Studies* 37, 3, 2003, pp.551-584

⁴⁰ Jashodhara Bagchi & Subhoranjan Dasgupta, 'The Problem', *Seminar* 510, Feb 2002, pp.12-14

partition of India, Mushirul Hasan opines that, “With the focus on high politics, the same old story does the rounds with unfailing regularity. The engagement continues to be with the ‘major’ political actors of the 1930s and 1940s, who conducted their deliberations lazily in cosy surroundings and presided over the destiny of millions without their mandate⁴¹”. Therefore, the historians’ history of partition “is not a history of lives and experiences of the people who lived through that time, of the way in which the events of 1940s were constructed in their minds, of the identities and uncertainties that partition created or reinforced⁴².” “The grand narrative of partition”, thus, “does not reveal at all how the momentous happenings in August- September 1947 affected millions, uprooted from home and field and driven by sheer fear of death to seek safety across a line they had neither drawn nor desired⁴³”. The study of the human cost of partition, the agony and trauma of abducted women, the plight of migrants and the harrowing experiences of countless of those who boarded the train to come to their own ‘nation’ had been lacking.

From the 1980s such a lacuna in writings on partition began to be addressed. It proved to be a watershed as far as partition historiography is concerned. Affected by the emergence of what is called as ‘Subaltern School’ which focussed on hitherto neglected themes such as gender, class, caste etc. - a school of historiography emerged on partition of India whose focus was on the human aspect of partition. Partition came to be studied now from the perspective of common men and women, the trials and tribulation that they had to undergo during and following the mayhem of partition violence and displacement. The pioneers in the study of partition from a human perspective were a set of feminist historians that made an incisive study of the impact that partition had on women⁴⁴. The focus of the historians of this genre also shifted from archival sources to the oral sources. Interviews and personal testimonies played the most important role in this new study. The writings of Anjali Bhardwaj,

⁴¹Mushirul Hasan, ‘Memories of a Fragmented Nation: Rewriting the Histories of India’s Partition’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, October 10, 1998, pp.2662-2668

⁴²Gyanendra Pandey, ‘The Prose of Otherness’, *Subaltern Studies*, Vol.8, edited by David Arnold and David Hardiman, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1994, pp.188-221

⁴³Mushirul Hasan, ‘Memories of a Fragmented Nation: Rewriting the Histories of India’s Partition’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, October 10, 1998, pp.2662-2668

⁴⁴Argues Jisha Menon “these feminist Partition scholars attempt to redress the bias in Partition historiography that speaks of the epochal event in terms of its political causes and disregarding the violent rupture it produced in the lives of over 12 million people. Their scholarship foregrounds the experience of political non-actors, in order to critique political history as well as find a way of writing it differently”. See, Jisha Menon, ‘Rehearsing the Partition: Gendered Violence in “Aur Kitne Tukde”’, *Feminist Review*, No. 84, Post Colonial Theatres, 2006, pp.29-47

Ritu Menon, Kamla Bhasin, Urvashi Butalia, Ravinder Kaur and others are praiseworthy attempt in this direction. Menon and Bhasin in their work show how Partition's gendered violence was often linked to discourses of communal and national 'honour'. They argue that women were symbolically constructed as bearers of both communal and national honour, both in state discourses as well as in first person accounts from this time⁴⁵. Urvashi Butalia through her work has ably attempted to bring the displaced person's individual experiences and personal pain at the centre of the epochal event of Partition. Using oral testimonies as the major source and also through exhaustive analysis of the diaries, letters, memoirs and parliamentary documents, she has attempted to trace the answer to the question as to what effect Partition had on those at the margins of history- children, women, ordinary people, the lower castes, the untouchables⁴⁶. Gyanendra Pandey, on the other hand, re-examines the violence during Partition and shows how the preceding events have been documented. In the process, he presents a critique of history-writing and nationalist myth-making. In addition to this, he also shows how local forms of community are established by the way in which violent events are remembered and written about⁴⁷.

Upon the completion of 60 years of Partition there had been a spurt of scholarly writing on it. Two important books in this regard are Yasmin Khan's *The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan* (2007) and Ravinder Kaur's *Since 1947: Partition Narratives among Punjabi Migrants of Delhi* (2007). Khan in her work has tried to study the context, execution and the aftermath of Partition. She weaves together the local politics and ordinary lives with the larger political forces at play. She also shows how the common people were unaware about the intricacies of the partition debate. Her work is a praiseworthy attempt as it underscores the catastrophic human cost of partition and relates how the present South Asia's politics, economy and their respective ills are a legacy of Partition. Ravinder Kaur's work is another important work in the genre of the writings on human cost of Partition. Kaur examines how the influx of thousands of refugees in Delhi changed the city and how such change impacted the lives of the refugees. She also shows how private and

⁴⁵ See, Ritu Menon & Kamla Bhasin, *Borders and Boundaries: Women in India's Partition*, Kali for Women, New Delhi, 1998.

⁴⁶ Urvashi Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence: Voices From the Partition of India*, Penguin Books, New Delhi, 1998.

⁴⁷ See, Gyanendra Pandey, *Remembering Partition: Violence, Nationalism and History in India*, Cambridge University Press, 2002.

collective memory influence and shape each other. Another important work that has enriched the study of Partition is the moving personal account of the social activist Anis Kidwai titled *In Freedom's Shade* (2011). This work, while revealing the architecture of the violence also shows how the efforts of common people brought the cycle of reprisal and retribution to a close. Additionally, it is also an authentic record of the activities of the Shanti Dal in the context of recovery of abducted women and history of Delhi.

Nisid Hajari's *Midnight's Furies: The Deadly Legacy of Partition*, sees the works on partition that aims to cover the human aspect of it as the stories that are "necessarily granular and episodic, and often unreliable" and views his own work as an attempt to "answer a different question-not why the subcontinent was split, or who was to blame for the massacres, but how the experience of partition carved out such a wide gulf between India and Pakistan". He ends up devoting a considerable portion of his book around the acts of grand actors mainly Nehru and Jinnah and 'their all-too human failings that helped to set their nation at odds'⁴⁸. He considers it very important to properly understand and acknowledge these 'mistakes' so that the dangerous gulf that divides the two countries can be bridged and ' heirs to Nehru and Jinnah put 1947's furies to rest'⁴⁹.

Venkat Dhulipala in a recent book on partition contends that the creation of Pakistan was not accidental at all and the idea of Pakistan was not thus 'insufficiently imagined'. It argues that the idea of Pakistan gradually developed as an outcome of the debates in the public sphere. This, in turn created popular enthusiasm for its

⁴⁸ See Nisid Hajari, *Midnight's Furies: The Deadly Legacy of India's Partition*, Penguin India, 2016, pp. xix-xx. While reviewing Hajari's book Urvashi Butalia says: "The study of partition has undergone considerable change in the last few decades, not only in the terms of academic explorations but also in general accounts, in collection of interviews and stories, in textbooks, and indeed in art, music, culture, film and more. All of this, I think, helps us to begin the process of understanding Partition better. So, it was with some surprise, that I read Hajari's claim that Partition remains poorly understood within India, as I did his slight disdain for "other" histories." Furthermore, in reply to Hajari's criticism of the works which explore the human experience of partition (with their emphasis on oral history) as 'episodic', Urvashi argues: "My second question has to do with the characterisation of certain types of history as "episodic"- something that, it seems to me, carries the assumption that somehow chronology can be privileged over episode. I am reminded of D.D. Kosambi's scathing critique of the western emphasis on chronology as the only way of understanding history. Instead, I would like to offer that each-episode, or pattern, or chronology-has its own charm..." (See: UrvashiButalia, 'Book Review: NisidHajari's *Midnight's Furies* gives a compelling account of Partition', August 10, 2015, <http://www.indianexpress.com/article/lifestyle/books/memories-of-midnight-3/>. (accessed on: 11/07/2017)

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, p.261.

creation in the last decade of the colonial rule. It was the upper class *ashraf* Muslims of the United Provinces who were the flag-bearers in this regard and it was in here that the idea of a separate nation-state for the Muslims, in the form of Pakistan, got concretised as ‘a New Medina’- a powerful new leader and protector of the Islamic world. It was only later that this idea got a strong foothold in the Muslim-majority provinces of Punjab and Bengal⁵⁰.

Fictional writings on partition and some of the films dealing with its trauma are also richest and arguably the finest sources to study and understand what common people had to go through in those tumultuous days. An adequate exploration of these mediums is indispensable to understand partition in its totality. In fact, in the heydays of ‘High Politics’ of partition, when the human experiences and the human cost of partition was almost completely neglected or glossed over, it were the fictional writings and cinema (which came up a little later) that dealt with these issues. In the words of noted Hindi novelist Krishna Sobti: “Memory of those times could always be falsified, distorted with an ideological bias. That is why writers wrote their major novels only after they were rid of their mental and physical clogging and could see the partition with clear sight⁵¹.” “The fiction written about the partition in India and Pakistan”, she adds “has made an attempt, despite the enormity of the horror it describes, to preserve the essential human values. This attempt is remarkable. Because there certainly existed hatred between the communities. It led to the destruction of property, migration of populations and a lot of killings. Yet the writers were convinced that it was essential to preserve a sense of humanity, to affirm human values⁵².”

The human tragedy caused by partition has found poignant expressions in novels like *The Train to Pakistan*⁵³ by Khushwant Singh, *Ice Candy Man*⁵⁴ by Bapsi Sidhwa, *Tamas*⁵⁵ by Bhisham Sahni, *Adha Gaon*⁵⁶ by Rahi Masoom Raza, *Kitne Pakistan*⁵⁷ by

⁵⁰ See Venkat Dhulipala, *Creating a New Medina: State Power, Islam and the Quest for Pakistan in Late Colonial North India*, Cambridge University Press, 2015.

⁵¹ Krishna Sobti and Alok Bhalla, ‘Memory and History’, *India International Centre Quarterly*, Vol.24, No.2/3, Crossing Boundaries, Monsoon 1997, pp.55-78, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23005432> (accessed on 06/01/2015)

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Khushwant Singh, *Train To Pakistan*, Chatto & Windus Publishers, 1956.

⁵⁴ Bapsi Sidhwa, *Ice Candy Man*, Penguin Books India, 1989.

⁵⁵ Bhisham Sahni, *Tamas*, Rajkamal Prakashan, 1972.

⁵⁶ Rahi Masoom Raza, *Adha Gaon*, Rajkamal Prakashan, 1966.

Kamleshwar, *Aag ka Dariya*⁵⁸ by Qurratulain Haider. Manto's stories are truly remarkable representations of the trauma of partition. In fact, 'Partition and its aftermath became an obsessive theme in Manto's later writing, and his stories of this period are widely considered among the most forceful accounts of the trauma of division. It is very often for these that he is most remembered⁵⁹.'

The world of cinema also could not remain unaffected by the partition of the country. It destabilised the two major film centres of undivided India - Bombay (now Mumbai) and Lahore. In course of time Calcutta (now Kolkata) also emerged as a major film making centre. Some of the major film personalities of the time like Noor Jehan, Zia Sarhadi and Ghulam Mohammed left for Pakistan. Similarly, prominent film makers such as Gulzar, B.R. Chopra, Yash Chopra, Govind Nihlani and others moved across the border and came to India⁶⁰.

The Indian cinema that emerged after 1947 bore the undeniable imprint of partition. Not many films, however, were made which directly dealt with the subject of partition⁶¹. *Lahore* (1949) directed by M.L. Anand was the first film that dealt with the partition violence and the issue of abducted women. *Chhinamul* (1951) by Nema Ghosh that came two years later, revolved around the partition violence and the massive displacement that it caused, removing the people far away from their socio-cultural moorings. The kind of deprivation, physical abuse and mental trauma that the violent uprootment caused had also been brilliantly portrayed. Ritwik Ghatak made a trilogy of films in the 1960s in the form of *Megha Dhaka Tara* (1960), *Komal*

⁵⁷Kamleshwar, *Kitne Pakistan*, Rajpal Publishing, 2000. The novel won the Sahitya Akademi Award 2003. While it got rave reviews in India, owing to its provocative title, the novel did not do well in Pakistan.

⁵⁸Qurratulain Haider, *Aag ka Dariya*, Kitab Mahal, 2014. The book was originally published in 1959.

⁵⁹Aamir R. Mufti, 'A Greater Story- writer then God: Genre, Gender and Minority in Late Colonial India', in Partha Chatterjee & Pradeep Jeganathan (eds), *Community, Gender and Violence, Subaltern Studies XI*, Permanent Black, New Delhi, pp. 1-36.

⁶⁰Gita Viswanath & Salma Malik, 'Revisiting 1947 through Popular Cinema: A Comparative Study of India and Pakistan', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 44, No. 36, September 5, 2009, pp.61-69.

⁶¹For a detailed study on how partition has affected Indian cinema in the six decades after the event, see, Bhaskar Sarkar, *Mourning the Nation: Indian Cinema in the Wake of Partition*, Duke University Press, 2009. It is considered as one of the best books which study the impact that partition had and continues to have on Indian cinema. In fact cinema on the whole was deeply influenced by the trauma of partition. Says Rafique Baghdadi, the National Award winning film critic and historian: "It was a very tense period, mingled with confusion and excitement. People were full of hope for a new and better nation, while at the same time there was a looming sense of insecurity, and that is reflected in the movies that were made in the time." (See: Ruchi Kumar, '1947: The Partition of Indian Cinema', *Daily News & Analysis*, August 15, 2013, <http://www.dnaindia.com/entertainment/report-1947-the-partition-of-indian-cinema-1875020>).

Gandhar (1961) and *Subarnarekha* (1962). These films capture in a poignant manner the daily struggles of the displaced persons living in slum-like conditions on the outskirts of the cities in the ‘squatter’ refugee colonies. His films while focussing on the emotional and mental trauma of the refugees “were peopled with the vast floating populations that drew into Calcutta from the villages of East Bengal, of smouldering dreams in slums and unmitigated nostalgia about the golden land left behind⁶².” About Ghatak’s penchant for making films on partition, his son Ritaban Ghatak once said “My father’s work was always meant for the masses. He found limitations with literature so he turned to theatre, and when he found even theatre was constrained by the number of people who can see a performance, he turned to cinema. He respected the masses; believed they could not live on bread alone⁶³.”

Amar Rahe Yeh Pyar (1961) directed by Prabhu Dayal dealt with the hitherto neglected issue of child victims of partition. Set in the backdrop of partition riots, the story is of a lost child who is handed over to a widow for upkeep. Five years later, the child’s Muslim parents come to claim him but decide against it seeing the bond and affection that the child had developed with the woman. Yash Chopra’s *Dharmaputra* that was released in the same year (1961) also deals with a similar issue. While portraying the religious violence and communal bigotry in the backdrop of partition, it tells a story of an illegitimate Muslim child adopted and lovingly brought up by a Hindu family. M.S. Sathyu’s *Garam Hawa* (1973) explores a new theme in dealing with the kind of hardships that Muslim families had to undergo in post-partition India. The ambiguity in the Muslim mind regarding their decision whether to continue living in India or move to Pakistan has been captured beautifully. The psychological trauma faced by the elderly people who were made to leave their ancestral land and property has also been portrayed through the story of an old widow who refuses to leave the home where she had come as a bride decades before. *Tamas* (1987), directed by Govind Nihalani vividly captures the role of rumours in inciting communal trouble. The suffering of women, abduction rape and mass suicides has also been dealt with. The film also highlights the attempts made by peace organisations to restore communal harmony.

⁶²SalilTripathi, ‘Troubled troubadour’, *The Times of India*, April 27, 1997.

⁶³*Ibid.*

On completion of 50 years of independence and partition, there was a spurt of film-making on the subject.

Train to Pakistan that was released in the year 1998 was based on the novel of the same name by Khushwant Singh. Directed by Pamela Rooks, the film is set in the backdrop of the partition riots and revolves around the love affair between a Sikh youth and a Muslim woman. It shows how the news and rumours of violence elsewhere led to the disruption of community relations in the hitherto peaceful village leading to outbreak of serious rioting. It also shows the impact that it had on the railways, the violence in which becomes the “totemic image” of partition. *1947 Earth* that was released in the same year is based on Bapsi Sidhwa’s novel *Ice Candy Man*. Directed by acclaimed filmmaker Deepa Mehta, the story is set in Lahore during the time immediately before and after partition. It captures the events of the period and the upheavals that it brought in the lives of people across social and religious categories. Two remarkable films mainly dealing with the issue of abducted women were released in 2003: *Khamosh Pani* directed by Sabiha Samar and *Pinjar* based on a novel by Amrita Pritam, directed by Chandraprakash Dwivedi.

CHAPTERIZATION

This thesis is divided into five chapters excluding the Introduction, Historiography and Conclusion.

The opening Chapter titled ‘Violence and Ensuing Migration’ begins with the argument that the kind of violence surrounding the partition of India was unprecedented in human history. At the end of the mayhem, even the conservative estimates put the figure to about one million deaths or more. The kind of communal frenzy that was witnessed during those tumultuous times was enormous in scale and brutality. The chapter also discusses how a chain of violence that began with the ‘Great Calcutta Killings’ on the day of August 16, 1946, in coming months engulfed parts of Bihar, Noakhali in East Bengal, Garhmukteshwar in United Provinces, reaching its crescendo with the Rawalpindi Riots of March 1947. Very soon, almost all the parts of Punjab, as elsewhere, began to feel the heat of communal violence. The chapter also highlights the role that political propaganda and rumours played in spreading violence to newer areas. The impact that it had on the life of the capital city

of Delhi has also been discussed. The intensification of violence with the announcement of the 3rd June Plan has also been discussed along with the ambiguities created by the delayed declaration of Boundary Commission's Award. The chapter also highlights how large scale violence, looting and arson, made the people leave their homes and migrate to safer places. It points out that intermittent migration had started ever since the initial spurt of violence, which increased manifold in the months to come. The violence in Punjab, following the declaration of new boundaries in particular, led to what is called the biggest migration in human history, gearing around a single event. It is estimated that about 12 to 14 million people crossed the newly created boundaries and settled in new and unfamiliar territory. The chapter also tries to explore the ways in which class distinctions determined the mode of transport and subsequently, the very experience of migration.

The second chapter examines the possible reasons behind Delhi attracting the largest chunk of refugees and how did it fare in its aftermath. It also provides an account of the life that the refugees had to live in government established refugee camps in various parts of the city, the problems faced by the camp inmates and the ways in which the government's policies affected their lives. The physical abuse and psychological trauma faced by the young women has also been dealt with. The chapter also considers the ways in which the government provided initial relief to the distraught refugees and established an exclusive machinery to deal with their issues. It also opines that there were considerable class differences among the refugee population and hence the task before the government to permanently settle them was a complex one.

The third chapter 'Women as Victims of Partition' deals exclusively with the ways in which partition deeply impacted the lives of women who became the worst sufferers in the partition mayhem. It argues that in any event of large scale communal violence, it is the women who have to bear the biggest brunt. The gendered violence of partition was, however, unprecedented. Thousands of women were raped and murdered in a most horrific manner. The chapter argues how the bodies of women became a site of political assertion, the violation of which became a means of demeaning, shaming and humiliating the men of the other community. Thus, we see a number of cases of cutting off breasts and marking of religious symbols on the private parts of violated

women. In fact, the study argues that during the partition violence, women's bodies had become the 'site on which the battle of nationhood began to be fought'. The study also seeks to understand the issue of women's agency in cases of mass suicides. The chapter also makes a detailed study of the issue of abducted women along with the complexities generated by the state's effort to recover them.

The fourth chapter 'State as the Agent of Rehabilitation' provides a detailed study of the Indian State's efforts to permanently rehabilitate the refugees. It discusses the housing schemes that the government undertook to provide them shelter. The complex issues of Evacuee Property and the provision of compensation to refugees have also been dealt with. It also seeks to understand the problems that those Muslims who chose to stay in India had to face. The various Acts that the government promulgated in order to settle the refugee issue have also been mentioned. The chapter also highlights the schemes to provide training and employment to refugees. It also deals with government's efforts to rehabilitate the agriculturists, teachers, lawyers, engineers, architects and erstwhile government employees. Various measures taken by the government towards promotion of education and employment have also been discussed.

The fifth chapter seeks to understand the manner in which partition had a transformative impact on Delhi's polity, society, economy and culture. Through a number of personal testimonies gathered from a variety of sources (books, magazines, journals and personal interviews) an attempt has been made to understand the struggles faced by the refugees and the manner in which they were overcome to resurrect lives. The study also tries to deal with the complex question of nostalgia for lost home, the answers to which quite often depend on the way in which the questions are framed and the existing India-Pakistan relations.

CHAPTER 1

VIOLENCE AND ENSUING MIGRATION

One word that stands almost inseparable from Partition is 'Violence'. As Gyanendra Pandey says: "Perhaps the most obvious sign of the Partition of India in 1947 was the massive violence that surrounded, accompanied or constituted it¹". Partition violence was unprecedented in its scale, spread and brutality. G.D. Khosla, who served in the Judicial Branch of the Indian Civil Service, had witnessed the violence first hand. His account about partition violence, based on interviews with the victims, is one of the first authentic records about it and reads as follows:

History has not known a fratricidal war of such dimensions in which human hatred and bestial passions were degraded to the levels witnessed during this dark epoch when religious frenzy, taking the shape of hideous monster, stalked through cities, towns and countryside, taking a toll of half a million innocent lives. Decrepit old men, defenceless women, helpless young children, infants in arms, by the thousands were brutally done to death by Muslims, Hindu and Sikh fanatics. Destruction and looting of property, kidnapping and ravishing of women, unspeakable atrocities and indescribable inhumanities were perpetrated in the name of religion and patriotism....Madness swept over the entire land, in an ever-increasing crescendo, till reason and sanity left the minds of rational men and women, and sorrow, misery, hatred, despair took possession of their souls².

Sporadic incidents of communal clashes had, no doubt, occurred many times in the past too but the communal violence surrounding partition was of an entirely different category from the local riots on the issue of cow slaughter or music before mosques. The chain of violence that began in Calcutta with the Muslim League's day of 'Direct Action' on 16th August 1946, soon engulfed Noakhali in East Bengal, followed by Bihar and Garhmukteshwar in Meerut district in United Provinces. Once the flames of communal violence reached Punjab in the month of March 1947, a point of no return of sorts was reached, as the cries of Pakistan became shriller in this hugely contested Muslim majority province. The violence that had begun in Rawalpindi district soon spread to neighbouring districts, engulfing all of Punjab in quick time. It

¹ Gyanendra Pandey, 'The Prose of Otherness', *Subaltern Studies*, Vol.8, edited by David Arnold and David Hardiman, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1994, pp.188-221. For the millions that were caught in the mayhem, Partition is closely associated with violence. To those fortunate ones that survived, it takes on other names- migration, violence, and uproar.

² G.D Khosla, *Stern Reckoning: A Survey of the Events Leading Up To and Following the Partition of India*, OUP, Delhi (1989) (reprint of 1949 edition), p.3.

continued unabated till the time the minority community was forcibly ousted from their homes and forced to migrate to the other areas, and eventually to the other side of the border.

Each communal riot was seen as a further endorsement of the two-nation theory and the divisive propaganda unleashed by the communal parties worked overnight to stress upon the desirability of partition as the solution of all ills. The ones who were strictly opposed to it at one point of time, had to eventually agree to it to prevent the prospect of civil war that loomed heavily during those days. The violence around the demand of Pakistan did not remain confined to the two contested provinces of Punjab and Bengal however. Delhi, Bombay, Karachi, Quetta, Varanasi, Shahjahanpur, Pilibhit, Moradabad, Meerut, Kanpur, Lucknow, Bareilly, Garhmukteshwar, Allahabad, Aligarh, Ahmedabad, Godhra, Vadodara, Shimla, Dehradun, Chapra, Jamalpur and others too witnessed communal riots at different points of time between 1946 and 1950. It is estimated that about one million people lost their life in this communal orgy. Partition of India was, thus, preceded and followed by communal butchery of unimaginable scale. Never in the past had India experienced such senseless violence and such gruesome atrocities, that too perpetrated by the common people against each other.

The instigation had no doubt come from the communal leaders who worked for their own political gains but it was the common people, who, blinded by hatred towards people from other community, took up arms, killed and maimed people. The violence that accompanied and followed partition was, in other words, the “compulsive destruction of Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims by one another, the violence of the people as distinguished from the violence of the State, and the ‘convergence of elite and popular communalism³’.”

The Indian National Congress, which claimed to represent all of India and Indians, was clearly not able to bring the Muslim masses in the mainstream. This was evident since the 1937 elections. The nationalist leaders failed to address the fears of the Muslims of socio-economic, political and cultural domination by the Hindus in an independent India. The Muslim League led by as brilliant a strategist as Jinnah,

³ Bharati Ray, ‘Women and Partition: Some Questions’, in Bharati Ray and Aparna Basu (eds), *From Independence Towards Freedom: Indian Women Since 1947*, OUP, New Delhi, 1999, pp.1-18

played upon these fears and in course of only a decade captured the imagination of a substantial number of Muslims. This was amply clear after the League massive success in 1945-46 elections. It strengthened Jinnah's claim as the 'sole spokesman of the Muslims' and put his two-nation theory and thus the demand of Pakistan on a much stronger footing. As the Pakistan movement grew in popularity, '*Lad ke lenge Pakistan*' (we will get Pakistan by force) became the popular slogan and this was forcefully insisted upon by resorting to communal rioting. The Congress later argued that they agreed to the partition of the country to put an end to the orgy of violence unleashed by the League to enforce their demand of Pakistan. They believed that it would end the stalemate that had plagued the functioning of interim government and made effective governance near impossible. Partition was thus considered as a necessary evil which had to be accepted to put an end to the orgy of violence. As it actually happened, the communal mayhem attained a more feverous pitch once the scheme of partition came to be known and intensified further as the days on independence and partition came nearer. Once the new borders came to be known after August 17, 1947, the communal carnage reached epic proportions. It is estimated that by this high tide of violence subsided about 1 million people: men, women and children lay dead.

In the words of Sucheta Mahajan:

...though the Congress accepted partition as a last measure, when all else failed to stop the violence, this tactic was as incapable of containing violence as earlier ones. The irony was cruel: "The partition of India was agreed by the Congress leaders in the hope of averting [as Nehru himself declared in his radio address on 3rd June] a civil war between Hindus and Muslims, but a civil war did result, perhaps in acuter form." If they had anticipated that partition would unleash greater furies of violence rather than stemming the existing tide, perhaps the Congress leaders may not have accepted partition⁴.

Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia has aptly summed up this in his book *Guilty Men of India's Partition*⁵:

The country was partitioned in order to avoid further Hindu-Muslim rioting. Partition produced that which it were designed to avoid in such abundance that one might forever despair of man's intelligence or integrity. Six hundred thousand women, children and men were killed often with such brutality and

⁴ Sucheta Mahajan, *Independence and Partition: The Erosion of Colonial Power in India*, Sage Publications, Delhi, 2000, pp.346-47

⁵ Rafiq Zakaria, *The Price of Partition*, Bhartiya Vidya Bhawan, Mumbai, 1998, p.172.

lunacy that the killers seemed to be experimenting with a view to achieve yet newer forms of murder or rape. 15 million persons were uprooted from their homes and made to seek a living and habitat in regions that increasingly tended to become less friendly. That movement was probably the greatest migration forced or willing in all history of humankind. To this day some men are trying to find out as to who was more beastly, the Hindu or the Muslim.

1.1 Direct Action of Muslim League and Its Impact:

By the end of the Second World War it had become clear to the British authorities that they cannot hold India for long. The war had wrecked the economy of Britain. At the end of it, she no longer remained a major world power. The United States of America and the Soviet Union had emerged as the new super powers in the world. There was considerable pressure on Britain from these two powers to grant political independence to her former colonies. The war itself had been fought advocating the principle of the 'right of self-determination'. In addition to it, the national movement under the leadership of Gandhiji had also grown tremendously in strength. Memories of the upsurge created by the Quit India Movement were still fresh in the minds of the British bureaucracy. Furthermore, a series of revolts in the armed forces in India, uproar created by the INA Trials and particularly the Royal India Revolt of February 1946 had made the British acutely aware that it would no longer be militarily possible and economically viable to occupy a country of sub-continental proportions. Therefore, they decided to wind up their Raj and withdraw from India. But before that could be done, it had to transfer power to suitable Indian hands so that its future geopolitical interests do not get completely jeopardized.

For this purpose, they sent a three-member Cabinet Mission in March 1946 comprising Pethik Lawrence, Stafford Cripps and A.V. Alexander. As Lawrence emphasised in a statement made at a Press Conference at New Delhi on 25 March 1946, the objective of the Mission was to set up "a machinery whereby the forms under which India can realise her full independent status" is "determined by the Indians" and "to set up an acceptable machinery quickly, and to make the necessary arrangements⁶".

⁶ Statement made by Lord Pethik-Lawrence at a Press Conference at New Delhi on 25 March 1946, in *Nicholas Mansergh (ed), The Transfer of Power 1947-47: The Cabinet Mission 23 March-29 June 1946*, Vol.7, 1977, pp.2-5.

It also had a clear instruction that any solution to the Indian problem must satisfy Britain's future economic and defence interests. For Britain, India remained the jewel which it could hardly afford to let go completely. As a 'Secret Note on the results to the British Commonwealth of the Transfer of Political Power in India'⁷ emphasized "The transfer of political power in India to the Indians will affect Great Britain and the British Commonwealth in the three principal issues: Strategy, Economics and Prestige." "The principal advantage that the Britain and the Commonwealth" derived "from the control of India" was "strategic." In the future, India could "also be an indispensable link in the Commonwealth air communications both in peace and war". India was also one of the countries with robust trade relations with Britain. Its geographical location, its industrial potential and tremendous strength in terms of manpower, meant that it could play a vital role in furtherance of Britain's future geo-strategic interests. Additionally, "she had an army of quarter a million; and her economic prospects were really good" and above all "the greatest danger was that an independent India may come under the domination of Russia". The Mission kept this in mind while during the course of the next three months, it had long and wide-ranging discussion on the twin issues of establishment of an interim government and a Constituent Assembly to frame a new constitution for free India.

After long discussions the Mission came up with a plan on 16th May 1946 which came to be known as the Cabinet Mission Plan.

Initially, the Cabinet Mission as well as the Viceroy Wavell were attracted by the possibility of creation of a full-fledged Pakistan on the prospect of it being a willing new entrant in the Commonwealth and were ready to help its defence needs against India but by the middle of April 1946, their stand had changed. They now suggested to the British Prime Minister that Pakistan would be weak "the defence would not be very effective" and "it would be strengthened only in so far as it could rely upon its treaty with Hindustan. There would be no common control of Foreign Policy and therefore common action might easily become difficult or impossible⁸." Pakistan

⁷ Cabinet Mission to P.M. Attlee, 13 July 1946, in Nicholas Mansergh (ed), *The Transfer of Power 1942-47: The Interim Government 3 July-1 November 1946*, Vol.8, 1979, pp.49-57

⁸ Telegram from cabinet delegation and Wavell to Attlee, L/P&J/5/337:pp.141-2, 11 April 1946, in Nicholas Mansergh (ed), *The Transfer of Power 1947-47: The Cabinet Mission 23 March-29 June 1946*, Vol.7, 1977, pp. 220-21.

would thus be more likely to be a liability and hence, the Mission rejected the Muslim League's demand of a sovereign Pakistan.

In its place it proposed for an undivided India in which the Union government at the central level would be responsible for defence, foreign affairs, and communications whereas the rest of the subjects would be dealt by the provinces which would be grouped into three categories or groups. Through the grouping, however, the Cabinet Mission did concede the Muslim League's demand half-way. Group A was to comprise the Hindu-majority provinces of Bombay, Madras, Central Provinces, United Provinces, Bihar and Orissa. Group B was to comprise the Muslim-majority provinces Of Punjab, North West Frontier Provinces and Sind, while Group C was to have Assam and Bengal⁹. The Mission's Plan of a weak centre, "full autonomy" to the provinces and the provision for grouping gave to the Muslim League "the substance of Pakistan". Initially, the two parties seemed to accept the Plan. In a statement made on 22 May 1946, Jinnah while expressing his regret 'that the Mission should have negative the Muslim demand for the establishment of a complete sovereign State of Pakistan' left the final decision on its acceptance or rejection on the Working Committee and the Council of the Muslim League¹⁰. The Congress Working Committee passed a resolution on May 24 and expressed its inability to give a final opinion on the Cabinet Mission proposals which it claimed as 'incomplete and vague' and postponed the decision in the absence of a full picture¹¹. Sardar Patel thought that while on principle the Cabinet Mission could not and should not coerce any province to go into a group against its will, but he felt that it was unnecessary to go into detail and ask further explanations. He opined that, "I do not think it is wise to open up these matters at this stage. If we find the proposals otherwise satisfactory, and the interim arrangement is made to our satisfaction, it would be wise to accept the proposals¹²". However, soon differences emerged over the issue of grouping and both the major parties sought explanations from the Mission. It, therefore, issued a

⁹ Statement by the Cabinet Delegation and Viceroy Wavell issued on 16 May 1946 in New Delhi, L/P&j/10/42:ff 53-55, in *Nicholas Mansergh (ed), The Transfer of Power 1947-47: The Cabinet Mission 23 March-29 June 1946*, Vol.7, 1977, pp. 582-591.

¹⁰ Statement made by Jinnah on 22 May 1946, L/P&J/5/337: pp. 343-9, in *Nicholas Mansergh (ed), T.O.P.*, Vol.7, 1977, pp. 663-669.

¹¹ CWC Resolution on May 24, 1946, Enclosure to Maulana Azad to Pethick-Lawrence, Letter on the same date, in *Nicholas Mansergh (ed), T.O.P.*, Vol.7, 1977, pp. 679-682.

¹² Sardar Patel to Nihchaldas Vazirani, dated 12 June, 1946, V. Shankar (ed), *Select Correspondence of Sardar Patel: 1945-1950*, Vol 1, Navjivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1977, pp. 121-22.

statement on 25th May clarifying the points raised by Jinnah and the Congress. About the contentious issue of grouping it said, ‘The reasons for the grouping of the Provinces are well known and this is an essential feature of the scheme and can only be modified by agreement between the parties. The right to opt out of the Groups after the constitution-making has been completed will be exercised by the people themselves, since at first election under the new provincial constitution this question of opting out will obviously be a major issue and all those entitled to vote under the new franchise will be able to take their share in a truly democratic decision¹³’. After the Mission’s clarification, the Muslim League Council met on June 6 and accepted its proposals. It agreed to participate in the Constitution-making process and authorised Jinnah to negotiate with the Viceroy on Interim Government¹⁴. The Congress Working Committee in its resolution passed on 25 June 1946, agreed to “join the proposed Constituent Assembly with a view to framing the Constitution of a free, united, and democratic India¹⁵”. The All India Congress Committee ratified it on 7 July. However, the differences over grouping remained with the Congress insistence that there should be no compulsion regarding it and the provinces should be free to decide whether to join or not to join a particular group. Nehru made his view about the Constituent Assembly clear in a Press Conference on 10 July that “what we do there we are entirely and absolutely free to determine”, the Assembly being a ‘sovereign body’¹⁶.

This statement provoked angry reactions from the League’s camp. The pro-League newspaper Dawn in its report on 17 July 1946 questioned the British Government, “Are they going to delude themselves and mislead the world by continuing to hug the illusion that Congress has accepted their long-term Plan and constitution-making in India will now proceed on the basis of the compromise formula laid down with their authority by the Cabinet Mission; or are they going to make it clear once again that

¹³ Statement by Cabinet Mission made on May 25, 1946, L/P&J/10/43: ff 57-60, as in *Nicholas Mansergh (ed), T.O.P., Vol.7, 1977, pp. 688-689.*

¹⁴ Enclosure to Letter from Jinnah to Wavell on 7 June 1946, L/P&J/5/337: pp. 418-20, as in *Nicholas Mansergh (ed), The Transfer of Power 1947-47: The Cabinet Mission 23 March-29 June 1946, Vol.7, 1977, pp. 836-838.*

¹⁵ Enclosure to Maulana Azad letter to Lord Wavell, 25 June 1946, L/P&J/ 5/337: pp. 504-509, in *Nicholas Mansergh (ed), T.O.P., Vol.7, 1977, pp. 1036-1038.*

¹⁶ Statement by Nehru at a Press Conference on 10 July 1946, L/P&J/10/73: ff 298-302, as in *Nicholas Mansergh (ed), The Transfer of Power 1942-47: The Interim Government 3 July-1 November 1946, Vol.8, 1979, pp. 25-31.*

should any party, be it the Muslim League or the Congress proceed inside the Constituent Assembly on any other basis than that categorically specified in the State Paper of May 16th, 1946, the Plan will be deemed to have failed and the Constituent Assembly set up under it will be dissolved¹⁷?”

The Council of All India Muslim League organised a two-day session in Bombay in the last week of July 1946, attended by 400 of its 528 members and withdrew League's acceptance of the Cabinet Mission proposals. Speaking at the meeting Jinnah questioned again the national character of the Congress and blamed it for the failure of the Cabinet Mission Plan. Maulana Hasrat Mohani, the famous Urdu poet and freedom fighter, speaking at this session, advocated Direct Action and added confidently that not a single Muslim would lag behind once Jinnah gave its call¹⁸.

On 29th July 1946, Jinnah gave the call for 'Direct Action' to be celebrated all over the country on 16th August¹⁹. It asked League's followers to come out on the streets in large numbers and observe a complete hartal on the day in order to press for the demand of Pakistan. In the provinces where the Muslim League held its sway, the preparation for Direct Action began to be made. Bengal was one such province. In the 1946 elections the Bengal Muslim League had emerged as the majority party and had formed a government under the premiership of Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy. His government declared the 16th of August as a public holiday so that people can come out on the streets in large numbers and fight for the demand of Pakistan. An advertisement in League paper on 16 August read:

‘Today is Direct Action Day

Today Muslims of India dedicate anew their lives and all

they possess to the cause of freedom

Today let every Muslim swear in the name of Allah to resist aggression

Direct Action is now their only course

¹⁷ Dawn Report of 17 July 1946, as cited in Nicholas Mansergh (ed), *The Transfer of Power 1942-47: The Interim Government 3 July-1 November 1946*, Vol.8, 1979, pp. 72-73.

¹⁸ *The Times of India*, 29th July, 1946

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

Because they offered peace but peace was spurned

They honoured their word but were betrayed

They claimed Liberty but are offered Thralldom

Now Might alone can secure their Right'.²⁰

In fact, the Muslim League's leaders had been spreading communal propaganda in the preceding weeks as well. In an editorial in *The Morning News*, a newspaper published from Calcutta, its editor Akram Khan who was an active Leaguer himself, wrote on 5 August 1946 that the Muslims "do not believe in the cant of non-violence."²¹ One Nizamuddin, a conservative landlord threatened: "There are a hundred and one ways in which we can create difficulties, especially when we are not restricted to non-violence. The Muslim population of Bengal know very well what "Direct Action" would mean so we need not bother to give them any lead".²²

The incessant propaganda did have its effect and the day of 'Direct Action' saw massive communal rioting in Calcutta. Trouble started as early as 7 a.m. in Manicktala area in north-east Calcutta and continued throughout the day engulfing new areas. By 6 p.m. several incidents of communal clashes accompanied by looting of shops and arson were reported from several parts of Calcutta. In addition to brickbats, in a number of cases shotguns were also used by the members of both the communities. As the telegram from the Governor to Lord Pethik-Lawrence made it clear, the disturbances were "markedly communal" and not in "any way anti-British" or "anti-government"²³. The residence of Congress leader Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy and the office of Bengal Provincial Congress Committee were also attacked by the mob. For the next three to four days the violence continued unabated. The scale of slaughter and brutality became evident once the mayhem subsided. "Streets were littered with near-naked, bloated bodies with limbs tangled like ropes. In the streets which now wore a barren look, vultures and dogs ripped off great ribbons of their

²⁰ *Dawn, Eastern Times, Morning News*, 16 August 1946. As cited in: Anita Inder Singh, *The Origins of the Partition of India 1936-1947*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1987, p. 181

²¹ *Morning News*, 5 August 1946, *Ibid.*

²² *Dawn*, 12 August 1946

²³ Telegram from Governor of Bengal F.Burrows to Lord Pethik-Lawrence, 16 August, 1946, 8:20 p.m., L/P&J/8/577: f 52, as in Nicholas Mansergh (ed), *The Transfer of Power 1942-47: The Interim Government 3 July-1 November 1946*, Vol.8, 1979, pp. 239-40.

flesh”²⁴. The Muslim League government did not act decisively to nip the violence in its bud. In fact, the Muslim League government was very much complicit in the riots as it did not allow the law enforcement agencies to carry out their duties when it was required the most. In a statement to the press on August 17, 1946 Nehru said²⁵:

I should not like to say much about the Calcutta disturbances before full facts are available. But this is obvious that what has happened in Calcutta can only take place when there is an organised effort to do so. The Provincial Government has no high reputation for competence or anything. Now one is inclined to doubt if it is any government at all. The kind of speeches which have been delivered by the Provincial Ministers in Bengal and Sind exhibit a sense of irresponsibility which is amazing. Obviously, such events as have taken place in Calcutta, deplorable as they are, do not make any major difference to the course of events. What they do is to degrade our public life completely. The future of India or that of any community is not going to be decided by the gangster methods. Unfortunately, even a small number of persons can for a while upset the life of the city if proper precautions are not taken. I am sure that the vast majority of Hindus and Muslims in Calcutta must deplore what has happened and must have kept away from it.

The Statesman's editorial of August 18, 1946 stated:

It was obvious from the early hour that some of those who were set on disrupting the city's peace were privileged. The bands of ruffians rushing about in lorries, stopping to assault and attack and generally spreading fear and confusion, found the conveyances they wanted. On a day when no one else could get transport for their lawful avocations, these men had all they wanted; it is not a ridiculous assumption that they had been provided for in advance.²⁶

It is estimated that within 72 hours itself the unprecedented communal rioting claimed about 4000 lives and displaced about 10,000 people in its wake. The Government sources put the number of people being treated in various hospitals in Calcutta at “over 3000” and the number of those killed into “4 figures”²⁷.

It was only after intervention of the army on the fourth day that violence ended. Horace Alexander, who had toured the affected areas on August 17, 1946 in a Red Cross van and had witnessed the violence first hand, was also perplexed about the delayed call up of the army. In a letter to the Secretary of State he wrote that, “The

²⁴ Nisid Hajari, *Midnight's Furies: The Deadly Legacy of India's Partition*, Penguin Books, Delhi, 2016, p.16

²⁵ *The Hindu*, 19th August 1946

²⁶ *The Statesman*, 18th August 1946

²⁷ Telegram from Burrows to Wavell, 19 August 1946, L/P&J/8/577: f 44, as in Nicholas Mansergh (ed), *The T.O.P.*, Vol.8, 1979, p. 267.

failure to call in the help of the military until Saturday afternoon seems to me to call for very severe censure”, particularly “in the light of the plain impotence of the police”²⁸. Sardar Patel too, pointed out to Stafford Cripps the negligence of the administration to quell the violence in the bud. He argued: “...if strong action had been taken here, when “Direct Action Day” was fixed by the Muslim League and when 16 August was fixed as a day of demonstration in Calcutta, all this colossal loss of life and property and blood-curdling events would not have happened. The Viceroy here took the contrary view, and every action of his since the “Great Calcutta Killing” has been in the direction of encouraging the Muslim League and putting pressure on us towards appeasement²⁹”.

The violence that took place in Calcutta had gripped the psyche of the minority population and they had started to leave for other places which they considered safe.

Phillips Talbot, a young American journalist on a tour of India, reported to his boss in New York –based Institute of World Affairs, about the Calcutta Riots in the following words:

Witnessing a great city feed on its own flesh is a disturbing experience. In spite of our war heritage of callousness, I know that I was not alone in sensing profound horror this last week as Calcutta, India’s largest metropolis and the second city of the Empire, resolutely set at work to cannibalise itself. After four days of uncontrolled fury a shattered city remained. Many months must pass before it can recover from the material despoilment that overtook it. But far more serious, I am afraid, is the spiritual damage. Dazed, suspicious survivors showed none of the camaraderie and mutual sympathy which tends to spring among victims of severe bombing. Instead their eyes revealed hatred, bitterness, distrust, and fright. I cannot guess how long the city will need for the recovery of its soul.³⁰

²⁸ Letter from Horace Alexander to Pethick-Lawrence, 22 August 1946, L/P&J/7/5935: ff 2-3, in Nicholas Mansergh (ed), *T.O.P.*, Vol.8, 1979, pp. 287-90.

²⁹ Sardar Patel to Cripps, dated 15 December, 1946, in V. Shankar (ed), *Select Correspondence of Sardar Patel: 1945-1950*, Vol 1, Navjivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1977, pp. 146-49.

³⁰ Phillips Talbot, *An American Witness to India’s Partition*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2007, pp.184-185. Phillips Talbot had come to India in 1938 as a 23-year old on a scholarship with the objective of learning the intricacies of life and politics of South Asia. He stayed in India till 1950 and reported about the events around the build up to India’s and Pakistan’s independence. He also reported about the early experiences of these new dominions in a series of reports sent to the Institute of World Affairs, New York. In the Foreword of this book B.R. Nanda calls Phillips account as the best contemporary account of those time, p.10

In similar vein Purushottam Das writes³¹:

Thousands of bodies have perished in the Calcutta carnage, but what is worse is that it has injured the soul of man. This injury is much greater than all that had happened in Bengal. People live in constant fear of death. They cannot breathe freely, they have lost all sense of security. Death is a constant reminder to them.

1.2 The Repercussions of Calcutta Riots: Spiral of Violence:

The Calcutta Riots had an unmistakable impact on the future course of events. In some ways it sounded the death nail for the dream of a united India. It made it clear that the League, through its incessant propaganda, had gathered enough strength to completely dismantle the entire fabric of law and order by resorting to large scale violence, if it so wished. The spectre of civil war from now on loomed heavily on the horizons. Furthermore, once the news of the Calcutta riots spread, the communal situation worsened in other parts of the country too.

The next outburst of communal violence took place in Noakhali in East Bengal. Muslims formed the majority in this part of Bengal. The class composition was such that the majority of Muslims were peasants, landless labourers, and artisans while the Hindus who were in minority, were mostly landowners. In such a scenario, it was comparatively easier for the League cadres to propagate the idea of Pakistan among the masses as a land of opportunity and a place where they could live without the dominance of Hindu *baniyas* and landlords. Mass meetings were held at various places urging the Muslims to enrol in the Muslim League National Guard. A strong movement for economic boycott of Hindus was also started and Muslims found purchasing from Hindu shops were severely beaten³². Growing mutual distrust between the two communities led to the outbreak of violence on October 10, 1946, and over 700 villages were subjected to looting, arson and murder. In sharp contrast to the Calcutta Riots, in Noakhali and neighbouring Tippera district, the attacks on property and incidents of rape figured much more prominently than murders. Telegrams from East Bengal giving distressing accounts of organised hooliganism, looting, arson, murder and forcible conversions came pouring in to Nehru, other

³¹ P.D Tandon, *To Noakhali- With the Congress President, October 1946*, New Literature, Allahabad, p. 3

³² Telegram from Governor Burrows to Pethik-Lawrence, 16 October 1946, No.266, L/P&J/8/578: f 158, as in Nicholas Mansergh (ed), *T.O.P.*, Vol.8, 1979, pp.743-44

political leaders and British officials throughout the month of October and November 1946. Nehru wrote to Wavell on October 14 about the “exceedingly painful reports” of the happenings.³³ In another letter, he told the Viceroy that, “a vast area of Bengal has ceased to have any Government functioning, any security, and has just become the happy hunting ground of the worst elements in the community. Mass slaughter, arson, burning of human beings, rape, abduction on a large scale, forcible conversions and all manner of other horrible things are happening³⁴.” Sardar Patel complained to Stafford Cripps on 19 October 1946: “You would realise how difficult it is for an Indian Home Member to sit in his office quietly day by day when innumerable piteous appeals and complaints are received for some kind of help which would give these unfortunate and helpless victims some protection”. He added that, “What is happening in East Bengal is much worse and the Calcutta incident pales into insignificance before Noakhali”.³⁵

It, however, took about two weeks for the violence to subside completely.

The Congress Working Committee adopted a resolution on October 24 condemning the communal violence in Noakhali in strong terms. It said that, “The riots in Bengal clearly form parts of a pattern of political sabotage calculated to destroy Indian Nationalism and check the advance of country towards democratic freedom.” It also held communal hatred preached by the League over the years and their politics of hate, responsible for the violent outbreaks. Warning against retaliatory violence, the resolution said:

The Committee finds it hard to express adequately their feeling of horror and pain at the present happenings in East Bengal. Reports published in the press and statements of public workers depict a scene of bestiality and medieval barbarity that must fill every decent human being with shame, disgust and anger. Deeds of violation and abduction of women and forcible conversion and of loot, arson and

³³ Nehru to Wavell, 14 October 1946, Wavell Papers: Official Correspondence: India, January 1946-March 1947, p.173, as in Nicholas Mansergh (ed), *T.O.P.*, Vol.8, 1979, pp.724-725.

³⁴ Nehru to Wavell, 15 October 1946, Wavell Papers: Official Correspondence: India, January 1946-March 1947, p.175-6, as in Nicholas Mansergh (ed), *T.O.P.*, Vol.8, 1979, pp.732-33

³⁵ Sardar Patel to Stafford Cripps, dated 19 October, 1946, as in V. Shankar (ed), *Select Correspondence of Sardar Patel: 1945-1950*, Vol 1, Navjivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1977, pp. 409-10.

murder have been committed on a large scale in a predetermined and organised manner by persons often found to be in possession of rifles and other fire arms³⁶.

As a result of the fear created by the communal violence, a large number of Hindus left Noakhali and migrated to other places. Bihar, being the neighbouring province, attracted the largest number of refugees. Once the tales of Calcutta and Noakhali along with the rumours associated with them, reached Bihar with incoming refugees, the communal situation in Bihar deteriorated.

The incessant propaganda unleashed by the Hindu Mahasabha and through newspapers such as *Searchlight* and the *Indian Nation*, edited by a Hindu landlord, the Maharaja of Darbhanga (Nehru suspected that the landlord's instigation was to "divert the attention of their tenantry from agrarian problems³⁷") also played a prominent role in communalising the atmosphere, especially since the Noakhali riots. *Searchlight* carried daily reports on "goonda raj in East Bengal" and accused the Muslim League of attempting to establish Islam by sword. "Gone are the days when Hindus...proved helpless before successive hordes of invaders³⁸." In such an atmosphere, the call of a hartal by the Hindus on 25 October 1946 and its observance as 'Noakhali Day' in Patna led to outbreak of "a mass upsurge of Hindu peasants against Muslims, resulting in a massacre far more terrible really than Noakhali, with at least 7000 deaths³⁹." Trouble soon spread to the neighbouring districts. Communal rioting broke in Chapra Saran district, resulting in 20 deaths and 40 other casualties. Police had to resort to firing to curb the rampaging mob at various places in which 2 people were also reported killed. Rioting spread to neighbouring villages of Chapra in coming days in which 63 people were killed. On 28th October communal riots took place in Bhagalpur in which 14 people were killed and 43 other casualties were reported⁴⁰. Prompt action by the Congress ministry brought the situation under control by the evening of the same day but the next day communal clashes were reported from eastern and south-eastern parts of Jehanabad subdivision in Gaya

³⁶ *The Times of India*, 25th October, 1946

³⁷ Nehru to Patel, 5 November 1946, Durga Das, *Sardar Patel's Correspondence, 1945-50*, Vol. 3, Ahmedabad, 1971, p. 165.

³⁸ *Searchlight*, editorial, 21 October 1946, as quoted in Anita Inder Singh, *The Origins of the Partition of India 1936-1947*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1987, p. 198.

³⁹ Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India: 1885-1947*, Macmillan Publishers, New Delhi, 1983, p.433

⁴⁰ Telegram from Governor H. Dow to Pethick Lawrence, 29 October 1946, L/P&J/8/573: f 136, in Nicholas Mansergh (ed), *The Transfer of Power 1942-47: The Interim Government 3 July-1 November 1946*, Vol.8, 1979, p. 831

district and the western part of Monghyr district. The Marwari businessmen were believed to have financed the organised killings of Muslims in Bihar, in retaliation of for the violence in Calcutta and Noakhali⁴¹. In a note written on 6th November 1946, Nehru who had gone to Bihar to personally assess the situation observed⁴²:

The events in Calcutta from the 16 August onwards resulted in the killing of a large number of Biharis in Calcutta. Many of the *gwalas* (milkmen), the cartmen, the rickshaw-*wallas* and the *darwana* or door-keepers in Calcutta were Biharis. There is also in Bihar a large Bengali Hindu population. The news of this killing in Calcutta affected Biharis profoundly. The relatives of those killed returned to Bihar as well as other refugees. They spread out in rural areas carrying stories with them of what had happened in Calcutta. This created a feeling of great resentment throughout the province. On the top of this came news of Noakhali and East Bengal, more especially the accounts of forcible conversion of large number of people and abduction and rape of Hindu women. This kind of a thing is likely to inflame any people anywhere. Hindus especially are more affected by anything involving abduction and rape of women and forcible conversion. The Biharis became terribly excited and the Bengali element in Bihar was even more excited.

The outcome of this was the riots that took place in October-November 1946. Once the fear of violence and destruction gripped their minds, an exodus of Muslim population from Bihar began. The increasing spate of communal violence polarized the communities further as time progressed. In such a situation small incidents involving two communities or mere rumours, sometimes, led to serious rioting.

For peace and amity to prevail at this critical juncture, it was necessary that the community leaders as well as the leaders of the political parties took the initiative of bringing communal harmony by fighting off rumours and opposing communal elements with their full might. But very little effort was undertaken in this direction. Gandhi, the apostle of non-violence was considerably shaken and pained by the rapid deterioration in the Hindu-Muslim relations which was evident by the instances of new outbreaks of communal violence as days progressed. Once the news of riots at Noakhali broke, Gandhi sent Congress President Acharya Kripalani and his wife Sucheta Kripalani there to ascertain the facts and try to bring peace among

⁴¹ See, Anita Inder Singh, *The Origins of the Partition of India 1936-1947*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1987, p. 198

⁴² Nehru in a Note on November 6 1946, Jawaharlal Nehru Papers, NMML. See S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of J.L. Nehru*, Second Series, Volume 1, Pub. by Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1984, p.72

communities⁴³. Purushottam Das Tandon, who also accompanied them on the tour to Noakhali, was utterly shocked by the scale of ‘mass slaughter and butchery’. He writes in his memoir, “I have neither the strength nor the ability to describe in adequate words the monstrosities that were perpetrated by hordes of murderers in Noakhali and elsewhere. Some one must invent a dictionary to describe that devilish dance of death⁴⁴.”

Later, Gandhi decided to visit Noakhali by himself to try to preach his message of truth and non-violence and bring some sanity to the minds and hearts of people. While he was still at Calcutta, the news of communal riots in Bihar came and considerable pressure was put on him to take a tour of Bihar instead. But after some hesitation, he decided that “though Bihar calls me, I must not interrupt my programme of Noakhali.” Rather, he decided to undertake “some measures of penance” for the Bihar happenings by reducing his intake of food.⁴⁵

Gandhi stayed in Noakhali from 6 November 1946 to 2 March 1947, and fought heroically against all odds to bring some sanity in the hearts and minds of the people. Next, he toured Bihar, Delhi and Calcutta trying to soothe communal tempers and douse the fire of communalism. His herculean effort in these rife-torn months has been called as ‘the Mahatma’s finest hour⁴⁶’, by Sumit Sarkar. He writes:

Increasingly isolated from the Congress leadership, the old man of 77 with undiminished courage decided to stake his all in his bid to vindicate his life-long principles of change of heart and non-violence in the villages of Noakhali, followed by Bihar and then the riot-torn slums of Calcutta and

⁴³ The riots that engulfed Noakhali and Tippera from October 10, 1946 onwards were one of the most horrific communal riots witnessed in India till date. That they were very well organised by the local Muslim League cadres was very much evident. Kripalani opined: “Outside goondas do not loot things of everyday use such as clothes, foodstuffs etc. They don’t drive away cattle...Outside goondas are...not interested in forcible conversions and marriages. They don’t take pirs and maulvis with them to perform conversion ceremonies.” This was the statement by Kripalani on 29 October 1946, as quoted in Lambert, ‘Hindu-Muslim Riots’, p.184. See: Anita Inder Singh, *The Origins of the Partition of India 1936-1947*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1987, p. 196

⁴⁴ P.D Tandon, *To Noakhali- With the Congress President, October 1946*, New Literature, Allahabad, p. 1

⁴⁵ Open letter in *Harijan*, 10 November 1946, *Mahatma Gandhi Collected Works*, Vol. 86, pp.81-82.

⁴⁶ Sardar Patel, however, saw it as a “fruitless mission”. Deeply worried about Gandhiji’s failing health, he wrote to Stafford Cripps, “You know that Gandhiji at the age of 77 is spending all his energy in the devastated Hindu homes in Eastern Bengal and trying to recover the lost girls and bring back those forcibly converted to their old faith. But he is working against heavy odds, and I have great apprehension that he will end his life there in this fruitless mission. He is surrounded by a very hostile atmosphere. In the event of his death there in these circumstances, what will happen no one can say. I shudder to think of the consequences...” See, V. Shankar (ed), *Select Correspondence of Sardar Patel: 1945-1950*, Vol 1, Navjivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1977, pp. 146-49.

Delhi. He lived with a handful of companions in hostile Muslim dominated villages, held out a threat of fast unto death if Bihar Hindus did not mend their ways (6 November 1946), and from January 1947 set out barefoot through Noakhali village roads, once sweeping away with hands garbage strewn on his path by angry Muslims, and starting every morning with what had become his favourite hymn, Rabindranath's 'If there is none to heed your call, walk alone, walk alone'. Gandhi's unique personal qualities and true greatness was never before evident than in the last months of his life: total disdain for all conventional forms of political power which could have been his for the asking now that India was becoming free; and a passionate anti-communalism which made him declare to a League leader a month after partition, while riots were ravaging the Punjab: 'I want to fight it out with my life. I would not allow the Muslims to crawl on the streets of India. They must walk with self-respect'⁴⁷.

Nehru too followed Mahatma's footsteps and fought communal forces with all the strength in his command. He toured Calcutta to oversee the relief works for the victims of riots and dashed to Bihar once the news of riots came. He stayed there till peace returned and minced no words in strongly condemning the dastardly act of Hindu mobs of attacking the Muslim *tolas*. He delivered a number of speeches, travelling widely and urging the masses to abide by the Gandhian principles of truth and non-violence. A determined Nehru wrote to Sardar Patel "I must not leave Bihar till we see light...As for myself I will never allow any repetition of communal massacre anywhere on this earth. I have suspended all my engagements and I will go from village to village in Bihar to prevent communal riots."

In a speech at Taregna he spoke thus, "In case any man seeks to kill his compatriot, he will have to murder Jawaharlal first, and then by trampling over his corpse, he would be able to satisfy his lust for blood"⁴⁸. To curb the rioters in Bihar, Nehru went to the extent of threatening bombing the affected areas. It led to an outcry by the Hindu Mahasabha and "some resentment among the Hindus about the alleged ruthlessness with which the Hindu mobs were suppressed while Muslim mobs in Bengal were apparently given a free hand."⁴⁹

Notwithstanding these efforts, some leaders continued to fuel communal hatred by resorting to inflammatory speeches. Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) and the

⁴⁷ Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 1989, p. 437. Sarkar quotes Khaliqzaman, *Pathway to Pakistan*, p. 404.

⁴⁸ Speech at a public meeting at Taregna (Bihar) on 5 November 1946, *Jawaharlal Nehru Selected Works*, 2nd Series, Vol.1, p.60

⁴⁹ Fortnightly Reports for UP and Bengal for first half of November 1946, HP File No. 18/11/46, as cited in Anita Inder Singh, *The Origins of the Partition of India 1936-1947*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1987, p. 199

Hindu Mahasabha, who had till then maintained a 'safe' distance from the Indian national movement, also emerged vigorously on the political scene at this point of time to make it sure that the Congress does not give in to pressure and agree to the demand of Pakistan. Reporting about situation in Bihar after the riots, for instance Governor Hugh Dow wrote to Wavell that "Almost everywhere in the province feelings are very tense between the communities, and in spite of much conciliation work being done by prominent individuals, the prominent leaders are still so much at variance and exercise so little restraint in their public utterances, and the press is so little helpful, that everyone still feels that another flare-up may come up at any moment⁵⁰." The fiery speeches made by the leaders of the communal parties created a fear psychosis in the minds of the common people. Every issue now came to be seen from a communal angle. On November 6 in a Hindu fair at Garhmukteshwar in Meerut district "a small incident in an amusement side show led to overwhelming attack with arson and looting on few Moslem [Muslim] stallholders and carriage drive" resulted in 46 deaths. On the next day of the fair, mobs attacked the Muslim residents and burnt their houses⁵¹. The number of casualties was high. Such incidents strengthened the hold of League among the Muslims who began to believe strongly in the League-propagated fear of Hindu domination in an independent and united India. Furthermore, Sikh community leaders like Master Tara Singh, who had a considerable influence among the rural masses of Punjab, vitiated the communal atmosphere in Punjab by resorting to inflammatory speeches. *Hindustan Times* report titled 'Sikhs cannot trust the Muslims' of 2 March 1947 is particularly revealing:

The New York Times published today an interview between their correspondent at Amritsar and Master Tara Singh, the 62 year old leader of the militant Sikh community, in which the latter said – "I do not see how we can avoid civil war although, of course, we should try". Master Tara Singh emphasizing particularly Sikh fear of the Muslims said: "There can be no settlement if the Muslims want to rule Punjab. We cannot trust the Muslims under any circumstances."

The correspondent said that the Sikh leader, whose picture was published alongside the dispatch, disclosed that the Sikhs had started to organize their own private volunteer army in view of the Muslim League agitation against the coalition ministry

⁵⁰ Dow to Wavell, L/P&J/5/181:ff 34-7, D.O. No. 310-G.B., 22/23 November 1946, in Nicholas Mansergh (ed), *The Transfer of Power 1942-47, The Fixing of a Time Limit 4 November 1946-22 March 1947*, Vol.9, 1980, p.148

⁵¹ Telegram from Sir F.Wylie (United Provinces) to Lord Pethic Lawrence, L/P&J/8/573:f 132, November 8, 1946, in Nicholas Mansergh (ed), *T.O.P.*, Vol.9, p.30

of Punjab in which the Sikhs are represented. Master Tara Singh was quoted as saying that he believed “in the Sikhs ability to keep the Muslims out of East Punjab. “But why should we stop there”, “We would drive them out of the Punjab entirely”⁵²

By March 1947, the prospect of civil war loomed heavily upon Punjab with its leaders frequently resorting to irresponsible and inflammatory utterances. On March 5, 1947, Master Tara Singh appealed to all those who were opposed to the Muslim League demand of Pakistan to observe March 11, 1947 as “Anti-Pakistan Day”. He said: “Under the stress of Pakistan menace, Sikhs, Hindus, and Congressmen have once again organised a united front and are preparing to make the formation of Muslim League ministry in Punjab impossible. Let every Hindu, every Sikh and every Punjabi realise the gravity of the situation. The Muslim League has now won the first round and we are now face to face with the Pakistan menace”.⁵³

There are various such versions of the Sikh leaders’ speeches. Slogans of *Pakistan Murdabad* were shouted and naked swords were rattled in public in opposition to the Pakistan demand.

The Sikh masses were deeply influenced by these speeches as they were strongly and unwaveringly against the creation of Pakistan. They feared that it would break up their community. Punjab was the only province in which they were in considerable numbers. Moreover, they had a relatively better socio-economic status in the province. Major businesses, banks, insurance companies etc were in the hands of Sikhs and Hindus. In addition to it, the sacred Sikh shrines were also scattered throughout the province. Creation of Pakistan would have meant restricted or no access to those holy places. Therefore, the Sikhs opposed the creation of Pakistan vehemently. Some of their leaders did not show proper restraint in their utterances and conduct in the public which further fuelled the animosity between Sikh organisations and the League.

League leaders had themselves excelled in delivering hate speeches. Some of the most hateful speeches were delivered in the Muslim Legislators’ Convention in Delhi at the time of Cabinet Mission’s visit. If *Pakistan Murdabad* was provocative to the

⁵² *Hindustan Times*, March 2, 1947

⁵³ *The Times of India*, March 6, 1947

Muslims of Punjab in March 1947, the slogan *Leke rahenge Pakistan, Jaise lia tha Hindustan* (we will achieve Pakistan in the same way in which we once conquered India) in February, was equally provocative to the Hindus and the Sikhs.⁵⁴

By this time it had become clear that in the event of an imminent partition of the country, Punjab would be the most hotly contested province. Its wide network of canals, painstakingly developed since the late 19th century, made it one of the most irrigated, rich and fertile land in India. Trade and commerce was also fairly well developed, along with better industrial and educational infrastructure.

Punjab was thus, a prized possession. To claim it and to establish their hold on it, the extremist leaders of the political parties started forming their own private armies from 1946 onwards. RSS cadres, the Muslim League's National Guards and the Sikh *Jathas* became the self proclaimed protectors of their respective communities and the fight for and against Pakistan began to be fought on streets.

The communal situation in Punjab began deteriorating from October 1946. Khizr Hayat Khan, the Punjab Premier, was himself shocked by the sudden deterioration in communal relations, coming in the wake of communal riots in Bengal, Bihar and United Provinces. To prevent the situation from getting out of hand, on 29th November, the Governor of Punjab, Evan Jenkins used his discretionary power under Section 89 of the Act of 1935 and promulgated the Punjab Public Safety Ordinance which "reduced open activity in both bodies [RSS & Muslim League National Guards] but intelligence reports showed that they were still being trained for fighting with knives, lathis etc.". On 24th January 1947, therefore, an ordinance banning both the bodies was passed under the Criminal Law Amendment Act⁵⁵.

Till that time, the Unionist-Congress-Akali government of 1946 had acted more or less as a continuance of the old Unionist regime and acted as "faint signpost of communal balance in Punjab". However, the coalition government was itself the result of Sikh leader Baldev Singh's manoeuvre of propping up Khizr Hayat Khan's ministry through the Congress and Sikh support. The elections of 1946 had given

⁵⁴ B.R. Nanda, *Witness To Partition*, Rupa Publications, New Delhi, 2003, pp.45-46

⁵⁵ Telegram from Punjab Governor Evan Jenkins to Lord Pethik-Lawrence, 26 January 1947, Wavell Papers, Official Correspondence: India, January 1946-March 1947, pp. 219-20, in Nicholas Mansergh (ed), *T.O.P.*, Vol.9, 1980, pp. 556-57.

only 10 seats to Unionists in comparison of League's 79 seats and therefore League's failure to form a government despite being the single largest party in the elections, had given rise to a great deal of discontent. This further increased pro-Pakistan sentiments among the Leaguers. The League thus organised a massive civil disobedience movement against the Khizr's Government with the objective of capturing power in Punjab and then go all out for their Pakistan demand. As Governor Jenkins noted, "their argument is that because they are single largest party they are entitled to dislodge coalition Ministry by show of force" and "if this argument is accepted democratic government would become impossible in the Punjab⁵⁶". The League kept up the ante, began to lead huge demonstrations throughout Western Punjab and filling the jails with its cadres. The constant pressure exerted by the League through its movement ultimately led to the resignation of Khizr Hayat Khan's coalition ministry on 3rd March 1947. With this the League got a free hand and the "sluice gates of anarchy were thrown wide open". Also, the fall of Khizr Ministry left Punjab "face to face with the Pakistan issue⁵⁷". Considerable pressure was put on the Punjab Governor by the League through their provincial leader Nawab of Mamdot to swear in a League ministry. However, he refused to give in to the pressure as he felt that the risk was "enormous" and there might be "immediate Sikh uprising with Hindu support" in what would be a "civil war for possession of Punjab⁵⁸".

Meanwhile, communal violence continued unabated and massive communal rioting took place in March 1947 in Rawalpindi, Multan, and soon engulfed other parts of Punjab.

⁵⁶ Telegram from Punjab Governor Evan Jenkins to Lord Pethik-Lawrence, 29 January 1947, Wavell Papers, Official Correspondence: India, January 1946-March 1947, pp. 229-30, in Nicholas Mansergh (ed), *T.O.P.*, Vol.9, 1980, pp. 571-72.

⁵⁷ Letter from Wavell to Pethik Lawrence, 5 March 1947, L/PO/10/24, in Nicholas Mansergh (ed), *T.O.P.*, Vol.9, 1980, pp. 870-872.

⁵⁸ Telegram from Jenkins to Wavell on 5 March, 1947, Wavell Papers, Political Series, January-March 1947, pp. 96-97, as in Nicholas Mansergh (ed), *T.O.P.*, Vol.9, 1980, pp. 868-70.



Image 1: Workers removing the corpses of people who were murdered in the riots in Delhi.

Source:<https://www.scoopwhoop.com/inothernews/partition-photos-1947/#.kn8739y4d>

Lahore, the most prosperous and cosmopolitan city of those times, began to witness rioting from March onwards. On March 4, 1947, the first day the anti-Pakistan disturbances, 98 people were grievously injured and 13 people were killed. A demonstration against the demand of creation of Pakistan had culminated in communal clashes. Soon, the trouble spread to other parts of the city and pitched battles were fought on the streets for and against the demand of Pakistan.⁵⁹

With the deteriorating communal situation, travelling to places became dangerous. People were forced to stay within the confines of their homes fearing an imminent attack from a rampaging, rioting mob. On March 5, 22 passenger trains, running between Lahore and Amritsar, Pathankot, Montgomery, Lalamusa and Hoshiarpur were cancelled due to communal disturbances.⁶⁰ The railway officials and the employees failed to turn up on duty. As the days progressed, the condition of the railways deteriorated further, with cases of killing and looting of passengers becoming a regular occurrence⁶¹. By March 7, Amritsar became a veritable inferno.

⁵⁹ *Hindustan Times*, New Delhi, March 5, 1947

⁶¹ The conditions in the railways became horrible once the Boundary Commission Award was known and massive migration began taking place. We come across many instances of trains been attacked on both sides of newly demarcated border in which unimaginable brutality took place with entire

Communal rioting also broke out in Multan, Jalandhar, Sialkot and Rawalpindi. Lahore's famous silk market was set ablaze. 11 people were killed and 33 got injured in clashes. The police had to resort to firing to control the rioting mob.⁶² One day later, many markets were set ablaze in Amritsar in which the losses were estimated to the tune of Rs. 2 crore.⁶³ By March 10, the situation deteriorated so much in Multan that air borne troops had to be rushed when serious rioting started taking place in villages. Heavy damage was estimated in Murree while Taxila was gutted.⁶⁴ Next day saw six villages being burnt down in Rawalpindi. Troops were posted throughout the city and curfew was imposed. Once again, 16 trains had to be cancelled in Multan division.⁶⁵ In Rawalpindi, an armed mob of 10,000 raided Mianwali, killing many people. There was no improvement in the tense communal atmosphere in Attock either.⁶⁶ The Punjab Governor in his telegram to Viceroy Lord Wavell on 16 March 1947 saw the situation in Punjab as 'very grave with talk of reprisals and civil war'⁶⁷.

Throughout the months of March and April 1947, the situation continued to remain very tense. Trade and businesses were on the verge of collapse. Markets and shops could open for only few hours of the day and the essential services were in complete disarray. The tension in the Punjab at the end of May and in the beginning of June was so acute that people kept a night vigil on housetops, or slept with their hands on the trigger of the pistol under the pillow.⁶⁸

The police and the law enforcement agencies were in many cases hopelessly compromised and there were many instances of partisan behaviour and at times even collusion with the rioters. "All manner of charges" were "made against the police of committing arson and of preventing people from putting out fires and firing at them

passengers wiped off. In fact, trains carrying nothing but dead bodies became sort of 'totemic image' of the savagery of partition violence. Khushwant Singh's novel *Train to Pakistan* poignantly deals with such a train journey of those tumultuous times. Anil Sharma's *Gadar* movie also, in one of its scenes, dramatically depicts one such violent train journey.

⁶² *Hindustan Times*, March 7, 1947

⁶³ *Ibid.*, March 9, 1947

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, March 10, 1947

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, March 11, 1947

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, March 13, 1947

⁶⁷ Telegram from Punjab Governor Jenkins to Viceroy Lord Wavell, 16 March 1947, R/3/1/89: f 126, as in Nicholas Mansergh (ed), *T.O.P.*, Vol.9, 1980, p. 960.

⁶⁸ B.R. Nanda, *Witness To Partition*, Rupa Publications, New Delhi, 2003,p.55

when they try to do so⁶⁹”.The violence in any case was so sudden and so decentralised that the government machinery became almost a spectator.⁷⁰ The government appeared strangely lethargic to respond to the threats posed by riotous elements.

On March 20, 1947, the government had, at least on paper, undertaken some strong measures to curb violence. Death penalty was prescribed for attempted murder and arson. Many districts were declared as disturbed areas and power to order “shoot at sight” were given to the magistrates.⁷¹

1.3 Communal Flare Up reaches Delhi

The communal mayhem in Punjab soon began to have its effect on Delhi. Delhi, in fact, became a far eastern extremity of Punjab very soon. H.M. Patel, an Indian Civil Service officer had been appointed Cabinet Secretary by the then Viceroy Lord Wavell in 1946 and was at the helm of affairs when the communal situation deteriorated all of a sudden. In his memoir, he points out that, surprisingly, “very few people know how near the brink of disaster Delhi was during those critical early days of independence.” While “one had anticipated unrest and disorder in Punjab, West and East and in particular in the areas, which were to constitute further boundary between East and West Punjab, between Pakistan and India” but “their effect was felt in a most unexpected manner in Delhi”⁷².

Beginning the third week of March itself, trouble was reported from various parts of the city, including multiple cases of stabbing. There were also incidents of stone throwing near the Jama Masjid, Moti Bazar and Kuncha Rahman in Chandni Chowk. Several people were reported to have received injuries in violent clashes. To bring the situation under control, the Delhi administration imposed Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code prohibiting the gathering of five or more people together at a place. On March 24, 1947, curfew was imposed from 6p.m. to 7a.m. for a week in the whole

⁶⁹ Nehru to Mountbatten, 22 June, 1947, R/3/1/91:ff 8-12, , as in Nicholas Mansergh (ed), *The Transfer of Power 1942-47: The Mountbatten Viceroyalty Announcement and Reception of the 3 June Plan 31 May- 7 July*, Vol. 11, London, 1982, pp. 561-563.

⁷⁰ Ashis Nandy, ‘Freedom came with a Price’, *The Times of India*, New Delhi, 16 August 2007

⁷¹ *Hindustan Times*, March 20, 1947

⁷² H.M. Patel, in Sucheta Mahajan (ed), *Rites of Passage: A Civil Servant Remembers*, Rupa and Co., New Delhi, 2005, p.77

of the area within the jurisdiction of the Delhi Municipal Committee and Fort and Delhi West Notified Areas. Curbs were imposed on the press as well. It required the editors, printers and publishers of all daily newspapers published from Delhi to submit for scrutiny to an appointed administrative authority, all matters including news, comments, photographs and cartoons relating to communal disturbances before publishing them⁷³.

On March 30, two persons were stabbed near the Paharganj Railway Bridge and 39 people were arrested in the intervening night of 29/30 for the violation of curfew. House searches were conducted in the disturbed areas and 17 persons were arrested for possessing *lathis*, knives and iron rods⁷⁴. On April 1, some cases of stray assaults on members of the minority community were again witnessed in Delhi. Shahdara was reported to be tense after communal violence and a 24 hour curfew was imposed in Paharganj.⁷⁵ In the second week of April the communal situation in Delhi worsened further. Cases of arson, murder, stabbing and loot began to be reported on a daily basis. Panic and fear had gripped the great city of Delhi and the streets and bazaars remained desolate.⁷⁶ With the British planning their hasty exit, the entire law and order machinery was on the verge of collapse. With partition becoming a certainty and confusion about the boundaries of the new State increasing day by day, the relations between the communities suffered a severe strain. Communal violence became almost a daily occurrence. “People, who had hitherto condemned violence and refrained from it, were now faced with it within themselves. In the context of breakdown of law and order, the situation was fast changing, ‘aggressors’ became ‘victims’ and vice versa. More importantly at times, aggressors saw themselves that they were acting in self-defence⁷⁷.”

In the words of Anis Kidwai, a prominent Gandhian social worker “A strange bestiality was born in those days. Even those with the most delicate of temperaments today celebrated wildly the misfortunes of others. Even the well educated, the

⁷³ *The Times of India*, March 24, 1947

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, March 31, 1947

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, April 1, 1947

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, April 30, 1947

⁷⁷ Anjali Bhardwaj, ‘Partition of India and Women’s Experiences’, *Social Scientist*, Vol.32/ 5-6 May-June 2004, pp.69-86

seemingly sensitive and sensible had enthusiastically joined those stoking the fires of retribution⁷⁸.”

Trevor Royal writes in his book, *The Last Days of the British Raj*:⁷⁹

Friends or neighbours of long standing turned on one another simply because one was Hindu, the other Muslim: logic and common humanity found themselves being replaced by fear, panic and hatred. For a while it seemed as if the whole world had gone mad as stories began to emerge of the wholesale slaughter of refugees, of trainloads of men, women and children meeting ghastly ends, of the burning alive of communities in their homes and places of worship, of death, destruction and rape.

Indeed the years 1946-47 were the years of unparalleled distrust, hostility and frenzied warfare. In such an atmosphere, at the depths of despair and madness, the ‘other’ was invariably seen and projected as the greatest and the most dangerous enemy, who had to be brought down as effectively and as soon as possible.⁸⁰ More of such senseless violence was witnessed as the day of independence came nearer.

1.4 The 3rd June Plan and the Coming of Independence: The Violence Intensifies

The British Prime Minister Clement Attlee made a significant announcement on February 20, 1947 in the House of Commons stating that, “It has long been the policy of successive British Governments to work towards the realisation of self-government in India” and “in pursuance of this policy an increasing measure of responsibility has been devolved on Indians...” He added that “in the opinion of His Majesty’s Government the time had come for responsibility for the Government of India to pass into Indian hands” and “to take the necessary steps to effect the transference of power into responsible hands by a date not later than June 1948⁸¹”. The aim of such an announcement was “to encourage all parties to concentrate their minds and come to terms⁸²” but “the effect was dramatically different: the prospect of the Raj coming to

⁷⁸ Anis Kidwai, *In Freedom’s Shade*, Translated by Ayesha Kidwai, Penguin Books, New Delhi, 2011, p.3

⁷⁹ Rafiq Zakaria, *The Price of Partition*, Bhartiya Vidya Bhawan, Mumbai, 1998, p.170.

⁸⁰ Satya P. Gautam, ‘Partition, Memories and Reconciliation’, *Seminar* 567, November, 2006, pp.62-65

⁸¹ Indian Policy Statement of 20 February 1947, Cmd. 7047, in Nicholas Mansergh (ed), *T.O.P.*, Vol.9, 1980, p.773

⁸² Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan*, Cambridge, 1985, p.244

an end within sixteen months kicked Pandora's box wide open, unleashing just those forces that threatened a strong central government⁸³". In his statement, Attlee also announced the appointment of Lord Louis Mountbatten as the new Viceroy replacing Lord Wavell.

The new Viceroy arrived in India on March 24, 1947. The situation that he found upon his arrival in India was a fairly intractable one. Muslim League under Jinnah was already on a war path as the communal mayhem in Punjab showed. Cabinet Mission's Plan had also become defunct by that time and therefore there was no point in persisting with it. Mountbatten, thus, trying to begin afresh, started to hold wide ranging discussions with all important political leaders on the specifics of the transfer of power. He felt that "the psychological effort of coming to the right decision very quickly will be very great: but it must be the right decision". Until such a decision is made, he believed that that it would be worthwhile to "ask the political leaders to keep their adherents quiet in order to achieve the minimum of ill-feeling during this vital period⁸⁴". Mountbatten had very little understanding of Indian politics. He along with his wife Edwina utilised their personal charm to get along with Indian leaders of various shades of opinion.⁸⁵ What followed was his plan of Partition on June 3rd which is also known as the Mountbatten Plan.

In a radio broadcast to the Indians on 3rd June 1947, Mountbatten expressed his regret at not being able to "obtain agreement either on Cabinet Mission Plan or any other plan that would preserve the unity of India⁸⁶." At the same time, the Viceroy added that "there can be no question of coercing any large areas in which one community has a majority to live against their will under a Government in which another community has a majority- and the only alternative to coercion is partition⁸⁷."

The Plan laid down the following procedure to accomplish the task⁸⁸:

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Addendum to Minutes of Viceroy's Fifth Staff Meeting, Mountbatten Papers, 29 march 1947, as in Nicholas Mansergh (ed), *The Transfer of Power 1942-47: The Mountbatten Viceroyalty Formulation of a Plan 22 March- 30 May 1947*, Vol. 10, London, 1981, p. 47.

⁸⁵ *The New Yorker*, August 13, 2007

⁸⁶ *The Times of India*, June 4, 1947,p.4

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Statement of 3 June, 1947, Cmd. 7136, as in Nicholas Mansergh (ed), *T.O.P.*, Vol. 11, London, 1982, pp. 89-94.

1. Assemblies of Punjab and Bengal would meet separately with one part representing the Muslim-majority districts and the other representing the remaining districts, to vote on the issue for the partition of the provinces. If any part agrees to partition of the province even by simple majority, the province would be divided.
2. The Provincial Legislative Assemblies of Sind and Baluchistan would also hold a meeting and decide upon the partition of the province by simple majority of votes.
3. The North West Frontier Province would hold a referendum in this regard. The Muslim-majority district of Sylhet in Assam was also required to hold a referendum.
4. Paramountcy in the Princely States would not be transferred to either of the successor states. In theory it meant that the Princely States would not become sovereign entities when the British left India.

In accordance with the 3rd June Plan, the members of the Bengal Legislative Assembly met on 20th June 1947. The division of the joint session of the house, on the question of joining the existing Constituent Assembly i.e. the Indian Union, stood at 126 votes against the move and 90 votes in favour. Subsequently, a separate meeting of the members representing the non-Muslim majority areas (Western Bengal) was held, which by a division of 58 votes to 21 voted in favour of partitioning the province⁸⁹.

The members of the Punjab Legislative Assembly on their part, met on 23rd June, first jointly and then separately. Owing to its Muslim- majority the joint assembly voted in favour of joining Pakistan. However, subsequently, the legislators of the Hindu and Sikh majority eastern districts met and voted in favour of partitioning the province by a margin of 50 votes to 22⁹⁰.

The widespread confusion regarding the basis of this partition, however, further aggravated the communal tension. A calculated attempt of clearing the minorities of

⁸⁹ *Hindustan Times*, June 21, 1947

⁹⁰ *Hindustan Times*, June 24, 1947. A Report from Reuter Indian Service presented this news in interesting way. It said, "With large sections of Lahore and scores of villages throughout the Province fire-blackened ruins, the 168 members of the Punjab Legislative Assembly laughed and joked as they shook hands in the lobbies of the Assembly building on their way to record their votes to decide whether the Punjab should be partitioned." ,Report of 23 June 1947, L/P&J/8/663: ff 81-82, as in Nicholas Mansergh (ed), *T.O.P.*, Vol. 11, London, 1982, pp. 89-94.

the district began to take shape. Merciless slaughter of the minority community began in the contested districts so that those districts can be made a part of the desired dominion on the basis of its religious composition. Communal clashes became more frequent, forcing the minorities to migrate to safer places. The inevitable result was gradual increase in the number of refugees. As these refugees brought with them the horrible stories of death and destruction, the communal situation worsened further in whichever area they moved. Writes Gyanendra Pandey:

The mood of people belonging to different religious denominations, whether they were rural or urban, privileged or unprivileged, and their understanding of the tradition and character of other religious communities, was built up-or renewed –to a considerable extent on the basis of incendiary and rhetorical, but “certain,” knowledge about the untold violence let loose on “our” unsuspecting brothers and sisters in faraway places.⁹¹

Rumours played a very important role in vitiating the communal atmosphere. The cases of explosions, arson, stabbing and defilement of women also increased as the day of transfer of power came nearer. The conditions had become “explosive”, “hatred and suspicion” had become “universal and undisguised⁹²”. The much coveted independence after a long and hard fought freedom struggle had arrived but even a day before independence, many parts of the country were reeling under communal riots. Punjab was in flames, with fire raging all over Lahore. Troops had shot 61 rioters a day before. 20 shops were gutted in the famous Anarkali Market. 60 people were killed and 100 injured.⁹³ For many common people independence came with a price that they had never hoped for.

The Boundary Commission Award was ready by 12th August 1947 but its announcement was deliberately delayed till 17th August 1947, so that the British could escape the responsibility of its complications⁹⁴. Once the Radcliffe Award was

⁹¹ Gyanendra Pandey, ‘The Long Life of Rumor’, *Alternatives* 27, 2002, pp.165-191. The author argues that the figures of victims of violence cannot be completely relied upon. In those exceptional circumstances it was not possible to keep an authentic record of the happenings around. Therefore, the first reports we have of major incidents of violence, faithfully (or not so faithfully) reproduced in the newspaper reports and official documents, are often rumours.

⁹² Telegram from Punjab Governor Jenkins to G.Abel, Mountbatten Papers, 6 July 1947, as in Nicholas Mansergh (ed), *T.O.P.*, Vol. 11, London, 1982, pp. 942-43.

⁹³ *The Times of India*, August 14, 1947

⁹⁴ According to Ayesha Jalal, the reason for the delayed announcement of the Boundary Commission Award was the likely violent reaction in the Punjab as “fierce disagreements on the award were inevitable and could well have smashed the apparent settlement”. “Viceroy’s tactic of postponing the

declared and the newly created boundaries came to be known, many people found themselves on the wrong side of the border. Another round of communal slaughter soon began wherein gangs of marauders set the whole villages inhabited by the minorities aflame, hacking to death men, women, children and carrying young women to be raped. Those “British soldiers and journalists who had witnessed the Nazi death camps claimed Partition’s brutalities were worse: pregnant women had their breasts cut off and babies hacked out of their bellies; infants were found literally roasted on spits”.⁹⁵

As the communal atmosphere had vitiated to unprecedented levels, the people who found themselves on the ‘wrong side of the border’ on account of their religious identity, began moving in large numbers as refugees to the other side of the border. Thus, migration became an utterly mismanaged frenzied affair. Few who still refused to leave their land and property behind were forced to move soon as communal riots engulfed new areas as the days progressed.

1.5 CONDITIONS IN DELHI: POST INDEPENDENCE

Delhi, being the capital of the new dominion, celebrated the day of independence which much pomp and show. On the 15th of August people gathered in huge numbers to cheer Prime Minister Nehru hoisting the tricolour on the ramparts of the famous Red Fort. With the new government assuming full powers, it was hoped that a new era of peace and development will follow. But a new ‘tryst with destiny’ began for those who had to bear the brunt of partition.

With the influx of large number of refugees from the Western Punjab, who came with the horrific stories of communal pogrom witnessed by them, ‘the atmosphere of the capital, which was still full of the glow of Independence, was rapidly transformed first, into an atmosphere of anxiety and bewilderment and then of horror and anger’⁹⁶. Sardar Patel wrote to Gandhi, “Lots of Punjab people who have escaped from Punjab are entering Delhi. They disturb us day and night. They escape out of misery and fear

award’, however, ‘did nothing to prevent an eruption in the Punjab.’ See, *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan*, Cambridge, 1985, p.293.

⁹⁵ Nisid Hajari, *Midnight’s Furies: The Deadly Legacy of India’s Partition*, Penguin Books, Delhi, 2016, p.xvi

⁹⁶ H.M. Patel, *Rites of Passage: A Civil Servant Remembers* ed. Sucheta Mahajan, Rupa and Co., New Delhi, 2005, p.78.

and it is very difficult to pacify them⁹⁷.” On August 25, 1947, a 12 hour curfew was declared in Delhi after the cases of arson in Sabzi Mandi area. Similar incidents began to be reported from other areas as the number of refugees entering Delhi kept on increasing as the days progressed. On August 28, fearing communal rioting, the government imposed 86-hour curfew with a relaxation of only 2 hours every day to enable people to make essential purchases.

Muslims and their properties became a primary target of attack. “Delhi became a prison for the Muslims”, recalled Ishtiaq Husain Qureshi, the then Dean of the Arts Faculty in Delhi University, “What was happening in the city was a nightmare, the fortified muhallas developed into arsenals. One could see that an unofficial war was in the offing”.⁹⁸ Like thousands of Muslims in those days, Qureshi was also anxious about the safety of his family. Many Muslim families began leaving their homes and gathering in Purana Quila Camp, Humayun Tomb Camp or wherever they felt some modicum of safety and security.

By the first week of September, the situation had become alarming. Sensing trouble, the then Deputy Prime Minister, Sardar Patel made a public statement on September 3, 1947 and appealed the people to maintain peace. He also asked the Government servants not to spare themselves in the discharge of their sacred obligation to their unfortunate brothers and sisters of the Punjab in their suffering and distress. The situation, however, remained tense. On the very next day, many cases of stabbing and arson were reported from various parts of Delhi. Senior I.C.S. officer H.M. Patel felt that, Stabbing had “developed into an art and it seemed to provide a natural outlet for the over-powering urge to wreak vengeance”, in fact “stabbing did not take place only in alleys. Groups of blood-thirsty refugees would even rush into houses and drag people out to be stabbed. Roving bands of Sikh refugees struck so much terror even in New Delhi that it became necessary to evacuate Muslim servants into refugee camps so as to ensure their safety”. Arson was also one of the ways in which “the passion for revenge found its expression”⁹⁹. Such an atmosphere in the capital necessitated the

⁹⁷ Sardar Patel to Gandhi, dated 24 August, 1947, *Sardar Shrinoo Patro*, as in P.N. Chopra (ed), *The Collected Works of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*, Volume XII (1 January 1947-31 December 1947), Konark Publishers, New Delhi, pp. 169-70.

⁹⁸ Tai Yong and Gyanesh Kudaisya, *The Aftermath of Partition in South Asia*, Routledge Publication, London, 2000, p. 198

⁹⁹ H.M. Patel, in Sucheta Mahajan (ed), *Rites of Passage: A Civil Servant Remembers*, Rupa and Co., New Delhi, 2005, p.83.

imposition of curfew and the calling out of the military. Despite that large scale rioting took place in the Old City. Local militias roaming in the streets resorted to religious sloganeering. A bomb was thrown at the Fatehpuri Mosque on the crowds gathered¹⁰⁰. The police had to resort to firing which resulted in one or two deaths and injuries to many¹⁰¹. The most seriously affected areas were Karol Bagh, Sabzi Mandi, Sadar Bazar and Fatehpuri¹⁰². Cases of looting were also reported from Connaught Place where bands of hooligans “broke open shops, smashing glass panes and looting goods and wares. Stalls on the pavement were overturned and wooden structures smashed.”¹⁰³The situation became so tense that the government imposed curfew in the whole city. Mountbatten, who had gone Simla, was told that the situation in and near Delhi had deteriorated and was requested to rush back to the capital. An Emergency Cabinet Committee was set up to monitor the events on an hour-to-hour basis. It included, besides Mountbatten, Nehru, Patel, Baldev Singh and K.C. Neogy¹⁰⁴.

Shankar, the Private Secretary to Sardar Patel had accompanied the Deputy Prime Minister on a round of the city when the disturbances were at their worst. He recounts:

I was a mournful witness of ghastly scenes, lying bare before me the bestiality and brutality of man. Men of all ages, their throats slashed, backs stabbed, and necks severed; women with vermilion marks lying exposed to the wind and weather, their bodies still showing some signs of freshness; babies in arms, probably just taken out of their cradles....It was clear that mass killing had been organised on both sides....The motorcade veered its way....amid these unprecedented scenes of horror¹⁰⁵.

¹⁰⁰ Pakistan Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan sent a telegram to Nehru on 6th September and expressed his shock over the incidents in Delhi and asked him to take “most stringent measures” to stop violence from spreading to other parts of the country. Prime Minister Nehru replied him the same day and called the “so-called bombing Fatehpuri mosque a “trivial affair”. In addition to it he also cited the number of steps taken by his government to quell the rioting. See, S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of J.L. Nehru*, Second Series, Volume 4, Pub. by Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1986,pp.51-52.

¹⁰¹ *The Hindu*, September 8, 1947

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *The Hindu*, September 7, 1947

¹⁰⁵ V.Shankar, *My Reminiscences of Sardar Patel*, Vol.1, Macmillan Company, Delhi, 1974,pp.100-101

In another appeal issued on September 13 to the citizens of Delhi, Sardar Patel reminded them that, “Delhi is not only the nerve-centre of the administration; it has also become the focus of non-official organisations” and therefore, “to disturb the life of Delhi” is “to deal a deadly blow to the very life of the community throughout India. It is also cutting life-line through which alone can the free flow of refugees be sustained”. He added: “Let each one of you, therefore, calmly reflect on the part of which you are playing in your respective spheres and outside and whether the consequences of such actions as you might be taking are promoting the object we all have at heart or whether they are hindering the task of saving the lives or relieving the sufferings of lakhs of people¹⁰⁶.”

With the coming of Gandhiji to Delhi on September 15 and the moral stick that he wielded, entire governmental machinery began functioning in an unbiased manner to restore peace. However, sporadic incidents of violence kept occurring. In a speech made in Delhi on 28 September 1947, Prime Minister Nehru spoke about his government’s intention of imposing a collective fine in the city. He said¹⁰⁷:

Delhi must bear the cost of local disturbances, responsibility for which cannot be laid squarely on any one community. The inhabitants of any locality in which desecration of places of worship occurs will have to bear the loss. People must work in mohallas for peace and improve conditions in the city. The life in the city cannot be organised on the basis of the military pickets and police escorts. People should themselves organise it and create a peaceful atmosphere. My pride in the glory of India has suffered because of happenings in Delhi and I cannot face the world as I did before. Many shameful things have happened....

In another speech made the next day, he even went to the extent of suggesting changing Delhi as the capital of the country. He appealed to the people to maintain peace and create conditions so that every community could live in India without any fear of their life and property. He said¹⁰⁸:

Every citizen of India, whatever his religion, has the right to live in this country and call for protection from the State. The Muslims who really consider India as their own country and do not look to any outside agency for help are welcome to live in the country. The Government must and will give full protection to them. I warn all those who do not intend to pledge their unquestionable loyalty to the

¹⁰⁶ *Bombay Chronicle*, 13 September, 1947, as in P.N. Chopra (ed), *The Collected Works of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*, Volume XII (1 January 1947-31 December 1947), Konark Publishers, New Delhi, pp. 198-200.

¹⁰⁷ *The Hindustan Times*, 29 September 1947

¹⁰⁸ *The Times of India*, 30 September 1947.

Indian State that there is no room in India for them. They are advised to migrate wherever they like. I had sometimes thought it would be a good thing to shift the capital. During the last few days Delhi has been like a city without a soul. If Delhi loses its culture, which is in its spirits, then it will cease to have any special claim to being retained as India's capital. The people of Delhi have some special responsibilities. Historically, Delhi is the centre of many cultures and civilisations. Different streams of thought have flown into this city and given it an individuality of its own. Disorder in Delhi is of special consequence since the eyes of Asia and of the world are turned on it. The recent rioting has resulted in a loss of lakhs of rupees to its people who have had to bear it. If compensation has to be paid to those who have suffered in the riots, that too must come from its citizens.

He felt that while there was an apparent improvement in the situation in Delhi, it was only on the surface. He feared that it was a lull while preparations were going on for a fresh and organised attack¹⁰⁹. In a public meeting in New Delhi on 4th October 1947 he appealed to the people of Delhi and the rest of India "to help the Government in the tremendous task of maintaining peace in the country so that the urgent tasks which await the administration in the Punjab may be tackled with speed and efficiency¹¹⁰."

Replying to a question raised by Sahib Bahadur B. Pocker in the Constituent Assembly of India on December 3, 1947, the then Home Member made the following statement about the Delhi Disturbances: The Government had some indications that trouble was likely to occur in Delhi and neighbourhood and they took all reasonable precautionary measures, but the sudden onrush of a large number of refugees who were victims of unimaginable cruelties and barbarities from Lahore, Sheikhpura and other parts of Punjab seriously upset the position and the desertion of the bulk of the Muslim element of the Police Force, which was in majority at the time, seriously crippled the effectiveness and efficiency of the police force and until effective police and military strength could be brought to Delhi from outside, the disturbances could not be brought under control. Even then the government felt that they were on top of the situation in a much shorter time than elsewhere.¹¹¹

According to unofficial estimates, about 10,000 Muslims lost their lives in communal violence in Delhi. The Muslim majority areas around the old walled city were the most affected. Around 44,000 Muslim houses were either evacuated by the Muslims

¹⁰⁹ Nehru to Vallabhbai Patel, *Sardar Patel's Correspondence 1945-1950*, Vol. 4, pp.398-399. See S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of J.L. Nehru*, Second Series, Volume 4, Published by Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1986, p.109

¹¹⁰ *The Hindu*, 6 October 1947.

¹¹¹ *After Partition*, Modern India Series, The Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, Delhi, 1948, pp.41-44

themselves, so as to escape violence or were forced to be evacuated by the marauders. A time soon came when more Muslims lived in refugee camps than in the safety of their homes. Many wondered that, if such could be the scale of violence in the capital city of the newly independent state, what they should expect elsewhere in the future as a minority community. Fear for the future and also the fact that many who gathered the courage to return back to their homes found their homes occupied by refugees from West Punjab, compelled many to board the trains to Pakistan from the nearby Nizamuddin railway station. Almost two-thirds of Muslim inhabitants abandoned the city- an estimated 3, 29,000 Muslims left Delhi- and according to the 1951 census the city had only 99,000 Muslims. A drastic decline from 33.22 per cent to 5.7 per cent by 1951.¹¹²

Peace could be restored only when the minorities on either side had been deterred either by death or migration.¹¹³ The reality, as Alok Bhalla puts it, was that the violence which had accompanied partition was of “such fiendishness that it had defied understanding. In this mayhem, there was hardly a family which survived those years without feeling perpetually threatened by the repulsive and the ruthless; there was hardly anyone who didn’t hide in some dark corner for safety as mobs outside, armed with thirsty spears and in the names of gods, killed each other for small and pathetic gain”.¹¹⁴

The Urdu writer Ismat Chughtai, summed up the trauma of partition violence and its aftermath in these words:

The flood of communal violence came and went with all its evils, but it left a pile of living, dead, and gasping corpses in its wake. It wasn’t only that the country was split in two- bodies and minds were also divided. Moral beliefs were tossed aside and humanity was in shreds. Government officers and clerks along with their chairs, pens and inkpots, were distributed like the spoils of war....Those whose bodies were whole had hearts that were splintered. Families were torn apart. One brother was allotted to Hindustan, her offspring were in Pakistan; the husband was in Hindustan, his wife was in Pakistan.

¹¹² Tai Yong and Gyanesh Kudaisya, *The Aftermath of Partition in South Asia*, Routledge Publication, London, 2000, p. 199

¹¹³ Rafiq Zakaria, *The Price of Partition*, Bhartiya Vidya Bhawan, Mumbai, 1998, p.170.

¹¹⁴ Alok Bhalla, ‘Memory ,History and Fictional Representations of the Partition’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.34,Issue No.44,October 30,1999, pp. 3119-3128

The bonds of relationship were in tatters, and in the end many souls remained behind in Hindustan while their bodies started off for Pakistan¹¹⁵.

By the time the mayhem ended it is estimated that about a million people died and many more suffered injuries to their mind and body.

1.6 MIGRATION: THE LONG JOURNEY AND THE TALE OF WOES

Migration of entire population of an area owing to some natural calamity or outbreak of war has not been uncommon in human history, but partition migration was undoubtedly the biggest forced migration of a significant part of total population of an area to the other, in fear of physical decimation at the hands of the men of other community. Exchange of population had been tried in South- Eastern Europe after the First World War but it proved to be a costly and a troublesome affair. Even in the most favourable circumstances, it would have been extremely difficult, if not impossible, to move such a huge and diverse population to new areas abandoning the old and familiar. The decision to leave one's ancestral home and hearth, a secure life in known surroundings for an uncertain future is extremely difficult to take. The land of one's forefathers does not only have a material value, it holds a tremendous emotional and psychological connect as well. "Human beings tend to take moral and cultural roots in the soil where they live for generations and the ties that bind them to the native village and town are not easily severed," argues Gopal Das Khosla, and therefore, "the dream of exchanging population on a voluntary basis was impossible of realization and Muslim league had to find another way of resolving the difficulty".

¹¹⁶

Migration to a new place also meant beginning life from a scratch. It meant the loss of one's source of earning as the whole socio-economic network that one establishes with much time and energy. In such a scenario, therefore, it appears unlikely that the people would themselves have voluntarily moved out of their settled lands. In fact, a

¹¹⁵ Ismat Chughtai, *My Friend, My Enemy: Essays, Reminiscences, Portraits*. Translated and introduced by Tahira Naqvi, Kali for Women, New Delhi, 2001, p.3

¹¹⁶ Gopal Das Khosla, 'Stern Reckoning: A Survey of Events Leading up to and Following the Partition of India', Ed. Mushirul Hasan, *The Partition Omnibus*, OUP, New Delhi, p. 220. In 1948, Government of India had appointed a Fact Finding Organisation to look into the events around partition. This organisation conducted interviews with thousands of refugee men and women and checked the veracity of their statements through other documentary evidence. Justice Khosla's book is based on the inquiry conducted by the organization.

negotiated settlement for exchange of population under peaceful conditions would not have been easy. Says Penderel Moon:

Some strong compulsion is required to make them move –the compulsion of fear, famine or the harsh unchallengeable fiat of a Stalin or Nebuchadnezzar. A forcible transfer by government decree in Russian or Babylonian style was hardly conceivable in India at that time. The political leaders and the people at large had been too long accustomed to the mild easy going ways of the British to employ or submit to such official coercion. The transfer took place in fact- and probably could only have taken place- under the impulse of fear and at the point of the sword.¹¹⁷

To use the words of Mrinal Pandey: “Since self-preservation, aggression and a sense of one’s own turf are basic human traits, all migrations, irrespective of their cause, nature and scale have caused bloody conflicts¹¹⁸.”

Eventually, many had to abandon their homes because the social spaces which they had been occupying since long had suddenly become fragile; the streets that they were familiar with and where they had spent their precious childhood had to be left all of a sudden because their neighbourhoods had become hostile and untrustworthy. Their religious beliefs had become a danger to them and a threat to others¹¹⁹.

The ongoing violence in the name of religion had created such enmity, hatred and suspicion that harmonious inter-community living appeared nearly impossible every passing day. People, thus, began moving out of their homes and moving to places where they could feel safe. As the days progressed and violence engulfed new areas, the tide of migration also surged manyfold. The communally charged atmosphere made the peaceful and planned migration a difficult one. The British rulers, moreover, failed to recognise the enormity of task at their hand and plan accordingly. Such criminal lack of foresight resulted in migration becoming such a frenzied affair, claiming lives of thousands of hapless men, women and children. Stanley Wolpert, for example, is not willing to absolve Mountbatten for the mayhem caused by

¹¹⁷ Penderel Moon, ‘Divide and Quit: An Eyewitness Account of the Partition of India’, Ed. Mushirul Hasan, *The Partition Omnibus*, OUP, New Delhi, 2002, p. 277

¹¹⁸ Mrinal Pandey, ‘The Great Migration’, in S.Settar and Indira Baptista Gupta ed. *Pangs of Partition*, ICHR, Manohar Publication, Delhi, 2002, p.117

¹¹⁹ Alok Bhalla, *Memories of a Lost Home*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2006, p.6

partition and questions his decision of advancing the date of transfer of power to August 15, 1947. He writes¹²⁰:

Prime Minister Atlee's government replaced Churchill soon after the allied victory in 1945. However, the last British Indian Viceroy, Lord Louis Mountbatten, lacked the patience or knowledge to convince leader of Congress and the League that it would be wiser for them to co-govern a single Confederation of South Asia, rather than the separate nation-states of India and Pakistan. Mountbatten was too ignorant and egocentric to manage endless acerbic meetings with Jinnah, Gandhi and Nehru or to work constructively; at least until the end of June 1948, the deadline Atlee's cabinet had given him to accomplish the mission.

Instead, "Mountbatten impulsively advanced the date for the United Kingdom's withdrawal from India to August 15, 1947, ignoring the advice of Gandhi and Jinnah to slow down the deadly Partition process, and refusing even to allow British governors of Punjab and Bengal to view the new partition map lines for their own provinces"¹²¹. His "speeding up the timetable for the British withdrawal" from the end of June 1948 as envisaged in Atlee's Declaration of February 20, 1947, to August 15, resulted in "inadequate administrative preparations and plunged the two

¹²⁰ Stanley Wolpert, 'A Mixed Legacy: From Raj to Modern India', *Harvard International Review*, Vol. 32, No.4, 2011, pp.36-39, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42763418>, accessed on: 16 March, 2019.

¹²¹ *Ibid.* The decision of Mountbatten to advance the date of transfer of power to 15th August 1947 has given rise to considerable debate among the historians. His critics held this decision responsible for the communal onslaught that followed. Mountbatten, however, defended his decision "on the grounds that things would have blown up under their feet had they not got out when they did". Sucheta Mahajan argues: "From the British point of view, a hasty retreat was perhaps the most suitable action. That does not make it the inevitable option, as Mountbatten and Ismay would have us believe. Despite the steady erosion of governmental authority, the situation of responsibility without power was still a prospect rather than a reality. In the short term, the British could assert their authority, but did not care to as Kripalani pointed out to Mountbatten. Moreover, the situation, rather than warranting withdrawal of authority, cried out for someone to wield it." See Sucheta Mahajan, *Independence and Partition: The Erosion of Colonial Power in India*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, pp.199-200.

Barney White-Spunner argues that given the complexity of the India Independence Bill, its passage would have been possible only by the end of July 1947. Therefore, in legislative terms early to mid-August was the earliest possible date for the transfer of power and that seems to be the reason for choosing August 15 date. However, 'what it had done was create an extraordinarily short, and many would argue far too short, period in which to complete the mass of work necessary not only to decommission the Raj but to hand over its functions not to one government but two'. See Barney White-Spunner, *Partition: The Story of Indian Independence and the Creation of Pakistan in 1947*, Simon & Schuster India, New Delhi, 2017, pp.168-169. Ayesha Jalal sees the early decision of departure of the British as "an ignominious scuttle enabling the British to extricate themselves from the awkward responsibility of presiding over India's communal madness". See Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan*, Cambridge, 1985, p.293. Eminent journalist and former editor of the Indian Express opines, "Speed was the essence of Mountbatten's strategy. By handing over power so expeditiously, he retained and created valuable Indo-British links. He conducted the withdrawal of British Power as meticulously as the military operations he had planned as Chief of Combined Operations in South East Asia during the phases of World War II. As a military commander long inured to bloodshed, excessive casualties did not deter him from securing his objective." See, Ajit Bhattachajea, *Countdown to Partition: The Final Days*, HarperCollins Publishers India, 1997, p. X.

dominions, at the time of their very birth, into civil war-like conditions”¹²². As the fear and uncertainty exploded, terrified Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs across all of North India ran for their lives, desperately seeking to escape the knives, guns, and flames that consumed most of what had been peaceful Punjab and Bengal. Meanwhile, every British regiment that had previously defended the land swiftly sailed home. The tragic final legacy of the Raj left more than 10 million Hindus, Muslim and Sikh refugees to flee in opposite direction from their ancestral villages, racing towards newly demarcated borders. Some one million of the weakest and oldest refugees died en route¹²³.

The leaders of the two major political parties too failed to anticipate the enormity of the problem and devise a well thought out plan for migration of minority population. Swaran Singh, the leader of the Panthik Assembly Party had said on 10th July 1947 itself that the transfer of populations was the solution which would be to the ultimate good of both the countries¹²⁴. Mountbatten had also written to Nehru a week back about the Sikh leaders of Punjab suggestion “that the transfer of population should be seriously considered in Punjab¹²⁵”. Nehru, however, thought that this was only a very temporary phase. In a broadcast on August 19, Nehru said, “While Government would give every help to those who wished to come to East Punjab, they would not like to encourage mass migration of peoples across the new borders for this would involve tremendous misery for all concerned. We hope that very soon peace and order will be established and people will have security to carry on their vocations¹²⁶”. Again on August 24, 1947, he said that he is not “in favour of wholesale migration of population. It was not in the interest of the majority of people to be uprooted from the soil. The lives and interests had to be protected by both the governments who were responsible for the minority well-being.”¹²⁷ However, as the tide of violence

¹²² Tai Yong and Gyanesh Kudaisya, *The Aftermath of Partition in South Asia*, Routledge Publication, London, 2000, p.13

¹²³ Stanley Wolpert, ‘A Mixed Legacy: From the Raj to Modern India’, *Harvard International Review*, Vol.32, No.4 (Winter 2011), pp.36-39

¹²⁴ S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of J.L. Nehru*, Second Series, Volume 4, Pub. by Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1986, p.18

¹²⁵ Mounbatten to Nehru, Letter No. 592/63, 4 July 1947, , as in Nicholas Mansergh (ed), *T.O.P.*, Vol. 11, London, 1982, p. 884.

¹²⁶ *The Hindu*, August 20, 1947.

¹²⁷ *The Times of India*, Nehru’s Speech, August 25, 1947. In a broadcast to the nation from All India Radio, New Delhi on 19th August 1947, Nehru had made his views clear again: “While we shall give

intensified, both Nehru and Patel who had been vehemently against any planned transfer of population had to change their views. Writes Sucheta Mahajan¹²⁸:

Migration [following declaration of Boundary Commission Award] was so extensive that transfers of population, though opposed earlier, were subsequently arranged by the two governments. Nehru, who had declared that he was “opposed to the principle of population transfers” and Patel, who had proudly said that he could “never be guilty of such a [sic] cowardly advice” as asking Hindus to migrate, were at the helm of the government that effected these transfers. From Patel’s hope that “minorities may not have anything to fear” to Rajendra Prasad’s brutally truthful admission was a long way: “It seem [ed] West Punjab and the Frontier Province will have no Hindu or Sikh and similarly East Punjab will have no Muslim.”

Francis Mudie, the governor of West Punjab viewed the refugee problem as a ‘nuisance’, and accordingly wrote to Jinnah:

I expect trouble in all the western districts. The refugee problem is assuming gigantic proportions. The only limit that I can see to it is that set by the [population] census reports. According to reports, the movement across the border runs into a lakh or so a day. At Chauharkhana in the Shekhupura district I saw between 1-1.5 lakhs of Sikhs collected in the town and round it, in the houses, on the roofs and everywhere. It was exactly like the Magh Mela in Allahabad. It will take 45 days to move them, even at 4,000 people per train; or if they are to stay here, they will have to be given 50 tonnes of atta (flour) a day. At Govindgarh in the same district there was a collection of 30,000 to 40,000 Mazhabi Sikhs with arms. I am telling everyone that I don’t care how the Sikhs get across the border; the great thing is to get rid of them as soon as possible.¹²⁹

The lack of foresight of the people in command at the time is unfathomable. Thus, it is evident that neither of the new governments had formulated a well thought out plan to deal with enormous task of migration. The results were catastrophic for the sea of

every help to those who wish to come to East Punjab, we would not like to encourage mass migration of peoples across the new borders, for this will involve tremendous misery for all concerned. We hope that peace and order will be established and people will have security to carry on their vocations.” See, S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of J.L. Nehru*, Second Series, Volume 4, Pub. by Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1986,p.9

¹²⁸ Sucheta Mahajan, *Independence and Partition: The Erosion of Colonial Power in India*, Sage Publications, New Delhi,2000, pp.345-346

¹²⁹ Francis Mudie to Jinnah; September 5, 1947 in Kirpal Singh(ed) *Select Documents on the Partition of Punjab, Haryana and Himachal, and India and Pakistan*, National Books , Delhi. Quoted from Ravinder Kaur, ‘The Last Journey: Exploring Social Class in the 1947 Partition Migration’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, June 3, 2006, pp.2221-2228

humanity that began its movement across the border.¹³⁰ Lack of proper safeguards in the form adequate number of police and military personnel, extremely inadequate provision of food, water and medical facilities on the long route of migration, led to enormous suffering to the common masses.

1.7 The Largest Migration in Human History: As it happened

Much before Radcliffe's infamous Boundary Commission Award became known, people had started moving along the lines of an anticipated border. Violence had been taking place with rising intensity since the Great Calcutta Killings of August 1946 and engulfed newer areas as the time progressed. The people who have hitherto been unknown to the very idea of Pakistan became more and more acquainted with it once the communal flare-up reached their villages, towns and cities. The March Disturbances in Punjab in fact opened the flood gates of violence and migration. The riots took place in the villages of Rawalpindi first and soon it engulfed other districts of Punjab as well. In Rawalpindi it had claimed the lives of 2,090 people and rendered 1,142 seriously injured.¹³¹

An important factor that added to the miseries of the common people and further communalized the whole atmosphere in Punjab was the fall of the Khizar Tiwana government. The Unionist Party which was in rule for long time comprised of leaders of various communities and this mixed religious composition of the ruling class acted as an effective check on the development of communal tendencies among the government forces. Once this coalition government resigned on March 2, 1947, under the pressure created by the Muslim League National Guards, there emerged a political

¹³⁰ Penderel Moon, 'Divide and Quit: An Eyewitness Account of the Partition of India', Ed. Mushirul Hasan, *The Partition Omnibus*, OUP, New Delhi, 2002, p. 223. Moon was serving as the revenue minister in the princely state of Bahawalpur at the time of partition. His work is an objective account of the events of those days based on his lived day to day experiences. The state of Bahawalpur was unique among the princely states as it was the only state in which a predominantly Muslim population was led by a Muslim prince. Its population was estimated be around 2 million out of which about 1,90,000 were Hindus and 52,000 Sikhs. Bahawalpur had no previous history of any large scale communal violence but when the refugees from Eastern part of Punjab started pouring in the state with their tales of horror, the situation changed overnight. Outbreak of communal violence first took place in the urban areas and soon engulfed all the parts. It stopped only after almost the entire Hindu and Sikh population was wiped out from the state either through violence or migration.

¹³¹ A.B. Hansen(2002): Fortnightly Report second half of March 1947, India Office Library quoted in A.B. Hansen, *Partition and Genocide: Manifestation of Violence in Punjab 1937-47*, India Research Press, New Delhi, p 117, further quoted in Ravinder Kaur, 'The Last Journey: Exploring Social Class in the 1947 Partition Migration', *EPW*, June 3, 2006, pp.2221-2228

vacuum in the province. This had the effect of further emboldening the Muslim League which took it as an opportune moment to press for Pakistan by resorting to communal violence and thus creating a fear psychosis in the minds of the minorities. The complete breakdown of the forces of law and order became increasingly evident as days progressed. What added to the severity of the problem in this “fratricidal war of extermination” was the fact that in many cases the custodians of the law themselves were complicit in the attack on minorities. Communal tendencies entered into the armed forces too and the army personnel were found providing rioters with arms, ammunition and training. When this happened, common masses lost all the faith they had in the government. The aggravating communal tension convinced the minorities that a situation has arisen in which they could not feel safe within the confines of their homes and neighbourhoods. So people in large numbers began leaving their homes and moving to places where they could have what may be called as “solace of numbers”. A number of camps emerged around the cities of Punjab and elsewhere to provide temporary shelter to the refugees.

According to an official estimate, the districts of Attock, Jhelum and Rawalpindi had about 60,000 people housed in refugee camps where they had gathered after their houses were burnt and looted in the communal mayhem.¹³² Most of the people, at this point of time, believed that their stay in the camp would be a temporary affair and that once peace and normalcy would return to their areas, they would go back to their homes. But as time progressed the communal situation further worsened and therefore, they could not return back. Violence remained largely uncontrolled throughout the summer of 1947 and especially so in the districts of Western Punjab. Writes Gopal Das Khosla:

The battle for Lahore began in May 1947 and continued unabated till the city was clear of non-Muslims. Persons residing inside the walled city were stabbed and intimidated, their habitations were destroyed by fire. Homeless and deprived of the means of livelihood, many of them began to leave the city and the volume of exodus increased day by day, till it became a pitiable and ignominious stampede in the month of August.¹³³

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ Gopal Das Khosla, ‘Stern Reckoning: A Survey of Events Leading up to and Following the Partition of India’, Ed. Mushirul Hasan, *The Partition Omnibus*, OUP, New Delhi, p. 223. The fight for Lahore broke out in May because the Sikh leaders had demanded that in case of partition of Punjab, Chenab should be considered as the boundary line. In that case Lahore could have become the part of India.

By mid-May 1947 an average of 100 refugees were pouring in everyday from NWFP and Western Punjab and settling in U.P., Alwar, Jaipur state or Delhi.¹³⁴ Throughout May, the movement of refugees continued.

The turning point in the history of partition migration however, came when Mountbatten's June 3rd plan was announced envisaging the partition of Muslim majority province of Punjab and Bengal, in case their legislative assemblies voted for it.¹³⁵ As already mentioned, in accordance with the 3rd June Plan, the members of the Bengal Legislative Assembly met on 20th June 1947. The division of the joint session of the house, on the question of joining the existing Constituent Assembly i.e. the Indian Union, stood at 126 votes against the move and 90 votes in favour. Subsequently, a separate meeting of the members representing the non-Muslim majority areas (Western Bengal) was held, which by a division of 58 votes to 21 voted in favour of partitioning the province¹³⁶.

The members of the Punjab Legislative Assembly on their part, met on 23rd June- first jointly and then separately. Owing to its Muslim- majority the joint assembly voted in favour of joining Pakistan. However, subsequently, the legislators of the Hindu and Sikh majority eastern districts met and voted in favour of partitioning the province by a margin of 50 votes to 22¹³⁷.

The date of transfer of power was also advanced from June 1948 to 15th August 1947. It meant that the entire scheme of partition had to be effected in a period less than three months. To carry out the task, the British Indian Government subsequently appointed a Boundary Commission headed by a British lawyer Sir Cyril Radcliffe. The man to whom this enormously complex task of drawing the boundaries was

This would have been completely unacceptable to the Muslim League and therefore massive violence was resorted to in the month of May till the city was cleared of non-Muslims.

¹³⁴ *Hindustan Times*, 23rd May 1947.

¹³⁵ As early as February 27, 1947, Swaran Singh, a prominent leader of the Panthic Party in Punjab Legislative Assembly had written to Governor Jenkins: "The Sikhs have been profoundly moved by the obvious desire of the Muslims to seize the Punjab for themselves and would not permit them to do so. The agitation has shown Pakistan in all its nakedness and was the fair example of the kind of treatment that the minorities, including the Sikhs, might expect from Muslim extremists. He [Swaran Singh] admitted that civil war would lead to widespread misery, but he could not see how the Sikhs could be partners with the Muslims on any terms in the absence of some effective sanction. He disliked the idea of partitioning Punjab, but felt that a partition with all its disadvantages might prove to be the only remedy." See: A.G. Noorani, 'Horrors of Partition', *Frontline*, Vol. 29, Issue 04, February 25-March 09, 2012

¹³⁶ *Hindustan Times*, June 21, 1947

¹³⁷ *Hindustan Times*, June 24, 1947

assigned had never been to India or South Asia before and had no knowledge about the geography, polity and economy of the Indian subcontinent. W.H. Auden puts the predicament of Sir Cyril beautifully in his poem 'Partition':

Unbiased at least he was when he arrived on his mission, Having never set eyes on this land he was called to partition

Between two peoples fanatically at odds, With their different diets and incompatible gods.

'Time,' they had briefed him in London, 'is short. It's too late

For mutual reconciliation or rational debate:

The only solution now lies in separation.

The Viceroy thinks, as you will see from his letter,

That the less you are seen in his company the better,

So we've arranged to provide you with other accommodation.

We can give you four judges, two Moslem and two Hindu,

To consult with, but the final decision must rest with you.'

Shut up in a lonely mansion, with police night and day

Patrolling the gardens to keep assassins away,

He got down to work, to the task of settling the fate

Of millions. The maps at his disposal were out of date

And the Census Returns almost certainly incorrect,

But there was no time to check them, no time to inspect

Contested areas. The weather was frightfully hot,

And a bout of dysentery kept him constantly on the trot,

But in seven weeks it was done, the frontiers decided,

A continent for better or worse divided.

The next day he sailed for England, where he quickly forgot

The case, as a good lawyer must. Return he would not,

Afraid, as he told his Club, that he might get shot¹³⁸.

Radcliffe's Private Secretary, Christopher Beaumont later remarked in an interview, the Chairman had never travelled east and "was a bit flummoxed by the whole thing. It was rather impossible assignment, really". In a very short period of six weeks he was made to decide the lives and fates of millions of people.

¹³⁸ Edward Mendelson, ed. *W. H. Auden: Collected Poems*, 'Partition', Vintage International, Random House Publications (1976, reprint 1991), 803, cited in Sunil Khilnani, *The Idea of India*, 2004

Sir Cyril arrived in India on 8th July 1947 and began working on the task assigned. The Punjab Boundary Commission and the Bengal Boundary Commission were set up by an order of the Governor General on 30th June 1947¹³⁹. The opinion of the major political parties was also taken beforehand and the terms of reference were drawn. Radcliffe was made the joint chairman of both the commissions which comprised of four other members, two members each nominated by the Congress and the Muslim League. Justices Mehr Chand Mahajan, Teja Singh, Din Mohammad, and Mohammad Munir were the members of the Punjab Boundary Commission. The Bengal Boundary Commission had Justices C.C. Biswas, B.K. Mukherjee, Abu Saleh Muhammad Akram and S.A. Akram as members¹⁴⁰. The commissions were provided with maps and data from the census figures of 1941. The Boundary Commissions were asked to demarcate the boundaries “on the basis of ascertaining the contiguous majority areas of Muslims and non-Muslims”, and in doing so they were asked to keep into account “other factors” also¹⁴¹. There were a number of differences among the members on the “other factors” and owing to different interpretations, the agreed solution was very difficult to reach. These judges, as alleged by Radcliffe’s Private Secretary, always took a communal line and thus the major decisions regarding the boundary line were ultimately left to the discretion of the Chairman.¹⁴²

After rigorous deliberations throughout the month of July, the Boundary Commission Award was readied. But the British deliberately delayed the announcement of the award till 16th August so as to escape the responsibility for the communal mayhem that such a partition was sure to engender¹⁴³. This happened despite warnings from the Indian leaders. For instance, Sardar Patel had warned Mountbatten as early as 15 July 1947, that “this business of transfer and retransfer of territory will produce very great confusion and difficulty and will completely upset the life” in the affected districts and surrounding areas and therefore, “the process of transfer must be a single

¹³⁹ *Hindustan Times*, July 1, 1947

¹⁴⁰ Notification in the Gazette of India Extraordinary, 30 June, 1947, R/3/1/157: f 104, as in Nicholas Mansergh (ed), *The Transfer of Power 1942-47: The Mountbatten Viceroyalty Announcement and Reception of the 3 June Plan 31 May- 7 July*, Vol. 11, London, 1982, pp. 755-56.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² Karl.E.Meyer, ‘The Invention of Pakistan: How the British Raj Surrendered’, *World Policy Journal*, Vol.20, No.1 (Spring), 2003, pp. 77-92.

¹⁴³ Radcliffe was aware what mayhem the complexities generated by the division of territories would engender. He once famously remarked later: “People sometimes ask me whether I would like to go back and see India as it really is. God forbid. Not even if they asked me. I suspect they’d shoot me out of hand-both sides.”

one after final determination of the area to be transferred. The easiest way to arrange this is to get the report of the Boundary Commission before 15 August¹⁴⁴”.

Meanwhile, the intervening months saw a lot of confusion and speculation on the shape that partition would take and where the boundaries will lay. As historian Mushirul Hasan says:

‘India’ or ‘Pakistan’ was mere territorial abstractions to most people who were ignorant of how Mountbatten’s Plan or the Radcliffe Award would change their destinies and tear them apart from their social and cultural moorings. In their world-view, there was no nationalism, religious or composite. They were blissfully unaware that their fate, which had rested in the hands of the exploiting classes for centuries, would be settled after Mountbatten’s three days of ‘diplomacy’ leading to the 3rd June Plan, and that the frontiers would be decided by Cyril Radcliffe in just seven weeks and ‘a continent for better or worse divided’.¹⁴⁵

The general belief was that while the Muslim majority districts of Punjab would go to Pakistan, the non-Muslim majority districts would go to India. Such an assumption, it is believed, led to widespread communal killings in those districts where the distribution of population was somewhat even and killing emerged as a device to ensure that the district had a clear-cut majority of a particular community. Each community started lobbying and making pleas in favour of various areas on their side. In such a situation the migration began gaining momentum.

¹⁴⁴ Sardar Patel to Mountbatten, dated 15 July 1947, as in V. Shankar (ed), *Select Correspondence of Sardar Patel: 1945-1950*, Vol 1, Navjivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1977, pp. 180-82.

¹⁴⁵ Mushirul Hasan, ‘Memories of a Fragmented Nation: Rewriting the Histories of India’s Partition’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, October 10, 1998, pp.2662-2668. He also argues that it is only the creative writings on the partition that cover this aspect of the partition narrative. Writings like *Tamas* by Bhisham Sahni, *Adha Gaon* by Rahi Masoom Raza are two which readily comes to the mind. Through their various fictional depictions on partition, authors like Sadat Hasan Manto, Krishna Sobti, Khushwant Singh, Alok Bhalla, Qurratulain Hyder and others too show how the common people were unaware about the nuances of partition. In the words of Alok Bhalla, “The fictional accounts, unlike narratives of the historians which move with certitude towards a definitive end, contain all that is locally contingent and truthfully remembered, capricious and anecdotal, contradictory and mythically given. Their endings too are various. While some manage to find their way out of the realms of madness and crime, others either mark out the emotional and ethical map of our times with indelible lines of screams, ash, smoke and mockery, or crumble into shocked silence”. In conversation with historian Alok Bhalla, litterateur Krishna Sobti, who wrote *Sikka Badal Gaya*, opined that “The fiction written about the partition in India and Pakistan has made an attempt, despite the enormity of the horror it describes, to preserve essential human values. This attempt is remarkable. Because there certainly existed hatred between the communities. It led to the destruction of property, migration of populations and a lot of killings. Yet the writers were convinced that it was essential to preserve a sense of humanity, to affirm human values.” See , Krishna Sobti and Alok Bhalla, ‘Memory and History’, *India International Centre Quarterly*, Vol.24, No.2/3, Crossing Boundaries, Monsoon 1997, pp.55-78, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23005432> (accessed on 06/01/2015)

Even on the day of independence i.e. 15th August 1947, on account of confusion over the border lines and delayed declaration of the Boundary Commission Award, strange scenes were witnessed in Punjab and Bengal. “Flags of both India and Pakistan were flown in villages between Lahore and Amritsar, as people of both the communities believed they were on the right side of the border. The morrow after freedom was to find them foreigners in their own homes, exiled by executive fiat”¹⁴⁶.

Intermittent migration had continued unabated till the Boundary Commission Award was finally declared on August 16, 1947. What followed the declaration of the Award may be called the greatest migration of human population ever recorded in history. The “formal creation of borders” now “meant that what was considered a temporary movement by many people to avoid violence, months before became absolute and permanent. From that point, the trickle of refugee movement turned into a deluge as millions began seeking safety in areas across the border where their community was in majority. Hindus and Sikhs now “belonged” to India and Muslims to Pakistan¹⁴⁷”. Clearly, the events of the preceding months had their effect on the psyche of the populace and the fear psychosis did not allow them to stay at their native places. All over West Punjab non-Muslims felt the urgency of leaving Pakistan where, within a day or two, conditions of life became impossible and only destruction was in sight. The situation was not very different for the Muslims in Eastern Punjab and Delhi and a similar migration to the west also began and gathered momentum as the time progressed. On 22nd August 1947, Nehru wrote to Mahatma Gandhi¹⁴⁸:

All this killing business has reached a stage of complete madness, and vast populations are deserting their habitations and trekking to the west or the east. A large number had left Western Punjab in previous months, as you know. Now the process is repeated on both sides.

On the 24th August, Sardar Patel wrote to Gandhiji:

¹⁴⁶ Sucheta Mahajan, *Independence and Partition: The Erosion of Colonial Power in India*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2000, p.202

¹⁴⁷ Ravinder Kaur, ‘India and Pakistan: Partition Lessons’, *Open Democracy*, 16th August 2007, http://www.opendemocracy.net/article/conflicts/india_pakistan/partition, Accessed on 10th January 2019.

¹⁴⁸ Nehru to Gandhi on 22nd August 1947. See, S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of J.L. Nehru*, Second Series, Volume 4, Pub. by Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1986, p.14

Situation in Punjab is extremely bad. People have become lunatic. Cities and villages are burnt and men are butchered as if in a slaughter house. There is information that the police and army men have joined the rioters. Thousands of people are running away and wherever they go they create an atmosphere of terror¹⁴⁹.

The two-way movement gathered pace as the scale of violence picked up engulfing newer areas. People, having lost all faith in the law enforcement agencies, began leaving their homes fearing total annihilation if they stayed back in their homes. As M.S Randhawa puts it, “The hand that was sowing the seeds in the agricultural fields in the morning was hurriedly packing to leave in the afternoon. There was nobody that they could go for justice. Thus the only choice before them was to say goodbye to the land of their birth”¹⁵⁰. Their dilemma and helplessness knew no bounds. To quote Nehru, “Whatever the average middle-class urban person may do, the peasant does not leave his land unless he finds it impossible to stay there. Specially [sic] on the eve of the harvest he does not move and yet these people left their lands. It simply means that life became so intolerable and dangerous that they could not stay there¹⁵¹.”

The decision to leave was, therefore, mostly taken in a matter of few hours. “Those who had the misfortune of living in outlying places and isolated pockets found escape impossible¹⁵²”. As the boundary lines became known more and more people began moving out of their villages and began pouring into the cities and the towns in thousands where they remained huddled together with very little or no food and water for days. When the number of people became considerably large, the caravan began. In the words of U.B Rao:

In the depth of night the last hope is shattered. The Hindus and Sikhs have no roots here at all. They must wrench themselves together, assemble their pitiful possessions, and before sun-up are on the long unending trek to India. Here a cart dragged wearily by a lean hungry bullock, there a wheelbarrow or a push-cart, many carrying bundle on their heads. Multiply this by hundredfold. The streams mingle and

¹⁴⁹ Sardar Patel to Gandhi, dated 24 August, 1947, *Sardar Shrinoo Patro*, as in P.N. Chopra (ed), *The Collected Works of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*, Volume XII (1 January 1947-31 December 1947), Konark Publishers, New Delhi, pp. 169-70.

¹⁵⁰ M.S. Randhawa, *Out of the Ashes: An Account of the Rehabilitation of Refugees from West Pakistan in Rural Areas of East Punjab*, Punjab Police Public Relations Department, Chandigarh, p.25. As quoted in : Ravinder Kaur, ‘The Last Journey: Exploring Social Class in the 1947 Partition Migration’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, June 3, 2006, pp. 2221-2228

¹⁵¹ S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of J.L. Nehru*, Second Series, Volume 4, Pub. by Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1986, p.146.

¹⁵² Gopal Das Khosla, ‘Stern Reckoning: A Survey of Events Leading up to and Following the Partition of India’. Ed. Mushirul Hasan, *The Partition Omnibus*, OUP, New Delhi, p. 223

flow ever eastwards. They cling together out of sheer terror, for on long way out danger lurks- bands of marauders prey on their very helplessness. The attack is launched unawares. Men, women and children perish or are badly mauled. Those who escape lick their wounds and resume their wearisome journey¹⁵³.

Such a caravan was led by bullock carts; each carrying a family huddled together with whatever little material possessions they could carry with them. Camels, horses and mules followed it carrying men and moved slowly, in their long march, from Sargodha, Lyallpur, Montgomery, Balloki on to Ferozepur, Delhi, U.P., Ajmer etc.¹⁵⁴ Alan Campbell-Johnson, the Press Attaché to the Viceroy, saw on 25th September 1947 from his Dakota plane- two streams of refugees moving in opposite directions. He estimated one to be over 50 miles in length and the other at least 45 miles long.¹⁵⁵



Image 2: A Convoy of Refugees on Bullock Carts. This image was shot by famous photographer Bourke-White somewhere in Punjab.

Source:http://www.news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/pop_ups/06/south_asia_india0s_partition/html/10.stm

¹⁵³ U.B. Rao, *The Story of Rehabilitation*, Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation, Government of India, 1967, pp.8-9

¹⁵⁴ Gopal Das Khosla, 'Stern Reckoning: A Survey of Events Leading up to and Following the Partition of India'. Ed. Mushirul Hasan, *The Partition Omnibus*, OUP, New Delhi, p. 223. By August 21, 1947, the daily migration had increased considerably. About 4,000 to 5,000 refugees arrived in Delhi and its suburbs everyday from West Punjab and elsewhere. About 30,000 refugees had by then arrived in Amritsar.

¹⁵⁵ Tapan Raychaudhuri, 'Re-reading Divide and Quit', Mushirul Hasan (ed.), *The Partition Omnibus*, OUP, New Delhi, 2000, p. 303

On October 8, 1947, *The Hindu* reported “one of the greatest migrations in history” as a 400,000 foot convoy of uprooted non-Muslim population of Western Punjab poured over the Pakistan border into India. This was perhaps the largest refugee migration from Western Punjab, with the convoy being so long that it was estimated that it would take eight days to pass a stationary point.¹⁵⁶ By the mid of October, the winter had also set in furthering the trouble of the refugees on the march as well as those who had crossed the border and sheltered themselves in camps.

The refugees in New Delhi had started breaking down under the strain to which they had been subjected for months. Apart from ordinary sickness, epidemics like small pox and cholera had become prevalent among both the refugee columns and camps.¹⁵⁷ Reporting about the migration of refugees, *Hindustan Times* writes on November 2, 1947¹⁵⁸:

A refugee “column” is never composed of less than 50,000 people and usually it has 100,000 or more. From a distance you are hardly able to distinguish whether it is a Muslim or a non-Muslim column. There is little to choose between the two except that they are moving in opposite direction. At the head are the bullock-carts, each carrying a whole family together with its few remaining possessions. Here and there you can see few people riding on the horses, donkeys and camels. In the rear are the people walking on foot.



Image3: A Foot Convoy of Refugees

Source:<https://times.com/4421746/Margaret-bourke-white-great-migration>

¹⁵⁶ *The Hindu*, 8th October, 1947

¹⁵⁷ *The Times of India*, 13th October, 1947

¹⁵⁸ *Hindustan Times*, 2nd November, 1947

The sheer human suffering involved in such migration could be gauged from the fact that in the caravans, the frail and the elderly, both men and women, who were not able to withstand the rigorous journey, were left aside on the road to fend for themselves. Without food, water and any medical aid, thousands of them died a painful death, with no one to grieve over their dead bodies. As the time progressed the route became littered with bloated and putrefying corpses, animal and human skeletons.¹⁵⁹ A horrible smell reached one's nostrils even when a person was at a considerable distance from the refugee column and it became stronger and stronger when one reached near it. It was a peculiar smell composed of smells of sweat, dirt, human and animal excretion and rotting flesh.¹⁶⁰

In addition to the massive foot caravans, the railways, the Military Lorries and air transport also played an important role in the transfer of population. The railways played the most important role in the two-way migration. Notwithstanding the perilous journey the people flocked to the railways in large numbers in the hope that it could help in a quicker migration. Thousands of people gathered at the railway platforms braving the riotous mobs on the way. But boarding a train was not an easy task. The railway machinery appeared paralysed by the weight of numbers and it became increasingly difficult to secure a ticket. Quite often it was the railway employees and their acquaintances who could secure a railway ticket. Moreover, owing to the security concerns, the time-table of the train and the platform designated for that very train was not revealed until about half an hour before the departure of the train. The railway officials were naturally the first to know about a train's timings. And hence they could place themselves at the right time and place to board the train before the huge rush started. Having an acquaintance in the railways was, therefore, very useful those days¹⁶¹. It is evident from the following account of Shyam Lal Manchanda who was a 16-year old resident of village Peepal Sawan Kapur in Multan district and was stranded in the Quila Multan Camp awaiting evacuation along with his family:

It was the rainy month of September when we were waiting for the "refugee special" train to evacuate us. Often the hostile Muslim groups attacked our camp. The arrangement of food and water was also

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ *Hindustan Times*, Magazine Section, November 2, 1947

¹⁶¹ Ravinder Kaur, 'The Last Journey: Exploring Social Class in the 1947 Partition Migration', *Economic and Political Weekly*, June 3, 2006, pp. 2221-2228

not adequate. The only agency that fed and looked after the refugees actually was the Multan Sewa Samiti, a social service organization service started by some influential Hindus of Multan. The wait for evacuation seemed endless till we chanced upon a distant relative whose sons worked in the railways. He took pity on us and agreed to take us along on a goods train that had been arranged the next day especially for the railway employees. They were open carriages meant for transport of goods and animals. The journey was tough as we had no protection from rain, cold or hostile attacks. Many people fell sick on the way. But at least we were lucky to board the train.¹⁶²

However, even the railway employees were sometimes not lucky to ensure a safe journey of their families by train. Bhola Ram Ranjan was a resident of Layya district near Rawalpindi in Pakistan and was posted as a stenographer in Railway's Divisional Office. As a result of violence in his district he had been trying to move to India along with his family for a long time but the railway officials were not relieving him of his duties. They said that until his replacement came from India, he would not be relieved. It was in October that the officials issued a railway pass for his family but did not allow him to leave. He recounts:

After getting the passes I helped my mother, wife and three year old son to board the train. The train started to move towards Ferozpur slowly but stopped after sometime at a station named Kamuki. It was probably the Deputy Commissioner who came to the station and informed that only recently the entire passengers of a train had been murdered at Kamuki station. It was decided that the train will not take the main line route and will go by the branch route. It was hardly two minutes of travel that the engine of the train came to a screeching halt. They [the Muslims] had cut the line. Then we saw a mob of people armed with swords, lathis, knives and spears move towards our train from the nearby agricultural fields. We closed all the doors of the train. In those days there were no iron grills in the windows of the train; therefore, we jammed the windows by using our luggage. Fortunately, we were accompanied by 8 soldiers of the Madras Regiment. Their commander ordered the soldiers to take position and fire. After firing in the air, they started firing towards the mob. As a result of it, the mob ran away and our lives were saved. About 25 soldiers of Gorkha Regiment joined us and one soldier each was stationed in every boggy of the train. The train was then moved back and taken to the main line route. Accompanied by those soldiers we reached Gujranwala. There I got a room with the help of railway employees which was vacated by Hindus who had migrated to India. The Muslims of the area

¹⁶² Ravinder Kaur, 'The Last Journey: Exploring Social Class in the 1947 Partition Migration', *Economic and Political Weekly*, June 3, 2006, pp. 2221-2228. She argues that different mode of transport determined the kind of experience that an individual or community had in the process of migration and that in turn determined how they remembered it in the long run. She points out how the foot journeys took weeks of travel and was fraught with dangers of violent attacks to the travelers. Air transport, on the other hand, took only a few hours and therefore, was much safer. In between these came the journey by train, trucks and Military Lorries which were often difficult to obtain and were also likely to be attacked. The means of transport, therefore, provided the vantage point from which to "witness" and "narrate" Partition.

were told not to sell anything to us but some of them came to us at night and sold essential ration items at exorbitant prices. We had to stay there for one month. Afterwards, the train brought us to Sarai Rohilla in Delhi”¹⁶³.



Image4: An overcrowded train full with Muslim refugees near New Delhi fleeing for West Pakistan on September 19, 1947.

Source: <http://www.dawn.com/news/1169309>

In such a scenario, for those without adequate money or contacts, the situation was a lot more difficult. The desperation of the fleeing people was used by the corrupt in their own ways. The dishonest clerks would not let go the opportunity to rob them of their money and whatever little material wealth that they still hold on to. They “explained that the fares printed on the tickets were out of date, and then the journey was not an ordinary one; it was a race for life- or perhaps death¹⁶⁴”. They were thus forced to pay an extra amount here. The ticket checker too admitted only those who were prepared to cough up extra money.

¹⁶³ Interview with Bhola Ram Ranjan, 25th May, 2013. Afterwards, Bhola Ram joined the railway service in India.

¹⁶⁴ B.R. Nanda, *Witness to Partition: A Memoir*, Rupa & Co. , New Delhi, 2003, pp.92-93

“Finally, the guard of the train remembered the mandatory clause of the Railway Act against overloading of carriages and travelling on footboards; for jeopardizing the safety of all passengers he felt quite justified in recovering an adequate premium from the refugees to cover the entire risk”!¹⁶⁵

Every train, as a result, was jam-packed with refugees, inside and outside. People even climbed on to the roof and sat balanced precariously on the curved surfaces. They stood on the foot-boards, clinging to the door-handles, exposed to hazards of the harsh sun rays and very often the bullets of the rabble-rousers¹⁶⁶. In many instances the riotous mobs connived with the railway guards and other state officials and stopped the train to commit looting and mass murder. The trains rarely ran on time and the frequent stoppages for hours exposed the hapless people to the sweltering heat of the sun. Food and water was nowhere in sight. There were instances of the well water poisoning as well. Little children were the first to succumb under such harsh conditions. “Small children and infants died of thirst and starvation. When babies in arms cried for a drop of water till no sound came from their parched throats, fathers and mothers in despair gave them their own urine to drink”¹⁶⁷. The sheer fear of death, however, saw people travel in inhuman conditions till they reached the ‘right’ side of the border.

Sardar Patel kept on urging Railway Minister John Mathai to step up the efforts to evacuate the refugees safely throughout the evacuation process. Thus, he wrote on 1st September 1947 “... I find that the progress made in securing reasonable rail communications is slow and entirely out of keeping with the requirements. I feel that we must show a much better rate of progress and that what is required are quick decisions and immediate implementation of those decisions overcoming all obstacles that may at first sight appear to be insurmountable but would seem to be surmountable given the will, the direction and initiative¹⁶⁸.” In another letter written the next day he reminded the Railways Minister that “In a nutshell, the problem is of

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ Gopal Das Khosla, ‘Stern Reckoning: A Survey of Events Leading up to and Following the Partition of India’, Mushirul Hasan (eds.) *The Partition Omnibus*, OUP, New Delhi, 2000, p. 223

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ Sardar Patel to John Mathai, dated 1 September, 1947, as in P.N. Chopra (ed), *The Collected Works of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*, Volume XII (1 January 1947-31 December 1947), Konark Publishers, New Delhi, pp. 193-94.

saving more than a million innocent and helpless potential victims of mass massacre. Every hour and every ounce of energy count¹⁶⁹.”

The renewed efforts of the railways now onwards, led to expediting the recovery process. Official estimates say that about 673 special refugee trains were run between August 27 and November 6, 1947 transporting 23 lakh refugees inside India and across the border. Out of these 13,62,000 were non-Muslims, and 9,39,000 were Muslims.¹⁷⁰ In the six day period between November 10 and November 16, 1947 itself, about 100,000 non-Muslim refugees were moved from West Punjab to India by rail¹⁷¹.

Motor lorries and trucks were also used extensively in the process of migration. Most of these were roofless and therefore, had no protection from the sun, dust or rain. Moreover, to accommodate as many people as possible, they were made to stand motionless throughout the long and arduous journey which made their bodies numb. They were also subject to attacks by the marauding mobs roaming the countryside with lathis, guns, swords and spears¹⁷². By November 30, 1947 as per the statement given by Rehabilitation Minister K.C. Neogy in the Constituent Assembly, over four million non-Muslims from West Pakistan had been recovered. The Military Evacuation Organisation set up by the Government on September 4 had alone evacuated so far by rail, road transport and by foot convoy 25, 83,000 persons. Five lakhs had come out before 15th August. It was estimated another eight lakhs had come between August 15 and September 4. It might be said that, the minister said, about five lakhs still remained to be evacuated, but no accurate figures were yet available¹⁷³.

¹⁶⁹ Sardar Patel to John Mathai, dated 2nd September, 1947, as in P.N. Chopra (ed), *The Collected Works of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*, Volume XII (1 January 1947-31 December 1947), Konark Publishers, New Delhi, pp. 194-95.

¹⁷⁰ Ritu Menon & Kamla Bhasin, 'Recovery, Rupture and Resistance : Indian State and Abduction of Women during Partition', *Economic and Political Weekly*, April 24, 1993, p. ws-2-ws11

¹⁷¹ Press Note issued on November 18, 1947 as reported in *The Hindu* on the same date.

¹⁷² Gopal Das Khosla mentions one such attack on a lorry convoy on August 26, 1947 when a convoy of 35 military trucks, carrying non-Muslim refugees from Sialkot was attacked by a large mob of Muslims on its way to Amritsar. Many were killed and injured, all their belongings looted. In fact, as late as July 1948, it was very dangerous to travel through Western Punjab by Lorries.

¹⁷³ *The Hindu*, December 1, 1947.

Air transport was used by the rich refugees who could afford to hire government-chartered aeroplanes and other private agencies at high costs. This mode of travel provided the quickest and the safest migration. It is estimated that by air, about 27,500 passengers were carried to India between September 15 and December 7, 1947, and a rather smaller number carried outwards, in 962 flights made by Government-chartered aeroplanes.¹⁷⁴ Even these upper class refugees were not immune to harassment by the corrupt officials, who did not let go the opportunity of taking advantage of the refugees' precarious situation. "Some refugees who had evidently never travelled by an aeroplane appeared to think that an air passage carried with it the right to carry a cart-load of household effects¹⁷⁵". They came in for a rude shock when "they were made to surrender the excess weight of jewellery, silk clothes and currency to customs and police officials who were assisting the aerodrome officials in keeping order on the ground and preventing a crash in the air. There was a strange irony in the situation in which a refugee squandered the remnants of his life-savings in a bid to save his life."¹⁷⁶ The British Overseas Airways Corporation (B.O.A.C.) played a major role in the evacuation of refugees by air. The government considered this task completed by early December 1948. Prime Minister Nehru thanked it on 2nd December in following words¹⁷⁷:

The operations on which the B.O.A.C. have been engaged for sometime on behalf of the Government of India for the transport of refugees across the borders of India and Pakistan concluded today. I am happy to learn from my Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation that these operations have been conducted smoothly and efficiently and to the entire satisfaction of that Ministry. I would like to convey my appreciation to all the B.O.A.C. officers and men concerned in this work. The task, which they have just concluded, arose out of a very unhappy chapter in the history of India. This chapter is closing and we shall soon be embarking on constructive endeavour. I am quite sure that in this constructive task there is much scope for friendly cooperation between India and the United Kingdom.

The evacuation of non-Muslim refugees from West Punjab was more or less completed by the end of November 1947¹⁷⁸. It is believed that by the end of it, over

¹⁷⁴ *After Partition*, Modern India Series, Issued by: The Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, G.O.I. , Delhi, 1948, p.54

¹⁷⁵ B.R. Nanda, *Witness to Partition: A Memoir*, Rupa & Co. , New Delhi, 2003, p.93

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ *Hindustan Times*, 3rd December, 1948.

¹⁷⁸ Statement of Financial Commissioner P.N. Dhar, as quoted in *The Hindu*, December 2, 1947.

12.5 million people were uprooted from their settled homes and cut off from their old moorings. Up to June 15, 1948, about 55 lakhs non-Muslims were estimated to have been brought over to India from West Punjab and other provinces of Western Pakistan and during the same period about 58 lakhs Muslims were moved into Pakistan from East Punjab, Delhi, U.P., Ajmer-Merwara, Alwar, Bharatpur, Gwalior and Indore. During the same period about one and a quarter million non-Muslims crossed the borders from Eastern Pakistan into West Bengal. The total comes to about 3 per cent of undivided India's population.¹⁷⁹

Table 1: State wise Distribution of Displaced population (Western Zone) (As on 31st December 1958)

STATE	Number of Displaced Persons		
	Rural	Urban	Total
Punjab	16,11,000	11,26,000	27,37,000
Rajasthan	1,54,000	2,09,000	3,73,000
Delhi	30,000	4,71,000	5,01,000
Bombay	54,000	3,61,000	4,15,000
Madhya Pradesh	50,000	1,59,000	2,09,000
U.P.	49,000	4,31,000	4,80,000
Mysore	2,000	5,000	7,000
Madras	1,000	8,000	9,000
Himachal Pradesh	1,900	4,000	5,900
Andhra Pradesh	-	4,000	4,000
TOTAL	19,62,000	27,78,000	47,40,000

Source: Annual report on the working of Ministry of Relief and

Rehabilitation (1957-58), p.67

¹⁷⁹ *After Partition*, Modern India Series, Issued by: The Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, G.O.I. , Delhi, 1948, p.50

As the above table shows, owing to the nearness to the western borders, the provinces of Punjab, Rajasthan and Delhi received the largest number of refugees. At the same time, the provinces of Bombay, U.P. and M.P. also witnessed the influx of a significant numbers of refugees. Even far away provinces like Mysore, Madras, Himachal Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh also received thousands of refugees, making it evident that the impact of partition spread far and wide. Here it is to be noted that our study focuses on the displaced population of the Western Zone only, leaving the study of migration on the Eastern Front where the scale of migration ebbed and flowed for decades after.

Moreover, this study limits itself to the study of refugees in Delhi itself which attracted the second largest number of refugees after East Punjab. The next chapter undertakes such an attempt in this direction.

CHAPTER 2

INFLUX OF REFUGEES IN DELHI AND THE INITIAL RELIEF EFFORT

The Government Census of 1941 put Delhi's population at 9.18 lakh. By 1947 it had risen to about 9.5 lakh. Out of this population, about 3.3 lakh Muslims left the city for Pakistan. At the same time about 5 lakh non-Muslim refugees entered the city from West Punjab, NWFP, Baluchistan and Sind. By 1951, the population of Delhi increased to about 17.44 lakh. About 28.4 per cent of this population comprised of the partition refugees.¹

The influx of Hindu and Sikh refugees and the outflow of Muslims from the city had a tremendous impact on Delhi. Delhi as it emerged post-1947 was very different from the Delhi of the past. It witnessed significant transformation in almost all aspects. As the years progressed, the city underwent tremendous changes politically, economically, socially and culturally. There are a number of different ways in which the residents of Delhi looked at the changes in Delhi post-Partition, both positively and negatively.

Ashok Mitra, a Marxist economist and politician described the changes in Delhi in these words:²

Much of what instantly filled the void of partition was unlovely and even uncouth beside the departed graces, the city distraught and groaning under unaccustomed strain. But the new spirit was in evidence everywhere. It came all in a flash when, sauntering that selfsame December under the arcades of Connaught Circus stripped through changing hands and still meagrely stocked, one was surprised by a little boy with a topknot on his head hawking newspapers a day old. Not wanting the paper I offered a two-anna piece. Pat came the disdainful rebuke from the four feet lump of pride. He did not need my coin unless I wanted his paper.

¹ See V.N. Datta, 'Punjabi Refugees and the Urban Development of Greater Delhi' in R.E. Frykenberg (ed), *Delhi Through the Ages: Selected Essays in Urban History, Culture and Society*, OUP, Delhi, 1993, pp 287-96

² Ashok Mitra, *Delhi Capital City*, Thomson Press (India) Limited, Publication Division, New Delhi, 1970, pp.2-3. He further says " A generation which now fill white collar jobs in offices and business houses paid their way through evening classes in nondescript colleges, doing odd jobs on the pavements, washing and laundering clothes for people at their houses, hawking vegetables and sundry ware. Almost for a decade the young raised themselves through school on a raw carrot or radish before they inched their way eventually to the *chat* and *golgappa* shops."

As we shall see in the course of this work, there are many such stories of men, women and children upholding their dignity amidst the trauma of forced displacement and working hard to resurrect their lives. As time progressed, on account of their hard work, patience and perseverance the refugees carved out a niche for themselves and became an indispensable part of Delhi.

Among all the north Indian states it was Delhi which attracted the largest number of refugees, mostly because it seemed to offer comparatively better opportunities for economic development in the future. The present day industrial regions of Punjab like Jalandhar and Ludhiana had not developed at that time and therefore, had little attraction, particularly for those refugees who had migrated from the urban parts of Western Punjab. Also, by the time refugees reached Delhi they had neither the resources nor the energy to carry the journey forward. Furthermore, being the capital of the newly independent country, it was expected to offer safety and security; and better prospects for the future. During those times of chaos, safety and security must have been an important consideration for those deciding to settle down in Delhi. Thus, it was left to the capital city of Delhi to provide an abode to half a million refugees.

By August 12, 1947 itself, about one lakh refugees had arrived in Delhi and thousands of refugees, Hindus, Muslim and Sikhs were pouring in daily from different riot-affected areas of NWFP, Punjab and Alwar etc³. About 1000 ration cards were being issued daily to them. As the number of refugees entering Delhi increased with the new boundary lines declared, the need for providing organised relief to them began to get prominence. The leading newspapers began highlighting the plight of the refugees almost on a daily basis. The *Hindustan Times*, in its edition of August 21, 1947 advocated the need of planned rehabilitation by the government. It added that: “Between 4000 to 5000 refugees, it is authoritatively learnt, arrive in Delhi and its suburbs everyday from West Punjab. A Civil Supplies officer, in an interview, said today that stocks of ration had been provided for 100,000 refugees scattered in various relief camps in Delhi and, New Delhi. There is, it is learnt no respite in the influx of refugees who started pouring in large numbers some three weeks ago. Besides thousands of refugees living in relief camps, an equally large numbers are putting up with friends or relatives⁴”. This included the thousands of Muslims who fled from the

³ *Hindustan Times*, August 13, 1947

⁴ *Hindustan Times*, August 21, 1947

rural areas of Delhi's hinterland in the neighbouring districts of Gurgaon, Rohtak and Meerut, fearing loss of lives in communal violence that had swept their areas.

By October this number rose to 150000 which further soared as time progressed. Direct migration from Pakistan to Delhi continued throughout 1947 up to the middle of 1948. However, the intra-country migration continued for years after. In this category come those people who had settled in other parts of the country after migration from Pakistan, and subsequently moved to the capital in search of better opportunities for future.

The table below shows the distribution of refugees according to their source of migration⁵:

State Country	Rural	Urban	Total	%	% Rural
Indian union:					
Andhra	-	3	3	-	0.0
Assam	-	7	7	-	0.0
Bihar	6	43	49	0.2	12.2
Bombay	8	250	258	1.1	3.1
Madhya Pradesh	5	87	92	0.4	5.4
Madras	-	20	20	0.1	0.0
Orissa	-	2	2	-	0.0
Punjab	573	4470	5043	21.1	11.4
Uttar Pradesh	107	1699	1806	7.6	5.9
West Bengal	5	105	110	0.4	4.5
Hyderabad	-	1	1	-	0.0
Jammu & Kashmir	16	196	212	0.9	7.5
Madhya Bharat	2	60	62	0.3	3.2
Mysore	1	8	9	-	11.1

⁵ V.K.R.V. Rao and P.B. Desai, *Greater Delhi: A Study in Urbanisation*, Delhi, Asia Publishing House, 1965, p.111

Pepsu	58	277	335	1.5	17.3
Rajasthan	40	345	385	1.6	10.4
Saurashtra	-	4	4	-	0.0
Travancore-Cochin	-	7	7	-	0.0
Ajmer	-	71	71	0.3	0.0
Bhopal	6	7	13	-	46.2
Coorg	1	-	1	1	100.0
Delhi	8	-	8	-	100.0
Himachal Pradesh	-	15	15	0.1	0.0
Vindhya Pradesh	-	4	4	-	0.0
Total	836	7681	8517	35.6	9.8
Pakistan West	2591	12724	15315	64.2	16.9
Pakistan East	25	24	49	0.2	51.0
Grand Total	3452	20429	23881	100.0	14.5

Table 2: Distribution of Refugees According to the Source of Migration- Location and Rural-Urban Character of the Place from which they immigrated to Delhi

The above table clearly shows that Delhi witnessed the influx of refugees of both urban and rural backgrounds from various parts of the country. This flow of homeless people into Delhi was so huge and sudden that the city's infrastructure crumbled under the pressure to provide food, cloth and shelter to the refugees. The city's administration had to struggle over the years to provide its population with basic amenities.

As the inflow of refugees increased tremendously after partition, the government shelters proved inadequate to shelter them. Refugees, thus, began to occupy every conceivable place that they could. This comprised the school buildings, college campuses, temple complexes, Gurudwaras, mosques, historical monuments, pavements, railway platforms, bus stands and military barracks etc. About one-third

of the refugees took shelter in the houses vacated by the Muslims who had migrated to Pakistan under adverse circumstances. Many others sought accommodation in the houses of their relatives and friends.

The sheer number of battered displaced people demanded that the government act fast to prevent the communal situation from getting out of hand. The government, therefore, employed its machinery to provide immediate relief to the refugees in the form of food, water, medical relief and shelter. The existing infrastructure in the city was woefully inadequate to house such a huge population and therefore new construction was a must to adequately shelter them. The construction of new houses was, however, a time taking task and hence, as a temporary measure, the government decided to shelter the refugees in various camps in the city.

Let us see how it happened.

2.1 LIFE IN REFUGEE CAMPS

With the arrival of refugees, a number of camps were set up in various parts of the city. Food, water, clothes and medical help was provided in these. Initially, three major refugee camps were set up in Delhi. The Kingsway Camp was the largest among them.

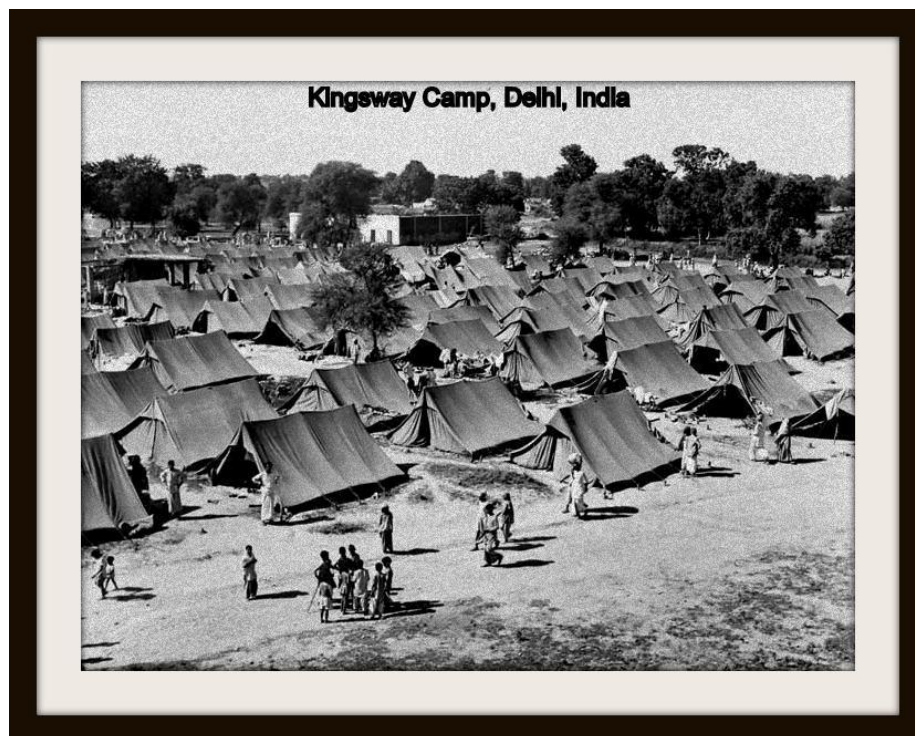


Image 5: Kingsway Camp, Source: NMML

The other two were located in Tibbia College area in Karol Bagh and in Shahdara. By April 1948, more camps were set up at Purana Qila, Anand Parbat, Bela Road and Tis Hazari. The number of camps was further increased in due course of time. As construction of new houses for refugees required a number of things to fall in place, the most cumbersome being the acquisition of land; the refugees had to stay in these camps for a long time. The life of refugees in these over-congested camps was very difficult with very limited food, water, health facilities and sanitation. Under such conditions, the vagaries of the seasons and associated fluctuations in the weather, made their living all the more difficult.

The Purana Quila Camp was set up when the law and order situation deteriorated in Delhi in September 1947. It was settled by the people who fled from the riot-affected areas such as Paharganj, Karol Bagh, Multani Dhanda, Shidipura, Sabzi Mandi and nearby areas. In the course of time it became one of the largest refugee camps sheltering Muslims from Delhi and elsewhere. Muslims of Delhi entered into it in large numbers in early September when communal riots engulfed the city with a hope that they would return back to their homes as soon as normalcy returned. However, only a few among the inmates of the camp could eventually go back to their homes because by the time they returned, their houses were already occupied by the Hindu and the Sikh refugees who refused to budge. About one-third of the total refugees from West Pakistan got accommodation in the houses of Muslim evacuees. For the Muslims, as the chances of going back to their homes became slim, the Purana Quila Camp became a transit point from where they eventually left for Pakistan.

Nirad C. Chaudhari, the eminent writer, who lived in Delhi during those times, recounts seeing Muslims “waiting for the evacuating lorries with vacant looks in their eyes, disregarding the rain and the storm, as if their only thought were to escape the spectre that was treading at their heels⁶.”

Richard Symonds who was an aid worker in the camp writes:

I joined Horace [Alexander] in the largest camp, the Purana Quila, which was sheltering 60,000 refugees in tents, in corners of battlements and in the open, together with their camels and tongas [horse-driven carts] and ponies, battered old taxies and luxury limousines. There were orderly rows of tents which organised bodies of college students had put up. You might meet anyone from a Nawab [a

⁶ Mushirul Hasan, ‘The Fear and Loathing’, *Outlook*, 7th June 2004

Muslim aristocrat] to a professor. Rich men offered you thousands of rupees if you could hire them an aeroplane to Karachi. It seemed possible to buy anything from a taxi to the hawkers' boxes of matches, which were now the only ones available in Delhi. From time to time Europeans hurried through looking for their bearers who had fled from their houses.⁷



Image 6: A distraught child refugee at Purana Quila Camp

Source: <http://www.hindustantimes.com/static/partition/gallery/>

Initially the Purana Quila camp was under the direct control of Mohammad Zahid Hussain, the High Commissioner for Pakistan in India, who “tried, in the beginning, to look after the requirements of the refugees” but he soon found out that “the job was too big for him and his limited staff⁸”. Therefore, on September 13, 1947, the

⁷ Richard Symonds, *In the Margins of Independence: A relief worker in India and Pakistan, 1942-1949*, OUP, Karachi, 2001, p.34, as quoted in Yasmin Khan, *The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan*, New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2007, p.143-144. Born on 18th April 1889, Horace Alexander, a British citizen, was a trusted aide of Mahatma Gandhi and had helped him attend the second Round Table Conference in London in 1931. He had worked hard to try to contain the partition riots and had worked extensively for the refugees. For more on Horace Alexander. See Geoffrey Carnall and Philippa Gregory, *Gandhi's Interpreter: A Life of Horace Alexander*, Edinburgh University Press, 2010, www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctt1r27dc.

⁸ H.M. Patel, *Rites of Passage: A Civil Servant Remembers* ed. Sucheta Mahajan, Rupa and Co., New Delhi, 2005, p.97.

Government of India took direct control of the camp in its hands.⁹ At times, the Delhi Emergency Committee, which took care of these camps, faced resistance from unexpected quarters while trying to help the refugees stranded here. The drivers who were tasked to transport ration to these camps and many of whom had come as refugees from West Pakistan “gave an infinite amount of trouble” as “they had no heart in working for the welfare of the Muslim refugees, and they would pretend to lose their way if they were sent to a Muslim mohalla or vehicles entrusted to their care would develop engine trouble on the way to a Muslim refugee camp”¹⁰. It took some time for the government to overcome this problem with the help of student volunteers. Furthermore, “so high was the tension in these Muslim concentrations that the inmates were prepared to beat up even those who came only to help” and therefore, “only known and identifiable foreigners and Muslims could enter the camps, and fortunately, also a few Hindu senior officials¹¹.”

When Anis Kidwai, a prominent social worker tasked by Gandhiji to undertake relief work for the refugees, visited the Purana Quila camp in October 1947, there was “as far as the eye could see” nothing but “disorganised tents and heaps of tin roofs amidst which naked children, unkempt women, girls without their heads covered and men overcome with anger wandered up and down endlessly”. She describes the condition in the camp in these words:

From morning to afternoon, little girls with starving infants hanging of their shoulders, their faces telling tales of longing and hunger, stood for hours in queue after queue for two ounces of milk. Each mother wanted just a little extra so her chapped, aching breasts could get respite; each young child insisted for little more for its starving belly. The volunteers, always alert and economical, had to sternly refuse- how else would the morning tea be prepared and dry *rotis* made moist enough to swallow?

Living the life of beasts, people would eat food off their hands or in pot-shards, which also served as griddles for baking blackened *rotis* made from mud-laced flour. These shards, and some leaves, were their only vessels, crockery, cups. Other bodily needs had to be met with two bricks; at other times,

⁹ *Hindustan Times*, September 14, 1947.

If we go through the Purana Quila refugee’s accounts of those days, a continuous thread that runs through is the alleged indifference of the Government of India towards the inhabitants of this camp. Anis Kidwai’s account of it also runs on the same lines. Even food and clothes to this camp used to come from Pakistan for a number of days.

¹⁰ H.M. Patel, *Rites of Passage: A Civil Servant Remembers* ed. Sucheta Mahajan, Rupa and Co., New Delhi, 2005, pp.94-95. For a detailed view of how the Delhi Emergency Committee, working through a Central control room, worked tirelessly to bring the communal situation in Delhi in September 1947, pages 77 to 102 of this book may be seen.

¹¹ *Ibid.*,p.97

these very two bricks would be put together to serve as a kitchen stove. Thirst and hunger, typhoid, cholera, dysentery, fever and many other diseases were widespread. Any shortfall in misery was made up by snakes, whose bites delivered scores [sic] from this tortured existence. The rains in September were manifestations of god's wrath and, under that roof of a grey sky, all the sanctuary seekers could do was to huddle in the knee-deep mud and await death¹².

When partition took place, Arghwani Begum from Sahaspur, United Provinces (now Uttar Pradesh) was at the end of her pregnancy. On account of the outbreak of communal riots in the area, her family moved to the Purana Quila camp in Delhi. She gave birth to a child the next day. Born in extremely unhygienic condition, the child had to be wrapped in an old frock belonging to someone else. The cycle of birth and death, obviously, continued unabated despite the mayhem created by the partition riots¹³.

The Humayun Tomb camp was another camp predominantly inhabited by Muslims. Its population had swelled to about 60,000 by the end of September 1947 but by November 1947, the number of refugees had gone down to about 25,000¹⁴. The bulk of the population of this camp had by then left for Pakistan or had moved to other places within the country. An unusual feature of this camp was a hospital where three special tents were erected exclusively for abandoned old women who had been weakened and crippled by age. Their families had boarded the train to Pakistan and left them to fend for themselves.¹⁵

¹² Anis Kidwai, *In Freedom's Shade*, Translated by Ayesha Kidwai, Penguin Books, New Delhi, 2011, pp.37-38

¹³ Urvashi Butalia, 'The Stuff of History', *Hindustan Times*, August 13, 2016, <http://www.hindustantimes.com/static/partition/comment/the-stuff-of-history-urvashi-butalia/>

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, November 25, 1947

¹⁵ Anis Kidwai, *In Freedom's Shade*, Translated by Ayesha Kidwai, Penguin Books, New Delhi, 2011, p.56



Image7: Humayun Tomb Camp in September 1947

Source: <http://www.twitter.com/indiahistorypic/status/444700907263909888>

The conditions in other camps in Delhi, inhabited mostly by Sikhs and Hindus, were also more or less the same. Lack of proper food and water, along with inadequate health and sanitation facilities were problems common to all. Dealing with the fluctuating weather was an additional problem. With the delay in construction of houses for the refugees and obsolete tents that they were kept in, the conditions became more miserable when the skies opened up in the monsoon. A heavy downpour of more than 24 hours in mid-September 1947 worsened the plight of the refugees. The worst affected were the refugees in the Idgah Camp where no shelter was available against heavy rain.¹⁶ Such inhospitable condition of living led to the outbreak of a number of diseases in the camps. Cholera broke out in the Karol Bagh Camp in the same month. The number of sick increased as the days progressed, the cases of cholera, dysentery and diarrhoea were widespread.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, September 16, 1947

At the Kurukshetra Camp, 25,000 Hindu and Sikh refugees had been sheltered by early October 1947. The numbers increased every day. Soon, the number of tents available was not enough to accommodate the refugees stranded there. Many had to spend days and nights under the open sky, fighting the rain, sun and cold. The diet was only good enough to prevent death from starvation.¹⁷ Sucheta Kripalani upon visiting the camp complained heavily of the inadequate arrangement of medical facilities and sanitation. The callous attitude of the government officials becomes further evident from the fact that about 13,000 refugees stationed in this Camp were forcibly sent to the nearby villages to settle down without any security, in the houses lying vacant on account of the migration of the Muslim population to other places. These people were given ration for only one week and were expected to look after themselves afterwards.¹⁸

By the end of December 1947, there were more than 160 refugee camps all over the country, providing accommodation to 12,50,000 refugees. In the East Punjab alone 7,21,396 were accommodated in 85 camps. Out of the remaining total, 1,50,000 were in the camps in Delhi, 53,000 in Punjab and Rajasthan States, 33,000 in Bombay, 30,000 in the United Provinces, 5000 in Madras and 1,500 in the Central Provinces¹⁹.

The government, which was facing an acute food shortage on account of a weak monsoon the previous year, was forced to begin a system of rationing. It began issuing new ration cards and made its possession mandatory to get free rations. However, only those refugees who had got a living accommodation were entitled to permanent ration cards. The inmates in the camps were issued temporary ration cards. The government felt that the inmates of the camps could move to place to place and hence, issuance of permanent ration cards to them might lead to issue of bogus cards.²⁰

Official red tape also stood in the way of getting a ration card issued. They had to stand in long queues at government offices for days and were, in many cases, required to pay bribe to get it issued. In the intervening period, many families had to go without food.

¹⁷ *The Hindu*, October 5, 1947

¹⁸ *Hindustan Times*, October 17, 1947

¹⁹ See, S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of J.L. Nehru*, Second Series, Volume 7, Pub. By Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1988, p.25

²⁰ *Ibid.*, January 6, 1948.

As time progressed, the living conditions in the camps deteriorated further. Dr. Zakir Hussain, while reporting the condition of refugee camps in the city to his colleagues remarked that “these places could not properly be called camps, but rather areas in which humanity was dumped.”²¹ As the number of complaints regarding the pathetic conditions of the refugees in camps increased and government became the subject of increased criticism, it decided to organize a proper census of the refugees. Such a census in the camps in Delhi took place on the 2nd and 3rd October 1948. Prior to the census, the officials had circulated an order to the inmates in the camps to stay in the camps and not to venture to other places on the day of the census. Thus on the appointed day a thorough physical count of the population living in rooms, barracks or tents was carried out. The final numbers that came out after the census on 3rd October 1948 was 43,970.²²

Some of the refugee camps that had been set up in 1947 continued to function till 1949 and surprisingly, the grievances of the refugees there were still very similar to what it had been two years back. For example, the inmates of the Kingsway Camp complained that with the onset of the monsoon in July (1949), the conditions of living in the camp have become pitiable. They added that despite the construction of new hutments by the government which were ready to be occupied, the officials delayed the allotment on technical grounds. A heavy fire had destroyed this camp the previous year, causing a lot of hardship for its inmates, yet the refugees had no option but to live in the same camp. While a few camps had hutments prepared for them at the places chosen by the government; no such huts were prepared for these refugees. The Government had earmarked a place for them at Tilokari, which in the words of refugees was “too far and out of the way a place, for us”.²³

By August 1949, at the Purana Quila Camp, except for 100 families or so, all others had been accommodated in the tenements. More tenements were in the process of completion and it was expected that within a week or so, the remaining people would shift to the new tenements. However, refugees complained that the huts constructed for them were being allotted to people outside the camp on the recommendations from

²¹ Partition Emergency Committee Minutes, 16 September 1947, reprinted in appendix to H.M. Patel, *Rites of Passage: A Civil Servant Remembers* ed. Sucheta Mahajan, Rupa and Co., New Delhi, 2005, p.360

²² File No. 1/48, Confidential, Fortnightly Report of the First Half of October 1948, Delhi Archives.

²³ Mridula Sarabhai Private Papers, File No. RW/S/1/D- 1948-49, 9/7/1949, NMML

higher ups in the administration, while many needy people were still living under the canvas.²⁴

Agitations and protests by the refugees on a number of issues had also become a regular affair. For example, on the issue of food shortage, the Humayun Tomb refugees took their delegation directly to the Prime Minister.²⁵ The refugees at the Tis Hazari Camp also felt the need for agitation because they believed that the government would do nothing for those who remain quiet. They complained that while driving them out of the mosques the government had promised to accommodate them first but this promise was not kept.²⁶

The continued living under congested and unhygienic conditions in the camps for this long period had adversely affected the health of the inmates of camps. Let us see what the government record says about the health status of the refugees living in camps in March 1949:

Table: 3

Statement Showing General Health of Refugees in Each Camp, March 1949

Name of Camp	Total Population	Number of Births			Number of Deaths			Cause of Death			Number of Patients Under Treatment		Number of Inoculation	Number of Vaccination
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	T.B	Small Pox	Others	Infectious	Others		
Kingsway	21539	19	23	42	6	2	8			9	4	9414		
Humayun Tomb	2992					2	2			2	1	4495		803
Kalkaji	1412	4	4	8								1914		
Safdarjang	1333											6	100	
W.Canteen	226													
Purana Quila	4328	2	8	10								2742		
Anand Parbat	3922	4	2	6								1456		
Bela Road	2246	4	1	5	1	1	2			2				46
Tis Hazari	2061				1	1	2			2		1844		152
K.F.Shah	1452											77		375
Schools	833													
Total	42344	33	38	71	8	6	14			15	5	22508	100	1376

Source: Chief Commissioner Files, File no. 3 (193), 1949, Relief and Rehabilitation Department, Delhi Archives.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, , Subject: Situation in Refugee Camps, 1.8.1949

²⁵ *Ibid.*, Subject: Some facts Regarding the situation & work in the Refugee Camps, 1.8.1949

²⁶ *Ibid.*

The above mentioned table makes it clear that even after almost two years 42, 344 people were still living in various camps in Delhi and there were discrepancies in the health services provided by the government. While the governmental data gives the total number of people living in the camps, it does not have the full details on the status of health for all the camps. For example the data presented in the Table does not give the number of births in the Safdarjang Camp, Wavell Canteen camp²⁷, Tis Hazari Camp, K.F. Shah Camp etc. Similarly the data is inadequate regarding deaths in some camps and other health parameters in the camps. However, what can be surmised is that the government measures of vaccination and inoculation were inadequate which resulted in suffering of the people. The inadequacy of data on health in the governmental records makes any detailed study of the subject difficult.

One thing common to the life of these refugee camps on both sides of the border was the suffering of women who were the worst victims in this ordeal. They had to undergo a lot of physical and psychological trauma.

A young woman of 21(at the time of partition), describing her experiences, said, “I stayed in the camp for two months. Camp life was very miserable. We were given chapattis full of lime and were constantly molested by the soldiers. Maulavis [Muslim religious preachers] used to come and preach us against the Indian dominion. They told us that we would go to heaven if we live with them. They said that it was foolish on our part to go to India as flour was selling there at Rs 5 per *seer*, salt at Rs 10 per *seer* and the difficulties of obtaining cloth were insurmountable. According to them the Sikhs were not allowing Hindu girls to go beyond Amritsar and were raping them and cutting up their hearts²⁸.”

A party of young women who were brought to the camp said: “We reached the camp on the 15th day. It was nothing less than hell. The flour was mixed with lime and drinking water smelt so foul that it made us ill to drink it. When the Muslims gave us food they taunted us by saying that they were feeding witches. Sick children were given wrong medicines and some of them became blind and died as the result of the

²⁷ Wavell canteen served the purpose of a temporary halting place for the refugees only and those who preferred to stay longer were shifted to other camps. The Assistant Commissioner (Camps) was entrusted the responsibility of fulfilling this task. Source: File No. 3 (26)/48, Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation, Delhi Archives.

²⁸ Gopal Das Khosla, ‘Stern Reckoning: A Survey of Events Leading up to and Following the Partition of India’, Mushirul Hasan (eds.) *The Partition Omnibus*, OUP, New Delhi, 2000, pp.230-231

poison given to them. The military guards brought their friends at night and molested the young girls in the camp. They pinched our breasts and made indecent jokes; those who were pregnant were shot down. One day a man caught me by my breast and dragged me. When I moaned and wailed he kicked me and then left me to weep. A young girl of 14 or 15 sleeping by my side was dragged away and raped. When she resisted they kicked her. Her face in the morning looked as if it had been scratched by a knife.”²⁹

The above mentioned account was from a transit camp in Pakistan where Hindu and Sikh women were kept before being transferred to India. But wherever the camps existed, women had to undergo similar suffering.

Having been suddenly deprived of their social and cultural moorings, the life in refugee camps was indeed very difficult, emotionally and physically draining but still not a cloud without a silver lining. The constant struggle against great odds strengthened the refugees’ resolve to face the world outside. It was all the more true for the children, young men and women. As Ravinder Kaur observes the ‘refugee’ was also the raw material out of which modern citizens were produced, once the bodies and spirits were restored in the refugee camps. “The refugee camps were”, she further points out, “the transformative spaces in which the governmental efforts to rehabilitate bore fruit and succeeded in the making of a new citizenry. In due course of time, the physical distance from the state-run camps came to be seen as a sign of forward movement towards being a full citizen”.³⁰

The government of India decided to close down all the refugee camps by 31st October 1949. However, clear instructions were given to the officials that there should not be forcible closure without making available suitable accommodation to the needy. In fact, Prime Minister Nehru himself instructed, “It is not good enough just to inform State and other governments that you are going to stop this free feeding. You have to

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Ravinder Kaur, ‘Distinctive Citizenship: Refugees, Subjects and Post-Colonial State in India’s Partition’, Vol.6, Issue 4, *Cultural and Social History*, 2009, pp.429-446

devise adequate alternatives of work....There must be intensive and accurate planning and checks as to how far your plan is succeeding".³¹

By 1950 all the relief camps were shut down and the inmates were shifted to the site of permanent rehabilitation

Now, let us see how the Indian state undertook the task of providing relief to the refugees.

2.2 The Initial Relief Provided by The State in Delhi

Providing relief to the lakhs of refugees coming to the capital (as elsewhere) was the most urgent task which had to be undertaken by the newly independent state. It was a humanitarian crisis of huge proportions and therefore, it was essential that the government adopted a pro-active role. In addition to it, Delhi was also expected to be the role model for the relief work in the rest of India. Therefore, the government started many schemes and programmes first in Delhi and then based on its outcome; similar schemes were started in other states.

Besides the obvious humanitarian reasons, the future of the newly independent nation also depended on how quickly and how effectively this large uprooted mass of people is settled. The refugees had overnight lost everything that they had had. They had lost all their sources of income and were dependent on others for food, clothes and shelter. Apart from the physical and economic security, the refugees also needed a degree of legal, social and psychological security. This required properly planned and efficiently executed expenditure on their education, training and skill-development. It was the only way by which this immense human resource could be effectively utilized.

Therefore, the government of India began the vital task of providing relief to the refugees immediately after the first batch of refugees arrived in Delhi. Subsequently, a number of measures were undertaken to rehabilitate the refugees in a proper manner. This was an enormous task which the newly independent country had to undertake right at its birth. In fact, this task was so daunting and complex that it could be called

³¹ Letter from Nehru to Minister of Rehabilitation Mohanlal Saxena dated 30th July, 1949, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Vol.12, p.121

the first major case of disaster management in free India. Furthermore, this task was undertaken by a state which has just come out from the two centuries of foreign rule and was jostling with all sorts of bureaucratic, financial and administrative dislocations. It should, however, be remembered here that while this task of providing relief and rehabilitation was chiefly undertaken by the state; private organizations and other non-governmental organization also played an important role. Organisations like the International Red Cross, UNICEF, RSS, Hindu Mahasabha, Jamiat-Ulema-e-Hind, Ramkrishna Mission, United Council of Relief and Welfare and others were also instrumental in providing relief to the refugees.

In this section I have tried to look at the role that the government played in providing initial relief to the refugees and the machinery that it set up for their permanent rehabilitation.

The Initial Efforts

- On May 5, 1947, the state government of Bharatpur offered its help to those refugees who wanted to settle in Bharatpur. They were also asked not to associate with any communal activities³². Soon, similar offers were made by other princely states and provinces as well where the refugees were invited to come and begin life afresh.
- On July 24, 1947, with the object of coordinating efforts for dealing with the refugee influx, the Government of India appointed C.N. Chandra an Officer on Special Duty to investigate and submit habitation plans and proposals for the proper relief, rehabilitation and resettlement of the refugees. On July 25, 1947, the All India Congress Committee formed Central Congress Relief and Rehabilitation Committee to take steps for the rehabilitation of riot refugees.³³
- On August 17, 1947, Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister of India and Liaqat Ali Khan, the Prime Minister of Pakistan met at Ambala where a conference was held with the Governors, ministers and senior officers of the East and West Punjab. The next day, the two Premiers issued a joint statement at Amritsar stating that the Governments of both India and Pakistan were determined to bring peace and order to Punjab. It was decided to take every possible measure to put an end to the orgy of

³² *Hindustan Times*, May 6, 1947

³³ *Ibid.*, July 26, 1947

violence. Administrative and military arrangements were to be made along with the appeal for peace to the leaders of the people. Plans were also made to transport the refugees and to provide them with food and accommodation in the intervening period.³⁴ The two governments also undertook the responsibility of timely and peaceful running of train services and improving other means of communication for quick and safe movement of refugees across the borders. The two leaders also undertook a visit to the riot-affected areas of Amritsar.

- On August 19, 1947, to help the refugees from Punjab in cooperation with the Central Refugee Committee and other relief bodies, a Punjabi Refugee Committee was set up with its headquarters at Panch Kuian Road, New Delhi.³⁵
- On August 20, Lala Deshbandhu Gupta, member of the Constituent Assembly submitted to the Land Disposal Inquiry Committee of the Delhi Improvement Trust, a scheme to set up a model town near Delhi to solve the problem of housing shortage. On the same date, M.S. Randhawa, Deputy Commissioner, Delhi issued an appeal and asked the affluent class to provide accommodation to the refugees in their servant quarters.³⁶
- Prime Minister Nehru visited Amritsar again on 24th August and met with a number of leaders of different political parties and discussed the situation in the province. He also addressed the crowds at a number of roadside meetings. He was still against mass migration of minorities from West and East Punjab. He appealed to people that retaliation of any kind is not going to help the case and that it was essential to maintain communal harmony for the larger good of the people.
- By August 27, 1947 about Rs 10,000 were spent on repairs of military barracks in Delhi in order to make them fit to house the refugees. Schools were also being established. Classes in embroidery and home craft were also being organized.³⁷
- By early September 1947, a new requisitioning ordinance was in the process of being promulgated. It was decided that no more requisitioning of houses will be done in Delhi except in very urgent cases. Requisition notices were served on many landlords

³⁴ 'Ensuring Peace: The Two Dominions Cooperate', *The Times of India*, August 25, 1947, p.6

³⁵ *Hindustan Times*, August 20, 1947

³⁶ *Ibid.*, August 22, 1947

³⁷ *Ibid.*, August 28, 1947

and possession was being taken. The general principle to be followed was not to disturb bonafide people who have worked in Delhi, married men with children and public institutions. Single men or married men without children were promised an alternative accommodation. Steps were also taken to eject all the unauthorized persons who had occupied the homes of the officers who had opted for Pakistan. The cases of sub-letting by government officials were also being strictly looked into.³⁸

- On September 2, 1947, a Women's Refugee Comforts Committee was constituted under the Delhi Provincial Refugee Relief Committee to look after the needs of women and children.³⁹
- The Indian government announced on September 6, 1947, the creation of a new Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation for refugees and the appointment of a Cabinet Emergency Committee to deal with the situation. Mr. K.C. Neogy was appointed Minister of Relief and Rehabilitation. The Cabinet also set up an emergency Committee to deal with the Punjab situation consisting of the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister, the Defence Minister, the Transport Minister and the Minister for Refugees. The Governor-general was invited to join this Committee and had agreed. The Commander-in-Chief was also required to attend and assist in the deliberations of the Committee. It was required to hold daily meetings to consider the situation and issue directions⁴⁰.
- Mahatma Gandhi appealed on October 4, 1947 to the people to donate blankets or quilts for the refugees to help them in the approaching winter. He said that even thick cotton sheets could be sent but they should be cleaned before being sent. Hindu and Muslims should all join in this humanitarian task. He would like them not to earmark anything for any particular community.⁴¹
- The government issued an ordinance on October 12, 1947 making the registration of refugees within 15 days compulsory. In this ordinance, 'refugee' meant any person who had since March 1, 1947 entered the province of Delhi, having left his original place because of the communal disturbances or fear of such disturbances.

³⁸ *Hindustan Times*, September 4, 1947

³⁹ *Ibid.*, September 6, 1947

⁴⁰ *The Hindu*, September 7, 1947

⁴¹ *The Hindu*, October 5, 1947

Infringement of this ordinance was made punishable with imprisonment for three months or fine or both.⁴² Registration was also made compulsory for availing any government aid. Accordingly, a Registration Office was established which saw heavy footfall as the days progressed.

- In a Press Note issued on October 16, 1947, the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation said that its highest priority will be the rehabilitation of homeless women and unattended youth and children. It also prepared a strategy to tide over the winter season. It appealed to individual homes to adopt children up to the age of 10 and gave the slogan “Each One Take One”. It also appealed to the shops, business concerns and individual homes to employ the needy, wherever possible.⁴³
- In another Press Note circulated on October 28, 1947, the Government of India amended the ordinance on refugee registration issued on October 12, 1947. Now the last date for registration for refugees was fixed as November 15, 1947.⁴⁴
- On November 14, 1947, two resolutions, one laying down the national policy to be followed by the Government of India in dealing with the issues of relief and rehabilitation and another on the question of protection of minorities in India, were approved by the Congress Working Committee.

The resolution on relief and rehabilitation suggested that conditions should be created in the Indian dominion itself so that the minorities can live with peace and dignity. It also asked to create a conducive atmosphere for the return of the refugees.⁴⁵

- On November 18, 1947 K.C. Neogy, Minister Relief and Rehabilitation, outlined elaborate plans for refugee rehabilitation, while addressing the Constituent Assembly. He said that in Delhi, the Government of India is exploring the possibility of reserving for the refugees certain sites both in residential and industrial areas. He also informed that sanction has already been accorded to the grant of loans to students and trainees whose parents and guardians are unable to find funds. He also assured that the question of giving advances to women who have lost their husbands or supporters and to others was under consideration. For those wishing to set up their own industries,

⁴² *The Hindu*, October 13, 1947

⁴³ *Ibid.*, October 19, 1947

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, October 30, 1947

⁴⁵ *The Times of India*, November 15, 1947

assistance on the lines of the provisions contained in Aid-to- Industries Acts of certain provinces and assistance in kind was contemplated.⁴⁶

Now, let us look in some detail, at the machinery set up to undertake the massive task of relief and rehabilitation.

As already mentioned, while the task of providing immediate relief to the refugees by setting up of camps and provision of food, clothes, water and medical facilities therein, had begun the moment refugees entered the city in large numbers, the institutional mechanism to deal with the enormous task was devised a little later. On September 6, 1947, the Government of India set up a full-fledged Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation with K.C. Neogy as the Minister. Once the organised work of rehabilitation began, it was felt that the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation would need greater assistance to undertake the task more efficiently and effectively. Therefore, the Government of India set up a Rehabilitation and Development Board in the year 1948. The Board had the following composition and functions:

Chairman: Aftab Rai.

Members: Mehr Chand Khanna and Colonel G.N. Naidu.

Secretary: Dr. D.R. Kohli.

Technical Adviser: C.G. Kale.

Statistical Adviser: Professor P.C. Mahalanobis.

Functions of the Board:

1. To plan and execute the schemes for the purpose of rehabilitation of the refugees.
2. To undertake a quick survey of the resources of the country for the rehabilitation purposes.
3. To examine the schemes already in progress at that time.

⁴⁶ *The Times of India*, November 19, 1947

4. To consider the development of cottage industries and suggest their integration with major industries if feasible.
5. To seek the cooperation of the provincial and state governments in regard to schemes financed wholly by the central government.
6. To assist the provincial and state governments in expediting the execution of schemes financed wholly by those governments.

In regard to schemes financed partly by the centre, the provincial governments concerned were requested to function in close collaboration with the Board. For these purposes the states and the provincial governments were asked to appoint Liaison Officers or to set up some other suitable agency to undertake the task. The Board was to deal with all rehabilitation schemes. The matters of agricultural settlement were to be dealt with only in some special cases where such a reference was made to the Board by the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation.

The Board functioned under the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation. It had full authority to correspond directly with the state and provincial governments in matters relating to rehabilitation and development⁴⁷. Once this framework was set up and the measures of providing initial relief was over the government's next step was to carry out a more planned and systematic permanent rehabilitation of the refugees.

But before analyzing the government's effort in that direction it would be apt to keep in mind that the refugees were not a homogenous group, there was considerable class difference among them.

2.3 Class Difference among the Refugees:

Class in a broader sense refers to the position that individuals occupy in the economic sphere. Marx describes class in terms of ownership of the means of production.

⁴⁷ Chief Commissioner Office, File No. 3(60)/1948, R&R Branch, Delhi, Letter No. RH-127(1), Subject: Establishment of a Relief and Rehabilitation Board, Delhi Archives. However, the Board could never function effectively owing to the lack of support from the bureaucracy and official red tapism. Prime Minister wrote in an official note on 14th November, 1948 (File No. 29(108)/48-PMS): "Unfortunately the power of red-tape was too great and the Relief and Rehabilitation Ministry partly succumbed to it and the Development and Rehabilitation Board could never function with any speed or independence. It is clear that the approach to the problems is not one of getting anything done quickly but of who should be appointed and what salary he should draw, etc., etc."

However, Marxian definition cannot be strictly applied to the refugees in Delhi, as in urban areas property is only one of the factors determining the class position of individuals. The refugees settled in various camps in Delhi were a motley crowd, comprising people with different socio-economic backgrounds. The upper class among the refugees consisted of the erstwhile landlords, big traders, rich merchants, traders and the affluent service professionals. The violence surrounding the partition had forced them to leave their homelands where they were fairly well established and lived a peaceful life. Partition had forced them out of the comfort of their homes and made them migrate to an unfamiliar territory. However, this class of people generally did not go through the kind of ordeal that people lower down the social hierarchy underwent. Their migration was comparatively a well managed affair, a good number of them came to India on aeroplanes and were therefore fortunate not to undergo torturous journey on overcrowded trains, lorries or in foot columns. They still had the wherewithal to fend for themselves. They were not as helpless and dependent as others. In fact, there was quite revulsion for this class of refugees among the upper classes of Delhi. The newspaper reports of those days cite them as a 'disturbing factor in the life of the city'. They were seen as people who had become very rich during the war years by resorting to black marketeering and other dubious acts. They were also alleged of trying to take over the existing business and trading firms by the enormous wealth that they still possessed. Additionally, they were held responsible for takeover of residential and business properties in the city at abnormal rates and thus manipulating the real estate and property rates. For instance, in Delhi and New Delhi, it was understood, some premises were acquired by Lahore businessmen by paying *pagris* (advances) ranging between Rs 50,000 and Rs 100,000.

The *Hindustan Times* reported on 31st August 1947:

They buy the best of everything without regard for the prices. From 2 p.m., provided the weather is not too bad, they begin to go up and down the Mall, the men talking about their losses in Lahore and the women about the dresses and fancy goods they had to leave behind. There are a number of restaurants on the Mall which every evening are filled with bored, well dressed men and women. You cannot mistake the look on these refugee faces. While some are thus killing time, others roam the Mall looking for the officials of the East Punjab Government, members of Legislative Assembly, retired judges and others. From them they get the latest information from Lahore. This information is then embellished and passed on from one group to another. Highly coloured accounts of disturbances causing dismay

and demoralization are thus passed on as factual news. In this mood of self-pity the refugees look for people to blame and find their own leaders the handiest.

Here it has to be noted that the upper class among the refugees had the knowledge and time to carry off most of their valuables back to India after disposing off the immovable assets. Their experience of partition was thus, entirely different from the masses of the refugees who belonged to the lower class and the lower-middle class. These people were small traders, businessmen, landlords, agriculturalists, landless labourers, herders, artisans, craftsmen and professional classes like that of doctors, engineers, lawyers, teachers etc. These people needed the urgent attention of the government. Deprived of all their movable and immovable assets they had become people paupers overnight. Without any source of income and livelihood, they became completely dependent on the government to meet their immediate needs, so that they could get back to their proper senses and resurrect their lives afresh. They had had to undergo a lot of physical and mental agony owing to their arduous migration to India and the violent events preceding that. A way had to be found out to rehabilitate these persons by providing them medical help, education, proper training and skill development so that they could get meaningful employment in the future. As the refugees were a heterogeneous lot, it was not possible to adopt a one size fits all approach towards their rehabilitation. The government therefore needed to be flexible in its approach while trying to rehabilitate them. Their skills and aptitude had also to be considered.

Here, it would be interesting to know about the diversity of occupations which the refugee themselves were desirous of getting. This would give an inkling of the enormity and complexity of the government's task to provide livelihood to these people.

In a letter dated May 13, 1948 to the Secretary, Relief & Rehabilitation to the Delhi's Chief Commissioner, the Information & Employment Officer for Relief & Rehabilitation Commissioner, Delhi, provides the following information⁴⁸:

⁴⁸ Chief Commissioner Office, File No. 3(60)/1948, R&R Branch, Delhi, Letter Dated: May13,1948, Delhi Archives

Table 4: Statement Showing the Number of Persons Desirous of Following Various Occupations.

OCCUPATION	Kalka Ji Camp	Bela Road Camp	Purana Quila Camp	Anand Parbat Camp	Kingsway Camp	Total
Agriculture worker	51	5	12	-	87	155
Landlords	14	1	64	2	212	293
G. Merchants	2	-	6	33	841	882
Provision merchants	75	-	19	10	246	350
Labourers	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chemist & druggists	-	-	3	1	21	25
Cloth merchants	3	-	13	-	96	112
Ahartis	-	-	7	-	18	25
Halwaiis	3	-	13	-	96	112
Hardware merchants	-	-	5	-	17	22
Boot and shoe	-	-	-	1	-	1
Tailors	9	33	15	2	213	272
Carpenters	-	2	3	-	12	17
Blacksmiths	1	-	6	-	-	7
Goldsmiths	36	11	-	1	280	328
Technical & merchants	6	21	14	6	113	160
Press workers	2	1	2	-	-	5

Lawyers	1	-	2	-	5	8
Teachers	11	-	12	2	86	111
Doctors	9	1	2	2	41	55
Vaids & hakims	1	1	8	-	25	35
Factory owners	5	2	4	10	75	96
Tonga drivers	-	2	-	-	16	18
Contractors	1	4	4	1	37	47
Soap makers	-	-	2	-	3	5
Cycle merchants	-	-	11	-	33	44
Sports dealers	-	-	3	2	-	5
Lime, brick kiln workers	-	-	1	-	1	2
Petty shopkeepers	-	182	205	-	643	1030
Weavers	-	-	2	-	5	7
Business men (Misc.)	44	14	388	27	150	618
Petition writers	-	-	3	-	2	5
Service including government servants	-	67	274	-	698	1039
Soda water factory owners	-	-	2	-	29	31
Radio owners	-	-	-	-	10	10
Fruit merchants	-	-	4	-	7	11
TOTAL	274	347	1121	113	4340	6196

The above table lists as many as 36 different occupations that the 6196 refugees surveyed in 6 camps in Delhi had been into previously and desired to get into now. The highest number of these comprised of various categories of government servants (1039). The second highest numbers (1030) comprised of petty shopkeepers while the grocery merchants stood at third position (882). This stands at 16.76 per cent, 16.62 per cent and 14.23 per cent respectively. Businessmen, provision merchants and goldsmiths also comprise significant numbers. In addition to these we also have agricultural labourers, artisans and service men like lawyers, teachers and doctors etc.

This unique document gives us inkling into the sheer magnitude and complexity of the task of rehabilitating these varied classes of people, especially keeping in mind that this data does not cover the entire refugee population of Delhi.

In Chapter 4, we shall study in detail how the state machinery responded to this complex task and worked to permanently rehabilitate the refugees.

But before that, let us briefly discuss the impact that partition had on the Dalits who were at the margins of the society, the most underprivileged and deprived section of it. For decades their stories did not form a part of the mainstream narrative on post-partition refugees.

Urvashi Butalia is among the first who attempted to give voice to these people by including their experiences in her acclaimed work, *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India*⁴⁹. Ravinder Kaur too, undertook a study of dalit refugees settled in Delhi and argues that “the history of partition is popularly imagined as the history of upwardly mobile upper caste Hindus and Sikhs, who were forced to move in the middle of all chaos and violence”. She further adds that “there is an absence of untouchable migration accounts from the studies of resettlement colonies figuratively as well as physically. The inevitable result of it is that most of the partition stories that we know of till now are mostly of the upper caste, middle class refugees stories that have contributed to post-colonial historiography”⁵⁰.

⁴⁹ See: Urvashi Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India*, Penguin Books India (p) Ltd, New Delhi, 1998.

⁵⁰ See: Ravinder Kaur, *Since 1947: Partition Narratives among Punjabi Migrants of Delhi*, Oxford University Press, 2007.

Among the millions that migrated to India after partition, the dalit refugees constitute a significant number. This comprised the *Sansis*, *Bazigars* and *Banjaras* etc. who were branded criminal tribes by the British. For months these people were, however, not allowed to migrate to India from the various violence affected areas of Pakistan because the government considered them indispensable to run ‘essential services’⁵¹. They faced violence and forcible conversion in Pakistan. Their weak socio-economic condition meant that they could not undertake the long and perilous journey on their own and therefore, they had to wait for evacuation by the Indian government. By that time their predicament came to be known in India too and owing to the pressure created by Ambedkar and dalit organisations, the government launched a plan to evacuate them in November 1947. Due to its efforts thousands of dalit refugees were evacuated from Pakistan⁵² and brought to refugee camps in East Punjab and Delhi. Their exact number is not known because they were never organised or categorised by the government. They had multiple identities-refugees, criminal tribes and scheduled castes. Once the government repealed the Criminal Tribes Act in 1952, most of these people fell in the category of Schedule Caste.

Mangat Ram belonged to the Sansi community and was a resident of Okara Mandi, Pakistan. He says: “We walked for four or five days, day and night under the supervision of military and got blisters on our feet! The kafila was so long that the first person was at Ferozepur and the last person was at Okara. Many were killed amongst us also. Young girls were picked up. During the journey helicopters threw rotis for us along the way.” He dreads about those times and wishes nobody has to witness similar events.

Once he reached Punjab with his family, they were allotted some land in lieu of the land they owned in Pakistan. Not finding agriculture on the allotted small plot economical, the family moved to Delhi in search of better livelihood. Mangat Ram joined the railways where he worked as a grade one technician till his retirement in

⁵¹ Prime Minister cabled to his counterpart in Pakistan on 12th January 1948: “Recent ordinances banning departures of *bhangies*, *dhobis* and Harijans generally unfair and causing great disquiet. Would request that these ordinances be rescinded.” See, S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of J.L. Nehru*, Second Series, Volume 4, Pub. by Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1986, p.95

⁵² Akanksha Kumar, ‘Locating Dalits in the Midst of Partition and Violence’, *Journal of Studies in History and Culture*, Vol.2, Issue 2, Fall-Winter 2016, pp.1-33.

1984 and continues to live in a semi-pucca refugee colony near Majnu ka Tila. He still awaits the government's assistance as he feels that he has not got his due⁵³.

In similar vein Ganga Devi, 80, who also came from Okara Mandi and resides in Majnu ka Tila says:

We came from Pakistan in 1947 and lived in a refugee camp at Red Fort before we got these huts allotted, for which we had to pay Rs 3 a month. We only got a ration card in the beginning and we did not get anything in comparison to other refugees. Women suffered a lot. I remember almost everything. They were murdered and thrown into wells. We did not come by train because we were told that you will be murdered in the trains. So we came walking all the way from Pakistan with the military. It took us around 3 to 4 days to reach Ferozepur. But then we moved to the capital as my husband got a job here⁵⁴.

Harijan Sewak Sangh (HSS), established by Mahatma Gandhi in 1932 was designated a Central Agency in early 1948 and was entrusted with the task of settling the dalit refugees from Pakistan. In addition to it, a board of 15 members comprising two members each from five regions (Bombay, Madhya Bharat and Greater Rajasthan, Suurashtra, East Punjab, and Bengal) and five members from the Delhi region was set up called Displaced Harijan Rehabilitation Board (DHRB). It was given the task of preparation of schemes related to rehabilitation, getting approval of these schemes from the State governments and helping in their implementation.

Though the refugee colonies built by the board succeeded in rehabilitating the dalit refugees to a significant degree yet many among them were not able to retain the allotted quarters for long time on account of their failure to pay high rents under the hire purchase system. Most of these people sold off their quarters and moved to other areas in the city. The lack of employment opportunities, lack of proper facilities of drinking water and sanitation were other reasons forcing them to move to new areas. These dalit refugees who were mostly labourers, workers and technicians etc,

⁵³ Akanksha Kumar, 'The Wait is still on...', *The Hindu*, October 18, 2013, <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/the-wait-is-still-on/article5246312.ece> (accessed on: 12/07/2017)

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

however, did not experience a very big improvement in their lives as they were not able to utilize the opportunities that the city provided⁵⁵.

Ravinder Kaur, however, points out that the dalit refugees in Delhi were content with the government's efforts to provide relief and subsequently rehabilitate them, and they happily acknowledge it (this is quite in contrast to the lower-middle, middle, upper class/caste refugees who portray themselves as self-made and hardly ever acknowledge government's help). As she puts it⁵⁶:

The untouchable were helped by the government in different ways, which may be deemed discriminatory, from the non-untouchable migrants. Yet, among the untouchables, the credit of their social and economic success is duly given to the government. This is something often avoided by the upper caste Hindus since it challenges the myth of their own role in successful resettlement. The untouchable refugees remain beholden to the Congress Government, whose politics of rehabilitation had dramatically transformed their lives. Most of them said that they could have never dreamed of making such economic gains...had they remained in Lahore...They received systematic support from the state that would have never happened in ordinary circumstances.

Suffice it to say that the refugees that had come to the capital in the wake of partition were not a homogenous lot and therefore, the way in which they experienced the event and its aftermath also greatly varied. The women, as a class, however suffered the most and this is the issue that we discuss at length in the next chapter.

⁵⁵ Akanksha Kumar, 'Dalit Refugees from West Pakistan in Post-Partition Delhi', Unpublished M.Phil Thesis submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University, 2010.

⁵⁶ : Ravinder Kaur, *Since 1947: Partition Narratives among Punjabi Migrants of Delhi*, Oxford University Press, 2007, p.172

Chapter 3: Women as Victims of Partition



Image 8: A Refugee Woman consoling the other in a refugee camp

Source: <https://www.isrhistory.wordpress.com/2014/10/10/women-and-the-partition-of-india/>

In any large scale communal riot, it is the women who inevitably become the worst sufferers. It stands true for upheavals such as caste violence, communal violence or wars. This is not to suggest that women do not face violence during peacetime. Upheavals and convulsions, however, it seems, make the situation much more difficult for them¹. In the violence that accompanied and followed the Partition of India “it was the women who were frequently singled out for especially humiliating treatment at the hands of men of the rival community: molestation, rape, mutilation, abduction, forcible conversion, marriage and death²”.

¹Satya M. Rai, ‘Partition & Women: The Case of Punjab’, Amrik Singh (Ed.) *The Partition in Retrospect*, , Anamika Publishers and Distributors(P) LTD., Darya Ganj, New Delhi, 2000, p.178

² Andrew J. Major, “ ‘The Chief Sufferers’: Abduction of Women During the Partition of the Punjab”, *Journal of South Asian Studies*, Vol. 18, 1995, pp.57-72

The gendered violence of partition was, in fact, unprecedented in the annals of history. There were numerous cases of women been raped in horrific manner, often followed by savage mutilation of their bodies-cutting off the breasts, branding of religious symbols on the private parts and other such inhuman acts. Thousands of them were abducted too by men of the rival community and subjected to continued sexual and physical violence. The task of recovery of the abducted women- Hindu and Sikh women from Pakistan and Muslim women from India, which began months later and continued for about a decade, also caused another uprootment in the lives of those women who had reconciled themselves to their new lives. Also, many of the ‘rescued’ Hindu and Sikh women were not accepted back in their family fold and had to spend the rest of their lives in the ashrams run by the government or fend for themselves for rest of their lives. They, thus, added to the numbers of unattached women and children who had lost their all in the partition riots, struggling to resurrect the lives afresh. All these aspects needs to be looked at to understand the impact that partition had to women’s lives. This we shall do in the course of this chapter.

Even the most conservative accounts put the number of women affected by this lunacy at one million. Partition historiography, as it evolved over the decades, however, ignored the troubles and tribulations that the women had to undergo during and after partition. It was only from the 1980s onwards, with the coming of feminist historians like Urvashi Butalia, Anjali Bhardwaj, Sudesh Vaid, Kamla Bhasin, Ritu Menon and others that partition began to be studied from the women’s perspective.

For the women victims of partition, India’s independence in 1947 did not bring the happiness and joy that they had hoped for. To borrow the words of Anjali Bhardwaj “... independence remains a very ‘abstract’ thing. For women ‘independence’ was associated with partition, it meant being uprooted; it cut at one stroke their ‘familial channels’. Thus to them independence and partition could hardly be conceived of as separate things, they were the same. For them independence meant getting on with their lives, rebuilding and sustaining themselves in a scenario where they were imprisoned in their own homes.”³

³ Anjali Bhardwaj, ‘Partition of India and Women’s Experiences’, *Social Scientist*, Vol.32/ 5-6 May-June 2004, pp.69-86

In the first chapter, we have seen how a chain of violence began from Calcutta on August 16, 1947 on Direct Action day of the Muslim League and in the subsequent months of October and November, it spread to Noakhali in Eastern Bengal, Bihar and Garhmukteshwar in United Provinces. Numerous incidents of rape, abduction and conversion of women were witnessed during this violence. However, the cycle of violence that began from March 1947, beginning with the riots in Rawalpindi were different in nature and scale altogether. In the riots that followed, the women's bodies became the prime targets of political violence. They were not only abducted and raped in horrific manner; their bodies were savagely mutilated too.

Men of one community aimed to "shame" the men of the other community by targeting their women, who were assumed to be the repositories of the 'honour' of the entire community that she belonged to.

India of those times was a deeply patriarchal society, this 'concern for paternity and caste purity had led to a tightening of control over women's sexuality. And the concept of *pativratya* (physical and mental chastity) had been gradually evolved and made into the principal ideology for women. In fact, virginity before marriage and *pativratya* after marriage were not obligations for just the woman, they were obligations for the men of her family as well⁴. Early marriages were a common practice and female literacy was at very low levels owing to societal constraints. In fact, "an educated woman was often described as westernised, sexually aggressive, and rejecting domestic drudgery, all symbolic either of the thwarting of patriarchal hegemony, or outside its sphere of control⁵". Overall, the female folk had very little presence outside the confines of their homes. It is generally believed that it was the Gandhian Civil Disobedience Movement that first brought women in the socio-political mainstream for the first time. Gandhi's advocacy for female participation in public affairs was undoubtedly a liberating experience for many women. Nevertheless, this freedom remained confined only to the peaceful participation in the movements of struggle against the colonial rule. Overall, the society continued to be as patriarchal and conservative as before. The roots of this rigid patriarchal control over the life (and through that her sexuality) of women (during the modern period) is

⁴ Bharati Ray, 'Women and Partition: Some Questions', in Bharati Ray and Aparna Basu (eds), *From Independence Towards Freedom: Indian Women Since 1947*, OUP, New Delhi, 1999, pp.1-18

⁵ Anjali Bhardwaj, 'Partition of India and Women's Experiences', *Social Scientist*, Vol.32/ 5-6 May-June 2004, pp.69-86

generally seen among the Indians of the late 19th century. As Debali Mookerjea-Leonard argues⁶:

Through a peculiar sort of analogical reasoning, cultural nationalists around the turn of 19th century conflated the symbolic purity associated with the inner, or private, domain with actual bodies of women. Interpellating the chaste women's body as the bearer of an essential Indian/ Hindu identity, the period witnessed her transformation into an icon of the honour of the nation, the religious community and the untainted household. That is to say, nationalists engaged in a process of myth making whereby feminine sexual purity was granted the status of the transcendental signifier of national virtues...National anxiety about colonialism manifested itself in, and intensified, gender pathologies, and the discursive developments around chastity in the colonial and nationalist era clearly had concrete consequences for women [particularly during the outbreak of communal/ethnic violence, as it happened around partition] because their bodies were not simply sites of patriarchal constraint and violence.

In similar vein, Jisha Menon argues that "The symbolic elevation of 'woman' as the embodiment of the sanctified, inner recesses of culture and tradition ironically positioned the real women as the targets of violent assertions of family, community and nation".⁷

In such schema, therefore, the women were not to be just raped and killed but their bodies were also to be 'desecrated' by attacking the symbols of their motherhood. Thus, we hear of a number of instances of breasts been chopped off and religious insignia inscribed on female genitals. These symbols ("om" or the crescent moon) represented their "otherness before the violence, and their other identity as shamed, conquered and branded".⁸ In the words of Veena Das "women's body... became a

⁶ Debali Mookerjea-Leonard, 'Jyotirmoyee Devi: Writing History, Making Citizens', *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2005, pp. 1-39. Jyotirmoyee Devi was a distinguished feminist writer and a prominent Gandhian. She has to her credit a number of novels and short stories on riots surrounding partition of India. Debali Mookerjea-Leonard through a feminist reading of her works contend that the rejection of recovered women were motivated and even ideological rationalized, by a long and complicated history of patriarchal fetish regarding women sexuality.

⁷ Jisha Menon, 'Rehearsing the Partition: Gendered Violence in "Aur Kitne Tukde"', *Feminist Review*, No. 84, Post Colonial Theatres, 2006, pp.29-47. Jisha Menon is an Assistant Professor of English at University of British Columbia where she teaches Post-Colonial Literature. "Aur Kitne Tukde" is a play based on partition violence which was premiered at the National School of Drama in New Delhi on 29th March 2001 and is written by B.Gouri. The play is conceived and directed by Kirti Jain.

⁸ Kavita Daiya, 'Honourable Resolutions: Gendered Violence, Ethnicity, and the Nation', *Alternatives* 27, 2002, pp. 219-247. Historians Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin argue that "women's sexuality symbolizes 'manhood'; and its desecration is a matter of such shame and dishonor that it has to be avenged." Further, they argue that particular acts of physical violence "engraved the division of India into India and Pakistan on the women of both religious communities in a way that they became the respective countries, indelibly imprinted by the other." However, Kavita Daiya questions whether

sign through which men communicated with each other. And that “the political programme of creating the two nations of India and Pakistan was inscribed upon the bodies of women”.⁹ Jisha Menon similarly argues that “marking the female bodies through acts of political violence constituted a mode of transcription to communicate with the other men of rival community that will encounter the violated body”.¹⁰

Defilement of a woman was seen as defilement of the whole community and thus a means to shame the male members of the rival community. Women’s bodies became the site on which the battle of nationhood was fought.

Beginning March 1947, we hear of many cases of women and girls being repeatedly raped, passed on from one hand to the other hand, sold, auctioned, used and subsequently thrown away. Describing such an incident on 24 September 1947 at Kamoke, in Gujranwala district, an official wrote:

The most ignoble feature of the tragedy was the distribution of young girls amongst the members of the Police Force, The National Guards and the local goondas. The S.H.O. [Station House Officer] Dildar Hussain collected the victims in an open space near Kamoke Railway Station and gave free hand to the mob. After the massacre was over, the girls were distributed like sweets¹¹.

Non- Muslim women from parts of Kashmir were also abducted and brought to West Punjab for sale. A report from Sargodha district claimed:

sexual violence against women is always about communal “honour” or does other kinds of violence and desires such as class discontent, caste conflict, gender conflict or sexual desire manifest themselves in the form of communality. Furthermore, how do we address the intra-community violence against women? Additionally, if in this historical and anthropological analysis, it is violence against women’s bodies that constitutes violence against masculinity and male honour (as well as against community and nation), then where can we make visible, and in which histories do we inscribe, the violence done to male bodies and its relationship to masculinity, male honour, and communality and nation?

⁹ Tai Yong and Gyanesh Kudaisya, *The Aftermath of Partition in South Asia*, Routledge Publication, London, 2000, p. 24. Thus, the events around partition- the migrations, the mass killing and abductions- came to be intimately bound with the national honour and in such a situation assume the role of *parens patriae*. And the state assumed the responsibility for the restoration of the citizens, more particularly the women.

¹⁰ Jisha Menon, ‘Rehearsing the Partition: Gendered Violence in “Aur Kitne Tukde”’, *Feminist Review*, No. 84, Post Colonial Theatres, 2006, pp.29-47.

¹¹ Report of Chaman Lal Pandit, Fact Finding Officer, *Selected Documents on Partition of Punjab*, New Delhi, 1991, p.225, as quoted in Andrew J. Major, “ ‘The Chief Sufferers’: Abduction of Women During the Partition of the Punjab”, *Journal of South Asian Studies*, Vol. 18, 1995, pp.57-72

The Pathans brought a very large number of abducted women and children from the Kashmir front and they had been selling these like cattle and chattel. There were cases in which a woman had been sold thrice or four times. The Pathans had made this a regular trade¹².

Similar atrocities on women took place wherever the flames of partition violence reached. Punjab, however, became its epicentre. It is estimated that in Punjab alone, around 40,000 to 50,000 women were violated on both sides. For instance, in Doberan, 70 women were abducted; in Kahuta this figure was as high as 500; in Harial 40, in Tainch 30, in Bomali 105, in Rajar 95. In Rawalpindi alone, about 400 to 500 women were abducted. These abducted women were often sold from hand to hand and inhumanly treated by their captors.¹³ For days and weeks they were kept without proper food and water, hidden from the public gaze and were repeatedly raped. They were, thus, totally subjected to the whims and fancies of their captors.¹⁴

Fearing such atrocities to their women in these hours of unprecedented upheaval, many families acted against their own women. At times, therefore, when the men feared that their women- wives, daughters, and sisters- could be violated by the “enemy”, they killed the women themselves. One such event has been described in detail by Urvashi Butalia and Sudesh Vaid who made a detailed study on the women victims of partition by conducting a series of interviews with them. As mentioned earlier, the Sikh villages around Rawalpindi were the first to witness large scale violence. In these villages, Thamali, Thoa Khalsa, Dobheron, Choa Khalsa, Kallar, Matur and others, violence erupted in March 1947. By March 13, 1947 about 4000 to 5000 people were killed. Those women who escaped rape, death and abduction were left to fend for themselves. The fear of being raped and the contemporary popular anxiety regarding purity and pollution did not leave many options for them. Some of these women chose or were made to choose suicide as a way to avoid being a subject of humiliation later. The most well known among these cases of mass suicide took place in a village named Thoa Khalsa in Rawalpindi. Sant Bahadur Singh, a young

¹² Report of work in Sargodha district, no author, *Selected Documents on Partition of Punjab*, New Delhi, 1991, no. 225, as quoted in Andrew J. Major, “ ‘The Chief Sufferers’: Abduction of Women During the Partition of the Punjab”, *Journal of South Asian Studies*, Vol. 18, 1995, pp.57-72

¹² Report of work in Sargodha district, no author,

¹³ Urvashi Butalia, ‘Community, State and Gender’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.28, Issue No.17, April 24, 1993, pp.ws-12-21

¹⁴ Tai Yong and Gyanesh Kudaisya, *The Aftermath of Partition in South Asia*, Routledge Publication, London, 2000, p. 22

boy at that time was a resident of this village and recounts the happenings in these words:

In Gulab Singh's haveli 26 girls had been put aside. First of all my father, Sant Raja Singh, when he brought his daughter, he brought her into the courtyard to kill her, first of all he prayed (...did ardaas) saying " 'sacche badshah', we have not allowed your Sikhi to get stained, and in order to save it we are going to sacrifice our daughters, make them martyrs, please forgive us ..."

Wiping tears from his eyes, he speaks proudly about the mass suicide of women by jumping into the well in the later part of that day itself:

There was a well ... at the well Sardarni Gulab Kaur... In my presence said 'sacche badshah' [true king or the true lord, referring here to Guru Nanak], let us be able to save our girls... This incident of 25 girls of our household (being killed) had already taken place ... she knew that Sant Raja Singh had killed his daughters and other women in his household... those that are left, we should not risk their lives... and allow them to be taken away... After having talked among themselves and decided, they said, we are thirsty we need water, so the Musalman [Muslim] took them to well. I was sitting with my mother... Mata Lajwanti, who was also called Sardarni Gulab Singh, sitting at the well, she said two words, she did ardaas [prayer] in two words, saying 'sacche badshah' it is to save our Sikhi that we are offering our lives... forgive us and accept our martyrdom... and saying those words, she jumped into the well, and some 80 women followed her... they also jumped in. the well filled up completely....¹⁵

Among the Sikh and the Hindu community this act of 'mass suicide' was seen as the act of exemplary bravery and sacrifice of Sikh women to save the 'honour' of the community. *The Statesman*, a leading Anglo-Indian newspaper published from Calcutta on April 15 reported:

The story of 90 women of little village of Thoa Khalsa, Rawalpindi district, who drowned themselves by jumping into a well during the recent disturbances, has stirred the imagination of the people of the Punjab¹⁶.

In July 1947, a number of leaflets distributed among the refugees in Delhi too, hailed this as an act of immense courage and sacrifice. Not surprisingly, therefore, that the refugees from this village still commemorate this event at a Delhi Gurudwara every year on the 13th of March. Here the 'martyrdom' of the women is celebrated and the

¹⁵ Gyanendra Pandey, 'Community and Violence', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.32, Issue No.32, Aug 9, 1997, pp. 2037-2045

¹⁶ *The Statesman*, April 15, 1947

above mentioned incident is narrated in front of the gathered audience again and again. The women of the present generation are encouraged to imbibe a similar spirit of 'sacrifice' for the 'preservation of the sanctity of the religion and the protection of faith'. They are expected to cast themselves into the same mould. One of the *bhajan* sung to commemorate the 'heroism' of the women goes like this¹⁷:

Sura to pehchaniye

Jo Lade din ke het.

Purza purza kat mare

Oar kabhi na chhode khet

Know him as the brave one

Who fights against the enemy

Let his body be cut into hundred pieces

But never will he give up his faith.

A fact finding team set up by the Indian Government recorded another event of mass suicide by women in Bewal village (in Rawalpindi district), where women had committed suicide by self-immolation on March 10, 1947. They had put their bedding and cots in a pile, set fire to it and jumped onto it.

Events of similar nature were reported from other places as well. There are also references of women carrying vials of poison around their neck so as to commit suicide if and when there was a likelihood of rape or abduction.

Even, Gandhiji looked at the events like these, as the manifestation of remarkable bravery on the part of women and saluted their sacrifice. Thus he says:

...I have heard that many women who did not want to lose their honour chose to die. Many men killed their own wives. I think that is really great, because I know that such things make India brave. After all, life and death is a transitory game.... [The women] have gone with courage. They have not sold their

¹⁷ Urvashi Butalia, 'A Necessary Journey: A Story of Friendship and Reconciliation', *Alternatives*, 27, 2002, pp.148-161.

honour. Not that their lives were not dear to them, but they felt it was better to die with courage rather than be forcibly converted to Islam by the Muslim and allow them to assault their bodies. And so those women died. They were not just a handful, but quite a few. When I hear all these things I dance with joy that, there are such brave women in India.¹⁸

Historians, however, question the use of term 'suicide' for such acts and the voluntary nature of it.

Menon and Bhasin (1998), for example, opine that the women did not voluntarily endorse the honour code and chose death. If they had not committed suicide, there was a likelihood of being killed by their own kin and neighbours to "protect their honour." They note that acquiescence does not imply consent, and submitting is not the same as agreeing. Pandey (2001) prefers the use of the term "martyrdom" to describe the suicides. Therefore, the issue of women's agency in choosing death by suicide is a complex one. Many women caught in such a horrendous bind faced with inevitable rape, mutilation, torture and murder would have chosen to take their lives on their own. However, it's also likely that few women would have thought otherwise, and that their suicide was forced upon them. The former, having grown in a culture that held the patriarchal values closed to their heart, may have been acculturated sufficiently so that they would have chosen suicide "freely."

Urvashi Butalia argues that, "so patriarchal are the notions of the violence that we only see it as relating to men" and "so communalised have such notions become that we only see it as relating to the 'other', the 'aggressor'". This hides many such instances where the perpetrators of sexual violence were the people from the same community. "For just as there were 'voluntary' suicides, so also there were mass murders".¹⁹ Thus, in many cases the husbands, fathers, brothers and even sons, turned the killers. We cannot know for certain, the compulsions that gave these women the strength and courage to take up their own life.

¹⁸ *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. LXXXIX (89), The Publication Division, New Delhi, 1983, p.202.

¹⁹ Urvashi Butalia, 'Community State and Gender', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.28, Issue No.17, April 24, 1993, pp.ws-12-21

3.1 The Fate of Abducted Women

A number of women who were subjected to sexual violence were killed straightaway or left barely alive in a horrific state. Many others were forcibly abducted and kept as a looted commodity by their captors. The treatment meted out to such women constitutes “a sordid chapter in the history of human relations²⁰” and values. The abducted women kept in strict confinement with little food and water, were often treated as sex slaves. We also hear of cases of women being sold and then resold to men within the community; subjected to further sexual and physical violence. At the same time, there were also instances of abductors marrying the woman in due course of time and accepting them within their family fold and thus beginning life afresh. “They were able, little by little, to piece together some form of normality, to find happiness in the arrival of children or to adjust and bury their memories of life before 1947. The fortunate ones may even have found love. Women whose lives to date had already been severely controlled by social values found that any small freedoms and hard-won contentments that they had forged over the years – through family life, routine and security – could be rebuilt”. For some among them who belonged to poor families and “had always gone hungry, a life in a more prosperous home or away from a violent or abusive husband could bring some consolation²¹”. Such women, therefore, vehemently opposed being ‘rescued’ when the government of both countries began their recovery operation.

3.2 Recovery of Abducted Women:

The issue of recovery of abducted women came up for discussion at the national level immediately after the communal strife in Calcutta, Noakhali and Bihar. The All India Congress Committee in its 54th session held in Meerut (November 23-25, 1946) passed a resolution which stated²²:

The Congress views with pain, horror and anxiety the tragedies of Calcutta, in East Bengal, in Bihar and in some parts of Meerut district. The acts of brutality committed on men, women and children fill every decent person with shame and humiliation. These new developments in communal strife are

²⁰ Gopal Das Khosla, ‘Stern Reckoning: A Survey of Events Leading up to and Following the Partition of India’, Mushirul Hasan (eds.) *The Partition Omnibus*, OUP, New Delhi, 2000, p. 230

²¹ Yasmin Khan, *The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan*, Penguin Books, New Delhi, 2007, p. 180.

²² Nripendra Nath Mitra (ed.), *The Indian Annual Register: An Annual Digest of Public Affairs of India, Vol.2, July-December 1946*, Published by The Annual Register Office, Calcutta, 1946, pp.123-24

different from any previous disturbances and have involved murders on mass scale as also mass conversions enforced at the point of dagger, abduction and violation of women and forcible marriage....The immediate problem is to produce a sense of security and rehabilitate homes and villages which have been broken and destroyed. Women who have been abducted and forcibly married must be restored to their homes. Mass conversions which have taken place forcibly have no significance or validity and the people affected by them should be given every opportunity to return to their homes and to the life of their choice.

Beginning March 1947, as the flames of communal violence engulfed Punjab, the cases on atrocities on women increased manifold. The number of abductions also increased. On 4th April 1947, Nehru wrote to Evan Jenkins²³:

...There is one point, however, to which I should like to draw your special attention as I did when I met you last. This is the question of rescuing women who have been abducted or forcibly converted. You will realise that nothing adds to popular passion more than stories of abductions of women, and as long as these abducted women are not rescued trouble will simmer and might possibly blaze out. Every day's delay in rescuing them adds to the difficulties of the situation and makes rescue more unlikely. In view of the open allegations of partiality against the police, it was suggested that the military might help in this rescue work. It appears from the report I am sending you that about 200 such women were in fact recovered as also a large quantity of looted property. I am told that the military has been stopped from doing this work now, although about 100 women have still to be rescued. I would request you to take special interest in this matter so that the rescue of these women as well as those who have suffered compulsory conversion might be effected as soon as possible. It is unfortunate that many people place no reliance on the police in such matters.

The All India Congress Committee at its session held in Delhi on November 16, 1947 said:

During these disorders (due to partition violence), large number of women have been abducted on either side and there have been forcible conversions on a large scale. No civilised people can recognise such conversions, and there is nothing more heinous than abduction of women. Every effort therefore, must be made on behalf of the Governments of the two Dominions and of East and West Punjab that forcible conversions will not be recognised and that they would co-operate in the recovery of abducted women.²⁴

Mridula Sarabhai, a disciple of Mahatma Gandhi and a prominent social worker of the time played a prominent role to bring the issue of abducted women to the

²³ Nehru to Jenkins on 4th April 1947, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Second Series, Vol.2, Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, New Delhi, 1984, pp.303-304.

²⁴ *The Hindu*, November 17, 1947.

negotiating table of two governments. She began discussing the issue with the then Minister of Relief and Rehabilitation of Pakistan, Ghaznafar Ali Khan. Subsequently, an Inter-Dominion Conference attended by senior government officials and a number of social workers was held in Lahore on the 6th December 1947. An agreement was signed to set up the official machinery to recover the abducted Hindu and Sikh women from Pakistan and abducted Muslim women from India. *The Times of India* reported on December 8, 1947: “A joint organization of the dominion of India and Pakistan for the restoration of kidnapped women and children to their families was suggested by Ghazanfar Ali Khan, the Pakistan minister for refugees inaugurating the Inter-Dominion conference, held in Lahore, today to consider ways and means for the restoration of abducted women and forced converts”.²⁵ Here, it was decided that all out efforts would be made to recover and restore all the abducted women. It was also made clear that no conversion after 1st March 1947 would be considered valid and those women would be restored with the help of the local police. Most importantly, it was made clear that the wishes of individual women would not be considered and hence, no statement of theirs would be recorded before any magistrate. The Military Evacuation Officers would provide all assistance for safe upkeep and transfer of these women to their respective dominions. Social workers assisted by the local police and District Liaison Officers were put in overall charge of this entire work of recovery and restoration.

The government subsequently began the recovery work and a number of rescue operations were launched. As the days progressed, the government came under considerable pressure to act quickly and increase the rate of recovery. The issue was also raised at intervals in the Constituent Assembly and state Legislative Assembly debates. For instance, Shibban Lal Saxena, a member of Constituent Assembly from United Provinces, appropriated the rhetoric of the Ramayana while speaking during the passage of Recovery Act²⁶:

²⁵ *Times of India*, December 8, 1947

²⁶ *Constituent Assembly Debates*, 1947-1952, Delhi, Government of India Publications. The issue of recovery of abducted women came up at regular intervals during these debates with emphasis only on the numbers, not on the mechanism and complexities of the operation. The All India Congress Committee also passed a resolution on November 17, 1947 emphasising on the urgency of recovery of abducted women. The resolution stated: “During these disorders, large numbers of women have been abducted on either side and there have been forcible conversions on a large scale. No civilized people can recognise such conversions and there is nothing more heinous than the abduction of women. Every

Even now the Ramayana and the Mahabharata are revered. For the sake of one woman, who was taken away by Ravana, the whole nation took up arms and went to war. And here, there are thousands and the way they have been treated...If there is any sore point or distressful fact to which we cannot be reconciled under any circumstances, it is the question of the abduction and non-restoration of Hindu women...as descendants of Ram, we have to bring back every Sita that is alive!

At the Inter-Dominion Conference in Delhi on 18-20 December 1947 the Pakistan government accepted the Indian government's proposal to associate the Military Evacuation Organisation so that the recovery work could be expedited. However, in another conference held at Lahore, on 8th January 1948, Pakistan government opined that the responsibility for recovery of women and children should exclusively entrusted upon the local police²⁷. The issue of abducted women was again discussed on January 22, 1948 when the representatives of both countries met. During the course of discussions, Mridula Sarabhai made a number of suggestions which were readily accepted. She suggested that the police force sent by one province to the other should be increased and better transport facilities in quick time should be provided to the rescuers.

Every time such a rescue operation was mounted, a women officer was sent along, accompanied by the police and others. The wishes of women were considered immaterial. The state looked at these women solely in the terms of their religious identity as Hindu or Muslim and accordingly repatriated them to Pakistan or India. Their children were looked upon as born of wrong sexual union and the women's right to decide their own future was denied to them. Many women were thus forced to accept identities and kinship relations which the state now enforced in its role as 'the father patriarch'²⁸. And after what the state had arbitrarily decided, there was no consideration given to the likes, urges and wishes of the women who were the real sufferers in the whole process. Thus, "the state's intrusive attempt to annul the conversions and forcibly restore these women to their homes of ethnic origin calcified Sikh/Hindu/Muslim as immutable categories, at odds with the complex identifications

effort must be made to restore women to their original homes with the cooperation of the governments concerned" (See Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin, *Borders and Boundaries: Women in India's Partition*, Kali For Women, New Delhi, 1998,p.69)

²⁷ S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of J.L. Nehru*, Second Series, Volume 5, Pub. by Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1987,p.116

²⁸ Ritu Menon & Kamla Bhasin, 'Recovery, Rupture and Resistance: Indian State and Abduction of Women during Partition', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.28, Issue No.17, April 24, 1993, pp. ws-2-10.

that these terms often had for the recovered women”.²⁹. Women were forcibly taken away from their new homes where many of them had settled well, borne children and adjusted well to their lives. They did not want to face another upheaval again. One such “recovered” girl who did not wish to return back questioned Mridula Sarabhai:

“You say abduction is immoral and so you are trying to save us. Well, now it is too late. One marries only once- willingly or by force. We are now married-what are you going to do with us? Ask us to get married again? Is that not immoral? What happened to our relatives when we were abducted? Where were they...You may do your worst if you insist, but remember we will not go³⁰.”

Tahira Mazhar Ali had worked for the recovery of women from Lahore. She recounts³¹:

I was working with Mridula Sarabhai particularly after Jawaharlal [Nehru] asked for the return of the abducted Hindu women. I got myself immersed in the task of recovering those women. Mridula asked me to ask those women to come back to their homes. But many of those women did not want to face the family because of shame and sheer embarrassment they felt. Quite a few were accorded acceptability and some were happy and well settled in the house holds they were living. Such women, therefore, did not want to go back.

Muslim women too, in many cases, vehemently opposed being ‘rescued’ and restored to Pakistan. Nehru wrote to the Minister of Rehabilitation K.C. Neogy on 3rd March 1948³²:

I have just had a telephone message from Sushila Nayar from Patiala. She told me that the great majority of the women recovered refuse to leave their new homes and were so frightened of being taken away forcibly that they threatened to commit suicide. Indeed, last 46 of them ran away from the camp through some backdoor. This is a difficult problem. I told Sushila Nayar that she can assure these

²⁹ Jisha Menon, ‘Rehearsing the Partition: Gendered Violence in “Aur Kitne Tukde”’, *Feminist Review*, No. 84, Post Colonial Theatres, 2006, pp.29-47.

³⁰ Ritu Menon & Kamla Bhasin, ‘Recovery, Rupture and Resistance: Indian State and Abduction of Women during Partition’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.28, Issue No.17, April 24, 1993, pp. ws-2-10. Through the voices of women victims, the government, members of parliament and also through the experiences of women workers who assisted in recovery operation, in the paper the authors try to demonstrate how ambiguous and conflictual their mutual relationship was. They strongly contest the state’s particular construction of the identity of the abducted woman and recovery of those women also who did not want to leave. They say that it would be “wrong to presume that the lot of abducted women was uniformly grim and their abductors without exception bestial, unreliable and craven”.

³¹ Interview with Tahira Mazhar Ali, recorded by Pippa Virdee in Lahore on 19 September 2008 as quoted in ‘Remembering Partition: Women, Oral Histories and the Partition of 1947’, *Oral History*, Vol.41, No.2, *Conflict* (Autumn 2013), pp.49-62

³² Nehru to K.C Neogy on March 3, 1948. S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of J.L. Nehru*, Second Series, Volume 5, Pub. by Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1987,p.120

women that no one is going to send them forcibly to Pakistan but we thought it desirable for them to come to Delhi so that the Pakistan High Commissioner and others could then find out what their desires were. This would finally settle the question. In any event, I assured her that we would not compel any girl to be sent to Pakistan against her wishes.

However, the wishes of the women were rarely given much importance and once 'recovered' they were in all likelihood repatriated to the country that they 'belonged' to based on their religion. The women social workers accompanied by the police, adopted disguise, used false names, acted secretly and on their own, or just stormed their way into homes where they suspected that abducted women were living. In an interview to Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin, Krishna Thapar, who was involved in the work of restoration of abducted women, recounted one such instance³³:

Some time in 1950 I was required to escort 21 Muslim women who had been recovered to Pakistan. They did not want to return, but the Tribunal had decided that they had to go. They were young, beautiful girls and had been taken by Sardars. They were determined to stay back because they were very happy. We had to use real force to compel them to go back. I was very unhappy with this duty- they had already suffered so much and now we were forcing them to return when they just did not want to go. I was told, "*Ey tan aiveyeen raula pa raiyan ne, enada to faisla ho chucka hai, enanu tu bhejna hi hai*" (These girls are simply creating a commotion for nothing, their case has been decided and they have to be sent back.)

Many women were, thus, recovered without their wishes.

Before they were repatriated to 'their' countries, they were made to stay in transit camps. Kamlaben Patel who was a Gandhian worker deeply involved in the recovery work, called the conditions in these camps "awful, and worse than the cattle sheds". These were overcrowded, extremely dirty and often witnessed deaths due to epidemics. Lack of funds meant very little food and only a pair of clothes for the inmates. The condition in some of the Pakistani camps was worse. According to Kamalaben, when the women from the Kurja Camp arrived in Lahore they looked more like skeletons. They had not eaten properly for months, not bathed for weeks.

³³ Ritu Menon & Kamla Bhasin, *Borders and Boundaries: Women in India's Partition*, Kali For Women, New Delhi, 1998, pp.91-92

Their hair and bodies were covered with ulcers and lice. During the 190 miles long journey from the Kurja Camp to Lahore, they had been provided no food and water³⁴.

The women, hence, had to undergo tremendous physical and psychological suffering. Having being deprived from everything secure and familiar, “the women’s identities were in continual state of construction and reconstruction, making them a kind of permanent refugees”. Many such women knew well that they will not be accepted by their families back home and therefore, chose to spend rest of their lives in ashrams.³⁵

Furthermore, the recovery process was frustratingly slow. An Inter-Dominion Conference held between 13th and 15th March debated on the issue of those women who did not want to return to their natal families and agreed that “special camps should be established for such women, one in West Punjab and one in East Punjab. Non- Muslim women recovered in Pakistan who are unwilling to be transferred to India will be taken to the special camp in East Punjab. Muslim recovered in India will be taken to the special camp in West Punjab. After a period not exceeding a fortnight the wishes of these recovered women will be ascertained by special workers of both Dominions acting jointly and action will be taken in accordance with their wishes³⁶”. It was also decided that, “any dispute as to whether a woman or child was abducted or forcibly converted before or after 1st March, 1947 shall be determined by a joint enquiry held in Lahore or Jullundur, as the case may be, by the two senior most police officers of the special recovery staff of the two Dominions³⁷.” At another conference held in May 1948, it was agreed that both the countries will use the publicity media at their disposals to arouse the public sentiment in favour of return of abducted women and that both Dominions should enact legislation on similar lines to facilitate and regularise these recoveries. When recovery work was resumed under the new agreement, after November 1948, in some cases parties resorted to Law Courts, with a

³⁴ Aparna Basu, *Mridula Sarabhai: Rebel with a Cause*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1996, pp.127-128.

³⁵ Ritu Menon & Kamla Bhasin, ‘Recovery, Rupture and Resistance: Indian State and Abduction of Women during Partition’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.28, Issue No.17, April 24, 1993, pp. ws-2-11. Menon and Bhasin, thus, question the rationality of state’s recovery operation of abducted women by uprooting them again and denying any agency to the women themselves. They argue that in its “articulation of gender identity and public policy implicitly and explicitly, the state departed from its neutrality in assigning certain values to the ‘legitimate’ family and community ‘honour’ and that it did so through a regulation of women’s sexuality.”

³⁶ File No. R/GOVT/2-1948-1954, Extract from Inter-Dominion Agreement, dated 13-15 March, 1958 at Lahore, Mridula Sarabhai Private Papers, NMML.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

view of getting back the women who had been detained temporarily in camps, under the writ of Habeus Corpus, and it was found necessary to urgently provide legal sanction for the procedure followed. The Government of India, accordingly, enacted an Ordinance called the Recovery of Abducted Persons Ordinance, 1949 (Ordinance No. V of 1949) on January 31, 1949. Pakistan enacted such an Ordinance only in May 1949³⁸.

By the end of December 1949, the number of recovered women in both countries stood at 12,000 for India and 6000 for Pakistan. A sharp difference also arose between Mridula Sarabhai and Rameshwari Nehru, two most prominent woman social workers, on this issue. While Rameshwari felt that the discontent in some circles against the slow pace of recovery of women in Pakistan was genuine, Mridula felt that the Indian effort to rescue Muslim women should not suffer on account of this. Moreover, Rameshwari Nehru also felt that the voice of women in recovery should now be given more heed, now that two years had passed since partition and that it was more likely that the women would have more or less settled into their new lives. She considered it that from a human perspective; it would be “inadvisable to continue the work of recovery any longer” and thus “by sending them away” forcefully “we have brought about grief and the dislocation of their accepted family life, without in the least promoting human happiness³⁹”. Mridula did not agree on this as she considered that the abducted women cannot be a free agent, given their unsettled circumstances. With the growing differences, she chose to resign on the issue. However, Prime Minister Nehru, who had seen Mridula working day in and day out since August 1947 for these hapless women victims of partition, did not accept her resignation. Instead, he put Mridula solely in charge of recovery work by transferring it from the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation and bringing it under the Ministry of External Affairs. A new office, the Central Recovery Office was created, which kept in close liaison with the Recovery Organisations in India and Pakistan and helped them in the implementation of government policy regarding the recovery of abducted women and children⁴⁰. In fact, as late as 1953 too, she was not willing to consider the recovery

³⁸ File No. R/GOVT/1-1949-50, Memorandum from Ministry of External Affairs, Mridula Sarabhai Private Papers, NMML.

³⁹ Rameshwari Nehru, ‘Memorandum on Recovery of Women, Review of the position since October 1948’, 1950, Report No. 1, Rameshwari Nehru Papers, NMML

⁴⁰ Aparna Basu, *Mridula Sarabhai: Rebel with a Cause*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1996, p.134.

work as 'coercive and inhuman'. In a note on 'Reference to the question as to when the consent should be taken' written on 7 November 1953, Mridula opined⁴¹:

I would recommend that in consultation with Pakistan, both the Hon'ble Ministers-in-charge of recovery and leaders should call upon the abductors and their supporters to immediately report to the Recovery Organisation the abducted women in their possession and allow them to go and meet their relatives on Indian and Pakistani passport whichever the case may be, while doing this, a guarantee must be given that they would not be forcibly recovered if they benefit of this offer. The response itself will prove whether the abducted women are allowed to act according to their will while they are with the abductors and in the society where they are living. If the response is poor, then in that light, it would be necessary to consider the desirability of the present procedure. On the basis of guidance it can safely be believed that the abducted woman even today is not a free agent, is but a greater coercive and fearful atmosphere and compared to that, recovery operations and procedure are in no way coercive and inhuman.

Thus, the recovery operation for abducted women continued for 9 years after partition though recoveries began to drop off after the initial few years. The process of recoveries gradually died down once the Government of India and Pakistan decided in 1954 not to recover the abducted women against their wishes⁴².

The Abducted Persons (Recovery and Restoration) Act of 1949 though continued to be renewed till 1957. After it, the Act was allowed to lapse. The most important reason behind this was the issue of the fate of abducted children. Previously, the Government of India had passed an ordinance that the recovered abducted women will have to leave their child born in Pakistan as it believed that such children will not be accepted in women's Indian families. Pakistan had also passed such a law in case of Muslim women recovered from India. Social workers from both the countries opposed such a callous law that separated the woman from her child. As per the government estimates, between 1st January 1954 and 30th September 1957, about 860 children were left behind by Muslim women who were sent to Pakistan and 410 children were taken by them. For the children left behind, the government had to make arrangement for their food and shelter by establishing orphanages. Owing to such complexities, the government had to gradually wound up the recovery work,

⁴¹ File No. R/GOVT/4-1953, Mridula Sarabhai Private Papers, NMML

⁴² File No. R/GOVT/2- 1948-1954, 'Instrument of Ratification of the Indo-Pakistan Agreement on Recovery of Abducted Person', New Delhi, 7-8 May 1954, Mridula Sarabhai Private Papers, NMML.

district by district. In all, some 30,000 women from India, and about 8000 Hindu and Sikh women were recovered from Pakistan.⁴³

3.3 The Struggle of Women Victims of Partition:

Once the recovered women were brought to India, the task of uniting them with their families began. It began to be realised increasingly by the government that many of them were unacceptable to their families, who fearing ‘social stigma’ refused to bring them back to their family fold. The government was thus in a state of flux. Prime Minister Nehru upon hearing such cases issued a public appeal on 16th January 1948⁴⁴:

Among the many problems that we have to face, one of the most urgent is the recovery of girls and women who have been abducted. We must strain every nerve to help these unfortunate women to go back to their homes. Their friends and relative should welcome them back and give them all comfort and solace after their harrowing experience. I am told that sometimes there is an unwillingness on the part of their relatives to accept the girls back to their homes. This is a most objectionable and wrong attitude for anyone to take up and any social custom that supports this attitude must be condemned. These girls require our loving and tender care and their relatives should be proud to take them back and give them every help.

However, such an appeal went largely unheeded. As noted Hindi novelist Krishna Sobti points out, the Muslim women rescued from India and sent back “were accepted in Pakistan more easily” and hence “somehow rehabilitated in society” but “Hindus, as a whole, did not accept their women back” and “there were some families which surrounded such women with deep silences”. Sikhs, she argues, “were able to deal with the women who had suffered, better than the others” and “showed a greater sensitivity to the fact that these unfortunate women were part of their families, that they were their wives, sisters, daughters...”⁴⁵.

This ‘repudiation of abducted wives, daughters, mothers and sisters’ argues Debali-Mookerjee, “was a dramatic demonstration of the fact that discursive constructions of

⁴³ Urvashi Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India*, Penguin Books India (p) Ltd .,New Delhi,1998, p.123

⁴⁴ *The Hindustan Times*, 17 January 1948.

⁴⁵ Krishna Sobti and Alok Bhalla, ‘Memory and History’, *India International Centre Quarterly*, Vol.24, No.2/3, Crossing Boundaries, Monsoon 1997, pp.55-78, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23005432> (accessed on 06/01/2015)

Hindu femininity held abundant scope for violence”⁴⁶. Such violence was not only physical but also deeply psychological for these women who had to spend rest of their lives without a family and community support, living a life of loneliness (and deprivation) in ashrams or other such places.

The women of partition argue Jasodhara Bagchi and Subhoranjan Dasgupta, however, “refused to succumb to the dictates of fate. Both in Punjab and Bengal (as elsewhere) they displayed exemplary resilience, fortitude, patience and strength to emerge victors against the combined nightmare of assault, exodus, displacement, grinding poverty and broken psyche. They not only kept their new shelter in camps and refugee settlements intact but also ventured out to acquire skills and earn.”⁴⁷

Gargi Chakravarty terms this struggle as “a mile stone in the annals of the women’s movement”.⁴⁸ In her opinion, “Too often, women’s experience of partition becomes a story of loss and victimhood, of violence and oppression.” While she considers this focus as “valid and deeply relevant, it does somewhat marginalise other areas of experience that are no less relevant”. These, she argues, “relate to the ways in which uprooted women have faced the enormous challenge of rebuilding and reshaping their lives in alien conditions and how some of their concerns evolved into a new women’s movement⁴⁹”.

Not only did partition bring the women to the public domain, enlarging the social spaces available to them and affecting the hitherto practiced purdah or seclusion but it also marked the emergence of the new woman who was self-reliant, independent, self-made and the one who could challenge, and not succumb to the male domination. This helped to change the patriarchal norms of behaviour and thought to a great extent. In the words of Anjali Bhardwaj Datta⁵⁰, “...the newly built surroundings and the changed circumstances did not allow women to be simply reframed into old Punjabi [equally true for refugee women from other regions as well] patriarchal norms

⁴⁶ Debali Mookerjee- Leonard , ‘Jyotirmoyee Devi: Writing History, Making Citizens’, *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2005, pp. 1-39

⁴⁷ Jasodhara Bagchi & Subhoranjan Dasgupta, ‘The Problem’, *Seminar* 510, Feb 2002 ,pp.12-14

⁴⁸ Gargi Chakravarty, *Coming out of Partition: Refugee Women of Bengal*, Srishti Publishers & Distributors, New Delhi, 2005, p.xiv

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Anjali Bhardwaj Datta, ‘Gendering Oral History of Partition: Interrogating Patriarchy’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, June 3, 2006, pp.2229-2235.

in a new nation, i.e, post-Partition north [as in other parts] India”. She argues “how in times of social and political upheavals (especially those arising out of ethnic or communal conflicts), the division between private and public spaces becomes radically altered. This in turn provides women with a liberating experience⁵¹.” Therefore, “Partition narrowed the physical spaces and enlarged the social spaces available to women thereby affecting the practice of parda or seclusion, modified the impact of caste and regional culture on marriage arrangements and widened the channels of educational mobility and employment of girls and women”⁵². As Urvashi Butalia puts it, “Just as a whole generation of women were destroyed by Partition, so also Partition provided an opportunity for many to move into the public sphere in a hitherto unprecedented way⁵³.” In the context of Bengali women refugees, Gargi Chakravarty writes⁵⁴:

“The complex dynamics of displacement and spatial loss, the psychological and the sociological dimensions of the experiences of people venturing into world of problems and possibilities required all kinds of adjustments that eventually altered their gendered existence within the family. It contributed to end of andarmahal, the segregation of women from the outside world. The refugee women’s emergence in the public domain, their pursuit of education, their search of employment, and their participation in the activities of colony life changed the social milieu of West Bengal.”

The exigencies created by partition displacement had the affect of modifying the caste and regional culture, thus in turn affecting the marriage arrangements and educational mobility of girls and women. More and more women came to the streets to fight for their survival, get employed in any venture possible. Thus, she became independent and self-reliant. Hasna Choudhary, one such lady, says “Because of the partition we

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Karuna Chanana, ‘Partition and Family Strategies: Gender-Education Linkages among Punjabi Women in Delhi’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.28, No.17, April 24, 1993, pp.ws25-34

⁵³ As quoted in Jashodhara Bagchi & Subhoranjan Dasgupta, ‘The Problem’, *Seminar* 510, Feb 2002, pp.12-14

⁵⁴ Gargi Chakravarty, *Coming out of Partition: Refugee Women of Bengal*, Srishti Publishers & Distributors, New Delhi, 2005, pp.79-80

learnt to become self-reliant, and stand on our own feet. Without partition this would not have been possible.”⁵⁵

It should also be added here that those women who resurrected their lives on their own, by their hard work and determination, also tried to ensure that their daughters get properly educated, trained and thus become self-reliant. In the words of Anjali Bhardwaj:

Those mothers, who had felt their own vulnerability acutely, viewed getting a degree as crucial, as this would enable their daughters to get jobs if necessary. This did not mean that education would lead immediately to employment but that it equips them for it. Women [and men] after the Partition were very keen that their daughters should not have to face a similar situation. With the dispersal of the joint family, sisters and daughters could no longer be expected to be looked after by their male kin. Hence, it became expedient to equip them with requisite skills so that they could fend for themselves. Partition had widened the channels of educational mobility⁵⁶.

The government too assumed the responsibility of rehabilitating these victims of partition and established a number of training cum employment centres where they could learn the skills and get a gainful employment in the future. In addition to it, a number of ashrams were also established to provide shelter and care to widows and unattached women. Let us see how this task unfolded over the years.

The Indian State's Attempt for Relief and Rehabilitation of the Refugee Women

As partition was seen as the time of ‘national disaster’, quite naturally such an event galvanized the newly independent state into action. A massive relief and rehabilitation programme was launched by the new government which perceived itself as the benign power and protector of the rights and privileges of its citizens. Women became the chief focus of attention of the ‘paternalistic’ state. Therefore, a Women’s section under the guidance of female social workers was set up by the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation on 24th November 1947, to deal exclusively with the issues of women victims of partition. Rameshwari Nehru was appointed its Director and Hannah Sen made its secretary. Rameshwari believed that, the women and children were the chief sufferers of the partition upheaval and therefore, ‘in the opinion of all right thinking people’, it is ‘obligatory on the part of the Government to provide for their

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.49

⁵⁶ Anjali Bhardwaj Datta, ‘Gendering Oral History of Partition: Interrogating Patriarchy’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, June 3, 2006, pp.2229-2235.

maintenance and care. In its declaration of policy, the Government has acknowledged this responsibility, and the Prime Minister also has given repeated assurances to the people, that unattached destitute women and children would be fully looked after the state⁵⁷.’ The Indian State thus, soon swung into action and set up various transit camps, relief centres and vocational training centres to undertake this enormous exercise. While the transit camps and relief centres, established on both sides of the border, helped to rescue the women with relative safety and provided much needed solace, the vocational training cum employment centres went a long way to help them to stand on their feet and resurrect their lives again⁵⁸.

The majority of the training-cum- production centres in Delhi came into existence during February-August, 1948 under the command of Director General of Resettlement & Employment. Later, in 1949 they were brought under the jurisdiction of the Department of Rehabilitation, Delhi Administration when Provincial Women’s Section for the Delhi Province was set up on 15th January 1949. The Chief Commissioner of Delhi was made its administrative head and this section was now to look after the task of preparing and executing the schemes related to the settlement of women refugees in Delhi⁵⁹. Delhi’s Women’s Section had four main adjuncts, namely⁶⁰: (a) The Homes; (b) The Training cum Production Centres; (c) The Marriage Bureau; and (d) The Employment Bureau.

The Women’s Section had earlier acted on a scheme submitted by the Ministry of Labour, for the conversion of the ex-Service Women’s Training Centre and hostel in Delhi into a training centre for refugee women. By January 1949 it had provided accommodation to about 300 students and imparted training in stenography, typing, clerical and commercial work, tailoring, needle-work, bleaching and dyeing, baskets

⁵⁷ Note of 5 December by Rameshwari Nehru, ‘Report of the work done by the Women’s Section of Ministry of Rehabilitation’, Rameshwari Nehru Papers, NMML.

⁵⁸ Interestingly, the Women’s Section of the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation also proposed for an exclusive colony for the refugee women and children. Prime Minister Nehru liked the proposal and felt that it could be highly useful as a permanent institution. To collect the scattered women at one place, he felt, would make it easier to organize them for productive activity and for some kind of community life. The proposal on a big scale could involve a population of about 10,000 persons with large grounds for gardening, dairy farming and poultry keeping, cottage industry, etc. However, nothing much was heard about this proposal in the government records further. Note to the Minister for Relief and Rehabilitation, 8 September 1948, Jawaharlal Nehru Collection, See S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of J.L. Nehru*, Volume 7, Pub. by Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1988, p.60.

⁵⁹ File No. 13 (20)/49, Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation, Delhi Archives.

⁶⁰ Rameshwari Nehru Private Papers, Reports 1946-49, NMML.

and willow work, soap making, spinning and weaving and vegetable and fruit preservation. Another training institution run by the Women's Section was the Gram Sevika Shiksha Kendra, which trained women in social work. The training here was based on the Kasturba Scheme for village social work and applicants were admitted only on condition that they would, after completion of the course, go out to the villages to organise village upliftment work. It also ran four homes for the destitute, namely the Lahore Sheds, the Satnarain Home, the Mehrauli Dharmasala, and the Ram Bagh Home in Delhi⁶¹.

In the refugee camps too, attempts were made to provide some remunerative work by setting up workshops in a few trades. The women refugees also became its beneficiaries. For example, initially 200 spinning & fly-shuttle looms were established which provided work to about 275 women and girls. Similarly, dyeing and calico printing centres provided employment to 200 men and women; tailoring centres provided work to 100 men and women; button making to 50 men and children; and thread-balling employed 50 women and girls etc.⁶²

The government encouraged the women to organise themselves in various women's co-operative societies by grant of easy loans at nominal rates of interest and also helped in procurement of tools and machinery. As a result of it a number of such societies came up during this period. It provided training to the refugee women in stitching, knitting, embroidery, typing, calico printing, tailoring, block and fabric printing etc.

A letter from the Assistant Registrar, Cooperative Society to the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation in the year 1949, regarding the grant of loans to cooperative societies, mentions the following women's cooperative societies and the number of women workers⁶³:

- (1) Women Cooperative Industrial Society at Metcalfe Road- 135 women workers

⁶¹ *The Times of India*, 9th January, 1949.

⁶² Deputy Commissioner's Files, File no. 280/1947, Delhi Archives.

⁶³ Deputy Commissioner's Files, File No. DC/340/1949, (Subject: Refugee Women Cooperative Societies in Delhi Tailoring and Embroidery Work), Delhi Archives.

- (2) Mahila Udyog Sangh Cooperative Industrial Society at Kingsway Camp- 280 workers
- (3) Purana Quila Mahila Sehkari Udyog at Purana Quila- 150 workers
- (4) Delhi Women League Cooperative Industrial Society at Kashmiri Gate- 45 workers

The work and rehabilitation centres also continued to get financed by the government. The table mentioned below gives a list of various such centres in and around Delhi by 1951.

Table 5: A List of Works and Rehab. Centres in Delhi State in 1951

Location	Equipment	Industries Started
10 Park Area, Karol Bagh, New Delhi	Hand sewing machine 12 Foot sewing machine 6	Training in cutting, embroidery, knitting
Near Madras Hotel, C...P New Delhi	Hand sewing machine 10 Foot sewing machine 5	Training in cutting, embroidery, knitting and stitching of liveries
84-Rajinder Nagar, New Delhi	Hand sewing machine 30	Stitching of liveries and knitting & embroidery
8-Central Lane , Babar Road, New Delhi	Hand sewing machine 12 Foot sewing machine 6 Machine for laundry 1	Training in cutting, embroidery, knitting & stitching of liveries
Municipal Girl's School, Lodi Colony, New Delhi	H.S.M. 20 F.S.M. 7	Training in cutting, embroidery and knitting
Opposite Qutub, Mehrouli	H.S.M. 19, Durri Frame 1, handloom fly shuttle 9	Stitching of liveries, making of dusters, khadi,
Near Lajpat Nagar, New Delhi	H.S.M. 27, F.S.M 8, Handlooms 15, Newar	Stitching of liveries, making of dusters, khadi,
Narkali Building, Pul Bangesh, New Delhi	Tap Frames 10, Frames for Badges 6	Stitching or liveries and embroidery work
-do-	H.S.M. 30	-do-
Near Railway Station, Shahdara	H.S.M. 13	Stitching of liveries,
20-Hudson Lines, Delhi	H.S.M. 38, Soap frames 4, soap boiling pans 3,	Stitching of liveries, preparation of chutney,
2-a King Edward Road, New Delhi	Electric cloth cutting machine 2	Garments are cut by expert tailors

Names of Works and Rehab. Centres	Name of Organiser
Karolbagh	Miss Sundry Chandra
Connaught Place	Mrs. Shanti Kalsi
Pusa Colony	Miss K. Gandhi
8 Central Lane	Mrs. Shela Puri
Lodi Colony	Mrs. Sumitri Puri
Udyog Shala	Miss Shakuntala Sulhan
Kilo Kheri	Mrs. Kharbanda
Sabzi Mandi	Mrs. V. Malik
Sabzimadi	Miss A. Sulhan
Shahdara	Miss B. Sethi
Kingsway	Miss B. Sethi
Cutting Centre	Rattan Singh
Karolbagh	

Source: Chief Commissioner Files, File no. F. 13 (32), 1951, Relief and Rehabilitation Department, Delhi Archives

As the table above shows, the thirteen Work and Rehabilitation Centres for destitute women were fairly distributed in and around Delhi. The centres at Karolbagh, Connaught Place, Sabzi mandi and Kingsway employed a significant number of women workers. Equipments like Hand Sewing Machines, Foot Sewing Machines, Laundry Machines, Durri Frames, Tape Frames and Electric Clothing Machines were used to train them in the different crafts like cutting, embroidery, knitting, stitching liveries etc. Once they acquired these skills they were free to work either in some co-operative society or individually in their homes and earn a living to sustain themselves and their families

The government while paying monthly wages to the women workers also helped them in marketing of their products. The government offices were its major customers, the task of tailoring of uniforms for the Class IV employees was also mostly entrusted to the women training centres. The Women's Section appreciated the help that it got from the government departments. For instance, in its annual report of 1950 it said 'we are thankful to the Ministry of Home Affairs who appreciated the situation and issued directive to all the Ministries and Heads of Departments to have their class iv servants liveries stitched through this section⁶⁴.' Various outlets were also opened up to sell their products. The production of fine embroidered linen, readymade garments and handicrafts for sale was associated with the establishment of the famous refugee handicrafts shop in Connaught Place later in 1956.

In June 1952, the government decided to reorganize the Delhi State Women's section. It was now renamed as "Social Welfare and Rehabilitation Directorate, Delhi State" and following duties were assigned to it⁶⁵:-

1. Care of the displaced destitute women and children.
2. Vocational training of the displaced persons living in the rehabilitation colonies;

⁶⁴ Annual Report of Delhi Provincial Women's Section, 25 March 1950, Rameshwari Nehru Papers, NMML.

⁶⁵ Chief Commissioner Files, File no. F9 (5)/52, 1952, Relief and Rehabilitation Department, Delhi Archives

3. Grant of loans to the individual displaced persons and loans and stipends to students studying in colleges, professional and technical institutions;
4. Grant of maintenance allowance to displaced persons;
5. Welfare of non-displaced persons, destitute women and children. The following changes were also made:
 - Kasturba Niketan, Women's Colony at Lajpat Nagar was to continue the maintenance of women and running of vocational work cum training centres. Two separate dormitories for 500 orphan and unattached children were also to be set up, along with running pre-basic-cum-nursery school for children.
 - The Boy's Middle School at Rambagh and Girl's Middle School at Satnarin building, Sabzi Mandi and Girl's High School in Dharmshala building, Mehrauli was handed over to the Director of Education. The residential site remained under the charge of the Social Welfare and Rehabilitation Directorate.
 - The total number of work-cum- training centres were brought down from 12 to 9, by amalgamation and were to continue in various localities of Delhi, New Delhi, Shahdara and Mehrauli.
 - The Working Girl's Hostel for low paid working women was continued.
 - The existing scholarships to about 100 school children studying outside Delhi was to be continued for some more time.
 - Issuing of sewing machines at concessional rate was to be continued from the Prime Minister's National Relief and the Discretionary Grant of the Ministry for Rehabilitation, Delhi State. A fixed cash allowance of Rs.15 per month to 50 aged and disabled persons was to be continued.
 - Facilities of giving unattached babies for adoption were to also be continued.

- Facilities for finding employment for needy women were also to be continued. It was advised to have a proper liaison with the office of the Regional Employment Exchange for the purpose.
- The 200 women and children who were provided free residence in the Munawar Manzil and Anarkali buildings were to be shifted to Rehabilitation Colonies with a view to arrange for their permanent rehabilitation.
- It was also decided that the work centres under the Ministry of Rehabilitation, except Arab-ki- Sarai would be administered by Delhi State. The Government of India, accordingly, issued the instructions for the transfer of the Centres located at Kingsway, Azadpur, Malviya Nagar, Tilak Nagar, Lajpat Nagar and Kalkaji to Delhi state government.
- The grant of loans to individual displaced persons, loans and stipends to students in colleges, professional and technical institutions which till then was done under the control of Assistant Registrar of Cooperative Societies (Rehabilitation) was transferred to the Assistant Registrar, Cooperative Societies (General), Delhi State with effect from 1st June 1952.

The Government of India, Ministry of Rehabilitation also decided to transfer the entire work relating to the grant of maintenance allowance to the displaced persons to the Delhi state government. It involved the following two tasks:

- (1) Receipt and scrutiny of the applications for the grant of maintenance allowance and
- (2) Disbursement of the allowance sanctioned by the Ministry of Rehabilitation.

The first task which was being undertaken under the administrative control of the Assistant Registrar of Cooperative Societies (Rehabilitation) was transferred to the Social Welfare and Rehabilitation Directorate together with the existing staff. The second task which was undertaken by the Custodian of Evacuee Property was now entrusted to the Delhi government. It was understood that there were about 6,700 grantees in Delhi state to whom an amount of Rs. 1,30,000 was being distributed

every month. The Government of India promised to provide that amount from time to time to the Custodian of Evacuee Property.

Further, the Government of India allotted Delhi State government Rs. 3 lakhs for the construction of homes for women and children in the financial year 1954-55. Vocational Training and Work Centres were allotted Rs. 4.82 lakhs and Women Centres were allotted Rs. 2.41 lakhs.⁶⁶

Various changes were made regarding the running and management of these centres since then which in some ways shows that government's approach towards these centres and thus, the responsibility for these victims of partition was not unequivocal. This is clear from the fact that in the first 40 years of their existence itself, the administrative control over these centres changed twice from Central to State Government. Within the Central Government itself, they were tossed to four different ministries and within the state they changed two departments.

The training-cum- production centres which first came into existence during February-August, 1948 had functioned under the command of Director General of Resettlement & Employment. Later, in 1949 they were brought under the jurisdiction of the Department of Rehabilitation, Delhi Administration. In 1957, the thirteen centres with about one thousand workers were transferred back to the Central Government's Ministry of Rehabilitation. But the western wing of the Ministry was closed down in 1960, and the Centres were then transferred to the Ministry of Works and Housing, then they moved to Ministry of Labour, and finally to Education and Social Welfare. They were with the Ministry of Social Welfare till 1974. At that time there were about 19 centres with 1075 workers. Their average monthly wage was in the range of Rs. 45 to Rs. 400 during this period. As Anjali Bhardwaj so aptly says – the State, which was so 'benign' and enthusiastic about starting these centres after 1947, gradually became increasingly ambivalent towards them. And as the State

⁶⁶ Chief Commissioner Files, File no. F1(17)/1954 A, 14th May 1954, Relief and Rehabilitation Department, Delhi Archives

started seeing 'Partition' as a 'thing of past', its attitude towards rehabilitating these women changed and it began to withdraw from its responsibilities.⁶⁷

The chequered administrative history of these Centres seems to have made them step-children of the Delhi administration. Initially, while the focus was on production, gradually the focus shifted from production to training. The Centres began to offer a short duration non-certificate course, a one year certificate course and teacher training course. By 1988-89, about 2100 girls in non-diploma course and 260 women in other courses had received training. In three centres, new courses like typing, shorthand, secretarial practice, and beautician courses were introduced. Some of these courses got affiliation from the Technical and Training Directorate. The turning of these centres from production centres to some sort of women's polytechnics became a source of anxiety for the refugee women working there.

The major source of earning for these women had always been stitching uniforms for the third and fourth class employees of the Central Government, and other undertakings like the Post and Telegraph, Delhi Transport Corporation, etc. Bulk orders from these organizations, in past times, had provided them with enough earning to make a decent living. But from the mid-seventies the work began to get privatized. The private agencies began to be hired for the stitching work. In the lean period, the women were allowed to take up private orders and work on them in the centres. However, the government charged a 25 per cent commission on such works. To protest against this, the women workers came out on the streets in 1977. They held a massive demonstration at the office of the Directorate of Rehabilitation Services, Delhi Administration at Jamnagar House, Shahjahan Road. They demanded the abolition of 25 per cent deduction as commission and also demanded an increase in the wages. As a result of the pressure created by the agitation, the government suddenly 'discovered' that the women had actually been entitled to higher wages since 1974. So, the Government conceded only what it had been legally obliged to do four years ago. The agitation, therefore, did not yield much to the workers in monetary terms. But what the united protest was able to achieve was that it showed the women the efficacy of collective protest. In the long run, it helped a lot in

⁶⁷ Anjali Bhardwaj, 'Partition of India and Women's Experiences', *Social Scientist*, Vol.32/ 5-6 May-June 2004, pp.69-86

pressurizing the government to concede to some of the demands. In 1982, the Social Welfare Mahila Karmchari Union came into existence. This united front of the women refugee workers demanded the abolition of the 25 per cent deduction, increase in the wage rates, regularization of service and old age pension.

The Government however did not pay much heed to their demands. It consistently denied the demand for regularisation of service on the grounds that women were pie rate workers who did not have a continuous service with the government. This argument was highly surprising keeping in mind the fact that these women workers were working to produce for the government at the centres established by it, since 1948. To have their demands met the women organized a 17-day *Dharna* in 1983. Though the government did not agree to regularize their services, they agreed to abolish the 25 per cent deduction as commission. However, this measure could not provide much relief as the volume of work entrusted to these centres reduced substantially. Later on, the government began to give cloth and stitching allowance to its employees. As a result, the employees mostly went to private tailors to get their uniforms stitched and thus the women of the working centres were deprived of a regular source of their income on which they had been dependent for years. Many saw this as the government's angry response to the protest. Notwithstanding this, the women workers organized another 14-day *Dharna* to demand old age pension. Later, the government conceded to this demand. But the amount to be received as old age pension was meagre and a number of conditions were attached to get that meagre amount too. The work in these centres decreased substantially as time progressed. Rumours also spread that the government would soon close all the centres. While the government denied any such plan but it did nothing to stop the decline of the centres.

By 1989, the Kalkaji Centre reduced to one-third of its original space area, in Shankar Market it reduced to half, while the Lehna Singh Market Centre became three-fourth of its original space area. The famous Refugee Handicraft Shop at Connaught Circus was later on shifted to Khan Market and then to the premises of production-cum-training centre at Shankar Market. For the women workers it brought a number of problems. Their working space was reduced, the work became less and the income declined. A number of women workers protested against this measure. In 1989, the turnover reduced to Rs3.68 lakhs from the previous year's turnover of

Rs7.72 lakhs. All fresh production and supply came to a standstill and the government began disposing the existing stock at heavy discounts, with a view to close the shop altogether. This brought untold misery on the women employed there.

Over the years, these destitute women had worked hard against unfavourable circumstances both at their workplaces and their homes. The most striking thing about their work conditions has been that they have been subjected to all the formal rules and regulations that time-rate workers are usually subjected to. These include fixed eight-hour daily schedule, six day week, attendance register, and monthly payment. But, needless to add, they never received any benefits of regular workers. At the Centres no arrangements were ever made for crèche facilities. The machines they work with still remain the hand-operated sewing machines, the oldest model that was introduced in the twenties. The women had to sit on the floor, bending for hours together. The work is tough on the body and, with some of its detail, hard on the eyes. Almost all of the older women the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) investigating team met suffer from eye problems⁶⁸.

Overall, it seems that the government's desire and its efforts to rehabilitate these women victims of partition and help them to live a life of dignity, weakened as time progressed. It clearly began to prevaricate as partition became an event in the past. Here it should be kept in mind that these unfortunate victims of partition were deprived of their socio-cultural moorings all of a sudden on account of partition of the country in which they had no role. Even then they struggled hard against seemingly insurmountable odds to eke out a living and resurrect their lives. Seen in this light, their demands for standardisation of wages, regularisation of services and a decent amount in the form of old-age pension appear very genuine and hence, the government should have ideally accepted them. But those demands were never met and hence, the struggle of these women still continues in some measure even after the passage of nearly seven decades after partition.

⁶⁸ Report of People's Union for Civil Liberties, "' We Demand Our Rights' Refugee Women's Long Journey'", *Economic and Political Weekly*, June 8, 1989, pp.1507-1510

CHAPTER 4: STATE AS THE AGENT OF REHABILITATION

While the immediate task of providing relief to the refugees began as soon as they entered the capital in large numbers, the task of planning for their permanent rehabilitation also began very soon. This huge mass of about half a million people had lost their all in the communal conflagration and hardly had any resources to begin life afresh. In other words, they were entirely at the mercy of the government to provide them with the resources to enter into the socio-economic mainstream. For the nascent independent India, it was extremely important to make optimum use of this invaluable human resource, one for building a strong nation and also to make sure that it does not threaten its social fabric which was already under severe strain due to preceding communal violence. As Prime Minister Nehru put it while making an appeal to the general public for contribution to The Prime Minister's National Relief Fund on 24th January 1948¹:

At no time has the necessity of giving relief to vast numbers of our suffering countrymen been so great and urgent as it is today. This is not merely a humanitarian task but one affecting the future of India. We cannot permit the real wealth of India as represented by the millions of men and women, who have been dispossessed and driven away from their homes, to waste away with no opportunity of settling down again and taking full part in the creative and constructive activities of the nation. We cannot permit the growing generation to be deprived of home and education and training and opportunities of becoming efficient and productive citizens of India. We have passed through disaster and suffering on a colossal scale. The effort to overcome it and to rise superior to it must be on equally extensive scale.

Housing and employment generation through skill-building were the two most important tasks in this regard. As far as rural rehabilitation was concerned, both these tasks could be solved at one stroke. The houses and the agricultural lands of the Muslim evacuees were simply allotted to the incoming refugees. However, the task of rehabilitation was much more complex in urban areas like Delhi. Let us see how the government undertook this important task.

4.1 Housing

We have seen in detail in Chapter 2, the manner in which the refugees who had come from West Pakistan were housed in various camps in the city and the problems that they faced. These camps could not have been continued endlessly. At some point of

¹ *The Statesman*, January 25, 1948.

time the government had to devise a plan for the permanent housing of the refugees. With the massive influx of refugees, the population of Delhi had increased manifold.² There were not enough houses to settle them. About one-third of the refugees had occupied the vacant houses of the refugees. For the rest, houses had to be constructed. Therefore, the government started making efforts in this direction.

The cost of building material had risen considerably as a result of the impact of the Second World War and therefore, low- income housing had been neglected in Delhi in the 1940s. This had led to a number of unauthorized constructions mostly on government land. The problem got further complicated due to the huge influx of partition refugees, who needed to be provided with a decent shelter. That in turn required construction of new houses. Additionally, the growing tasks of the newly independent state also required construction of new offices for governmental work.

The private investors in Delhi evinced their interest only in building middle-income and upper-income colonies, and therefore, the task of providing housing to low-income and lower middle-income refugees fell upon the government. Such a task required active co-ordination among various ministries of the government and the local municipal authorities. Thus, the Ministries of (a) Rehabilitation; (b) Works, Housing and Supply; (c) Railways; (d) Defence; and (e) Health; had to work in close co-ordination with the local authorities namely: (1) Delhi State Administration; (2) New Delhi Municipal Committee (NDMC); and (4) the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) (from 1958 onwards).

The Ministry of Works and Housing, shortly followed by the newly formed Ministry of Rehabilitation, began the work slowly and steadily.³ The government came up with the scheme for Rehabilitation Township near Delhi Cantt and Palam Aerodrome which aimed at the formation of a society on co-operative basis, providing accommodation to nearly two lakh displaced people from western Punjab. For this,

² Purushottum Goyal, *Delhi's March towards Statehood*, UBSD, New Delhi, 1993, p.9. By 1951, the refugees comprised as much as 28.4% of the population. Lying strictly within the limits of the old city wall till 1947, Delhi expanded and changed considerably.

³ Ashok Mitra, *Delhi Capital City*, Thomson Press (India) Limited, Publication Division, New Delhi, 1970, pp.10-11

about 250 to 300 square hectares of land on a site in the vicinity of Palam Aerodrome on Gurgaon Road was acquired.⁴

By April 1948, the government completed the preliminaries to the eventual setting up of three satellite townships of Sheikh Sarai, Kalkaji, Tihar; and development of Shadipur extension scheme in Delhi⁵. It was also decided to construct about 800 single room tenements at Malkaganj aimed at providing accommodation to about 350 refugee families scattered there and for the inmates of the Tis Hazari camp aimed to accommodate about 413 families living there.⁶ Similarly, to accommodate the refugee workers who had come from Lyallpur, 56 houses were constructed by the Delhi Cloth and General Mills Company Limited by the middle of December 1948⁷.

The Delhi Improvement Trust provided special facilities to the refugees for the grant of plots of land within its jurisdiction.⁸ All unallotted plots and plots not earmarked for specific purpose in the New Delhi Northern Extension Scheme, Industrial Area Scheme and Western Extension Karol Bagh Scheme were reserved for the refugees. The whole of the new Shadipur Scheme with the exception of the area required for Poor Class Slum Clearance Rehousing was also reserved for allotment to refugees.

As a result of these efforts, a number of housing colonies in Delhi came up around this period like Lajpat Nagar, Rajinder Nagar, Nizamuddin⁹, Punjabi Bagh, Rehgar Pura, Jungpura, Karol Bagh, Greater Kailash, Defence Colony etc. to accommodate the refugees.

⁴ Deputy Commissioner's Files, File No.B2 (37)/ General Branch, 1948 (Subject: Scheme for Rehabilitation Township near Delhi Cantt and Palam Aerodrome, 1948), Delhi Archives.

⁵ In addition to it, 4,000 temporary stalls for refugees were being constructed. It was decided that the refugees to whom these stalls will be allotted will pay a rent between one rupee and six rupee a foot each month.

⁶ Chief Commissioner's Files, File no. 1(44)/49, Delhi Improvement Trust, LSG, 1949, Delhi Archives.

⁷ Deputy Commissioner's Files, File no. 32(39)/ General Branch, 1948, Delhi Archives.

⁸ Chief Commissioner's files, File no. 3(60)/1948, R&R Branch, in a letter from Sir Arthur Dea, CIE,MC to the Secretary(R&R) to CC, Dated 10th April 1948

⁹ Nizamuddin became one of the earliest colonies to be developed, housing mostly the elites of Karachi.

Within the course of a year or so, nearly 20 colonies covering about 3,000 acres came up. The area of each colony and the approximate no. of people accommodated are shown below¹⁰:

Table 6

Number of Persons Housed in the Refugee Colonies

Name of the Colony	Area (acres)	Population
Rajinder Nagar	255	22,000
Patel Nagar	400	24,000
Malkaganj	28	2,500
Kingsway	151.3	18,000
Vijay Nagar	40	3,000
Nizamuddin	33	2,500
Nizamuddin Extension	64	4,000
Jungpura	130	7,000
Jungpura Neighbourhood	26	1,500
Lajpat Nagar	750	45,000
Kalkaji	355	17,000
Malviya Nagar	400	24,000
Bharat Nagar	14	1,500
Tilak Nagar	266	15,000
Purana Quila	20	6,000
Firoz Shah Kotla	7	1,500
Azad pur	9.2	1,500

¹⁰ A. Bopemage, *Delhi: A Study in Urban Sociology*, University of Bombay Publications, Bombay, 1957, pp.82-83

Regharpura	9.2	2,500
Anguri Bagh	1	400
Purdah Garden	1.6	300
TOTAL	2,958.60	1,99,250

Source: A. Bopemage, *Delhi: A Study in Urban Sociology*, University of Bombay Publications, Bombay, 1957, pp.82-83

Thus, we see that within a year 20 colonies, far flung as well as closely nestled, had been built up on about 3000 acres of land (1,785 acres in the south: Nizamuddin, Jangpura, Lajpat Nagar, Malviya Nagar; 930 acres in the west: Rajendra Nagar, Patel Nagar and Tilak Nagar; and 230 acres in the north: Kingsway, Purina Quila and Azadpur) to house about 200,000 people. But there were still thousands of refugees who were forced to live in the refugee camps. At that time, the declared governmental policy regarding the resettlement of refugees in Delhi was as follows¹¹:

1. Agricultural Allotment:

In regard to allotment of agricultural land to the refugees it was decided that preference was to be given to those who were not eligible for allotment of land in East Punjab and East Punjab States. As per the prevailing rules only Punjabis were eligible for allotment of land in East Punjab and East Punjab States. This rule was also applied in the allotment of gardens.

In effect it meant that the refugees who belonged to areas such as Baluchistan, NWFP, and Sindh etc. were ineligible for allotment of land in East Punjab. And therefore, these refugees had no option but to move to areas like Delhi and elsewhere.

2. Urban Allotment:

(a) Factories: Factories were generally allotted to those who were already running shops on the pavements. The idea was to clear the people from

¹¹ Deputy Commissioner's office, File no. 334/1949, General Branch, Letter No. RH-521(20), Dated 22 June 1948, , Delhi Archives

pavements and to prevent others from occupying it. The remaining shops and stalls were to be allotted to the cooperative societies.

- (b) Loans: Loans were to be provided only to the cooperative societies. Loans to individuals could be given only under exceptional circumstances. In addition to that, as far as possible the assistance was mainly to be in the form of machinery and tools; and not cash.

To review the progress in the task of rehabilitation, Prime Minister Nehru organised a meeting at Council House, New Delhi on 24th November, 1948. He had a feeling that though considerable amount of money had been spent by that time, yet the progress had not been equally satisfactory. At the meeting it was decided to maintain a proper statistics of those to be rehabilitated and to plan in an orderly manner for their rehabilitation. For this purpose, it was decided to: (a) form a committee for rehabilitation problems; (b) to formulate statistics with the help of Central Statistical Office; (c) to associate refugees in policy formulation and implementation of schemes; (d) to confer with the Ministry for Refugee and Rehabilitation, Finance and Works, Mines and Power for speedy implementation; (e) to secure cooperation of the states; (f) to fix percentage in provincial services for refugees; and

- (g) To plan new self-sufficient townships¹².

One of the most remarkable efforts in the direction of planning a new self-sufficient township was undertaken under the vision and leadership of Kamala Devi Chattopadhyay who converted Faridabad from a “highway *sarai* settlement into a modern industrial township”. Let us briefly look at this novel experiment.

In one of her visits to the Purana Quila camp she had seen the women living in extremely precarious condition. The women and the children had no protection from the sun and their tents often got blown away due to strong winds. It was here that she decided to do something concrete to permanently rehabilitate these people.

¹² Minutes of a meeting in the Prime Minister’s Room, Council House, New Delhi, 24th November 1948. File No. 199/CF/48, Cabinet Secretariat Papers as cited in Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Vol. 8, edited by S. Gopal, Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, Teen Murti House, New Delhi, 1989, pp. 153-54

After returning from the camp visit, she met Dr. Rajendra Prasad and apprised him about the plan to set up a new township utilising the labour of the refugees themselves. The housing colonies and small industrial units were to be built on a cooperative pattern. The government officials, however, raised objection to this plan as they felt that the refugees with their predominantly urban background, could not be trained to become masons, carpenters, handymen and build a township. Prime Minister Nehru, however, gave the approval to proceed with the plan. Subsequently, Faridabad Development Board was set under the chairmanship of Dr. Rajendra Prasad. The Indian Cooperative Union was entrusted the task of managing the process of organising the work. Sudhir Ghosh and Laxmi Chand Jain were the two most important persons who carried out the implementation of the plan. The refugees, on their part, did not disappoint the expectations of Kamladevi Chattopadhyay. “Organised in groups of 15 to 50 workers, they laid roads, erected houses, built a hospital and school and soon a fully fledged township sprang up around small industrial units for which the residents organized their own infrastructural inputs. The refugees themselves ran their transport service, health centre and community recreational activities and named their hospital B.K. Hospital, after the name of their great leader Badshah Khan”¹³. Deeply impressed by the Faridabad model of resettlement Horace-Alexander wrote in 1951, “One of the most interesting [examples of resettlement of refugees] is Faridabad, sixteen miles from Delhi, where some forty thousand Hindus and Sikhs from the North-west Frontier are now living. Here the administrator and his associates, most of them disciples of Mahatma Gandhi, have induced the refugees to build their own town; road construction, house building and all has been done with their own hands. None of them was manual labourer: all had the characteristic shopkeeper’s or professional man’s contempt for manual labour. The experiment nearly broke down. Today it has already proved itself a triumphant success. Moreover, co-operative principles have been adopted throughout, and in the end most of the men will work in co-operative factories”¹⁴.

¹³ ‘Faridabad: A Woman’s Vision to Build a City’, *Probashi*, March 3, 2015, <http://www.probashionline.com/faridabad-womans-vision-build-city/>

¹⁴ Horace G. Alexander, ‘Free India and Her Problems: II-Refugees and Resettlement’, *The Manchester Guardian (1901-1959)*, October 1, 1951, p. 6

By the end of 1950, about 27 refugee settlements had cropped up in Delhi. These were

Table 7: Refugee Settlements in Delhi, 1950

1. Rajendra Nagar(old & new)
2. Lajpat Nagar
3. Patel Nagar (East& West)
4. Kingsway
5. Kingsway Extension
6. Jangpura (A,B and Extra)
7. Purana Quila
8. Azadpur
9. Jangpura Neighbourhoods (A and B)
10. Tehra Scheme
11. Malkaganj
12. Kotla Firozshah
13. Kalkaji
14. Nizamuddin Village
15. Nizamuddin Extra
16. Regharpura
17. Sheikh Sarai
18. Swadesh Hard Board Scheme (near Red Fort)
19. Mori Gate Scheme
20. Tilak Nagar
21. Malviya Nagar

- | |
|-------------------------|
| 22. Andha Mughal |
| 23. Vijay Nagar & Extra |
| 24. Narela Colony |
| 25. Sarojini Market |
| 26. Moti Nagar |
| 27. Hudson Lines |

Even then, the problem of housing was not solved completely. The Ministry of Rehabilitation's Progress Report published in 1952 claimed that the displaced persons had adjusted themselves to the new environment. The reality, however, was that adjustment for most meant not resettlement but adaptation to their unsettled conditions. The government statistics showed that thousands of displaced families were still without adequate shelter. To carry out the task further, the Ministry asked for more funds. It had already spent Rs. 146.3 crores by 1952.¹⁵ The bureaucratic hurdles imposed by officialdom also posed problems in the task of providing housing to the refugees. The terms and conditions for the allotment of tenements were strict and often incomprehensible to the mostly illiterate refugees.¹⁶

Take the case of allotment of single-roomed tenements allotted to the displaced Harijans in Vinobhapuri/ Rampuri at Lajpat Nagar/ Kalkaji. Here, the terms implied:

- a) The tenements were to be sold to the allottees on payment, in monthly instalments over a period of 15 years on the actual cost of construction of the tenements (without interest), plus 5% collection charges. This worked out at Rs 7/8/-, in the case of Rampuri vide calculation statements attached.
- b) The land was to be treated as on lease to the allottees of the tenements for 99 years. The monthly instalment on account of recovery of ground rent was to be communicated separately.

¹⁵ 'Unfinished Job', *The Times of India*, June 11, 1952, p.4

¹⁶ Chief Commissioner's Files, File No. 4 (9 A)/54, No. RHB/37(5)/54-H.I., February 18, 1956, R&R Department, Delhi Archives

- c) House tax or any other tax was to be paid by the allottees directly to the municipality and was added to these recoveries.

Moreover, the instalments fixed were provisional and liable to change if any discrepancy was detected later.

Another problem which arose in the later years was of multiple allotments secured by some displaced persons in Delhi by fraudulent means. Those without any living accommodation naturally protested against this fraud. When the number of such complaints increased, the government swung into action. The Government of India issued a Press Note on May 31, 1952, giving an opportunity to such allottees to disclose the benefits secured by them within one month. It said that numerous cases existed in which allottees have sub-let a part of their accommodation at high rents while not paying the rent themselves or had left Delhi, and were keeping houses there, or had locked up the premises. Families had been split with a view to secure more than one allotment. As a result of this, many deserving people were still without a decent habitation. The problem of multiple allotments, however, could not be solved properly. The Director of Public Relations, Delhi State had to issue a Press Note on the matter again in the year 1956¹⁷. Among other things, it said that the Rehabilitation Advisory Committee had recommended to the Delhi state government that the allotments of shops and houses to those refugees who have had constructed their own houses and shops should be cancelled forthwith as it was neither desirable nor judicious that while a number of refugees did not have any decent accommodation, few of them were fraudulently enjoying multiple allotments. In fact, a new class of landlords had emerged among the displaced persons who wanted to enjoy double benefit by way of realizing heavy rental value of their newly constructed houses and shops, while themselves paying comparatively very small amount of rent to the government for the houses and shops allotted to them. It was thus decided at the Committee meeting that such cases had to be brought to government's notice and such multiple allotments cancelled immediately.

Between 1951 and 1958, out of a projected 142,000 dwellings, as many as 102,000 were actually built and occupied to which, in round numbers, private enterprise

¹⁷ Chief Commissioner's Files, File No. 3(14)/1955, Medical and Health, Press Note No. 222, Director of Public Relations, Delhi State, Dated: 9th June, 1956.

contributed 13,400, the Ministry of Works and Housing 15,400, the Ministry of Rehabilitation 65,000, the Delhi State Administration 2,350, the MCD and NDMC 900 and the Delhi Development Authority 5,000. By the end of 1958, the Ministry of Rehabilitation had provided Delhi with a total of 69,400 dwelling units sheltering about 53 percent of the refugee population. The peak of this effort was reached in 1952-53 by which the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation had built 6,680 houses, 30,690 tenements, 1,730 flats, 662 shops and 16 industrial sites and developed 1,300 plots of land for building and 25 for religious purposes.¹⁸



Image 9: Central Rehabilitation Advisor Mehar Chand Khanna showing an under-construction refugee quarter at Lajpat Nagar to British politician Aneurin Bevan on February 13, 1953.

Source: *HT Archives* (<http://www.hindustantimes.com/delhi-news/capital-gains-how-1947-gave-birth-to-a-new-identity-a-new-ambition-a-new-delhi/story>, Accessed on: January 17, 2019)

The Ministry of Rehabilitation also issued a Press Note in 1956 announcing the formulation of a scheme to begin the transfer of allottable government built properties in Delhi and elsewhere to the authorized occupants of such properties. Those who desired to purchase the tenements/houses/shops in their occupation were asked to submit applications in the prescribed form either to the Administrator of the colony or to the Regional Settlement Commissioner concerned. The last date for the filing of

¹⁸ Ashok Mitra, *Delhi Capital City*, Thomson Press (India) Limited, Publication Division, New Delhi, 1970, p.11

such applications was 30th September, 1956. It was stated that in the case of those non-claimants who applied before the 30th September, 1956 and who paid the first instalment along with any arrears of rent due from them within the period fixed by the Regional Settlement Commissioner, rents would be remitted retrospectively with effect from 1st October, 1955¹⁹.

By another Press Note issued on 15th July, 1956, the Government permitted non-claimants who were in occupation of allottable property to associate claimants to get the price of the property adjusted against the compensation of such claimants. On June 12, 1957, the Government further relaxed the terms and conditions on which allottable Government-built and evacuee property could be transferred to non-claimants. In the Press Note announcing this relaxation it was stated that a non-claimant displaced person could now pay for the allottable property in his occupation in 8 instalments viz. an initial instalment of 20% of the price of property, followed by the payment of the balance in 7 equal annual instalments²⁰.

The Government observed with great regret that in spite of the concessions and relaxations which had been made from time to time in order to facilitate the purchase of houses by non-claimant displaced person in occupation, the response had been exceedingly poor. The position in the middle of 1959 was that the non-claimant displaced persons who were in occupation of property valued at about 40 crores of rupees were taking the fullest advantage of the waiver of rent from October, 1955 but had taken no steps to deposit the 20% of the price of property in their occupation nor had they entered into an agreement to clear the balance in 7 years as was required under the rules. In addition to this, even though those houses were still owned by the government, these displaced persons were not paying any municipal tax. The Ministry of Rehabilitation, Government of India had to issue a Press Note again in the same year (1959) calling upon non-claimant displaced persons for the last time to avail of the existing concessions in regard to acquisition of allottable property in their occupation by paying the initial deposit and entering into an agreement to pay the balance in instalments as prescribed under the rules. Non-claimant displaced persons in occupation of Government built or allottable evacuee property in the pool were

¹⁹ Chief Commissioner's Files, File No. 16(4)/1959, Local Self Government, Press Note , New Delhi, Delhi Archives

²⁰ *Ibid.*

called upon to deposit the first instalment before the July, 1959. Those who had made the deposit before the prescribed date were allowed the concession of remission of rent with effect from 1st October, 1955 and were allowed the further concession of counting the instalments with effect from the date on which the deposit was made and not from 1st, October, 1955. For those who chose not to avail this offer, their properties were to be disposed off by the Government. The Press Note further stated that if in any particular case the Government permitted a non-claimant displaced person to purchase the property in his occupation after 31st July, 1959, it was to be on condition that all arrears of rent upto 1st August, 1959, was paid in full²¹.

Meanwhile, while these official formalities went on at their pace, Delhi continued expanding in all directions as a result of large scale construction. As time progressed, some parts of the city also got increasingly congested on account of lack of proper planning.²²The haphazard growth of Delhi proved to be troublesome in the future. So, while a section of New Delhi inhabited by officialdom, the big businessmen and the politicians became very well managed and got provided with all civic amenities, other parts of the city saw haphazard growth and heavy density of population, with lack of adequate civic amenities. The rapid growth of population has further aggravated the problems and put a severe strain on the city's infrastructure.

4.2 The Evacuee Property Issue:

On account of their sudden departure to Pakistan, the Muslims were forced to leave a considerable amount of movable and immovable property in Delhi as elsewhere. It included the houses and shops owned or rented by them. Most of their houses were forcibly occupied by the Hindu and Sikh refugees who had come from Pakistan. It is estimated that roughly about one-third of the total number of homeless refugees got their accommodation in this way, notably without any valid authorisation from the government. This was despite the government's declared policy of not sending any Muslim of Delhi to Pakistan against their will. In a note to the members of the Cabinet on 17 September 1947, Prime Minister Nehru had made it clear that, "the houses vacated by Muslim evacuees continue to belong to them and that ownership

²¹ Chief Commissioner's Files, File No. 16(4)/1959, Local Self Government, Press Note, New Delhi, Delhi Archives

²² A.K Jain, *The Making of a Metropolis: Planning & Growth of Delhi*, National Book Organisation, Delhi, 1990, p.75

and property in them cannot pass to another. So long as they are not taken possession of by their owners, a Custodian of Evacuees Properties will hold them in trust and no arrangements should be made which come in the way of return of their previous owners²³.”

However, as time progressed it became increasingly difficult for the government to dislodge the illegal occupants from these houses. Those Muslims who tried to return back to their houses could not do so in face of stiff opposition of the refugees.

The government was, therefore, forced to come up with a specific Act to deal with the problem of Evacuee Properties in 1954. Till that time, this problem was dealt in an ad hoc manner.

Let us see how this entire process unfolded.

As early as September 1947, the Housing Sub-Committee appointed by the Provincial Refugees Committee, discussed the prospect of sheltering the refugees in houses vacated by Muslims. This meeting was also attended by the representatives of the Government of India. The committee opined that the area of the whole town should be so divided as to leave sufficient accommodation for government officers. It wanted to utilize these houses to accommodate the government officers that had migrated from Pakistan. However, owing to the disturbed conditions of the times, the Estate Officer of the government was not able to proceed with the requisitioning work of these houses and in the meantime the vacant houses began to be occupied by the refugees. The government's threat to illegalize their occupation and forcible ejection did not have much effect. In fact, the refugees began approaching the Refugees' Committee to regularize their occupation²⁴.

Naturally, in a situation where a section of the bureaucracy and the refugees were in a contest to occupy the vacant houses of the Muslims, those original owners who returned back to claim their houses, found it very difficult to do so.

²³ S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of J.L. Nehru*, Second Series, Volume 4, Pub. By Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1986,p.81

²⁴ Chief Commissioner Files, File No. 17(30) 1947, Letter No. 5837-WII/47, Ministry of Works, Mines and Power, Dated, 27th September 1947, New Delhi, Delhi Archives.

Musammat Qamar Nisa Begum was one such person trying to get her property back from the forcible occupants. She wrote a letter the Custodian of Evacuee Property and appealed to him to help her.²⁵:

In the letter she said that she had been living in Delhi for generations and did not intend to leave the Indian Dominion. She promised to reside in India as a loyal citizen along with her husband. She further added:

1. That she purchased the property 614, Haveli Hisamuddin Hiader, at Ballimaran in Delhi about 10 years back at Chhai Teti, Paharganj No. 1004 to 1007 & 1533 to 1535, and constructed a three storey building according to the municipal committee sanctioned plan with shops and two flats.
2. That the building was let out to tenants on monthly rent of Rs 178 only.
3. That Munshi Gholam Bari, resident of Sabzi Mandi, Delhi was working as rent collector on the petitioner's behalf, and had not been traceable since three months and being a 'pardanasheen' lady, the petitioner depended entirely on the rent income for her livelihood.
4. That the Muslim tenants of the said building had been forcibly and unlawfully evicted from the premises and some unknown persons have illegally taken possession without knowledge and permission of the owner.

The lady requested the Custodian of Evacuees Property therefore, to get the trespassers ejected and also asked the government to pay compensation and return her property.

We do not have any further record of the correspondence and hence, it is difficult to say if government acted to ameliorate her grievance.

Problems of similar nature were faced by a number of Muslims who tried to reclaim their properties. In view of the magnitude of the problem and government's alleged partisan attitude towards the properties of the Muslims, the President and the General Secretary of the Central Muslim Committee, Maulana Ahmud Said and Maulana

²⁵ Chief Commissioner Files, File No. 17(30) 1947, Diary No. 6276, Ministry of Home, dated 4th December 1947, Delhi Archives

Hifz-ul-Rahman, sent a stern telegram to the Chief Commissioner of Delhi on 27th November 1947. It asked the government not to “allow allotment of houses in Muslim areas to refugees otherwise such unfavourable situation would be created in which Muslims will not be able to stay in Delhi and added that “when peaceful conditions [will return] most Muslims will return to their homes.”

The government later decided that the houses vacated in certain predominantly Muslim mohallas in Delhi city should not be allotted to non-Muslim refugees but given instead only to Muslims.²⁶ In fact, the government policy was to rehabilitate Muslims from the ‘mixed zones or localities’ to the ‘Muslim Zones’. Areas such as Sadar Bazar, Pahar Imli and Pul Bangash were cordoned off and ‘abandoned’ houses were kept unoccupied so that few Muslims from the ‘mixed areas’ could be moved there. Sardar Patel was, however, not in favour of creating ‘Muslim Pockets’. He wrote to PM Nehru, “Creation of Muslim pockets in the city would not restore conditions of security. Instead, they would lead to constant friction and conflict between rival camps entrenched in their respective positions. I also feel that the mere fact that a certain number of wrong type of persons settled in some localities have given rise to some trouble should not be decisive. We could replace them by better elements. It is also difficult to believe that in a predominantly Muslim locality a few non-Muslims could create a situation which would compel Muslims to leave the locality. The answer in such cases is to replace the unruly elements and to make adequate security arrangements to ensure that this kind of mixed locality prospers rather than vanishes²⁷.”

Congress party’s policy towards the evacuee property can be gauged from an undated letter written by the then Congress General Secretary, Brahma Prakash to the Ministry for Relief and Rehabilitation, Government of India.²⁸ The letter says that the Delhi Provincial Congress Committee (P.C.C.) is of the opinion that land beyond a certain reasonable limit should in no case be leased to any single man and no sale or exchange should be allowed. It also opined that long leases could be given in small

²⁶ Chief Commissioner’s Files, File no. 2(1) 1948, Office Memorandum , November 20, 1947, Department of Relief and Rehabilitation, Delhi Archives

²⁷ Sardar Patel to Nehru, dated 22 November, 1947, as in V. Shankar (ed), *Select Correspondence of Sardar Patel: 1945-1950*, Vol 1, Navjivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1977, pp. 533-534.

²⁸ Chief Commissioner Files, File No. 17(30) 1947, Letter from Congress General secretary to the Ministry of R&R, New Delhi, Delhi Archives

blocks, but here the claims of those residents of Delhi should be preferably entertained who, owing to the periodical extension schemes, had been dispossessed of their lands and were almost without any means of subsistence. The P.C.C. was of the view that proprietary rights of land should be retained by the government for further use in connection with prospective development schemes and for the purpose of cooperative mixed farming, dairy farming, and small scale industries.

The letter also drew attention of the government towards an interesting fact. It said that in 1857 in Alipur, Hamidpur and other villages' lands were seized from owner and given over to Muslims as rewards for loyalty. Muslim families in possession of those lands had by then left for Pakistan, and the heirs of the original owners had then applied to the Custodian for the restoration of their lands. The P.C.C. suggested that after proper inquiry such cases should be entertained and lands should be allotted on long leases to such persons.

4.3 Providing Compensation to the Refugees from West Pakistan

The unprecedented violence of partition had forced millions to flee with only clothes on their backs, leaving their homes, lands and property behind. In fact, many turned paupers overnight. They believed that it is the moral authority of the government to recompensate for their losses. The government also realised that providing compensation to them could go a long way in their permanent rehabilitation.

In July 1949, N. Gopaldaswamy Ayyangar, the head of the High Powered Committee set up for the rehabilitation of the refugees, had given an assurance that displaced persons would be given compensation for the properties left behind by them in West Pakistan. This assurance had been reiterated by Government on several occasions. A Press Communiqué issued on 12th September 1950 declared "the Government of India's intension to assure all concerned that the Displaced Persons will be compensated to the extent possible for their losses-the extent of the recompense depending necessarily upon the total assets that became available for distribution".

The Minister of State for Rehabilitation, Government of India, Ajit Prasad Jain said on 24th September 1950 that full compensation was not possible and therefore the government had planned to evolve a graded plan giving maximum compensation to the poorer classes. The minister said that the compensation would be paid out of a

pool made up of the property left in India by the Muslims and, the amount received from Pakistan to cover the difference between the value the property of Muslims (who had left for Pakistan) in India and Hindu property in Pakistan. The Government of India would make maximum possible contribution to this pool.²⁹ In accordance with this, claims from displaced persons in respect of their immovable properties in West Pakistan were invited in July 1950, under the Displaced Persons (Claims) Act 1950. The government records show that about four lakh claims had been received under this Act and the bulk of them had been verified by the end of 1952. At the same time, the value of evacuee property in India was assessed on a rough basis. In the light of the data so collected, the Government formulated a scheme for the payment of compensation to those refugees who had left their immovable properties in Pakistan. This scheme was prepared after wide range of consultations with various interest groups comprising the representatives of the displaced persons through the Committee presided over by Dr. Bakshi Tek Chand, and the Rehabilitation Ministers of various states. The scheme so formulated was put before the Union Cabinet for its consideration and approval in January 1953. In May 1953, the cabinet gave an in-principle approval to it. At the same time the government also decided that the expenditure that it had incurred on the construction of houses for the displaced persons and the loans that it had given for such tasks will be treated as a contribution from the government for the purpose of the payment of rehabilitation grants. The government at this time was, however, not very sure about the modalities that could evolve between India and Pakistan on the issue of evacuee property and other such matters, therefore any final decision on this was postponed for the near future.

The fresh negotiations that began in July 1953 between the two dominions could not, however, reach to a final conclusion. Fearing further delay in any amicable settlement, the Government of India sanctioned an interim compensation scheme in November 1953. But this scheme was confined to payment of compensation to certain high priority categories of displaced persons who were in urgent need of help. It was only a year later i.e. in 1954 that the Government of India arrived at a final decision that right, title and interest of the evacuees in their properties in this country should be acquired and utilized for the payment of compensation and that the details of the final

²⁹ 'Compensation for Lost Immovable Property: Mr. A.P. Jain Explains Government Plans, *The Times of India*, September 25, 1950, p.5

Compensation Scheme should be worked out. Thus, the next session of Parliament held in 1954 saw the passing of the Displaced Persons (Compensation & Rehabilitation) Act, 1954.³⁰

The aforementioned Act was aimed to “provide for the payment of compensation and rehabilitation grants to displaced persons and for matters connected therewith.”

Following were the main features of the Act:

- It defined Displaced Persons as “ any person who on account of the setting up of the Dominions of India and Pakistan, or on account of civil disturbances or the fear of such disturbances in any area now forming part of West Pakistan, has after the first day of March 1947, left, or been displaced from, his place of residence in such area and who has been subsequently residing in India, and includes any person who is resident in any place now becoming part of India and who for that reason is unable or has been rendered unable to manage, supervise or control any immovable property belonging to him in West Pakistan, and also includes the successors-in-interest of such a person.”
- “Evacuee property” meant any property which had been declared or was deemed to have been declared as evacuee property under the Administration of Evacuee Property Act, 1950 (XXXI of 1950).
- “Public Dues” in relation to a displaced person, included:-
 - (i) Arrears of rent in respect of any property allotted or leased to the displaced person by the Central Government or a State Government or the Custodian;
 - (ii) Any amount recoverable, whether in one lump sum or in installments, from the displaced person on account of loans granted to him by the Central Government or the State Government or the Rehabilitation Finance Administration constituted under the Rehabilitation Finance Administration Act, 1948), and any interest on such loans;

³⁰ Chief Commissioner Files, File No. 29(2)/1955, Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation, Statement of Shri Mehr Chand Khanna, Union Minister for Rehabilitation on the final Compensation Scheme, Delhi State Archives

- (iii) The amount of purchase money or any part thereof and any interest on such amount or part remaining unpaid and recoverable from the displaced person on account of transfer to him by the Central Government or a State Government of any property or any interest therein;
- (iv) Any other dues payable to the Central Government, a State Government or the Custodian which might be declared by the Central Government by notification in the Official Gazette, to public dues recoverable from the displaced person;
- “verified claim” meant any claim registered under the Displaced Persons (Claims) Act, 1950 (XLIV of 1950) in respect of which a final order had been passed under the Act or under the Displaced Persons (Claims) Supplementary Act, 1954 (12 of 1954)
 - Under the Act “West Pakistan” meant the territories of Pakistan excluding the Province of East Bengal and includes the tribal areas adjoining the North-West Frontier Province as might be specified in this behalf by order of the Central Government;
 - It also said that any notification issued by the Central Government before the commencement of this Act requiring displaced persons of any class or description to make applications for the payment of application, was to be deemed to have been issued under this section and all applications for compensation made in pursuance of any such notification was to be deemed to have been made under this section. Additionally, any proceeding in relation to such application pending at the commencement of this Act was to be disposed off in accordance with the provisions of this Act:

“provided that a displaced person who has made an application for payment of compensation before the commencement of this Act, may within one month of such commencement intimate in writing to the officer or authority to whom

the application was made or to the successor-in-office of any such officer or authority, the form in which he desires to receive the compensation.”³¹

- There were also provisions in the Act which dealt with the determination of public dues by Settlement Officers. It said that on receipt of an application under Section 4 of the Act, the Settlement Officer would make a thorough inquiry and on the basis of such an inquiry, he could pass an order determining the amount of public dues, if any, recoverable from the applicant and forward the application and the record of the case to the Settlement Commissioner.
- Similarly, there were various intricate provisions in the Act to provide relief to certain banking companies. The expression ‘banking company’ meant any of the displaced banks specified in the Schedule and included any other banking company which, before the fifteenth day of August, 1947 carried on the business of banking, whether wholly or partially in any area which subsequently became a part of West Pakistan, and which the Central Government might, in regard of such dislocation of business caused due to the partition of the country, notify in the Official Gazette.
- Regarding the form and the manner of the payment of compensation, the Act said that a displaced person would be paid out of the compensation pool³² the amount of net compensation determined under various sub-sections of the Act. Such a compensation could be in any one of the following forms or partly in one and partly in other form, namely:-
 - (a) In cash;
 - (b) In Government bonds;
 - (c) By sale to the displaced person of any property from the compensation pool and setting off the purchase money against the compensation payable to him;

³¹ Chief Commissioner Files, File No. 29(2) /1955-R&R, The Displaced Persons (Compensation and Rehabilitation) Act, 1954, No. 44 of 1954, p. 4, 9th October, 1955, Delhi State Archives

³² The Compensation Pool was to consist of- (a) all evacuee property acquired under section 12 of the Act, which also included the sale proceeds of any such property and all profits and income which accrued from such property; (b) such cash balances which lied with the Custodian which by the order of the Central Government got transferred to the compensation pool; (c) any such contribution which was made to the pool by the Central Government or any State Government. This compensation pool was vested to the Central Government and was free from all encumbrances.

- (d) By any other mode of transfer to the displaced person of any property from the compensation pool and setting off the valuation of the property against the compensation payable to him;
- (e) By transfer of shares or debentures in any company or corporation
- (f) In such other form as may be prescribed later.

The Central Government was further empowered to make further rules for the aforesaid purposes.

Under the Act, by the end of January 1955 over 41,000 displaced persons had been paid compensation totalling nearly Rs 9 crores. Of this sum, nearly 75% or as much as Rs 6.67 crores had been paid, and about 1, 90,000 acres of agricultural land had been given in compensation. The Minister of Relief and Rehabilitation M.C Khanna, informed in an address to the advisory Board given on February 6, 1955 that the persons falling in the priority categories of “ maintenance allowance”, “ mud huts”, “ homes and infirmaries” and “ cash doles” had practically been paid off. Of the 14,000 and odd widows, who had received compensation in their own right, more than 8,600 had already received compensation and grants.³³

Another important task that lay before the government at the outset was to bring these refugees into the economic mainstream by building their skills through training and to provide employment to the skilled personnel. In the next section we will look at the way in which the government undertook this task. While discussing the issue of the women victims of partition in the last chapter, we had seen how these training cum employment centres helped to rehabilitate these women immensely. Now let us see the entire task undertaken by the government both for men and women.

4.4 Training-cum-Employment Programmes

The government adopted a four-point solution to address the employment issue of the displaced persons: (1) finding employment in government and private offices; (2) by setting up institutes to provide technical and vocational training; (3) by constructing shops and markets and providing small loans to serve as capital; and (4) by providing

³³ File No. 29 (2) /1955, Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation, Press Information Bureau, Shree M.C Khanna’s address to the Advisory Board, New Delhi on February 6, 1955

financial and other assistance to middle and upper class businessmen and industrialists.

These schemes and programmes fall in the category of rehabilitation programmes because they were aimed to provide for settlement on a long-term basis by imparting necessary skills to earn a living or to provide capital to set up a business or industrial enterprise. As we have seen earlier, the government had established on September 6, 1947, the Ministry of Rehabilitation with K.C. Neogy as the Minister in charge with the task of providing relief and rehabilitation to the refugees.

Consequently, a number of Transit Camps, Relief Centres, Rehabilitation Homes, and Vocational Centres were set up for this purpose. In addition to the new training centres that were set up to train the refugees, there were also some existing centres which had been established to train the technicians during the World War and worked under the Ministry of Labour. After the war, these centres were being used to train the demobilised soldiers. They were later utilised as training centres for the refugees too.³⁴ The Delhi Employment Exchange also began sponsoring the schemes of technical training for the refugees with the help of individual factory owners. The trainees were also given a living wage, a third of which was contributed by the government and rest by the employers themselves.³⁵

A Rehabilitation and Development Board with Aftab Rai, M.C. Khanna, G.K. Naidu and D.K. Kohli as members and C.G. Kale and P.C. Mahalanobis as technical and statistical advisers, was set up on 7th February 1948 to facilitate the speedy rehabilitation of the displaced persons. It was entrusted with the task to plan and execute rehabilitation schemes, develop cottage and small-scale industries, and assist provincial and States governments in their schemes³⁶.

In one such scheme, it was proposed to set up workshops in a few trades. Under it, 275 female refugees were trained to work on spinning and fly-shuttles, 200 men and women were trained to work on dyeing and calico printing machines, training in

³⁴ File no. 3(141)/48, Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation, Letter from the Minister of Relief and Rehabilitation to the Chief Commissioner, Delhi, Delhi Archives

³⁵ *Hindustan Times*, 19th December 1947, p.10

³⁶ S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of J.L. Nehru*, Volume 5, Pub. By Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1988, p.151 (From File No. 29(36)/48-PMS)

tailoring was provided to 100 men and women, while 50 men and women each were trained in button making and thread balling.³⁷

We have seen in the previous chapter that the government had set up a number of training cum production centres in various regions of Delhi including the ones at Kingsway, Azadpur, Malviya Nagar, Tilak Nagar, Lajpat Nagar and Kalkaji etc. In total, the Directorate of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation had set up 21 Training Centres in various localities. For men, the training was provided in: (a) Black-Smithy, (b) Electrician's Work, (c) Carpentry, (d) Sheet Metal Work, (e) Cutting and Tailoring, (f) Weaving, (g) Filter's and General Mechanic's Work, (h) Printing Work, (i) Book Binding, (j) Hosiery Knitting, and (k) Commercial Printing. For women, the training was provided in following crafts: (a) Cutting and Tailoring, (b) Niwar – Weaving, and (c) Hand and Machine Embroidery.

A stipend, up to Rs 30/- per trainee, was provided to the needy persons.

The government, from time to time came up with directives to streamline the functioning of the centres. Thus, the Government of India sanctioned the continuance up to the 28th February, 1953, of the scheme for the Training-cum-employment centre, Lajpat Nagar, New Delhi on 1st April, 1952 which could train about 100 people each for 12 months in carpentry, fitting, commercial painting and 6 months in sheet metal working and printing press.³⁸ Similar, sanctions were also made for the continuance of Training-cum- Working Centres at Malviya Nagar, Tilak Nagar, Kalkaji, Kingsway and Azadpur. In May 1952, the central government transferred these centres to the administration of Government of Delhi under following terms and conditions³⁹:-

- (1) The Government of India will bear the expenditure on these centres as sanctioned under the Ministry's letters. If the Delhi state government wishes to continue the centres in 1953-54, they should send proposal to the Ministry in October 1952.

³⁷ Deputy Commissioner's Files, File no. 280/1947, Delhi Archives.

³⁸ Chief Commissioner's Files, File No.- F9(42)/52 (Subject: Reorganization of 6 men's Training-cum-Work Centre's in Rehabilitation Colonies), Relief and Rehabilitation Department, Delhi Archives

³⁹ Chief Commissioner's Files, File No. - F9 (42)/52, No. DWC- 1 (1)/ 52 (II), G.O.I., 9th May, 1952, Delhi Archives

(2) All receipts from the sale of finished goods or otherwise will be credited to the central government.

(3) If the Delhi government desires to make any modifications in the courses of training or to reorganise the centres involving expenditure in excess of sum granted the central government's permission will be necessary.

Thus, keeping with it some minor responsibilities, the Government of India entrusted most of the tasks of rehabilitation to the Delhi State Government. The Ministry of Rehabilitation inspected the various Training-cum- Employment Centres and decided to reorganize them completely. The intention was to concentrate in each centre on a few trades only. Some subsidiary or minor trades were attached in order to utilize the facilities of the centres fully. In accordance with the revised proposals, 17 trades were fixed for all the six centres and various trades were allotted to each centre considering the suitability of localities and the trained personnel. The minimum number of trades in any one centre was to be two and the maximum was to be five. With the reallocation of trades, it was found that by doing so it is possible to increase the number of trainees in a particular trade in each centre considerably without any appreciable expenditure. As there were demands for admission to the centres even without grant of stipend, a provision was made for non-stipendiary seats also. They were to be considered for grant of stipend in due course according to occurrence of vacancies. The additional quota was restricted so as not have additional staff. The total number of seats then proposed was 952 as against 486 sanctioned by the Ministry of Rehabilitation, Government of India. To improve the quality of instructors, the grades of instructors was revised and their pay scale was improved. Furthermore, a lump sum provision for machine equipment and furniture was made of Rs 1, 25,000 for raw materials. A total sum of about Rs 6, 16,000 was made for the financial year (1952-53).

These centres were formally transferred to the Social Welfare and Rehabilitation Directorate, Delhi State with effect from 1st July 1952. By the end of June 1952 itself, it had spent about Rs 81,000. The reorganization was to take effect from 1st November 1952 and till then these centres were to continue working on the existing sanctions. It was estimated that an expenditure of Rs 34,000 would be incurred on them on establishment charges from 1st July (i.e. from the date of their taking over) to 31st

October 1952 and an expenditure of Rs 89,000 would be involved on contingencies and other charges for the same period. Thus, it was expected by the government that a total sum of Rs 1, 23,000 would be incurred by 31st October 1952 on these centres by this Directorate, from the date of taking over.

A formal allotment of Rs 4 lakhs had been made till then and an additional amount of Rs 1, 91,700 was still to be sanctioned by the Directorate.⁴⁰

In total there were 21 training cum work centres in Delhi at that time. Some of these centres also had residential facility. Some were co-educational while others were meant for only men or women. The period of training varied from one year to two years. The refugees received the stipend of Rs30 per month. One teacher or trainer was available for every 16 or 20 trainees. The buildings were spacious and in most of the cases were provided and maintained by the central Public Works Department. In these centres, the usual crafts were taught but no employment was guaranteed, though in the production wing large government orders were received and executed in which the passed-out refugee workers had the opportunity to earn wages. Nearly all the trainees were said to have been provided employment in the production wing or outside.⁴¹

For promotion of small businesses, the government constructed a number of stalls at various places and allotted them to the refugees to start a business of their choice. By May 1948 rapid progress had been made with regard to the stalls in Tis Hazari and electric light had also been provided so that the work could be continued in the night as well. 60 stalls constructed at Chandni Chowk were allotted to the *Halwais* (sweets sellers). Arrangements for night shifts had also been made for the 1250 stalls constructed in the People's Park. In addition to these, 23 stalls for food vendors at Connaught place and 37 stalls at Irvin road were on the stage of near completion.

⁴⁰ Chief Commissioner's Files, File No. - F9 (42)/52, NO. Admn/WS/41, Social Welfare and Rehabilitation Directorate, Delhi State, in a Letter to the Secretary, Relief and Rehabilitation, 8th October, 1952

⁴¹ Ashoka Gupta, Amar Kumara Varma, Sudha Sen, Bina Das and Sheila Davar, '*East is East West is West*', *Seminar* 510, February 2002, <http://www.india-seminar.com/2002/510.htm> (accessed on: February 8, 2019)

There was also a considerable progress in the construction of stalls at Lodhi Colony, Humayun's Tomb, Babar Road and Gole Market.⁴²

Shops were allocated to responsible businessmen from big cities of Pakistan but not to those who were running shops on pavements, as there were few such persons within the Fort Notified Area. Distribution of shops was done province wise as stated below.⁴³

West Punjab- 114, North West Frontier Province- 24, Sind- 4, Quetta- 1, East Bengal- 1.

By 15 the September 1949, the province wise distribution of stalls was as follows:⁴⁴

	Khanna Market	Rajendra Market	Randhawa Market	TOTAL
N.W.F.P.	12	25	13	50
Baluchistan	3	4	-	7
West Punjab	80	92	54	226
Sindh	5	31	4	40
TOTAL	100	152	71	323

Table 8: Distribution of Stalls among the Refugees.

As per the data presented above nearly 70 percent (69.96 %) of the stalls were allotted to the refugees from West Punjab. The remaining 30 percent shops were distributed among the refugees from other provinces of West Pakistan. The criterion for such a division is, however, not very clear. One could assume that it was done taking in view the magnitude of refugee flow from these areas. Ninety per cent of the stalls in the Lajpat Rai Market and Amrit Kaur Market were allocated to refugee squatters of

⁴² Chief Commissioner's Files, File no. 3(60)/1948, R&R Branch, Letter dated May 13,1948, Delhi Archives

⁴³ Deputy Commissioner's Files, File No. Rx (13)/ General Branch, Letter No. 4876, Office of the Notified Area Committee, Fort Delhi, 10th June 1949, Delhi Archives.

⁴⁴ Deputy Commissioner's Files, File No. 334/1949, General Branch, and (Letter No. 3582/T), Secretary, Dated: 15.9.1949, Delhi Archives.

Chandni Chowk and Paharganj foot-paths respectively.⁴⁵ By the middle of 1950, the New Delhi Municipal Committee claimed to have constructed 570 refugee stalls at different sites in the city.⁴⁶

For other businessmen and industrialists, the government came up with another scheme of providing plant-equipment and machinery on hire-purchase system. Under this scheme, industrial workers of small-scale, cottage and home-industries were made eligible to purchase machinery to supplement their existing equipment on hire-purchase system. They were required to invest only 20% of the total cost of the machinery, while the Government of India (Small Industries Service Institute) paid the balance amount which was to be recovered in small instalments from the industrialists in a period of about 8 to 10 years. Under the Second Five Year Plan, the scheme for the development of cottage-industries was also provided, and it was expected that the refugees would take advantage there from:- (i) Development of Khadi Industries (ii) Development of Handloom Industry (iii) Hand Made Paper Industry (iv) Paper products and Paper Machine (v) Training in Hides and Skins (vi) Oil Crushing industry and development of Neem Oil Industry (vii) Establishment of the Art Centre (viii) Scheme for a mobile Black smithy.

Provisions were also made to disburse loans to the displaced persons which they could utilise to get gainful self-employment. In this regard, following arrangements were made for the receipt of fresh application for loans from refugees from 7th April 1948 onwards⁴⁷ :

1. Two clerks were placed at the Enquiry Counter to distribute revised loans application forms and to answer the queries of the refugee applicants.
2. Three clerks were entrusted with the task of filling up the application forms of illiterate applicants.

⁴⁵ Deputy Commissioner's Files, File No. Rx (13)/ General Branch, Letter No. 676/ R.E., Secretary, Municipal Committee, New Delhi, 1949, Delhi Archives.

⁴⁶ Deputy Commissioner's Office Files, File no. B9 (64)/ 1950, (Subject: Copy of Resolution No.54 of Ordinary Meeting held on 30.05.1950), NDMC, Delhi Archives.

⁴⁷ Deputy Commissioner's Office Files, File no. B9 (64)/ 1950, (Subject: Copy of Resolution No.54 of Ordinary Meeting held on 30.05.1950), NDMC, Delhi Archives.

3. Twenty counters each in charge of a clerk were set up to receive applications from applicants who had been classified under 20 different professions and trades.

On 9th April 1948 a Press Note was issued to further clarify all the points regarding the loans scheme. Within one week itself, about 2090 applications were received.

An indication of how far these measures went on to help the refugees in finding employment could be gained from the data provided by a survey conducted by the Directorate of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation in the refugee colonies in Delhi in the year 1953-54, regarding the employment status of the inhabitants of these refugee colonies:⁴⁸

- (1) Ramesh Nagar: Population- 3,075, Employable adults- 1,039, Employed- 799, Unemployed- 240
- (2) Moti Nagar: Population- 5,429, Employable adults- 2,041, Employed- 1411, Unemployed- 630
- (3) Gandhi Nagar (Note: Jheel Kulanja): Population- 3,492, Employable adults- 1,442, Employed-1,020, Unemployed- 422
- (4) Tehar: Population- 13,062, Employable adults- 5,334, Employed- 3,340, Unemployed- 1,994

This survey, though very limited in scale- covering only four colonies in Delhi, gives some interesting insights into the whole issue of employment provided to the refugees. In Ramesh Nagar nearly one-fourth (23.09 %) of the employable adults were without employment. In Moti Nagar this ratio was more. Here about 30 per cent of the employable adults were unemployed. In Gandhi Nagar the unemployment was slightly lower, while at Tehar the unemployment was at highest level where about 37.38 percent of the population was unemployed. What this data shows that, the measures taken by the government to provide gainful employment to the refugee population was only partially successful. The government thus came up with new measures to tackle the problem.

⁴⁸ File No. 36(1)/55, Letter No. DSWR/L/V/Survey/1588, letter from the Social Welfare and Rehabilitation Directorate, Delhi to the Secretary (R&R), Dated the 31st August, 1956, Delhi Archives

The Director of Industries and Labour, Delhi State, in a letter to the Secretary, Industries and Labour to the Delhi state government, informs about the following measures taken subsequently to provide employment opportunities to the refugees settled in various colonies in Delhi⁴⁹:

1. In the vicinity of Kalkaji and Malviya Nagar, near Okhla Railway Station, an Industrial Estate was to be established. The total expenditure sanctioned by the Planning Commission in this behalf was Rs 1.25 crores. Forty acres of land had been notified for acquisition and 160 acres of land was to be acquired in coming future. It also aimed to provide built-up accommodation, with light, power, steam, water and other facilities, on rental basis, to small-scale and cottage-workers. To begin with, about 75 to 100 such factories would come up in the Industrial Estate, employing nearly 3000 workers. Industrialists who could convince the government about the viability of their schemes were allotted factory sites on lease for 99-years. The ground rent was charged at Rs 1/- per 100 square yards. The premium could be paid in four equal installments plus an interest at 4% per annum. The government also proposed to allot land and factory building on rental basis for a period of 7 to 10 years with the building constructed according to the specifications of the industrialist. Rent assessed at 4% on the cost of land and 5.5% on the cost of building had to be paid. The industrialist had the option to purchase the land and the building anytime during the period of lease- land at its market value and building at its depreciated cost. Loans were advanced up to 50 per cent of the value of machinery installed, at about 4.5 % interest for a period of 7 to 10 years and water and electricity was provided at rates comparable to those in the neighbouring industrial areas.

The interested individuals were asked to present their schemes in full details, such as recurring and non-recurring expenditure, the number of persons likely to be employed, the capital that would be invested by them, the extent of government assistance required, etc., to the Director of Industries and Labour, No.1 Rajpur Road, Delhi, by 24th September, 1955.

⁴⁹ Chief Commissioner's Files, File No. 13(197)1955, Department of Industries and Labour, Delhi State, Letter No. F.35T-A/13611/5.1, Dated 24 September, 1955, Delhi Archives

The Delhi State Government by their notification No.F.13 (9)/55-R&RB, dated, the 7th/11th October, 1955, constituted a committee to advise on the setting up of small scale and cottage industries in the rehabilitation colonies in the Delhi State. The report that it presented was exhaustive and it would be in the fitness of things to have a look at it along with its recommendations:⁵⁰

- On the past history of any such governmental scheme regarding the setting up of small and cottage industries and progress thereof: It came to the notice of the committee that during the year 1949, or thereabouts, the Central Ministry of Rehabilitation forwarded to the Delhi State Government certain schemes intended to provide gainful occupations to the displaced persons in Delhi. These schemes had been generally approved by the central Ministry and were to be financed by the centre. It appeared to the committee that for some reasons these schemes had not been put into operation. The committee strongly felt that to solve the problem of rehabilitation, vigorous measures needed to be adopted. It felt that the establishment of small scale and cottage industries could go a long way in achieving this task.
- On Social Welfare Centres: The committee opined that the Social Welfare and Rehabilitation Directorate had been doing a remarkable job in running the then-existing 21 Training-cum-Work Centres. It felt it could prove more useful in some respects in implementing the schemes as envisaged by the report. The approach needed to be more dynamic keeping in view the increasing problem of unemployment.
- Displaced Persons Consulted: The rehabilitation colonies were asked through a press note and other means to make suggestions in the matter of starting small scale industries. Several displaced persons met members of the committee with their problems and suggestions. Some of them also highlighted their concerns and asked for electricity, acquisition of land, etc. The committee was impressed by their keenness and gave due consideration to their representation and suggestions. It also considered it necessary to bring

⁵⁰ File no. 13 (197)/ 1955, Chief Commissioner's Office, Industry and Labour, Delhi Archives

home to the government, the desirability of harnessing the enthusiasm of these people for increasing industrial production.

- Displaced Persons Population: The total population of the rehabilitation colonies at that time stood at two lakhs forty seven thousand two hundred and eighty (2,47,280).

The committee was in full agreement with the national objective of providing full employment to every able bodied adult in the country. But with the limited financial resources as well as the lack of adequate infrastructure, the committee felt that at least one person per family should be made capable of supporting the rest of the family. Taking the usual unit of five per family, it felt that about 80,000 people needed to be given employment.

- Distribution for Purposes of Industry: For the purposes of absorption in industry, the displaced persons appeared to fall under three broad categories.

Category A comprised of the people who were: (a) skilled, or (b) semi-skilled or (c) experienced in running industries. The second Category B comprised of those who were unskilled, but were generally educated while the third category, Category C included those women who were the sole bread-winners of the family, or those who wished to supplement their meagre family incomes. (This class was to be ordinarily covered by Category B).

- Category A. It was felt that persons falling in this category needed some kind of the assistance which was to be given in one or more of the following forms:-
 - (i) Grant of financial assistance, such as loans or subsidies, or both.
 - (ii) Assistance in procuring land, or electricity, or both.
 - (iii) Technical guidance
 - (iv) Marketing and
 - (v) Procuring raw materials.

It was estimated that about 3,000 persons could be made self-supporting through it.

- Loans and Subsidies: - The committee felt that the ordinary grant or provision under this head might not be sufficient, therefore it recommended special allotments for loans up to Rs 15 lakhs and subsidies up to Rs 2 lakhs for a period of five years.
 - Assistance in procuring land etc: The administrative staff should be tasked with the responsibility to provide all reasonable assistance to the displaced persons in the matter of starting industries and that government should see that the recommendations made were promptly executed. It was also suggested that a circular letter be issued by the government to all departments to impress upon them the need and urgency for giving full consideration to the requirement of displaced persons.
 - Marketing: It had come to the notice of the committee that, for want of adequate marketing facilities, the goods produced by displaced persons within the Delhi state did not find a ready sale, resulting in some of their small units of production lying idle or not working to their full capacity. The committee, therefore, strongly urged for the need of setting up an efficient marketing organization.
 - Category B: The bulk of the employable unemployed were covered under category B. These people could be easily absorbed provided they were properly trained and helped in starting the industries in which they had been provided. Small scale and cottage industries which the committee had recommended provided a suitable medium for extensive employment of such people.
- (1) Village Industries: The committee opined that in the context of rehabilitation colonies, village industries had a limited scope in providing wide range of employment. But still it felt that it could help in some measure to meet the needs of these colonies. It recommended establishing industries like carpentry, smithy, oil seeds pressing etc.

During the training the trainees would get stipends. After the completion of training, it was proposed that the trainee should be granted small financial assistance in the form of loans to enable him to buy the necessary tools etc.

(2) Small Scale and Cottage Industries in General : The industries that were recommended to be established in the rehabilitation colonies included, hosiery, handloom (cotton and woolen), sports goods (all types), carpentry (including wood seasoning), building and hardware fittings, tin toys including educational toys, cycle parts, sewing machine parts, cutlery industry, wire products and wire netting, dyeing, dry cleaning and bleaching, ceramic industry, electrical household and other equipment, production of umbrellas, agricultural implements, cane and bamboo work, production of torches, boots, shoes, nagras and chappals, Production of small hand tools, plastic industry, hospital furniture, paper products, lantern manufacture, dye press industry, brush manufacturing, shoes laces, paints and varnishes, tailoring, black smithy, candle making and commercial painting and art work.

The committee strongly felt that these industries could become strong units of productions and function well only if the persons running them were properly trained. It thus provided for a three-phased training for this purpose.

In conclusion the committee wrote:

“The committee during its discussions with various displaced organizations found that there was useful human material in the colonies which at the moment because of lack of facilities was being largely wasted. It cannot be denied that these people are full of vitality. Despite numerous difficulties, financial and otherwise, they have been able to hold their head above water for the last 8 years. It would be misfortune, therefore, if this talent and energy were not fully utilised and employed in national interests as well as their own. The committee felt certain that if the displaced persons were given an opportunity to start small scale and cottage industries, they would help increase production. And without increased production there could not be any improvements in the living conditions of people in Delhi or elsewhere.

In the new socialistic society which the state envisaged, full employment and production had been set as the national objective and therefore the committee strongly

felt that the starting of small industries in the colonies might give an opportunity to displaced persons to play their worthy role in bringing about the new humanitarian democratic order”.

4.5 Government Efforts to Rehabilitate various classes among the Refugees:

While the majority of the agriculturist class among the refugees was accommodated in East Punjab, Delhi too received a relatively small number of agriculturalists among the refugees that came from West Pakistan. The refugees from the rural areas of Pakistan were divided into two: (a) Those who had left land in West Punjab, and (b) the refugees from NWFP, Sindh, Baluchistan and Bahawalpur.

The refugees belonging to West Punjab area were not allotted agricultural land in Delhi while rural refugees from other areas who had registered themselves before 20th February, 1948, were allotted land in Delhi villages. The percentage share according to the land area distributed was as follows:

NWFP- 45 per cent, Sindh- 33 per cent, Baluchistan- 5 per cent, and Bahawalpur- 17 per cent. A total of 150 families were rehabilitated in this manner⁵¹. However, as opposed to the agricultural land allotment in East Punjab, in Delhi, village-wise allotment could not be done as agricultural land here was scattered in partly evacuated villages. Moreover, the lands here were of far inferior quality than that of West Punjab which they were forced to abandon and hence, many would have had to switch to occupations other than agriculture.

The Relief and Rehabilitation Budget dated 8th march 1948 says that Rs 20,000 has been provided during the financial year for free grant to refugees for subsistence till the time of next crops. Rs 150 were provided per family at the suggestion of the Rehabilitation Board.⁵²

Teachers also constituted significant numbers among the refugees. The Education Ministry tried to absorb most of the refugee teachers from Pakistan areas, who were in

⁵¹ File No. 2 (51)A/49, Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation, Delhi Archives

⁵² File No. 3(2)/1948, D.O. No. 270/48, Relief and Rehabilitation Budget, Delhi, 8th march 1948

Government service and who have migrated to Delhi in the wake of partition⁵³. They were asked to get themselves registered with the Refugee Assistant office of the Superintendent of Education, Kashmiri Gate, Delhi⁵⁴. This separate Refugee section in the Provincial Education Department was set up in September 1947. In fact, three governmental agencies undertook this task of registration of teachers: (1) Transfer Bureau, (2) Ministry of Home Affairs and (3) Employment Exchanges.

The Government of India in a letter dated 9 December 1947, fixed the salaries to be drawn by the government servants strictly in accordance with the basic salary that was drawn by them at the time of partition. The salary was to be in no case less than the cumulative salary that they drew earlier. This policy was reiterated again for the refugee teachers when the Special Education Board met on 6th August 1948.⁵⁵ Through a circular dated 21st April 1948, the Government of India had recommended 25 percent of the vacancies for teachers to be filled by the refugee teachers. The circular also asked the respective state and provincial governments to relax the criteria of age and domicile for the refugee teachers.⁵⁶ Furthermore, in June 1949, it was decided that the same benefits of pay etc that was given to teachers in a privately owned schools or a government aided schools, would be given to refugee teachers as well.⁵⁷

For the class of lawyers also, the Government of India came up with a proposal. They were made eligible for rehabilitation loans up to a maximum of Rs 3000- vide Relief and Rehabilitation Ministry letter No. R&R- 7/48, dated 20th January 1948. The Ministry of Home Affairs also addressed the provincial governments suggesting that the Provincial High Court should be moved to relax their rules so as to enable refugee lawyers to practice in the High Courts and courts subordinate to them. It also asked to exempt them from the usual enrolment fees vide ministry of Home Affairs Letter No. 11/11/47- RR (GG-13) dated 5th February 1948.

⁵³ Maulana Azad to Sardar Patel, in a letter dated 9 February, 1948. As in, Ravinder Kumar (ed), *The Selected Works of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad*, Vol.3 (1947-48), Atlantic Publishers, New Delhi, 1991, p. 135.

⁵⁴ *Hindustan Times*, August 28, 1947

⁵⁵ File No. 6(26)/48, Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation, Delhi Archives.

⁵⁶ File No. 3(141)/48, Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation, Delhi Archives

⁵⁷ File No. 6(26)/48, Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation, Delhi Archives

For the class of engineers and architects the Government of India came up for a proposal of extending the loans granted to consulting engineers and architects to Rs 3000 on 4th May 1948⁵⁸.

The Government also undertook a number of measures to re-employ the erstwhile government employees. The Home Minister, on January 13, 1948 had issued instructions that “nothing should be allowed to stand in way of the resettlement of displaced employees of the provincial governments in Pakistan and the question of their confirmation should be decided within three months.” However, the order was not implemented even after the displaced persons had put in two or three years of temporary service. Meanwhile, by September 1950 many had been sacked and others were employed below their due rank. A number of confirmations were stated to have taken place by mid 1950 in the central government departments since partition but none of the beneficiaries were believed to be displaced persons. Whenever the axe of retrenchment fell on some department, the displaced persons had to go out first. Belated justice was done, however, in February 1950 in the case of employees of the Baluchistan administration. Government orders were issued that they should be treated on par with the central government employees serving in Pakistan who had opted for India and that all benefits, originally accruing to them, should be restored to them. In defence of this step, the authorities explained that such a consideration was shown in the case of Baluchistan only because it was a centrally administered area⁵⁹.

4.6 Efforts Towards Promotion of Education Among the Refugees

Education is the foundation on which a strong edifice for the future can be laid. Educating the children well was particularly crucial as they were the future of India. Prime Minister Nehru made his government’s priority clear while addressing the refugees in the Kurukshetra Camp on 8th April 1948⁶⁰:

My sympathies are with all of you in your difficulties but ultimately my main anxiety is not so much for the adults, if you will forgive me saying so, but for the children, the little girls and boys because

⁵⁸ Chief Commissioner’s Files, File no. F8 (9)/ 48, No. RH-524(4), Department of Relief and Rehabilitation, Delhi Archives

⁵⁹ ‘Refugee Employee of Central Government: Many Not Yet Confirmed: Others Retrenched,’ *The Times of India*, September 11, 1950, p.1

⁶⁰ Speech at a refugee camp, Kurukshetra, 8 April 1948, A.I.R. tapes, NMML. See, S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of J.L. Nehru*, Second Series, Volume 6, Pub. by Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1987, pp.96-97

they are the future of India. If our boys and girls are suppressed and not well looked after now then the future of the country will be jeopardised. We must think about the future whatever we may do today. Therefore, our greatest wealth is our children and our first duty should be, whether it is the Punjab Government or the Central Government which is responsible for the organisation of these camps, to nurture these young saplings, to pay proper attention to their education and to ensure that later they are given adequate opportunities to work....no child should be denied an opportunity to receive education due to lack of fund or any other reason.

Government, therefore, took this task in all seriousness and very soon came up with a number of schemes and programmes.

On 1st April 1947, a circular was issued to schools, relaxing the conditions of admission for the refugee students. They could be now be given admission even without production of documents such as Transfer Certificates. On 16th July 1947 another circular was sent to schools in which the heads of schools were offered suggestions and given instructions for admitting more students. The following steps were taken:

(a) The limit of admission in each section in the Middle Department was raised from 40 to 50 and in High and Higher Secondary from 40 to 45.

(b) Schools were permitted to pitch tents for providing additional accommodation, and were advised to explore the possibility of running second shifts if possible.

(c) Managements were encouraged to open more schools.

In the month of August 1947, disturbances broke out on a large scale in the Punjab and other areas and thousands of people started migrating to Delhi. Due to this influx of refugees a separate Refugee Section was opened in the Department of Education on 18th August 1947 to deal exclusively with the issues of refugee students and teachers. The Department of Education also thus began functioning as an Employment Bureau. Circular were issued to schools relaxing further the rules regarding admission of students in each department. Mandatory floor area of each child was reduced to 10 square feet in the Secondary and 9 square feet in the Primary Department and the maximum limit of students in classes was raised to 45 in Higher Secondary and 50 in other Departments. Steps were also gradually taken to provide educational loans to the needy students. For this, application forms were sent from the Ministry of Relief

and Rehabilitation to all colleges and the Superintendent of Education with instruction to forward the same to the Ministry office by 1st may 1948.⁶¹

The progress in this field by early 1948 was as follows:

- (1) Three Primary Schools were opened in Kingsway Camp.
- (2) One Primary School was opened in Kalkaji Camp.
- (3) Two High Schools including Middle and Primary departments were opened, one each for boys and girls.
- (4) District Board opened 30 Primary Schools in rural areas to meet the additional educational demand.
- (5) Two of the aided and recognized Higher Secondary Schools were permitted to start second shift, including the middle classes for refugee children.
- (6) All aided schools were permitted to admit refugee children even in excess of the prescribed limits, provided accommodation was available.

All aided schools were directed to open additional sections to meet the demand of refugee children, and to utilize very inch of space available in the school buildings. By the end of the this year, about 27 schools for boys and girls, came up in areas like Mori Gate, Bara Hindu Rao, Timarpur, Daryaganj, Kingsway Camp, Sabji Mandi, Kalka Ji, Lodi Road, Tihar Refugee Camp Area, Tis Hazari camp Area and Purana Quila. Among them 11 were Primary Schools, 4 Middle Schools and 12 High Schools. In total, these schools employed 307 teachers who taught about 10,245 students. Table 9 gives a list of such schools.

Here it should be noted that a large number of refugee students, whose numbers could not be ascertained on account of lack of data, were accommodated in recognized government-aided schools also⁶².

⁶¹ Chief Commissioner's Files, File no. 3(60)/1948, R&R Branch, Letter dated May 13,1948, Delhi Archives

⁶² Chief Commissioner's Files, File No. 3(4)/1948, Relief and Rehabilitation Branch, Delhi Archives

Table 9: Number of Schools Opened by 1948

Type of School	Locality	No. of Teachers Employed	Approx. No. of Students
1.High School for boys(with Primary Department)	Mori Gate	24	800
2.High School for boys(Second Shift)	Mori Gate	16	500
3.High School for boys(Seven Sections)	Bara Hindu Rao	11	350
4.High School for boys	Timarpur	7	200
5.High School for girls(with Primary Department)	Daryaganj	18	450
6.Second shifts in Aided High Schools	Schools for boys & girls in 6 localities	110 approx.	3,400
7.High School for girls	Kingsway Camp	5	50
8.Middle School for boys	Sabji Mandi	13	400
9.Middle School for boys and girls (first shift)	Kingsway Camp	13	400
10.Middle School for boys and girls (second shift)	Kingsway Camp	13	460
11.Middle School for boys and girls	Kitchener Hostel	3	75
12.Primary School (three schools working in double shifts)	Kingsway Camp	46	2,300

13.Primary School	Kalka Refugee Camp	7	300
14.Primary School	Lodi Road	5	200
15.Primary school	Tihar Refugee Camp	2	60
16.Primary School (Nursery & Craft)	Tis Hazari Camp	6	100
17.Primary School	Purana Quila	6	200

Source: Chief Commissioner's Files, File No. 3(41)/1948, Relief and Rehabilitation Branch, Delhi Archives

Total No. of High Schools as stated above- 12

Total No. of Middle Schools as stated above - 4

Total No. of Primary Schools as stated above- 11

The government also came up with a scheme for grant of loans to students for technical and collegiate education. The policy envisaged was as follows⁶³:

- (a) Loans were to be granted to non-Muslim students from Western Pakistan areas only, whose parents or guardians had settled down in Centrally Administered areas as refugees, and who for want of funds could not continue their studies and/ or training.
- (b) Loans were to be given only for students in a recognized institution or college.
- (c) Loans were granted for completion of studies which the student had been already pursuing and not for any further or higher education or training after

⁶³ Chief Commissioner's Files, File No.2 (16)/1948, Relief and Rehabilitation Branch, Delhi Archives

completion of the present course. For instance, if a student was in the course of studies for graduation, his study was not to be financed for a post-graduate course.

- (d) The loan was to be repaid soon after the rehabilitation of the student, or the parent or guardian of such student, whichever occurred first. For this purpose, a half-yearly review was to be carried out of the financial position of the parent or the guardian.
- (e) The student as well as the parent or guardian or the surety was required to sign an undertaking to repay loan whether in lump sum or by instalments on rehabilitation of either of them.
- (f) The loan instalment to any student or trainee was to be stopped if the student fails to pass a recognized periodical exam.
- (g) The loan was to be given out by such instalments monthly or otherwise, as may be considered appropriate by the government on the basis of the recommendation of the head of the institute.
- (h) Government was to have a proper lien on the services of the students financed under the scheme.

Below is the schedule showing the amount to be taken on the basis:

Table 10: Schedule Showing the Amount of Loans to Be Taken on the Basis of the Courses Studied

Name of the Course	Maintenance	Books and Apparatus	Outfit & Contingency	Fees
Boarder				
1. I.Sc. Diploma course in Agriculture & Veterinary Science	420/-	70/-	70/-	100/-
2. B.Sc. & B.Sc Ag.	420/-	75/-	75/-	150/-
3. M.Sc.	420/-	160/-	120/-	200/-
4. Teachers Training Course :				
(a) Post-Graduate Course	350/-	75/-	75/-	220/-
(b) Diploma Course	350/-	75/-	75/-	160/-
5. Engineering (Technological) Diploma Course & Medical School Certificate Course	480/-	220/-	85/-	115/-
6. M.B.B.S. Degree Courses & Bachelor of Engineering Courses	540/-	250/-	160/-	250/-
Day Scholar				

1. I.Sc. Diploma Course in Ag. & Vet. Sc.	300/-	70/-	70/-	100/-
2. B.Sc. & B.Sc. Ag.	300/-	75/-	75/-	150/-
4. Teacher training course				
(a) P.G. Course	250/-	75/-	75/-	220/-
(b) Diploma Course	250/-	75/-	75/-	160/-
5. Engineering (Tech.) Diploma Course & Medical School Certificate Courses	360/-	220/-	85/-	115/-
6. M.B.B.S. Degree Course & Bachelor of Engineering Course	420/-	250/-	160/-	250/-

In April 1948, the Governor General sanctioned an allotment of Rs 15, 50,000 and Rs 14.5 lakhs for loans to refugees for rehabilitation. One lakh as free grants was also granted to the refugee students studying in 9th and 10th classes.⁶⁴ In August, the same year, the government further sanctioned an allotment of Rs 15, 00,000 (Rupees fifteen lakhs) to the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, Delhi for grant of loans to college students⁶⁵. The Government Progress Report regarding the grant of Educational Loans to refugee students and trainees till May 1949 is presented below⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Chief Commissioner's Files, File no.F.3(2)/48, No. 32-B/48, Dated 10th April 1948, Department of Relief and Rehabilitation, Delhi Archives

⁶⁵ Chief Commissioner's Files, File no.F.3(2)/48, No. 32-B/48, Dated 10th August 1948, Department of Relief and Rehabilitation, Delhi Archives

⁶⁶ Chief Commissioner's Files, File no.3 (193), Dated 16th May 1949, Department of Relief and Rehabilitation, Delhi Archives

Table 11: Progress Report Regarding the Grant of Educational Loans to Refugee Students and Trainees from Pakistan

Courses of Education or Training	Total No. of Applications Received	Total No. of Applications Sanctioned	Total No. of Loan Sanctioned	Total Amount of Loans Actually Paid
College Courses(F.A. & F.Sc., B.A., B.Sc., M.A., M.Sc.	1607	993	342837/-	318630/-
Teacher's Training Courses	25	14	6160/-	6160/-
Medical Ed., Dentistry, Nursing Etc.	137	49	37096/-	25655/-
Engineering & Technology	210	83	28,275/-	28,690/-
Agriculture, Vet. Science Etc.	21	10	4,440/-	4,440/-
Post Graduate Research Etc.	27	20	10,182/-	6,350/-
Military Course	1	1	1700/-	1700
TOTAL	2028	1170	430690/-	2,91,625/-

Source: Chief Commissioner's Files, File no.3 (193), Dated 16th May 1949, Department of Relief and Rehabilitation, Delhi Archives

The table above shows that the general courses assumed the place of prime importance and took a lion share of the total amount spent on higher education. At the same time, engineering courses were the next most popular courses. Interestingly, only one application was received and subsequently sanctioned for the military course. Out of 2028 applications for loans, only 1170 were accepted and 858 were rejected. The percentage of the applications rejected comes at about 42 percent, which

is a considerably higher number. The students had to do a lot of correspondence with the government authorities to have a re-look at the rejected applications and the chances of a successful appeal were little. Therefore, to avoid the unnecessary complications and delays in the payments of stipends to the displaced students, the Government of India, later, decided that financial assistance to such students whose parents/guardians migrate to another state may continue till such time as the course of study for which the stipend was sanctioned is completed. The question of granting stipends to such students for the next/higher course of study was to be dealt with as a fresh case by the state government concerned, at a later stage⁶⁷. The government also decided that displaced students in the under mentioned course of study may be granted stipend at the rates mentioned against each provided they are otherwise eligible⁶⁸:-

(1) M.Ed Degree	Rs 60/- per month
(2) Industrial Chemistry (Technical Degree)	Rs 40/- per month
(3) Overseer Certificate	Rs 40/- per month

The maximum rates of stipends admissible to the students who were pursuing different Degree Courses at the Delhi Polytechnic as on 6th February 1952 varied from Rs 30/- to Rs 60/- per month as given below⁶⁹:-

Degree Course in Electrical/ Mechanical Engineering- Rs 60/- per month

Degree Course in Chemical Engineering & Technology- Rs 40/- per month

Degree Course in Textile Technology & Arch. – Rs 30/- to Rs 50/- per month

Below is a statement showing expenditure on grant of educational loans and stipends to displaced students from West Pakistan in the state of Delhi during the years 1947-48 to 1952-53:

⁶⁷ Chief Commissioner's Files, File No.F8 (5)/52, No. F8 (1)-RHD/52, Dated 5th February 1952, Department of Relief and Rehabilitation, Delhi Archives

⁶⁸ Chief Commissioner's Files, File No.F8 (5)/52, No. F6(4)-RHD/51, Dated 25th February 1952, Department of Relief and Rehabilitation, Delhi Archives

⁶⁹ Chief Commissioner's Files, File No.F8 (5)/52, Letter No. M-16-GL (G)/52, Dated 6th February 1952 Government of India Delhi Polytechnic Department of Relief and Rehabilitation, Delhi Archives

Table 12: Statement Showing Expenditure on Grant of Educational Loans and Stipends to Displaced Students From West Pakistan in the State of Delhi During the Years 1947-48 to 1952-53

Year	Educational Loan	Educational Stipends	Remarks
1947-48	Rs 35,000	Rs -	* paid as scholarship to displaced children sent by this Directorate for Studies in Residential Institutions at Pilani, Banasthali, Halundi & Delhi at Rs 25/- per head
1948-49	Rs 3,95,000	*Rs 26,300	
1949-50	Rs 2,21,000	*Rs 51800	
1950-51	Rs 63,512	Rs 1,05,641 Rs 35,600	
1951-52	Rs 8,999	*Rs 2,55,00 Rs 30,200	
1952-53	Grant not communicated	Rs 1,38,834 *Rs 25,000	

Source: Chief Commissioner's Files, File No.F8 (5)/52, Letter No. M-16-GL (G)/52, Dated 6th February 1952 Government of India Delhi Polytechnic Department of Relief and Rehabilitation, Delhi Archives

Similarly, the number of students benefited and expenditure incurred under the scheme of financial assistance were as detailed below:-

Table 13. The Number of Students Benefitted from the Educational Loans and Expenditure on Them

Year	No. of Students Benefitted	Expenditure
1948-49	1821	Rs 12,6,610/-
1949-50	823	Rs 62,988/-
1950-51	10860	Rs 83,988/44/-
1951-52	56515	Rs 3,85,551/2/-
1952-53	48586	Rs 3,53,283/6/-

Source: Chief Commissioner's Files, File No.F8 (5)/52, Letter No. M-16-GL (G)/52, Dated 6th February 1952 Government of India Delhi Polytechnic Department of Relief and Rehabilitation, Delhi Archives

During the first five years ending March 1953, the Ministry of Rehabilitation, Government of India, claimed to have spent Rs 5 crores on the education benefitting approximately 4 lakh displaced students. For the next two financial years 1954-55 and 1955-56 the government announced that only Rs 35 lakh would be spent. This was a meagre amount when compared to the amount of Rs 1 crore which was granted in the financial year 1953-54.⁷⁰ In addition to cutting down the expenditure on education, the central government also decided to hand over the entire responsibility of educating the refugees to the respective state governments by the end of the year 1955-56. Thus, from 1st April, 1954, the allotment by the centre was reduced to 1/3rd of the previous amount⁷¹. The result was the slackening of the pace of educating the refugees. This becomes clear if we look at the conditions of the schools that had been established to educate the displaced students.

Thus, the condition of school buildings in the Rehabilitation Colonies in Delhi in the year 1955 was as follows⁷² :

Kingsway Camp

1. Government High School for Boys: The school was functioning in an old building and an extension was required. The Housing & Rent officer had been requested to allot some barracks for accommodating those classes which were being held in tents. No allotment had been made till then.
2. Government Girls High School: The school was functioning in double shift in the school building. Additional rooms were required. The Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation had been requested to extend the building.
3. Primary School: Six primary schools were running in double shifts in Outram, Hudson and Edward Lines, in barracks and tents. Six primary schools building were required. The Housing & Rent officer had been requested several times to allot barracks to accommodate those classes which were being held in tents, but no allotment had been made till then.

⁷⁰ Chief Commissioner's Files, File No.F1(17)/54 A, No. 3/23/54-BUD., Dated 14th May, 1954, Department of Relief and Rehabilitation, Delhi Archives

⁷¹ Chief Commissioner's Files, File No.F8 (5)/52, Letter No. RHA (E) 8 (50)/52. Letter from C.P. Gupta, I.C.S., Deputy Secretary, G.O.I. to all State governments, dated: 22nd April, 1953.

⁷² Chief Commissioner's Files, File No. 3(14)/1955, Medical & Health, Delhi Archives

Bharat Nagar

1. Government Primary School: The school was running in tents and a building was required.

Purana Quila

1. Government High School for Boys: The school had its own building and few more rooms were required to be added. Building in the second shift. Therefore, a separate building was required.

Patel Nagar

1. Government Boys High School: The school was running in its own building. Due to increase in the number of students additional accommodation was required. The Minister of Relief and Rehabilitation was approached to get the building expanded which was informed that the extension could be carried out from the state budget.
2. Government Primary School: The school was functioning in the second shift in the Boys High School building. The number of students in the school at that time was nearly 1600.
3. Government Girls High School: The present building was extended by the state government and in view of the increasing number of students; further extension of the building was required.

East Patel Nagar

1. Government Middle School: The middle school at that time was functioning in tents. The Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation had been approached for allotment of a land for construction of a separate building. Such a building could have been used to shift the students of Government High School West Patel Nagar.

Lajpat Nagar

1. Government High School: The Government High School was functioning in its building.
2. Government Girls High School: This school was also functioning in its own building and the building was also extended sometime before.
3. Government Basic School: This school was functioning in second shift of the Girls High School Building. Thus a separate building was urgently required.
4. Government Middle School: This school too did not have its own building and thus, a new building was required.

Malviya Nagar

1. Government High School for Boys: This school had its own building but it needed further expansion. The Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation had been approached for the same.
2. Government Girls School: This school had to run its classes in second shift of the Boys School building. Thus, a separate building was required.

Rajinder Nagar

1. Government Sindhi High School: The school was running in tents although it had been allotted a land for the construction of a school building. The administrative approval of the Government of India for the construction was awaited.

Tilak Nagar

1. Government High School for Boys: The school was running in its own building.
2. Government Girls High School: This school had its own building which had been further extended. Further extension was, however, required.

Kalkaji

1. Government High School for Boys: This school building had been constructed by the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation. Further extension of the building was required, the permission for which was being sought.
2. Government Girls High School: The school was running in a Work Centre and in tents. The Ministry had been approached to get a new school building constructed.

Ramesh Nagar

1. Government Middle School for Boys: The school was functioning in second shift of the newly constructed building of the girl's school. A separate building was thus required.
2. Government Girls High School: A new building for the school had been constructed.

Thus, when we look at the various schemes of loans and grants towards education some things stand out. Firstly, the students were not given adequate freedom in the choice of courses of study. Ideally, there should have been more freedom in this regard. Secondly, the provision to bar the student from all financial benefits after a single failure in the exam was very harsh, especially keeping in mind the trauma and displacement that they had gone through in the preceding months. Also, the loans were mostly granted only to pursue the unfinished education and not to pursue higher education as such.

However, despite these shortcomings, if we analyse the government's efforts in the field of education, we find that the government was proactive in this area. Given the financial and other constraints, it performed reasonably well. However, one could argue if it was necessary for the government to charge the hapless refugees for any kind of education. Prime Minister Nehru was of the opinion that the government should take upon itself the task of providing free education to the students. However, he later came to conclusion that it would be impracticable (under the then state of Indian economy) to provide free education for all kind of higher education. He argued

that apart from the cost involved, it would be a waste of effort. He was open to the idea of giving free education or scholarships to the bright students though.⁷³

4.7 An overall Assessment of the Government's Efforts in the area of Area of Relief and Rehabilitation.

A problem which plagued the proper functioning of the Relief and Rehabilitation machinery was the lack of co-ordination between the government of Delhi province and the Central Government. Though the Chief Commissioner was the person who had the direct responsibility for the rehabilitation work in Delhi province yet the Relief and Rehabilitation Ministry at the Centre, citing the compulsion of circumstances undertook some schemes directly. This often caused the duplication of work and unnecessary friction. The ministry opined that to confine its activities only to consider problems as they arise and to issue policy directives was not appropriate. It argued that unless it took active interest and part in the rehabilitation programme, little could be achieved. The Chief Commissioner's Office, however, saw this as undue interference in its work. Often the schemes financed by the ministry and implemented by the provincial government ran into trouble on administrative and financial matters. At this crucial phase, the bureaucratic red-tapism should not have been allowed to hamper the Relief and Rehabilitation work. The enormity and complexity of the problem required proper communication and co-ordination among all the parties involved in the work. It was such a momentous task that it could not have been done by the government only, the co-operation of the private agencies was also required. The government should have been open to the contribution from these agencies. The government often saw private agencies' efforts as an undue interference in their work. Prime Minister Nehru often cautioned against this approach to the officials. The problem of refugees could not have been solved without a combination of the governmental aspect and the social welfare aspect.

The Relief and Rehabilitation Ministry was formed to meet a grave crisis and was meant to function with speed. A consequence of this was the Development and Rehabilitation Board, which was meant to be autonomous so as not to get tied up in

⁷³ S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of J.L. Nehru*, Volume 7, Pub. by Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1988, p.78 (Note to the Ministries of Education and Relief and Rehabilitation, 9th August 1948, Cabinet Secretariat Papers).

official red-tape and routine. Unfortunately, the power of red-tape was too great and the Development and Rehabilitation Board could never function with required speed or independence. The approach to the problem was not one of getting anything done quickly but on who should be appointed, when he should be appointed and what salary he should draw etc. The approach was similar when the officials selected the beneficiaries for the governmental training-cum-employment schemes, health care schemes, housing schemes and other such schemes. We have seen in the statistical data gathered from the governmental files that a large number of applications of the refugees were rejected on flimsy grounds. Thus many students could not get higher education, service and business class people could not benefit from the governmental loans provided for them. As a result of such treatment the refugees got increasingly frustrated and the government was subject to wide criticism by the general public.

This is not to say that the government's relief and rehabilitation was a failure. In fact, the task in hand was so enormous and complex that the scope for betterment would have always remained. Keeping in mind the enormously complex social, political, economic and administrative problems it had to face at the time of independence, the efforts of government deserves some praise. This was the first task of 'disaster management' in a newly independent country which was to be undertaken in a communally vitiated atmosphere by an administration which was overburdened with various tasks and whose cadres were hugely depleted by the resignation of British officers and subsequent migration of Muslim officials to Pakistan. The adoption of welfare state model had also put great demands and expectations from the administration. The hopes and aspirations of the people had also increased tremendously after the achievement of hard-fought freedom. All this put a huge burden on the administration. Additionally, the economic stagnation had aggravated the problems of the government. All the sectors of the economy, agriculture, industries as well as the services sector faced huge challenges. Thus, the government had to start from the scratch. It had not inherited a sound infrastructure from the British which they could rely upon and deal with the massive and unexpected problem of providing relief, resettlement and providing a source of livelihood to the lakhs of refugees who poured in huge numbers and from all quarters. So, any analysis of government's efforts should be done keeping in mind these challenges that it faced in those times. The various housing plans, schemes to set up and promote training cum

employment centres, efforts to promote education among the refugees etc helped enormously to rehabilitate the refugees in the course of time.

In the next chapter we will see Delhi's own transformation post-partition and how life changed for the refugees living here over the years.

CHAPTER 5

DELHI'S TRANSFORMATION POST-PARTITION AND LIFE AS IT UNFOLDED FOR PARTITION REFUGEES

5.1 Delhi's All-round Transformation Post-Partition:

As a result of the huge influx of refugees, the city of Delhi underwent remarkable changes, not only physically but also economically, politically, socially and culturally. The city, once the centre of Muslim culture, had by the 1950s come to be dominated by the Punjabi culture. The arrival of nearly 5 lakhs refugees from West Pakistan, a majority of them belonging to western Punjab, had the effect of gradual transformation in the languages, food, costumes, arts, cinema and what not.

(a) Physical and Economic Changes:

It was not possible to accommodate this huge numbers of refugees within the limits of the old city. New Delhi, which had got fairly developed by then, was the exclusive domain of the bureaucracy, their establishment and the political bigwigs and therefore, refugees had to be settled in areas other than this core area of the elite. Fortunately, there were vast areas especially to the West and South of Delhi which were yet to be developed. As we shall see, it was these areas which were chosen to provide houses to the refugees by setting up new housing colonies. In addition to the residential buildings, the government also needed to set up schools, colleges, training centres, employment centres, health centres, banks, police stations etc within the easy reach of the habitation. The resultant constructions, inevitably led to a tremendous expansion in the physical boundaries of the pre-1947 Delhi.

The Times of India in its weekly column 'Delhi Diary' puts the ongoing changes in Delhi in these words:¹

Perceptibly, though slowly, the face of Delhi is changing. New buildings are springing up with commendable rapidity. One can hardly drive a mile in old or New Delhi without sighting the litter of cement bags, bricks and other articles for putting up houses. Nine separate refugee townships, with their own shopping centres, schools, hospitals and playgrounds are being built. One of them with 2,400 houses is nearing completion.

¹ 'Delhi Diary, *The Times of India*, March 6, 1949, p. 8

The residential buildings that came up subsequently were mostly built without adequate planning. The target of housing as many people as possible within minimum possible area often meant that the buildings were without sufficient vacant spaces and proper ventilation. They bore the stamp of matchbox architecture. In a city famous previously for its spacious *havelis*, the new construction was altogether different. As years progressed the number of such constructions increased further. The city's physical urban area grew tenfold and its population density per square kilometre rose from 3,470 in 1941 to 7,169 in 1951, registering a 106 per cent growth. The boundaries of Greater Delhi expanded from 198 square kilometres in 1951 to 323 square kilometres in 1961, to bring within its ambit the neighbouring towns where refugees increasingly took up residence.²

We have seen in the previous chapter that the government had over a period of time built a number of colonies around the city to provide shelter to the refugees. Areas like Lajpat Nagar, Rajendra Nagar, Kalkaji and Nizamuddin etc which wore a deserted look before, soon became sprawling centres of socio-economic activities. Economic changes were profound too. The Muslim population which had left for Pakistan had an economic profile different from the refugees that replaced them. The outgoing population mainly consisted of artisans, craftsmen, petty traders and labourers whereas the incoming population comprised of the people who were non-cultivating landlords, doctors, money lenders, lawyers, teachers and small shopkeepers, big businessmen etc. The economic profile of the city inhabitants, therefore, saw a rapid transformation leading to gradual urbanization.

The rich class of refugees (as we had seen in a preceding chapter), with the wealth at their command, had increased in the price of real estate in Delhi. They played an important part in bringing here an urban culture that they were accustomed to in places like Lahore. This class which was in minority did not have to go through the trials and tribulations that the rest of the refugees had to face. With the wealth at their command they were soon able to establish contacts with the higher ups in the echelons of power and became a part of big businesses, services etc in their new country. The majority of refugees, however, belonged to the middle, lower-middle

² Tai Yong and Gyanesh Kudaisya, *The Aftermath of Partition in South Asia*, Routledge Publication, London, 2000, p. 199

and lower classes. They took to any job available which could give some income. They thus became vendors, hawkers, mechanics, small shopkeepers, and carpenters etc to eke out a living. Later, as their condition improved, they took to trade and commerce which they had not been able to take up previously due to lack of capital. The government also assisted the refugees in this task by providing skill training and loans for business and industry. In addition to it, the government also constructed a number of stalls and allotted them to refugees to start business of their choice.

It did not take them long to become the dominant business community in the city. It is estimated that in no time about 90% of the shops in Chandni Chowk's cloth market began to be owned by the refugees. Every bazaar now had several bazaars in it as the refugees set up stalls and platforms on the footpaths and on the streets to sell a variety of goods. In fact, places like Connaught Place (CP) became so overcrowded with refugee hawkers that it became very difficult to walk through the area. As this began to impact the income of the local businessmen they began to resent the coming of the refugees. They conspired with the local municipality and eventually succeeded in passing a resolution that CP was getting dirty due to the refugees and that they should be removed from the area. The municipal authorities brought the police to remove the hawkers. The refugees met Prime Minister Nehru about this development. He, reportedly, got very angry and said to them, "You people are having such trouble and these guys are trying to get onto your feet. It's my work to rehabilitate you." He then himself went to CP and asked the police to get out. He told them, "In the world outside we raise our heads and walk. People ask us how we are managing to feed lakhs of people and I proudly tell them Indians have self respect and they are standing on their own feet. They are not going to be beggars³."

The erstwhile residents of Delhi, however, lamented later that "nothing remained of that speech and that etiquette, that humanity, that warmth and that colour by which Delhi once used to be recognised"⁴." The newcomers were "variously seen as clever, go-getters who cared nothing for decent society, as the dirty refugees who would stop

³ Interview with Mr. Sehgal as quoted in Shilpi Gulati, 'Dere Tun Dilli', *SubVersions*, Vol.1, Issue 1, 2013, pp.1-22

⁴ Shahid Ahmad Dehalvi, *Dilli ki Bipta*, p.150. As quoted in Gyanendra Pandey, 'Partition and Independence in Delhi- 1947-48', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.32, Issue No.36, September 6, 1997, pp.2261-2272.

at nothing, or as leeches feeding off society”⁵. Noted journalist and Rajya Sabha member Chandan Mitra, while searching for the “lost soul of Delhi” has this to say about the changes in “Delhi culture” after the influx of partition refugees beginning August 1947:

After 1947, began a long war of attrition between three cultures. Whatever survived of Shahjahanabad, British-bred bureaucracy and babudom, and the dispossessed Punjabi refugee, jostled for supremacy. In numerical terms, the Punjabi refugees were well placed to dominate Delhi. The problem was that they had brought neither culture nor affluence with them. They resented the brown sahib whose heyday was, in any case, numbered because he was so pathetically alien. But the new immigrants really hated the Urdu-speaking Old Delhi elite. To him, they symbolized Partition: they were targets of his inverted snobbery. Urdu and the *baiji* were the first victims of the multitude that disembarked from the train from Pakistan. The cultural conflict that Delhi has witnessed since was inherent in the situation. The Urdu-speaking Delhiwala (not necessarily Muslim, for many Muslims had anyway fled across the border) was supremely condescending and patronizing towards the immigrant⁶.

Delhi, the erstwhile people argued, had become an extension of Punjab. “Delhiwalas felt like a cat on the hot tin roof. The Bansals, Dixits, Mathurs, Srivastavas, the Ansari, Kidwais and Qureshis were fast losing out to the newcomers-Aroras, Batras, Chawlas, Malhotras, Sethis and Singhs. Their acquisitiveness and often coarse manners did not go well with the people”⁷

Nilendra Bardiar thinks that this criticism is often not so overt. He says, “While talking about post-partition Delhi, the words are always framed very carefully without making any direct reference to the city’s post-Partition population, yet the message is hardly in doubt. Thus, the invocation of the city’s past becomes a useful trope in avoiding the gaze of the present. It may seem to those unfamiliar with the city that there is nothing worthwhile in contemporary Delhi to write about”⁸.

Ravinder Kaur in similar vein argues:

Nostalgia and mourning for the lost city is not only tiresome but also historically inaccurate. It actually reeks of barely hidden social class contempt that only elite in any given society can be capable of. The question that the writers and historians of Delhi have so far avoided is – might there be a history of Delhi outside the imperial and colonial time frame? Is it possible to talk about Delhi that is not

⁵ Neel Kamal Puri, ‘The Outsider’, *Seminar* 567, November 2006, pp.27-29

⁶ Chandan Mitra, ‘Has Delhi Lost its Soul?’, *The Times of India*, December 20, 1987

⁷ Jesse Kochar, ‘Guests from the west: A look back at Delhi after 1947’, *The Hindu*, June 3, 2012

⁸ Nilendra Bardiar, “*New Delhi-Urban, Cultural, Economic and Social Transformation of the City 1947-65*”, Unpublished PhD Thesis submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 2013, p.11

Lutyen's Delhi or Shahjahan's Delhi? Or are there histories waiting to be written in aesthetically unappetising backlanes of Lajpat Nagar and shanty towns of Trilokpuri? Clearly, if history writing is any indication, then a vast majority of city's population exists only as an inconvenient contrast to the magnificence of old Delhi⁹.

Notwithstanding this criticism and resentment, the refugees continued to work hard to rebuild and resurrect their lives. In the words of Penderel Moon:

If the massacres of 1947 showed the Punjabis at their worst, the enforced migrations brought out some of the best of their qualities. The fortitude with which they bore the sudden uprooting from their homes and the vigour with which they set about establishing themselves in new ones were such as few other peoples could have equalled. They showed all the cheerful vitality of birds which, when robbed of their nest, will start immediately to build a fresh one. The conditions were harsh, but not too harsh to suppress or even check the surge of life in these sturdy, virile people¹⁰.

As time progressed, the most enterprising among them established their names and repute which commands awe and respect. Their stories of success are indeed the real rags to riches stories. The Oberoi Groups of hotels, the Bahrison's Booksellers, the Volga and the Kwality Restaurants, Bhatia Opticians, Escorts Tractors, Atlas Cycles, Frick India Refrigeration and Air-conditioning, Bharat Steel Tubes, Ranbaxy Laboratory and countless small and medium trade establishments in Chandni Chowk, Connaught Place, Ajmal Khan Road, Panch Kuian Road, Lajpat Nagar, Rajendra Nagar, South Extension and many other places in Delhi are a tribute to the toil and rigour of the 'refugee spirit'. We shall look into some of such success stories later in the chapter.

Beyond the physical and economic changes, Delhi also witnessed a significant socio-cultural transformation. An urban culture which had been largely based on Urdu was gradually overshadowed by new tastes and sensibilities, in food, dress and arts etc.

(b) Changes in the Food Culture:

⁹ Ravinder Kaur, 'Invisible Delhi', *Outlook*, January 24, 2008, <http://www.outlookindia.com/website/story/invisible-delhi/236564> (accessed on 9/07/2017). Noted historian Narayani Gupta describes contemporary Delhi as a place where "Tilak Nagars and Nehru Roads proliferate, and hardly anyone knows of the poetry of Mir and Zauk, the humour of Ghalib, the quality of life that Chandni Chowk once symbolized." See Narayani Gupta, *Delhi between Two Empires, 1803-1931: Society, Government, and Urban Growth*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1981.

¹⁰ Penderel Moon, 'Divide and Quit: An Eyewitness Account of the Partition of India', Ed. Mushirul Hasan, *The Partition Omnibus*, OUP, New Delhi, p. 247.

Since, a majority of the refugees belonged to West Punjab, the cuisine of Delhi changed the Punjabi way along with the city's own transformation¹¹. What's today called the Delhi's delicacies has been the outcome of such a metamorphosis in the food patterns. The delicious *Tandoori* and the Butter Chicken were few of such additions.¹² Butter chicken is now considered a classic Delhi dish which was popularised by the *Moti Mahal* restaurant in Daryaganj in 1950s. The story of the origin of butter chicken is an interesting one.

In the 1920s, a person named Kundan Lal Gujral ran a dhaba at Gora Bazar in Peshawar (now in Pakistan). He popularised Tandoori chicken as a major non-vegetarian delicacy. But he often faced the problem of left over chickens. He found a solution in a curry preparation wherein dried out chicken pieces could be softened and served. He thus invented a butter chicken sauce using tomatoes, butter and cream. The original recipe used very small amount of spices, with a little cumin, a spoonful of red chilli and salt to taste. The brilliance of the taste lay in the skilful combination of tomatoes and dairy fat¹³.

Other important additions to the Delhi cuisine were the mouth-watering *Multani Moth Kachori*, *Dahi Bhalley*, *Papri Chaat*, *Dal Makhani* and *tandoori roti* etc. The slow cooked *Dal Makhani*, in due course became the most sought-after vegetarian dish. In the beginning, regional variations were discernible - Pindi, Peshawari, Khyber etc. were thus the prefixes used as geographical indicators, vaguely indicating the type of food one could expect, but it was not long before the catch-all categories of *shahi* and *karhai* (be it murg or paneer) blurred the difference between an item and different items¹⁴. *Chana Bhatura* (also called *Chhole Bhature*) was another important

¹¹ Initially, the erstwhile residents of Delhi disliked this cultural change in food habits brought by the Punjabi refugees. Writes famous chef and food writer Charmaine O'Brien, "The inhabitants of Delhi who had lived there pre-Partition were often aghast at the Punjabi style of eating and cooking. Accustomed to the more refined sensibilities of Delhi's bania and Mughal fare, they were uncomfortable witnessing the unrestrained pleasure with which the Punjabi approached his food and were horrified to see him commit such culinary crimes as eating dal with pulao or eating standing by the roadside". See, Charmaine O'Brien, *Flavours of Delhi: A Food Lover's Guide*, Penguin Books India, 2003, p. 146.

¹² Metro Plus, *The Hindu*, December 25, 2004

¹³ <http://www.indianstreetfoodco.com/blog/2016/8/8/origin-of-butter-chicken-indian-or-english> (accessed on :8 July 8, 2017)

¹⁴ Pushpesh Pant, 'Disappearing Delicacies', http://www.india-seminar.com/2011/628/628_pushpesh_pant.htm (accessed on: 8 July, 2017). He calls the 1950s "the golden age of eating out in Delhi" when thousands of eateries bloomed to suit all tastes and pockets. The high end restaurants specialized in continental and Chinese fare. Important names among these were Gaylord, Laguna, Volga and York. It was followed by 'middle class' outlets like United Coffee

addition, which soon became the “ubiquitous snack of Delhi, sold by hundreds of street vendors, in cafes and hotels and fast-food chains¹⁵”.

As these delicacies gained rapid popularity, a number of dhabas or roadside-eateries mushroomed all over the city. “Often unable to take up their former occupations, many of the Punjabis who had ended up in Delhi began to eke out livelihoods by selling food they were familiar with. With so many of their own in the city the demand for such food was strong¹⁶”. These roadside-eateries that mushroomed all over Delhi, provided home-style food at economical rates to those without home and hearth. The dhabas along the highways got the Indians addicted to traditional Punjabi cuisine- *makke di roti, sarso da saag, murg tikka* and many more such delicacies. Seeing their growing popularity, many refugees opened such dhabas to keep the family pot boiling and moved to other enterprises as their incomes increased. Thus, as in due course of time, the refugees began to invest in big hotels and restaurants, the ‘restaurantisation’ of the capital began¹⁷. At least two names among these deserve a special mention. One was Kundan Lal, whom we discussed earlier; and the other was P.N. Lamba the man behind the renowned Kwaliti & Gaylord restaurants. Both of these men had started off as dhaba or *rehri* operators and grew up to become leading entrepreneurs in the country.

(c) Changes in Delhi’s Politics:

Changes took place in the field of politics too. The Hindu nationalist organizations had not been able to gain any considerable strength in pre-partition Delhi. However, the situation began to change after partition. The refugee camps themselves became the “pond of party-politics”, where anti-government feelings were aroused.¹⁸ Support for the right-wing parties began to increase as a result of continuous anti-Muslim propaganda by them. Congress was presented as a party that practiced appeasement of the Muslims, often at the cost of Hindus. To those who had suffered immensely in the partition riots, there was a definite feeling of hostility for the Muslims. “The

House that boasted a jukebox. The largest concentration of eateries was at Cannaught Place. The outer circle was girded by dhabas with a mini restaurant-like facelift: Kakeda, National and Glory.

¹⁵ Charmaine O’Brien, *Flavours of Delhi: A Food Lover’s Guide*, Penguin Books India, 2003, p. 140.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Shashi Bhushan Deo, ‘Capital Cuisine’, *The Hindu*, July 28, 2018.

¹⁸ Mridula Sarabhai Private Papers, ‘Note on the Mood of the Refugees from West Pakistan in India’, File No. JN/1947-48, Dated 11.1.1948, NMML, New Delhi

communalised atmosphere in the country in the aftermath of the holocaust that attended on partition”, argues Sucheta Mahajan, “provided fertile soil for their growth” and “their newfound confidence was reflected in the strident tone of their utterances and the provocative militancy of their actions. Quick strides were made from virulent anti-Muslim propaganda to active participation in the riots, to calls to overthrow the government and hang the national leaders and finally to the conspiracy to assassinate Gandhi¹⁹.” The RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha used this feeling to boost up their political base. They presented themselves as an alternative to the Congress and promised to work exclusively for the Hindu interests. A political arm of the RSS, Bhartiya Jan Sangh (BJS) was founded by Dr. Syama Prasad Mukherjee in 1951 to fight in the upcoming first Lok Sabha elections. It succeeded in polling 26% of the votes as against 49% of the votes polled by the Congress Party. Barring two general elections (1957 and 1984), in all subsequent elections the BJS/BJP secured more than one-quarter of the total votes polled in Delhi. As part of the Janta Party, it polled 38% of votes but won only one seat in 1980. The Janta Party got split the same year and the Bhartiya Jan Sangh was recreated as Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP). The year 1984 saw some significant changes in the political configuration of the capital as a result of the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on 31st October. Though the Congress succeeded in gaining a landslide victory in the elections that followed, riding on the sympathy wave, the anti-Sikh riots that had followed the assassination had claimed about 3000 lives, thus turning the Sikhs against the Congress party. After 1984, the BJP, therefore, began to gain strong following in every election up to 1998. In 1998 elections, while both the Congress and the BJP improved their vote shares, it was the BJP that benefited in terms of seats. It succeeded in winning six out of seven Lok Sabha seats.²⁰ However, in the subsequent elections Congress came back strongly. In the Assembly Election in Delhi held in 2008, the Congress retained power by winning 42 out of the total 70 seats while the BJP could secure only 23 seats. The parliamentary election of 2009 saw total rout of the BJP and it could not win any seat out of 7 seats available.

¹⁹ Sucheta Mahajan, *Independence and Partition: The Erosion of Colonial Power in India*, Sage Publications, Delhi, 2000, p.294.

²⁰ V.B. Singh, ‘Political Profile of Delhi and Support Bases of Parties: An Analysis’ in Veronique Dupont, Emma Taylor and Denis Vidal (eds.) *Delhi: Urban Spaces and Human Destinies*, Manohar Publishers, Delhi, 2000, pp. 205-227

Tables turned, however, in 2014 general election when the BJP, riding on the Modi wave, won all the 7 parliamentary seats. The electors of Delhi threw a major surprise in 2015 when the two major parties lost the Assembly Election to a new party, the Aam Admi Party. This party under Arvind Kejriwal had fought the elections on an anti-corruption plank and belying all caste, class and communal considerations, won 67 out of a total of 70 seats. The politics in the capital, it seems has become more fluid now. In the 2019 general elections, however, the BJP again won all the seven available parliamentary seats in Delhi.

Now, let us see how the partition refugees lived through these changes over the years.

5.2 Life: As It Unfolded Over the Years for The Refugees:

Besides the aid provided by the government, there were a number of people and organisations that came forward to help the refugees in their difficult times. This included a number of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs).

One such organisation was Rikhidevi Ramdas Suri Narishala (masala centre) under the aegis of the “Servants of the People Society”, located at Lajpat Bhawan, Lajpat Nagar. The women employed at the centre prepare masala (spices) from the stage of drying the raw material to cleaning, grinding and packing. Besides masala of different sorts, they prepare *besan* from *channa dal*, *dalia* from sprouted wheat, *papads*, *wadas*, *chanas*, peanuts, and *moong atta* (flour).

The then lady supervisor of the centre, Mrs. Kapoor, a Punjabi refugee from Lajpat Nagar recounted her life story to historian Anjali Bhardwaj in these words:

I have seen the Masala centre right from my childhood. My mother was an accountant here. I used to accompany her often. From the beginning, every care was taken here to look after the welfare of the women workers (most of whom were from refugee background), by providing them with social security and adequate benefits, with ancillary facilities like production incentives, uniforms, etc. Earlier, many Punjabi women from neighbouring areas like Lajpat Nagar, Garhi, Krishna Market, and Dayanand Colony used to benefit from the centre... now most of them have grown old, some have died. Grinding masala on the chakki is a very laborious task, so older women cannot do it with ease, though women like Basant Kaur still do it. Today, we have employed women from Garhwal,

Rajasthan, and Bihar who are in need of money. But the centre helped many Punjabi women in sustaining themselves.”²¹

For others, like Durga Devi, the state or the NGOs did not come to help. She built her life by her own enterprise. In her interview with Bhardwaj conducted at Beriwalla Bagh on 12th April 2002, Durga recounts:

I stayed in Kothi Mem after Partition with my married sister and her family. There in a *gali* [street], Gyan Chand used to run a small factory in his house, near the ‘tyre market’ for screen-printing on gunny bags and cotton bags used for storage. Gyan Chand used to cater to the wholesale market of Sadar Bazar. Along with some other women, I used to prepare dyes to be used in printing on the bags, we stacked piles of a hundred bags in a bundle, tied them, stitched bags, etc. With the money that I received from him, I educated my two sons and got my daughter married off. I also contributed to my sister’s household initially, and later when my sons grew older, I bought my own house in Beriwalla Bagh.

Later on, however in the 1970s, Gyan Chand had made enough money and shifted his factory to a bigger place in Wazirpur Industrial Area. By that time, his children had grown up, the family had expanded, and the work had increased. Gradually the family too shifted from Bara Hindu Rao to a newly-built house in posh New Rohtak Road. With the new factory at Wazirpur, the work became more specialized and now skilled workers were employed. The women who were employed earlier were no longer required. Moreover, Wazirpur was a considerable distance from my place. After the factory shifted, I stayed largely at home. But later on my son was employed in the factory. After receiving some experience there, he started his own business in dyes.²²

A similar story of hard-work and self-enterprise is of Kailash Rani. She says:

We came from Jhelum to Delhi almost with no belongings and had no clue about how to start our lives afresh. I had not acquired any skills there, so I was not eligible to take up any job. I had three small children and was pregnant with the fourth one. My husband’s work, a shop in Kalkaji, was not doing

²¹ Anjali Bhardwaj, ‘Partition of India and Women’s Experiences’, *Social Scientist*, Vol.32/ 5-6 May-June 2004, pp.69-86. She has focused her study on the experiences of women partition refugees. Through a series of interviews conducted in early 2000s, she has tried to capture the mode of rehabilitation, sustenance and rebuilding of their lives that the refugee women had gone through.

²² *Ibid.* For most of the women survivors of the ordeal of partition, independence came to mean uprootment from their familial channels and the struggle of survival in a strange land across the new border. Professor Bharadwaj sees partition as “surely more than a mere political divide” and certainly beyond that which happened in August 1947. It was virtually the “unspoken horror” of our times- which brought in “division of hearts” along with division of boundaries.

well at all...it seemed as if nothing would ever work out for us...I was shattered , but used to visit Kalka Ji temple on and off. There, once, we met an old acquaintance who had settled in Chiragh Delhi. He knew the pundits, and the authorities of Kalka Mandir. With his efforts, I started sewing marigold, mogra, and rose flowers in garlands and selling them at the temple. Later on I used to sell garlands, *ma ka shingar* (bangles, vermillion etc.) her pictures, *chunni*, etc., too on a *redi*; Life was a struggle...I used to wake up at 3:30 in the morning, walk down to the temple. Early in the morning many devotees came for *ma ke darshan*. I used to sell my items to them. After the morning *aarti*, I would make a next round to the temple. Life went on...but after 1965, I stopped going there, as by then my husband's shop had picked up, my son had grown up and joined him. Together, they started a welding business. But I cannot forget those dark days, when my fingers would go numb stringing garlands the whole day. But I had no option...I had to live on...²³

Many women had to take up the jobs of domestic servants, packaging work in factories or shops, newspaper hawkers etc. Maina Devi was one such person who had to struggle very hard to earn a living. She reminisces:

We lived a fairly prosperous life in Lahore. However at the time of Partition we had no time to collect anything. There was fear of people looting us of our gold and cash. We could not take everything along with us, so I dug all my gold and cash in my backyard assuming that once the riots would subside, we would go back and get our belongings. However, the time and opportunity never came. We stayed in open recovery camps all through (our journey), came to Delhi, and with Chajjiu Ramji's help (an old friend) stayed on rent in his house at Arjan Nagar. I had five children- two daughters and three sons. My husband was shock-stricken, and took to drinking. Later on he started showing signs of eccentricism.

I had the whole responsibility of looking after my children ...I had worked as domestic help in Chajjiu Ramji's house, and a few others. In the morning I washed clothes and utensils for people. In the afternoon used to go for a *pheri* (round) selling sweets to children outside schools. After that I used to go again to (another set of) houses for work...I could barely sleep for five hours. But I did not give up hope. Now my daughter is a doctor in Safdarjung Hospital. My husband died way back in 1987, but he was never there... I gave financial, moral, emotional strength to my family and later on in 1990s took up *sanyas*- I settled for a while in Haridwar. Today, I look only for peace in my life...I have struggled enough in my life, now I only want God to call me to himself.²⁴

After having struggled throughout her life in the streets of old Delhi, even now she does not consider Delhi her 'home'. She still calls its people 'Hindustani' and craves

²³ Anjali Bhardwaj, 'Partition of India and Women's Experiences', *Social Scientist*, Vol.32/ 5-6 May-June 2004, pp.69-86

²⁴ Anjali Bhardwaj, 'Partition of India and Women's Experiences', *Social Scientist*, Vol.32/ 5-6 May-June 2004, pp.69-86

for the streets of Lahore, her real 'Home'. The nostalgia for lost home thus persists and will probably persist till she leaves this world.

Migrations had also taken place within the country itself. I would cite one such instance of intra-country migration from Srinagar to Delhi. 78 year old Shanti Devi had to leave her birthplace, Maisoma Bazaar in Srinagar in the middle of one night for a sudden journey to Delhi in the wake of Partition riots. She recounts her story in these words:

My father unearthed all the gold and our grandmother with the children (including Shanti and six siblings) flew down to Delhi, while my parents came separately. On our arrival we were re-united at Kingsway Camp where we got shelter and food after which we got a *pucca* home and a buffalo in Ritz Lane.” Thereafter, the construction of the temples and a gurudwara marked the beginning of life afresh.²⁵

A similar migration by a difficult train journey was experienced by Ishwar Chand. He travelled from Punja Sahib to India and stayed for a brief period in the tents arranged by the Maharaja of Patiala before moving to Delhi's Hudson Lane. He recalls: “I remember hearing Pandit Nehru's speech occasionally. We got rations from the state. Sometimes people distributed quilts, clothes and money.” He later shifted to Haqeeqat Nagar in a government allotted home.

Satyawati Ahuja who presently lives in Khan Market had come from Peshawar. She had to live in Edward Mess before shifting to the government-built houses on a Muslim graveyard in 1952. She says: “We fought the daily battles of gathering of food and clothing but I will never forget my life in Pakistan.”²⁶

Intra-country migration as cited above continued to happen in later years as well. When the refugees could not get suitable accommodation or a decent source of livelihood after long struggle, they often chose to come to Delhi and search for a new life.

Kuldip Chander was one such person. He was six years old when his family left their hometown Gunjranwala in present day Pakistan and came to India as partition refugees. The family lived in different towns of India before finally settling down in

²⁵ Tanya Talwar, 'Home, Then and Now', *The Hindu*, 13th August, 2010

²⁶ *Ibid.*

Delhi in 1958. Chander opened a second hand bookshop in Defence Colony in 1965 after graduating from a government school in Lodhi Road. In the beginning he stocked thriller and romantic novels which he got as discards from the private libraries and from the second-hand book dealers of Daryaganj. His main customers were the young girl students and boys of schools and colleges. The shop's income, however, dwindled in the early 1980s with the advent of television and he was forced to shut it down. In 1985, he opened a stall of Mills and Boon in South Extension. In course of time the shop became a famous spot for the book lovers. He commutes daily by Delhi Transport Corporation and keeps the shop open from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. every day²⁷.

There were various interesting ways which the refugees devised to eke out a living. Devichand Chopra's story of resettlement in Delhi is one among them. Born in 1932, he was a resident of Koocha Gangu Shah, Suttar Mandi in Lahore. He recalls that communal violence had been taking place in Lahore since May 1947, demanding inclusion of Lahore in future Pakistan. As his area was largely unaffected by the communal mayhem, the family did not feel the need to move elsewhere. In July, except for his father, the rest of the family moved to Himachal to attend a marriage ceremony. The family had not thought that they will never get an opportunity to return back to Lahore and therefore, they did not carry their belongings to India while they came in July. His father also came to Himachal in August when it became clear that Lahore would go to Pakistan. They did not get an opportunity to return to Lahore and dispose off their movable and immovable property. They, thus, became resource less overnight.

Later in August the family reached Delhi and tried beginning life afresh. He recalls: "When we came to Delhi we were penniless. The family lived in a small house in *Lohe Wali Gali* in Jawri Bazar. Having no money to start a business, I started going to the shopkeepers near Chandni Chowk and asked them to hand over to me their unsold stocks of clothes. I sat on a wooden platform in front of the shop and started selling the clothes. Out of the little profit made, I purchased more clothes and sold it to the passersby."

²⁷ Mayank Austar Soofi, 'Our MB Man', *Hindustan Times*, New Delhi, September 3, 2010.

He devised another unique way to supplement his income: “In the morning I came to occupy the seat in front of the shops in Chandni Chowk. At that time there used to be a Delhi Clothes Mill depot there. As there was a lot of shortage of clothes those days, merchants came there in good numbers to purchase clothes. I used to stand in the queue of prospective buyers of clothes. But since I had no money to purchase it, I used to sell my place in the queue to other customers and earned some money. When that amounted to about 10-20 Rupees, I used that money to purchase some clothes and then sold it, sitting in front of the shops.” Later, in the mid-1950s his family was allotted a sum of Rs 6000 as compensation and a stall was allotted to them near the Red Fort. However, they chose to leave the shop and Devilal joined a private company. Over the years he changed many jobs, including the job of a clerk in food department. Finally, in the 1980s he decided to devote his whole life to the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh [RSS]. Presently, he lives and works in RSS headquarters in Jhandelwala in Delhi²⁸.

The life story of Balraj Bahri Malhotra, the current owner of the famous Bahrison's Bookshop in Khan Market is another example of indomitable spirit of the partition refugees. He belonged to a small town in Pakistan called Malakwal. Riots forced him to leave his home on 15th August at the age of 19. Along with his family, he spent 10 days in a make-shift refugee camp. Later on he boarded an overcrowded train from Malakwal railway station and reached Amritsar. His father who was a bank employee, however, was not allowed to board the train along with his family because his employers did not relieve him. After a brief stay in Amritsar, the family moved to New Delhi and stayed at Kingsway Camp. Starting from scratch he and his brother undertook whatever odd job that came their way. After that he joined a training institute in Safdarjung, which was located six miles from his camp. He also worked as a salesman and also loaded and unloaded government books at the railway station. There were days on which there was no income and the family had to live off the government rations. After a few years, while working on a shop in Chandni Chowk he came to know that shops constructed by the government were being allotted to the refugees. Later on, he was allotted a shop in the area with the help of his employer who was a politician. He recalls:

²⁸ Personal interview with Devilal Chopra, 1st April 2013, RSS Headquarters, Jhandelwala, New Delhi

No one in my family had any experience selling books and we had little money in to start off with. We made an initial investment of Rs 800, which was quite a lot for those days. We took a loan from a friend and started the business. That was the foundation of what became Bahrison's. I used to open the shop at 9 a.m., take requests from customers and work until 1p.m., when I would close the shop for lunch. I would then take my bicycle to meet a friend, who was also a book-seller. He introduced me to the business of book-selling and would either supply me titles from his own shelves or take me to the Old City to look for them. At 5:30 p.m. I would open the shop again. This was my routine for years. I have seen Delhi change over the years. Khan Market went from being a refugee market to a posh market²⁹.

He acknowledges that in the days of struggle, he often remembered the affluent life in Pakistan but adds that he and his family has adopted Delhi completely and there's no urge to visit Pakistan³⁰.

Another famous story of refugee enterprise is of the owner of the famous MDH Brand of spices Mahashay Dharm Pal Gulati who came to India from Sialkot in Pakistan at the age of 24 in September 1947, with only Rs 1500 in his pocket. Initially, he had to pull a Tonga to earn a living. Later on, he tried his hand at manufacturing and selling of spices at a small shop in Karolbagh. He knew the art of spice-making as the family had owned a relatively prosperous business in it in Sialkot. It did not take long for Gulatis to succeed in business here given the quality that they offered. The company now runs a business of over 500 crores and supplies spices to many countries. It also engages in a number of philanthropic works³¹.

The Chaina Ram Sindhi Halwai in Chandni Chowk is yet another evidence of refugee enterprise. He set up a shop at Chandni Chowk similar to the Chaina Ram Halwai shop that was set up in Lahore in 1901. Chaina Ram, the proprietor, died before partition and it was his son, Neecharam, and grandson who carried the patriarch's dreams with them across the border when the country was partitioned. Later on, they pioneered the famous Karachi Halwa in post- Partition Delhi which became a very successful business enterprise as time progressed.³²

²⁹ 'Delhi's Refugees : The Story of Bahrison's Bookshop', *The Wall Street Journal*, 12th December, 2011

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ 'A Sneak Peek into the Flavourful World of MDH', *The Economic Times*, 6th May, 2009.

³² *Ibid.*

There are many such real stories, of the struggle and sustenance. In most of such real life stories, these men and women have risen from the ashes and resurrected their lives by their sheer grit and determination. Many did not seek any help from the government and rebuilt their lives on their own strength and determination. At times, luck also favoured them. The story of the transformation of the lives of the refugees settled in Lajpat Nagar is an example of that.

Lajpat Nagar Colony was one among the many colonies that was developed in the 1950s to settle the partition refugees. The original allottees of this place were the refugees who were staying at Purana Quila camp. Though quite a few original allottees have moved to other places, yet families of the refugees still form the majority of colony's population. The area of allotted plots ranged between 100 to 125sq. yards. In the early 1960s, residents started renovating their houses. They constructed additional rooms and started giving them on rent which gave them some additional income. In the 1970s, a new commercial complex named 'Nehru Place' was developed in its vicinity. A large no. of big and small companies set up their shops and outlets there and it soon became a hub of commercial activities. People working there started looking for rented houses in Lajpat Nagar, the nearest housing colony to the place. The rise in demand increased the value of the property in the area manyfold. Then came the 1980s, the decade when house owners, in order to earn quick money, blatantly violated municipal bylaws and started constructing extra floors and basements in their houses. Some residents started giving their plots to the builders who constructed new three-storied buildings with a basement. The owners were given the ground floor, comprising two bedrooms, a drawing-cum-dining room, along with Rs. 10 to Rs.12 lakh in a single deal, while the builders sold the remaining part. Many of the erstwhile refugees, thus, became wealthy overnight and their socio-economic status changed accordingly³³.

Similar is the story of the transformation of the Old Rajendra Nagar. By the 1990s, the old refugee areas like it had transformed into relatively prosperous areas of Delhi.

³³ Vivek Shukla, 'A home for the homeless', *The Hindu*, August 14, 2016. Lajpat Nagar has, interestingly, continued to be the abode of refugees fleeing their homeland. In 1979, when Afghanistan was invaded by the then Soviet Union, hundreds of Muslim Afghans fled their country and sought refuge in India. Most of them eventually settled found refuge in Lajpat Nagar. The Hindus fleeing the Taliban violence in the late 1990s and the Kashmiri Hindus fearing for their lives and properties since the rise of militancy in the valley, too have sought shelter in Lajpat Nagar.

The provisional *Kaccha* houses allotted to the West Pakistan refugees were made of four-inch thick brick walls and asbestos roofs. It was meant to be a temporary arrangement, intended to last for only 5 years. Over the last seven decades these houses have become *Pucca* with thick brick walls which are now, adequately plastered and roofs have been suitably cemented. Due to its central location (only 15 minutes from Connaught Place) it has become a prime location of the city. Many property dealers realised its potential in the 1990s and began transforming the *Kaccha* houses into multi-storied *Pucca* houses. The property rates have soared many times. The houses and the parts of the houses began to be rented at higher rates and the refugees began getting a steady source of income through it. The material life of the refugees therefore, improved tremendously, many of whom began owning cars and other modern day amenities.³⁴

Another interesting story is the transformation of the lives of the refugees settled in Delhi's Nizamuddin Colony. A civil servant, who was in charge of the rehabilitation work there, recounts in his memoir:

I remember about the Nizamuddin Colony in New Delhi. It was established in an untenanted area outside Delhi which was overgrown with shrub and forests and inhabited by wild animals. When Mehr Chandji [the PWD minister then] and I took the first batch of displaced persons to Nizamuddin, we were subjected to a full round of angry abuses. They shouted at us, "You expect us to live here where not even dogs can exist. This is a haunt of wild animals. We will be looted by dacoits at night. We will be murdered. Then who will be held responsible?" At that time, we were giving them land in Nizamuddin for less than Rs. 3 per sq. yard. Today it is worth Rs. 10,000 per sq. yard. In fact, no land is available for purchase. Those very refugees who mistakenly abused us came back four years later and said: "We are sorry. We were so rude to you. We never realized what a gold mine you were giving to us."³⁵

As the above instances show, at times luck also favoured those who persevered. But overall, the refugee story is a story of struggle and indomitable spirit as we have seen

³⁴ Dhooleka Sarhadi Raj, 'Ignorance, Forgetting, and Family Nostalgia: Partition, The Nation State, and The Refugees in Delhi', *Social Analysis*, Issue 44 (2), November 2000, pp.1-5

³⁵ Dharmavira, *Reminiscences*, Vikash Publishing House, New Delhi, 1990, pp.74-75. Dharmavira, an Indian Civil Service officer, served as the Secretary of the Ministry of Rehabilitation from 1956 to 1962. He also served as the Chief Commissioner from 1963 to 1964. Regarding the place as to where refugees should be settled, he opined that refugees could not be rehabilitated by uprooting others. Only virgin and uninhabited land could be used for this purpose and that land had to be developed. These lands could obviously not be in the heart of the city, in the already populated areas. Initially the settlement of the refugees had a look of isolation but as time passed and more and more settlers got accepted, contact with the rest of population was established and the feeling of isolation reduced.

in the course of the chapter. Having gone through such upheavals in their lives, the life has moved on but have they forgotten their 'homeland'? Let us see how refugees remember their life before partition and how the second and third generation of these refugees associate with the land of their forefathers.

5.3 Nostalgia for the Lost Home?

Noted author Neel Kamal Puri says, "The migrant's identity remains forged out of the reality of having two homes. In fact, he lives with two homes in his mind- nostalgia marks one, and the endeavour the other. And the mind expands to accommodate both".³⁶ In similar vein Malavika Sangghvi argues, "a refugee's world view primarily rests on two emotions: being prepared for the worst, because the worst had happened to you, and an aching for lost homelands in the blood- childhood that can never be recovered, legacies that can never be inherited, rooms that can never be inhabited".³⁷

So how do the refugees of partition remember their homelands? How do they respond to the questions regarding this and are they still treated as refugees? "Responses to Partition" argues Yasmin Khan, "cannot easily be pigeonholed. They traverse the full range of human emotions from the acrimonious and bitter to the regretful and nostalgic".³⁸ Historian Ravinder Kaur opines that the response of the refugees depends on the way the questions themselves are framed. That is, focusing on Pakistan may elicit a different response altogether. The state plays a vital role in creating popular discourses. Thus, a discourse around high-pitched nationalism, patriotism and territorial integrity may sideline counter-discourses. It is not just personal aspirations that frame the responses; the very aspirations are framed vis-à-vis the given situation of Indo-Pak relations.³⁹ And therefore, the responses of the refugees get very much

³⁶ Neel Kamal Puri, 'The Outsider', *Seminar* 567, November 2006, pp.27-29

³⁷ Malavika Sangghvi, 'Refugee Recollections', *The Times of India*, April 8, 1999.

³⁸ Yasmin Khan, *The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan*, Penguin Books, New Delhi, p.203.

³⁹ Ravinder Kaur, 'Locating State In 'non- State' Spaces', *Seminar-56*, November 2006, pp.58-62. The paper is based on a series of interviews conducted by the historian during two crucial phases of India-Pakistan relations. The first set of interviews was conducted in the aftermath of the 1999 Kargil conflict and the second after the attack in 2001 on the Indian Parliament by the Pakistan-based terror group. The interviewees were the partition refugees settled in resettlement colonies of Delhi such as Lajpat Nagar, Rajinder Nagar, Ramesh Nagar and Gandhi Nagar. She argues that after moving into the Indian capital, the migrants were faced with two important challenges. The first was the obvious competition of eking out a space in Delhi and to try to establish a new 'home'. The second task was to conclude the relationship with their former homeland. Any talk of Pakistan or association with it was likely to give

affected by the popular nationalist discourse of the time. The feeling of being a refugee on the other hand, depends on the kind of treatment such a person is subjected to in his new abode and how well they have become a part of the socio-economic, cultural and political mainstream.

Baldev Singh was 18 years old when he left Sialkot for India. “I came along with my mother. We had to walk 17 days to reach Amritsar. We did not have anything except the clothes on our bodies. When Gandhi died we were at Patna. We took to whatever work we could lay our hands on, but did not compromise with our honesty and integrity,” asserts Singh. He takes pride in the fact that no refugee from his camp ever took any government help and built their lives on their own. His eyes shine with pride when he says that he is no more a refugee now. “I am not a refugee now; I am like any other Indian.” Showing satisfaction with his life full of struggles, he says that he is completely content with it and doesn’t wish to visit his ancestral home in Pakistan.⁴⁰

Shobha Ram had come from Dera Ismail Khan, in the North West Frontier Province. When being referred to as a refugee, he counters:

How can we be called refugees now? Today I have such a big house, it is open on three sides and by God’s grace it is architecturally modern as well. How can I be a refugee then? When I came here, I had worked as a servant in someone’s house for six and a half years and today I have so many people working for me. In true terms, we can’t be called refugees now. In a year or two, each one of us had got back on our feet because of our courage and strength. The government also helped us. The local people had sympathy for us. That way we are happy, we are all settled⁴¹.

Other refugees from Dera Ismail Khan, known as the *Derawals* in Delhi, also assert that they do not feel like ‘refugees’ any longer. They feel well settled here and do not want to return back to their ancestral place.⁴²

rise to questions of ‘loyalty’ to India. Therefore, most of the refugees hesitated to speak freely about Pakistan. Over 80 percent had never been to Pakistan after partition.

⁴⁰ <http://www.expressindia.indianexpress.com/archive.php?month=08&year=2007>, August 14,2007 (accessed on 6/12/2015)

⁴¹ Interview with Shobha Ram Lal as quoted in Shilpi Gulati, ‘Dere Tun Dilli’, *SubVersions*, Vol.1, Issue 1, 2013,pp.1-22

⁴² Shilpi Gulati, ‘ ‘Dere Tun Dilli’ (From Dera to Delhi): Exploring Identity Formation of Refugees From Dera Ismail Khan Living in Delhi’, *Subversions*, Vol.2, Issue I, 2014,

On the other hand, 72 year old Pindi Das is stoic in his feelings for his abandoned home in Gujranwala, Pakistan. He recalls how military trucks came to ferry them across the newly demarcated border and adds, “When we reached Amritsar, we had to live in tents. But the bad times are over as now we own two restaurants in Delhi which are doing fairly well.” He says that he doesn’t mind people calling him – “a refugee”. But 17 year old Priyanka, a third generation member of the family objects when she is referred to as a refugee. Her annoyance is visible when she says, “I feel bad if somebody calls me a ‘refugee’. Why should anyone refer to me as a refugee, when I am born and brought up here?” Sushil Dutta, who represents the second generation of the migrated family, emphatically denies any feeling of attachment with their ancestral roots in Pakistan. “Why should we feel any such thing, when we have nothing to do with that country? I am an Indian born and hence feel myself like any other Indian.”⁴³

Kishan Lal, who is into his sixties, says that his parents had never discussed their migration from the other side of the border and he came to know about it only after turning 12. He emphasised, however, that he never regrets leaving Pakistan. His son expresses his anguish in these words: “My grandfather was a refugee, my father is also a refugee, even I don’t have a problem being referred to as a refugee, but certainly, I don’t want to give my son this refugee tag.”⁴⁴

Madhu Kishwar is a feminist author based in Delhi. Her father was a resident of Lahore, while her mother belonged to Peshawar. Following the partition riots, they were forced to migrate to Delhi. Though it did not take long for her family to settle in Delhi and begin life afresh, the identity of being a ‘refugee’ did not leave her. She puts her feeling in these words:

I felt blessed to be born in the idealistic atmosphere of post-independence India, yet I have always felt the pangs of an uprooted identity on account of belonging to a refugee family. Though it did not take long for my family to settle down in Delhi, the city I was born in, it is a constant source of pain

<http://www.subversions.tiss.edu/dere-tun-dilli-from-dera-to-delhi-exploring-identity-formation-of-refugees-from-dera-ismail-khan-living-in-delhi/> (accessed on 9/07/2017)

⁴³ <http://www.expressindia.indianexpress.com/archive.php?month=08&year=2007>, August 14, 2007 (accessed on 6/12/2015)

⁴⁴ ‘For How Long Can One Be Bitter: Younger Members of Partition-Torn Families Voice Their Feelings’, *The Times of India*, February 21, 1999, p.17

whenever someone asks me, 'Where are you from?'- A simple, but important, question that is a key element in defining a person's identity in the subcontinent. In response, I usually offer something like an explanation rather than an answer: 'My father is from Lahore, my mother from Peshawar and I was born in Delhi. Part of my maternal family was based in Kashmir, from where they have been uprooted thrice after independence⁴⁵.'

This 'refugee' identity also bothers those who chose to settle in other countries as well.

Umeeta Sadarangani recounts how she could not escape her identity of being a 'partition refugee' even after settling in United States of America. Currently, she is a professor in the English Department at Parkland College, Champaign, Illinois, United States, teaching South Asian Literature and Culture. Her parents were born in Karachi and moved to Bombay in 1947. Later in her life she moved to United States and now she is a US citizen. But the identity of being a 'partition refugee' still haunts her. She writes:

My parents are Partition refugees. That fact is so much a part of my identity, so much a part of the answer to the simplest of questions that I cannot get away from it. And sometimes, I want to. When people ask me, "Where are you from?" the answer is never simple. This is partly because I have moved several times, but it's mainly because, as an Indian, that question is tied into another one: "What are you?", that is, to what regional/language group do I belong? Where I come from can signal to others, especially other South Asians, what I am. My answer, now almost automatic, is, "I was born in Bombay and grew up outside the city. But I am a Sindhi. My parents are from Karachi and moved to Bombay in 1947 because of Partition. Yes, Karachi is in Pakistan now, but when my parents were born in 1935, it was in India. There was no Pakistan." I tend to provide this context even to non-Indians who might not know about the Partition. Most days, I insist on this complexity. When I am tired, though, I say that I am from Champaign, Illinois. But very few people are satisfied with that answer; they know my name, and they want to know where it originates⁴⁶.

⁴⁵ Madhu Kishwar, 'Messy Legacy', *India International Centre Quarterly*, Vol.35, No.3/4, *The Great Divide* (Winter 2008 Spring 2009), pp.312-329. Kishwar is at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies which is a Delhi based research institute for the social sciences and humanities. She is also the founder editor of India's first feminist magazine *Manushi* which began publishing in 1979.

⁴⁶ Umeeta Sadarangani, 'Descendent of the Storm: On Being a Child of Refugees and Teaching Partition Narratives', *Modern Language Studies*, Vol.38, No.1 (Summer, 2008), pp.63-73, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40346980>, (accessed on 06/01/2015). As she rightly argues, for the partition refugees in addition to the physical and emotional trauma, there was the lasting trauma of permanent removal. This feeling was common to almost all the refugees.

Preeti Chopra, an associate professor of Architecture, Urban History, and Visual Studies at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, also finds it difficult to escape the identity of being a 'partition refugee'. She recounts:

I never know what to say when people ask me where I am from. No simple answer will suffice. At some point of my life I began to offer a partial answer. "My parents came from what is now Punjab, Pakistan," I said. "While we moved around India, a large part of my extended family settled in Delhi." Surely, it would have been easier to simply say that I was from Delhi, a city remade after 1947 by Punjabi refugees. My refusal to offer a simple, even if not entirely accurate answer suggests that I always knew that I was forged by the history of partition and the fact that my ancestral homeland lay across the border. Unfortunately, my stubborn knowledge was never accompanied by any sensitivity or penetrating insight into my own life, much less of those whose lives were turned upside down as they left of their own free will or were forced to flee across the newly created border in 1947. Few would be able to visit the people and the places of their former everyday lives. In actuality, that world was lost forever even for those who could cross the border or stayed behind⁴⁷.

Borders therefore, "define the places that are safe and unsafe"...and "a borderland" appears to be "a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary" which "is in a constant state of transition".⁴⁸

The responses of the refugees on the question of their urge to revisit their ancestral lands across the border, therefore gets affected both by this "emotional residue of an unnatural boundary" and by the popular nationalist discourse of the time, which shapes and also gets shaped by the then state of bilateral relations between the two countries, thus hindering hassle free movement of people across the border.

Joginder Raj Vinaik of Delhi had come from Kota in Pakistan and was very young at the time of migration. He remembers, "We took a house in Karol Bagh and all of us started working. I must have been 14 or 15 and got a job in Delhi Cloth Mills." Although life changed completely for his family yet his passion for football provided him with an opportunity to visit Pakistan once. But the official red tapism did not let

⁴⁷ Preeti Chopra, "'where are you from?' Belonging after Partition', *Tanqueed*, August 2013, <http://www.tanqueed.org/2013/08/journeys-to-ancestral-homelands-in-pakistan-and-india/>

She, however, was fortunate to accompany her friends on an 8-day visit to Lahore. The generosity and love that she got there gave her, as she recalls, 'a privileged glimpse and embrace into the intimate worlds of friendship and family.'

⁴⁸ Gloria Anzaldua, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, Aunt Lute Books, 1987, p.3. As quoted in Virinder S.Kalra and Navtej K. Purewal, 'The Strut of the Peacocks: Partition, Travel and the Indo-Pak Border', in Tai Yong Tan and Gyanesh Kudaisya (eds), *Partition and Post-Colonial South Asia*, Vol.3, Routledge, U.K, 2008, pp. 305-317

this happen. He laments, “How I wish there was no partition! Given a choice I would want to go back there – but none of us can ever go there again.”⁴⁹

Similarly, Darshan Lal, who had come from Hasan Abdal near Islamabad also expresses deep nostalgia for the lost ‘home’, “It was a long struggle here. We children had long left studying and had to work to help the family survive. I got a job with the Faridabad Development Board when I was 18. Life has been going on since then.” He also longs to go to his ancestral home in Pakistan and says, “I tried, we all tried going back just to see it. We got the passports but not the visits.... Even today if I close my eyes, I can trace my city, my school and my home – clearly,” he says with a faraway look.⁵⁰

Sapna Wadhwa, a 27 years old school teacher, also ardently expressed her wish to visit her ancestor’s place when she was interviewed on the occasion of the launch of the Delhi-Lahore Bus Service in the year 1999. She said:

My father was just 10 when his family left Pakistan and crossed over into India. They have some very bitter memories but not us- being so far removed from Partition; we never felt any aggression towards Pakistanis. I’m very excited at the prospect of a Delhi-Lahore bus service. I would love to visit my ancestral place in Dera Ghazi Khan where, I am told, the family had a mansion spread over an entire locality. A part of our family had preferred to stay back and converted to Islam. I would love to go back and re-establish links with them.⁵¹

Balwant Singh, a nonagenarian, who had barely escaped death in Partition riots by jumping out of a moving train, still laments the changes that have taken place after partition, especially, in social relationships. He expresses deep sadness at what he calls the “decline of human values” and his only wish is to visit his childhood friends before his death.⁵²

Nabh Singh came from his village in Sialkot, Pakistan and worked very hard to build his life. All his children are married and well-settled now. Even after having seen such an extreme form of religious antagonism, he has no such apathy towards people from

⁴⁹ Azera Rehman, “60 years after partition, ‘home’ still beckons”, *Daily News & Analysis*, August 8, 2007, <http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-60-years-after-partition-home-still-beckons-1114306>, (accessed on 9/07/2017)

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ ‘For How Long Can One Be Bitter: Younger Members of Partition-Torn Families Voice Their Feelings’, *The Times of India*, February 21, 1999, p.17

⁵² Sukhbir Singh & Manohar Singh Gill, ‘Social and Psychological Trauma of the Displaced: A Study of Partition of India’, *Asia-Pacific Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol.I (1), January-June 2009, pp. 1-18

the 'other' community. He too craves to go on a visit to his native place in Pakistan and meet his old friends⁵³.

This urge to revisit their ancestral land is also there among the Muslims left India at the time of partition and migrated to Pakistan. Sultana, who lives in Karachi, is one such person. She recounts her past in these words:

I was seven years old in 1947. We lived in Amritsar in Indian Punjab. My dad was a police inspector and our family was well off. With each day the tensions were growing and the place began to look like an alien world. One night our Hindu neighbour banged on our door and alerted us that angry Hindu mobs were coming towards this area, wanting to kill Muslims. He said that we should go with him and he hid us in his house. When somebody came to question him, he denied knowledge of our whereabouts. A few hours later my dad decided that we should leave for Pakistan. The journey was by bus. It was one of the most terrifying and heart-aching moments of my entire life. We left everything behind in a blink of an eye: all our friends, our house, our belongings. Sixty years have passed but the faces of my old friends are still fresh in my memory. I am a proud Pakistani now, but one day I wish to go back and walk on the streets of Amritsar, the place I called home for the first years of my life.⁵⁴

Agha Bakhtiyar Ali, a resident of Peshawar, Pakistan urges the government of India and Pakistan to resolve their differences through bilateral negotiations so that people on both sides of the border could go across hassle free to meet their friends and relatives. She says:

I was born two years after the partition. Though I am not a witness myself, my father and my elder brother narrated the partition story to me. My family was living in Amritsar. They fled in haste. Shops and houses belonging to Muslims were burned. Trains full of refugees were attacked and indiscriminate killing was carried out. Women were raped in front of their fathers and husbands. The same happened on the other side of the partition line. Everyone became like mad. My father's younger brother was killed by Sikhs and his siblings never left India. Looking back at these events after 60 years [in 2007], this was an ugly game played by our elders. None of the ideals behind the creation of Pakistan have been fulfilled. There's no peace, we are fighting terrorism and the country is economically bankrupt. And look where India is now! It was not a partition of land but a partition of Muslims, separating families forever. We have lost contact with our relatives in India. Me [sic] and my brother were very anxious to go to India to find them, but visa regulations are very strict. It is high time that both countries settled their differences peacefully through negotiations. Spending on defence should come down and people of both countries should be allowed to meet freely.⁵⁵

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ 'Partition Memories', 13 August 2007, http://www.news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/6939997.stm

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

A number of partition refugees, however, are very reluctant to speak at all about the event and its aftermath, arguing that they do not want to remember those horrific days and have no desire to revisit their ancestral homes again. Rajendra Kaur had been living a peaceful life in Rawalpindi when partition forced her to migrate to Delhi. She retorts:

Why talk about evil days? In our religion, it is prohibited to even utter or think of evil acts. If you do so it is like actually committing the act. I shall tell you what *paap*, *gandagi* is: when a man lusts for another man's blood, without any personal animosity; when a man has a woman at home and yet he defiles other helpless women. If one discusses such acts, one internalises them. There is a saying that if you discuss ghosts and snakes, they visit you. This talk is about dead people, why invite their ghosts? When we had just come here, we women used to cry and exchange stories of misfortune with other families in the camp. After 50years, the wounds have healed. Why are you reporting them?⁵⁶

Hansraj Grover, similarly, speaks about his life only after much prodding. Born in 1942 in Arafwalla, Lyallpur and he had started his journey to India in a foot convoy on August 13, 1947 along with his father, mother, three brothers and one sister. He could not recall the time it took to reach India through Ferozepur border. He says that relations of the Hindus with the Muslim neighbours were cordial till the time partition took place. They had been assured of safety by their neighbours and requested to stay at their places. But the news of violence coming from other places had frightened the family. The final straw was a warning from the Deputy Commissioner that it would be better if they leave for India. So the family left their place and migrated to India. It stayed in the Kurukshetra Camp for few days. Then they moved to Saharanpur and opened a dry fruits and grocery shop. However, the business could not succeed and the family shifted Mori Gate in a single room tenement. The elder brother sold candies and balloons to earn a living. His father started trading in dry fruits here which proved to be a successful venture. After few years, the family moved to a three-room house in Rajouri Garden and then in the year 1973 to Gunjaranwala Town, near Mader Town. He now runs a fairly successful business in Kamla Nagar dealing with science laboratory chemicals and equipments. When asked if he ever got any government help and whether he or his children wish visit their ancestral place in Pakistan, he says with a bit of anger: "The government never helped us, we never

⁵⁶ 'The Long Silence', *The Times of India*, 20th July, 1997

asked for any help either. I don't want to go to Pakistan ever, nor do my children, what do they have to do with Pakistan, they have been born and brought up here."⁵⁷

Some argue that everything in their ancestral places must have changed beyond recognition and therefore, there is little point in going back. Noted journalist Malavika Sangghvi whose parents had come from Pakistan has this to say about her parents:

Adrift in a harsh city, trapped in a tiny apartment, my parents would thrash against the cage they felt they were locked in, aching for their homelands. Because my father could not visit Lahore, and my mother chose to never go back to Kashmir. What would they have gone back to, in any case? Requisitioned houses, scattered memories, well-meaning strangers embarrassed into offering dim nostalgia?⁵⁸

Famous poet, author, lyricist, film-maker, and screenplay and dialogue writer, Gulzar was born in Dina (now in Pakistan) and was forced to move to India in the wake of Partition violence. He expresses the longing of a refugee for the lost home beautifully in this poem⁵⁹:

Eyes don't need a visa

Dreams have no borders

Eyes closed, I cross the border every day

To meet Mehdi Hasan!

I have heard that his voice is injured

And the ghazal sits in front of him, mute

Her lips tremble

When he says...

"The flowers have dried in the pages of books

My friend Faraz too is gone, will meet him in my
dreams perhaps!"

Eyes closed, I often cross the border.

Eyes don't need a visa

Dreams have no borders.

⁵⁷ Personal interview with Hansraj Grover, 19th April 2013

⁵⁸ Malavika Sangghvi, 'Refugee Recollections', *The Times of India*, April 8, 1999.

⁵⁹ Gulzar, 'Eyes Don't Need a Visa', *Footprints on Zero Line: Writings on the Partition*, Translated by Rakhshanda Jalil, Harper Collins, UP, 2017, p.54

CONCLUSION

If we look back at the 20th century, we see that a number of partitions of countries had taken place during its course. In fact, from a certain vantage point this century can also be called the ‘Century of Partitions’. In its course, countries like Ireland, Germany, Palestine, Korea, Vietnam, Cyprus, Pakistan, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia got partitioned. Among these partitions, the partition of India in 1947 which accompanied its independence from the shackles of British colonialism on August 15, 1947, was perhaps the most unique and distinctive event which changed the destinies of millions of people. “To an overwhelming number of people across much of the northern part of the subcontinent” the day of independence “signified partition (*vibhajan* or *batwara*) rather than coming of independence (*azadi*)”¹. The sheer scale and magnitude of violence, migration and uprooting that it witnessed make it stand apart from other partitions. The partition of the subcontinent is, therefore, rightly regarded as a ‘cataclysmic watershed’ in history.

It was an event which drastically changed the course of life of millions who were directly or indirectly affected by it. It has had a tremendous impact on the shape and form that independent India took. Partition is, thus, as central to modern identity in the Indian subcontinent, as the Holocaust is to identity among Jews, branded painfully onto the regional consciousness by memories of almost unimaginable violence. In the words of acclaimed Pakistani historian Ayesha Jalal, Partition is “the central historical event in twentieth century South Asia.” She sees it as “a defining moment that is neither beginning nor end, partition continues to influence how the peoples and states of postcolonial South Asia envisage their past, present and future².” Partition produced “reverberations which were both immediate and long-term. It was not a single event, but a trigger of processes which have left a deep imprint on state and society in the region³.” It was not “dispensed with in 1947” its “ongoing

¹ Tai Yong and Gyanesh Kudaisya, *The Aftermath of Partition in South Asia*, Routledge Publication, London, 2000, p.28

² William Dalrymple, ‘The Great Divide: The Violent Legacy of Partition’, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/06/29/the-great-divide-books-dalrymple> , (accessed on 7 July 2019)

³ See Tai Yong and Gyanesh Kudaisya, *The Aftermath of Partition in South Asia*, Routledge Publication, London, 2000

repercussions” are felt in entire South Asia till date and will continue to do so in the future⁴.

This work is an attempt to study how this unique event unfolded and what impact did it have and continues to have on the common people affected by it.

The most important factor that makes the Partition of India unique is the sheer scale, brutality and enormity of violence that took place in its wake. As G.D. Khosla, who had witnessed the violence first hand puts it: “History has not known a fratricidal war of such dimensions in which human hatred and bestial passions were degraded to the levels witnessed during this epoch when religious frenzy, taking the shape of hideous monster, stalked through cities, towns and countryside, taking toll of half a million of innocent lives.”⁵ Violence of such fiendishness had no precedent in Indian history. The estimate of the dead varies from 3 lakhs to over 2 million. The chain of partition-related violence began with the launching of ‘Direct Action’ by the Muslim League in Calcutta on 16th August 1946. For the next three days utter lawlessness prevailed in the streets of Calcutta. By the time the violence subsided, properties worth lakhs were destroyed, with the shops and houses being looted and put to fire. It also witnessed inter-communal killings of a scale and brutality, hitherto unheard in Calcutta, allegedly with the connivance of the League government under Suhrawardy. It is estimated that within 72 hours of the outbreak of violence, about 4000 people lay dead and nearly 10,000 people were displaced from their homes. As Phillips Talbot, the American journalist who had been on a study tour of India and witnessed the Calcutta Riots first hand has aptly put it:

Witnessing a great city feed on its own flesh is a disturbing experience. In spite of our war heritage of callousness, I know that I was not alone in sensing profound horror this last week as Calcutta, India’s largest metropolis and the second city of the Empire, resolutely set at work to cannibalise itself. After four days of uncontrolled fury a shattered city remained. Many months must pass before it can recover from the material despoilment that overtook it. But far more serious, I am afraid, is the spiritual damage. Dazed, suspicious survivors showed none of the camaraderie and mutual sympathy which

⁴ Yasmin Khan, *The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan*, Penguin Books, New Delhi, p.168.

⁵ G.D Khosla, *Stern Reckoning: A Survey of the Events Leading Up To and Following the Partition of India*, OUP, Delhi (1989) (reprint of 1949 edition), p.3.

tends to spring among victims of severe bombing. Instead their eyes revealed hatred, bitterness, distrust, and fright. I cannot guess how long the city will need for the recovery of its soul.⁶

If we look in retrospect, Phillips' words appear prophetic. It indeed took months, in fact, decades for the great city of Calcutta to recover from the 'material and spiritual despoilment' caused by the violence accompanying partition. The next outbreak of violence took place in the eastern part of Bengal, in the district of Noakhali on October 10, 1946. It took two weeks for the violence to subside, the casualties and the destruction being on a much higher level than that of Calcutta. As the Congress Working Committee Resolution put it, the violence at Noakhali, depicted "a scene of bestiality and medieval barbarity that must fill every decent human being with shame, disgust and anger." It added that "deeds of violation and abduction of women and forcible conversion and of loot, arson and murder have been committed on a large scale in a predetermined and organised manner by persons often found to be in possession of rifles and other fire arms⁷". The riots in Calcutta and Noakhali created a fear psychosis in the minds of minority community, a significant number of which began leaving their places and moving to regions where they felt safe from the riotous mobs. Wherever they went, they carried along the stories of atrocities wrought on them. This proved to be an important factor behind the spread of communal hatred to newer regions. The incessant communal propaganda by the Hindu Mahasabha through newspapers such as *Searchlight* and the *Indian Nation* also played an important part in it. In such a scenario, the observance of 'Noakhali Day' in Patna on 25 October 1946, led to the outbreak of "mass upsurge of Hindu peasants against Muslims, resulting in massacre far more terrible really than Noakhali, with at least 7000 deaths"⁸. The violence that had started first in Patna, had soon spread to Saran, Jehanabad, Gaya, Monghyr and Bhagalpur. As Nehru, who had gone to Bihar to assess the situation first hand admitted, the violence in Bihar was a direct repercussion of the violence in Calcutta and Noakhali which had "created a feeling of great resentment throughout the province", particularly "the accounts of forcible conversion of large number of people and abduction and rape of Hindu women⁹". The next to fall

⁶ Phillips Talbot, *An American Witness to India's Partition*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2007, pp.184-185.

⁷ CWC Resolution on October 24, 1946 as published in *The Times of India*, October 25, 1946.

⁸ Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India: 1885-1947*, Macmillan Publishers, New Delhi, 1983, p.433

⁹ S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of J.L. Nehru*, Second Series, Volume 1, Pub. by Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1984, p.72

victim in this spiral of violence was Garhmukteshwar in United Provinces. The reverberations were soon to be heard in Punjab, which had been seething for months with formation of private armies for or against the demand of Pakistan. The Sikh Jathas, the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS), the Hindu Mahasabha cadres and the Muslim League's National Guards had been spreading a lot of communal propaganda in the preceding months. The Punjab was, it appeared, ready to implode.

The floodgates of violence were opened once the Unionist government under Khizr Hayat Khan resigned on 3rd March 1947. Communal rioting on a massive scale began in Rawalpindi which in coming days and months engulfed almost the whole of Punjab. Once the scheme of partition known as the '3rd June Plan' or the 'Mountbatten Plan' was agreed upon by the political masters and partition seemed very much on the horizons, the communal violence, looting, arsoning reached alarming proportions, the crescendo of which began to be felt once the Boundary Award was declared on 16th August 1947 and the new boundary lines began to be known gradually. This horrendous violence continued unabated till the East Punjab was almost cleared off the Muslims and the West Punjab was cleared off its Hindu and Sikh population in the course of months after partition.

The violence spread to newer areas as time progressed. Delhi too, began to feel the heat of communal violence and in fact "became the eastern extremity of Punjab". As news from Punjab began reaching the capital, communal clashes began to be reported from various parts from the third week of March 1947 itself. The government had to impose curfew in the affected areas and also put a curb on the press in order to check the spread of rumours and communal propaganda. Despite these measures, Delhi continued to witness communal violence in the coming months. Once partition took place on 14-15 August 1947, the influx of Hindus and Sikh refugees from West Pakistan in large numbers to the capital deteriorated the situation manyfold. Muslims became the chief targets of attack by the incoming population. As the then Deans of the Arts Faculty in Delhi University, Ishtiaq Husain Quereshi put it, "Delhi became a prison for the Muslims", as "the fortified Muhallas developed into arsenals" and it appeared as if "an unofficial war was in the offing"¹⁰. As the situation appeared to be getting out of hand, the then Deputy Prime Minister Sardar Patel issued a public

¹⁰ Tai Yong and Gyanesh Kudaisya, *The Aftermath of Partition in South Asia*, Routledge Publication, London, 2000, p. 198

statement on 3rd September, appealing the people to maintain peace. It had little effect, however, as in the next few days large scale communal rioting took place at Karol Bagh, Sabzi Mandi, Sadar Bazar and Fatehpuri. The whole city had to be brought under curfew and Governor General Mountbatten, who had gone to a visit to Shimla, was urged to rush back to the capital and help bring the things under control. An Emergency Cabinet Committee was set up under him, comprising Nehru, Patel, Baldev Singh and K.C. Neogy to “deal with the crisis on an hour-to-hour basis¹¹”. Sardar Patel issued another statement on September 7, which asked the people of Delhi “not to lose their sense of proportion and be carried away by a false sense of sympathy towards bleeding Punjab. Those who try to disturb the peace of Delhi are doing a great disservice to the people of the Punjab and discouraging the Government of India. The refugees from the neighbouring provinces coming to Delhi will be abusing the hospitality of the people of Delhi if they do not show self-restraint and behave as good citizens¹².”

Mahatma Gandhi arrived in the capital on 9th September and issued a statement saying that he must apply the old formula ‘Do or Die’ and asked those who were engaged in the senseless murder, arson and loot to stay their hands. He added that, “Retaliation is no remedy. It makes the original disease much worse¹³.” Owing to his incessant efforts, by mid-September, the situation returned to some sort of normalcy with more traffic movement on the streets and a number of shops being opened in Old and New Delhi¹⁴. Sporadic incidents of communal violence against the Muslims, however, continued. The Mahatma undertook a fast on 13th January 1948 to bring about “a reunion of the hearts of all communities” and advocated complete protection to the minorities¹⁵. In a speech at a public meeting in Delhi on 15th January 1948, Prime Minister Nehru asked the population of Delhi to take “a pledge to bring about complete peace in Delhi.” He emphasised that “there should be no boycott of

¹¹ See, S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of J.L. Nehru*, Second Series, Volume 4, Pub. by Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1986, p. 51

¹² *The Hindu*, September 8, 1947.

¹³ *Ibid.*, September 10, 1947.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, September 11, 1947

¹⁵ S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of J.L. Nehru*, Second Series, Volume 5, Pub. by Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1987, p.6. An additional reason for the fast was “a silent reproach to the Government of India for its decision not to implement the financial agreement with Pakistan”.

Muslims and peaceful relations should be restored” as “Delhi is not merely the capital of India but a city with great historical past” and “conditions here have their effect on other parts of India¹⁶”. On 17th January, when a delegation of leaders went to meet Gandhiji and urged him to break his fast, he put following conditions to be met: (a) Complete freedom of worship to Muslims at the tomb of Khwaja Qutub-ud-Din Bakhtiar and non-interference with the celebration of the *Urs* which was due to be held there within a week (b) Voluntary evacuation by non-Muslims of all the mosques in the city which were being use for residential purposes or which had been converted into temples (c) Free movement of Muslims in areas where they used to stay before the disturbances (d) Full safety to Muslims while travelling by train (e) No economic boycott of Muslims and (f) Full discretion to Muslims to invite non-Muslims to live in areas occupied by them and freedom to Muslim evacuees to come back to Delhi if they so desired¹⁷.

The next day, as Gandhiji’s fast entered fifth day, a peace committee of 130 members belonging to different communities under Rajendra Prasad met him and pledged to fulfil all the conditions that he had asked for.¹⁸ Gandhi ended the fast the same day and situation in Delhi gradually improved. However, a complete peace could be restored only after the tragic assassination of the Mahatma on 30th January 1948.

Though it is difficult to arrive at accurate estimates, given the conditions of the time, it is generally believed that by the time this maddening violence subsided about 1 million people lay dead and millions turned refugees without home and hearths, nursing the scars of it.

The great Urdu writer, novelist Ismat Chughtai, summed up the trauma of partition violence and its aftermath in these words:

The flood of communal violence came and went with all its evils, but it left a pile of living, dead, and gasping corpses in its wake. It wasn’t only that the country was split in two- bodies and minds were also divided. Moral beliefs were tossed aside and humanity was in shreds. Government officers and

¹⁶ *The Hindustan Times*, January 16, 1948.

¹⁷ Maulana Azad’s Speech while addressing three hundred thousand people in Delhi on January 17, 1948. As quoted in Ravinder Kumar (ed), *The Selected Works of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad*, Vol.3 (1947-48), Atlantic Publishers, New Delhi, 1991, p. 125.

¹⁸ S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of J.L. Nehru*, Second Series, Volume 5, Pub. By Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1987, p. 16

clerks along with their chairs, pens and inkpots, were distributed like the spoils of war...Those whose bodies were whole had hearts that were splintered. Families were torn apart. One brother was allotted to Hindustan, her offspring were in Pakistan; the husband was in Hindustan, his wife was in Pakistan. The bonds of relationship were in tatters, and in the end many souls remained behind in Hindustan while their bodies started off for Pakistan.¹⁹

The biggest brunt of this violence (and subsequent displacement) was borne by the women who became the worst victims of partition. Partition violence is tragically unique not only in terms of its barbaric nature and enormous scale but also because of its gendered nature. Women were chosen as specific targets of this violence. In a cycle of violence that began in Calcutta on August 16, 1946 and engulfed Noakhali, Bihar, United provinces and Punjab in coming months, we find innumerable cases of rapes of women followed by mutilation of their bodies, the breasts been cut off and the genitalia being branded with religious symbols such as crescent moon or 'om'. These symbols were sought to represent the woman's "otherness before the violence, and their other identity as shamed, conquered and branded".²⁰ In this mayhem, as Veena Das puts it, "women's body... became a sign through which men communicated with each other. And that "the political programme of creating the two nations of India and Pakistan was inscribed upon the bodies of women".²¹ Jisha Menon similarly argues that "marking the female bodies through acts of political violence constituted a mode of transcription to communicate with the other men of rival community that will encounter the violated body".²²

Defilement of a woman was seen as defilement of the whole community and thus a means to shame the male members of the rival community. Women's bodies became the site on which the battle of nationhood was fought.

The kind of sexual savagery that women had to go through during partition riots, point to a shocking erosion of human values in those tumultuous times. The root of

¹⁹ Ismat Chughtai, *My Friend, My Enemy: Essays, Reminiscences, Portraits*. Translated and introduced by Tahira Naqvi, Kali for Women, New Delhi, 2001, p.3

²⁰ Kavita Daiya, 'Honourable Resolutions: Gendered Violence, Ethnicity, and the Nation', *Alternatives* 27, 2002, pp. 219-247.

²¹ Tai Yong and Gyanesh Kudaisya, *The Aftermath of Partition in South Asia*, Routledge Publication, London, 2000, p. 24.

²² Jisha Menon, 'Rehearsing the Partition: Gendered Violence in "Aur Kitne Tukde"', *Feminist Review*, No. 84, Post Colonial Theatres, 2006, pp.29-47.

this violence is generally seen in rigid patriarchal control over the life and sexuality of women since the late 19th century. As Debali Mookerjea-Leonard argues²³:

Through a peculiar sort of analogical reasoning, cultural nationalists around the turn of 19th century conflated the symbolic purity associated with the inner, or private, domain with actual bodies of women. Interpellating the chaste women's body as the bearer of an essential Indian/ Hindu identity, the period witnessed her transformation into an icon of the honour of the nation, the religious community and the untainted household. That is to say, nationalists engaged in a process of myth making whereby feminine sexual purity was granted the status of the transcendental signifier of national virtues...National anxiety about colonialism manifested itself in, and intensified, gender pathologies, and the discursive developments around chastity in the colonial and nationalist era clearly had concrete consequences for women [particularly during the outbreak of communal/ethnic violence, as it happened around partition] because their bodies were not simply sites of patriarchal constraint and violence.

In similar vein, Jisha Menon argues that “The symbolic elevation of ‘woman’ as the embodiment of the sanctified, inner recesses of culture and tradition ironically positioned the real women as the targets of violent assertions of family, community and nation”.²⁴

The irrational and undue concern for the protection of this ‘honour’ led many families to kill their women by their own hands, fearing that they would be ‘defiled’ by the men of the rival community. Many women chose to or were made to choose death by committing ‘mass suicides’. Such episodes, as we have seen in the famous incident at Thoa Khalsa in Rawalpindi district, was/is celebrated as an act of ‘exemplary bravery and sacrifice’ by women of the Sikh community to save the ‘honour’ of the community. Historians and feminists have, however, questioned the use of term ‘suicide’ for such acts and the voluntary nature of it. Menon and Bhasin (1998), for example, argue that these women did not voluntarily endorse the honour code and chose death. Had they not committed suicide, there was still a great likelihood of their being killed by their own kith and kin in the name of ‘honour’. Gyanendra Pandey prefers the term ‘martyrdom’ to describe these acts. Urvashi Butalia , argues that “so patriarchal are notions of violence, that we only see it as relating to men” and “so communalised have such notions become, that we only see it as relating to the ‘other’,

²³ Debali Mookerjea- Leonard , ‘Jyotirmoyee Devi: Writing History, Making Citizens’, *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2005, pp. 1-39.

²⁴ Jisha Menon, ‘Rehearsing the Partition: Gendered Violence in “Aur Kitne Tukde”’, *Feminist Review*, No. 84, Post Colonial Theatres, 2006, pp.29-47.

the ‘aggressor’” This hides many such instances where the perpetrators of violence were men from the same community. “For just as there were ‘voluntary’ suicides, so also there were mass murders²⁵”. In fact, during these tumultuous times, the women became “a pawn on the chessboard of patriarchal gamesmanship²⁶”.

It is estimated that by the time the tide of violence around partition subsided, about 75,000 women had become victims of rape and abduction. As discussed earlier, the women had become the chief target of attack in partition-related violence that raged since the middle of August 1946. The number of cases of abduction of women also increased as time progressed, forcing the All India Congress Committee to acknowledge the issue in its resolution passed after its 54th session held in Meerut from November 23-25, 1946, which put it in clear terms that, “women who have been abducted and forcibly married must be restored to their homes”²⁷. In April 1947, when the number of abductions of women surged in Punjab, Nehru urged the governor of the province, Sir Evan Jenkins, to “take special interest” in the issue and reminded him that “nothing adds to popular passion more than stories of abductions of women, and as long as these abducted women are not rescued trouble will simmer and might possibly blaze out²⁸”. However, the issue of recovery of abducted women was taken up at the level of two countries only from November 1947 when the scale of violence and migration dwindled somewhat. The All India Congress Committee at its session held in Delhi on November 16, 1947 said:

During these disorders [due to partition violence], large number of women have been abducted on either side and there have been forcible conversions on a large scale. No civilised people can recognise such conversions, and there is nothing more heinous than abduction of women. Every effort therefore, must be made on behalf of the Governments of the two Dominions and of East and West Punjab that forcible conversions will not be recognised and that they would co-operate in the recovery of abducted women.²⁹

²⁵ Urvashi Butalia, ‘Community, State and Gender’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.28, Issue No.17, April 24, 1993, pp. ws-12-21

²⁶ This phrase has been borrowed from, Tai Yong and Gyanesh Kudaisya, *The Aftermath of Partition in South Asia*, Routledge Publication, London, 2000, pp.5-6

²⁷ Nripendra Nath Mitra (ed.), *The Indian Annual Register: An Annual Digest of Public Affairs of India, Vol.2, July-December 1946*, Published by The Annual Register Office, Calcutta, 1946, pp.123-24

²⁸ Nehru to Jenkins on 4th April 1947, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Second Series, Vol.2, Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, New Delhi, 1984, pp.303-304.

²⁹ *The Hindu*, November 17, 1947.

On the initiative of Mridula Sarabhai, an Inter-Dominion Conference attended by senior government officials and social workers from both sides, took place in Lahore on 6th December 1947, which subsequently set up the official machinery to recover the abducted women from both sides. It was also made clear that conversions after 1st of March 1947 would not be recognised and more importantly “the wishes of the persons concerned are irrelevant” and therefore, “no statements of such persons were to be recorded before the magistrates”³⁰. Clearly, in the recovery operation the agency of women victims was not to be recognised and as we have seen while going through the accounts of such women (in the chapter on ‘Women victims of Partition’), many vehemently protested against being ‘rescued’. It should be noted here that a number of these women, after having gone through tremendous suffering, had somehow managed to adjust to their new lives and being taken away forcibly from their homes meant another uprootment for them. However, the state looked at these women only in terms of their religious identity and accordingly repatriated them to Pakistan or India.

By December 1949 the number of recovered women in both countries was 12000 for India and 6000 for Pakistan. The slow pace of recovery was often a matter of heated discussion in the Constituent Assembly and in one of its session in December 1949 some members even asked the government to wage a war against Pakistan to recover ‘their’ women³¹. This rescue operation continued for nine more years though the number of recoveries dropped down considerably after initial years. It died down completely in 1954 when both the governments decided not to rescue any more women without their wishes. An important reason for such a decision was the complex issue of children born out of these women from “the wrongful sexual union”. None of the states were willing to accept these children as their citizens. Moreover, the social workers from both sides also vehemently protested against any policy to separate the women from their children.

Many of the women who did not wish to be recovered and sent back to their families had argued that their families would not accept them back to their fold owing to the notions of purity and pollution. Their apprehensions came true, as the government

³⁰ *The Times of India*, December 8, 1947.

³¹ Ritu Menon & Kamla Bhasin, ‘Recovery, Rupture and Resistance : Indian State and Abduction of Women during Partition’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, April 24, 1993, p. ws-2-ws11

later discovered. After hearing about many such cases, Prime Minister Nehru had to issue a public appeal urging the people to “strain every nerve to help these unfortunate women to go back to their homes” and asked their friends and relatives to “welcome them back and give them all comfort and solace after their harrowing experience”. He added that, “any social custom that supports this attitude [the refusal of families to accept their women] must be condemned³²”. However, this appeal largely went unheeded. As noted Hindi novelist Krishna Sobti points out, the Muslim women rescued from India and sent back “were accepted in Pakistan more easily” and hence “somehow rehabilitated in society” but “Hindus, as a whole, did not accept their women back” and “there were some families which surrounded such women with deep silences”. Sikhs, she argues, “were able to deal with the women who had suffered, better than the others” and “showed a greater sensitivity to the fact that these unfortunate women were part of their families, that they were their wives, sisters, daughters...”³³.

For the unattached women, the state assumed the role of ‘*parens patriae*’ and established various relief centres, ashrams and also training cum employment centres where these women could be helped in acquiring skills so that they could earn a livelihood on their own. For this purpose a separate ‘Women’s Section’ was set up on November 24, 1947 within the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation. The government also encouraged these women to organise themselves in cooperative societies and provided them grants and loans at nominal rates of interest. It also helped them in procurement of land, tools, machinery and marketing their products. However, as time progressed, the State started seeing ‘Partition’ as a ‘thing of past’ and began to withdraw from its responsibilities.³⁴ This is clear from the fact that in the first 40 years of their existence itself, the administrative control over these centres changed twice from Central to State Government. Within the Central Government itself, they were tossed to four different ministries and within the state they changed two departments.

³² *The Hindustan Times*, January 17, 1948.

³³ Krishna Sobti and Alok Bhalla, ‘Memory and History’, *India International Centre Quarterly*, Vol.24, No.2/3, Crossing Boundaries, Monsoon 1997, pp.55-78, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23005432> (accessed on 06/01/2015)

³⁴ Anjali Bhardwaj, ‘Partition of India and Women’s Experiences’, *Social Scientist*, Vol.32/ 5-6 May-June 2004, pp.69-86

The chequered administrative history of these Centres seems to have made them step-children of the Delhi administration. Initially, while the focus was on production, gradually the focus shifted from production to training. Despite a number of protests by the women workers over the years, the government has consistently denied the demand for regularisation of service on the grounds that they were pie rate workers who did not have a continuous service with the government. This was done despite women workers being subjected to all the formal rules and regulations that time-rate workers are usually subjected to. These include fixed eight-hour daily schedule, six day week, attendance register, and monthly payment.³⁵ Overall, it seems that the government's desire and its efforts to rehabilitate these women victims of partition and help them to live a life of dignity weakened as partition no longer remained relevant in wider public memory. Looking back, their demands for standardisation of wages, regularisation of services and a decent amount in the form of old-age pension appear very genuine and hence, the government should have accepted them long back. But these demands were never met and hence, the struggle of these women still continues in some measure even after the passage of nearly seven decades after partition. Nevertheless, their journey since the trauma of partition has been truly inspirational.

As Jasodhara Bagchi and Subhoranjan Dasgupta put it:

The women of partition refused to succumb to the dictates of fate. Both in Punjab and Bengal [as elsewhere] they displayed exemplary resilience, fortitude, patience and strength to emerge victors against the combined nightmare of assault, exodus, displacement, grinding poverty and broken psyche. They not only kept their new shelter in camps and refugee settlements intact but also ventured out to acquire skills and earn.³⁶

Gargi Chakravarty terms this struggle of the refugee women for food and shelter as “a mile stone in the annals of the women's movement”.³⁷ In her opinion:

Too often, women's experience of partition becomes a story of loss and victimhood, of violence and oppression. While the focus is valid and deeply relevant, it does somewhat marginalise other areas

³⁵ Report of People's Union for Civil Liberties, “‘ We Demand Our Rights’ Refugee Women's Long Journey”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, June 8, 1989, pp.1507-1510

³⁶ Jasodhara Bagchi & Subhoranjan Dasgupta, ‘The Problem’, *Seminar* 510, Feb 2002 ,pp.12-14

³⁷ Gargi Chakravarty, *Coming out of Partition: Refugee Women of Bengal*, Srishti Publishers & Distributors, New Delhi, 2005, p.xiv

of experience that are no less relevant. These relate to the ways in which uprooted women have faced the enormous challenge of rebuilding and reshaping their lives in alien conditions and how some of their concerns evolved into a new women's movement³⁸.

Not only did it bring the women to the public domain, enlarging the social spaces available to them and affecting the hitherto practiced purdah or seclusion but it also marked the emergence of the new woman who was self-reliant, independent, self-made and the one who could challenge, and not succumb to the male domination. The patriarchal norms of behaviour and thought changed to a certain extent. This also had the affect of modifying the caste and regional culture, thus in turn affecting the marriage arrangements and educational mobility of girls and women. More and more women came to the streets to fight for their existence, get employed in any venture possible. Thus, she became a new partner of man in the struggle for a new existence.

What partition of the country and violence surrounding it also led to, was the largest migration of human population in history gearing around a single event. Wherever communal rioting on a large scale took place, people left their homes and gathered in camps near places where they could feel safe. Initially, it was thought to be a temporary phenomenon and people hoped that they could return to their homes once the mayhem ended. At that point of time nobody thought that the conditions will soon deteriorate to such an extent where return would seem suicidal. Once the 3rd June plan was announced and the major political parties agreed to it, Pakistan no longer remained a theoretical proposition. With the days of independence and partition coming nearer, ethnic cleansing of sorts began, where minorities within the districts were systemically targeted so that its claim to be a part of India or Pakistan could be strengthened on the basis of majority population. The late declaration of the Boundary Commission Award and the high handedness with which it was prepared contributed to making migration a frenzied affair. People, thus, moved in hordes across the borders, facing loot, murder, arson and rape in the hands of riotous mobs. The lack of foresight, proper planning and coordination forced the people to cover huge distances in foot convoys, motor lorries, railways etc under inhospitable, inhuman condition with very little or no food or water. We have seen in detail how painful and heard-rending the tales of migration of the common masses have been. The indescribable suffering could be gauged from the fact that in the miles-long foot columns, very

³⁸ *Ibid.*

often, the frail and elderly women and old people, who were not able to withstand the rigours of the journey, were left to die or fend for themselves. We also hear of cases of mothers giving the infants their own urine to quench their thirst, all the wells en route poisoned by the rowdies of other community. We have seen through the accounts of refugees as well as the then serving civil servants, how miles long of refugee foot caravans trekked their journeys across the new borders fighting against all the odds. We also hear of transportation of people in lorries and trucks like cattle, standing for hours without having any little space to move. The trials and tribulations of those undertaking the railway journey across the borders shows that even in the calamitous times as these, corrupt people did not let go the opportunity to harass the refugees. In many instances, the trains were attacked by roving band of hooligans who looted and killed every single passenger travelling. In the words of Pankaj Mishra: “Trains carrying nothing but corpses through a desolate countryside became the totemic image of the savagery of partition³⁹”. In the chapter on migration we have also seen how the experience of partition migration for the rich upper classes who could afford to fly by aeroplane was entirely different from the common masses that used other means to migrate.

Among the north Indian states it was Delhi, the capital, which experienced the largest influx of refugees, mostly because it seemed to offer comparatively better economic opportunities to the predominantly urban refugees from West Pakistan. It is estimated that about half a million people, mostly Hindus and Sikhs came to Delhi in the wake of partition, while about 3.3 lakh Muslims left the city. Its population, which according to the 1941 census was 9.18 lakh, nearly doubled to 17.44 lakh by 1951. More than one-fourth (28.4 per cent) of the total population of Delhi now comprised of partition refugees.⁴⁰ Such a huge influx of people from diverse social, economic, political and cultural background gradually transformed it in various aspects.

The existing city infrastructure was put under severe strain by the huge and sudden influx of refugees, who upon their arrival occupied every conceivable space they

³⁹ Pankaj Mishra, ‘Exit Wounds: The legacy of Indian Partition’, 13 August 2007, *The New Yorker*, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2007/08/13/exit-wounds>, (accessed on : 1 January 2019)

⁴⁰ V.N. Datta, ‘Punjabi Refugees and the Urban Development of Greater Delhi’ in R.E. Frykenberg (ed), *Delhi Through the Ages: Selected Essays in Urban History, Culture and Society*, OUP, Delhi, 1993, pp 287-96

could: schools, colleges, temples, mosques, gurudwaras, bus stands, and railway platforms etc. One- third of them occupied the houses vacated by the Muslims and most of those houses could not be restored to their original owners when they returned to reclaim them. To provide temporary accommodation to the rest, the government set up a number of camps in various parts of the city wherein refugees were provided food, water, clothes and medical help. Initially, three major camps were set up at Kingsway, Karol Bagh and Shahdara. More camps were later set up at Purana Quila, Anand Parbat, Bela Road and Tis Hazari. As constructions of new houses required a number of things to fall in place, the most difficult being the acquisition of land, which was a time taking task, a number of refugees had to stay in these camps for many months. The life in the camps was very difficult. Mostly over congested, they offered very limited quantity of food, milk and water to its inmates. The facilities for health and sanitation were also inadequate. In such a scenario, the fluctuations of weather made the matters worse. We have seen in the second chapter, the kind of suffering the people had to undergo in camps like those at Purana Quila, Humayun Tomb, Kurukshetra and Kingsway Camp etc. this suffering was all the more acute for the women who had to go through all sorts of exploitation.

The government decided to finally close down all the existing camps in the city by 31st October 1949. It had been making efforts to construct new houses for these people ever since the initial influx. The number of colonies that came up in due course changed the landscape of the city significantly, particularly to its west and south. The boundaries of Greater Delhi expanded from 198 square kilometres in 1951 to 323 square kilometres in 1961, to bring within its ambit the neighbouring towns where refugees increasingly took residence⁴¹. We shall review the government's entire project of housing the refugees, a little later while discussing state's effort of rehabilitation.

For now, let us see what more transformation Delhi witnessed in addition to its physical transformation.

⁴¹ Tai Yong and Gyanesh Kudaisya, *The Aftermath of Partition in South Asia*, Routledge Publication, London, 2000, p. 199.

Since the majority of the refugees belonged to the west Punjab, a ‘Punjabisation’ of sorts began with gradual but definite changes to its politics, economics, languages, food, costumes, art and cinema etc. There was a lot of resentment at the ongoing changes among the older population of the city who felt that “nothing remained of that speech and that etiquette, that humanity, that warmth and the colour by which Delhi once came to be recognised⁴²”. The refugees were “variously seen as clever, go-getters who cared nothing for decent society, as the dirty refugees who could stop at nothing, or as leeches feeding off society⁴³”. Delhi, the older population felt, had become an extension of Punjab. “Delhiwalas felt like a cat on the hot tin roof. The Bansals, Dixits, Mathurs, Srivastavas, the Ansaris, Kidwais and Qureshis were fast losing out to the newcomers – Aroras, Batras, Chawlas, Malhotras, Sethis and Singhs. Their acquisitiveness and often coarse manners did not go well with the people⁴⁴”.

The economic profile of the new population was very different from that of the Muslim population that left Delhi. While the outgoing Muslims were mostly artisans, craftsmen, petty traders and labourers, the incoming Hindus and Sikhs mostly belonged to the urban areas and were non-cultivating landlords, money lenders, small and big businessmen and people belonging to the services sector like doctors, engineers, architects, teachers, lawyers, clerks and administrators etc. This predominantly urban population led to the gradual urbanisation of the capital. Small section of the rich refugees, who had been able to manage their migration safely, used the considerable wealth at their command to become real estate owners and in fact, was the major reason for the spurt of prices of property in Delhi. Using their reach to the power corridors they soon became a part of the big businesses. They “already had education, contacts and status” and as a result of these advantages were “eventually able to ease themselves into a new and sometimes more profitable, by lobbying for jobs, gaining access to the most desirable vacated properties and extracting government loans⁴⁵”. A majority of the refugees, however, were pauperised by the

⁴² Shahid Ahmad Dehalvi, *Dilli ki Bipta*, p.150. As quoted in Gyanendra Pandey, ‘Partition and Independence in Delhi- 1947-48’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.32, Issue No.36, September 6, 1997, pp.2261-2272.

⁴³ Neel Kamal Puri, ‘The Outsider’, *Seminar* 567, November 2006, pp. 27-29.

⁴⁴ Jesse Kochar, ‘Guests from the west: A look back at Delhi after 1947’, *The Hindu*, June 3, 2012

⁴⁵ Yasmin Khan, *The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan*, Penguin Books, New Delhi, p.173.

partition mayhem and hardly had the wherewithal to sustain themselves and these were the people “who suffered forced resettlement, or who languished forgotten for decades in displaced person homes, camps and squatters’ colonies⁴⁶”. They took to any occupation that could give them some income. Thus, they become vendors, hawkers, mechanics, craftsmen etc and moved to newer vocations as their conditions improved. Owing to their hard work and perseverance, many refugees earned a big repute in field of business, trade and industry, with the passage of time. The Oberoi group of hotels, the Bahrison Booksellers, the Volga and Kwaliti restaurants, Bhatia Opticians, Escorts tractors, Frick India Refrigeration & Air-conditioning, Bharat Steel Tubes, and Ranbaxy Laboratory etc. are all examples of the refugee enterprise. So are the countless other small and medium business enterprises in Delhi established by the refugees in the wake of partition and are now fairly successful names here.

Beyond the physical and economic changes, socio-cultural and political changes in Delhi were also noteworthy. The erstwhile urdu-based culture was slowly overshadowed by Punjabi culture. The “food culture of the capital also changed the Punjabi way, with traditional Punjabi cuisine gaining increasing popularity as time progressed. *Tandoori* became the food of Delhi, and *Mughlai*, the older cuisine genre eclipsed gradually. The emergent food platter of the city came to be dominated by Punjabi delicacies, both vegetarian and non-vegetarian⁴⁷”: Butter Chicken, *Tandoori* Chicken, *Moth Kachori*, *Dahi Bhalley*, *Papri Chaat*, *Dal Makkhani*, *Rajma-Chawal*, being the most mouth-watering additions. “The concept of *sanjha-chulha* or community kitchen was also carried to this part of the border wherein a common *tandoor* or earthen oven was shared by the women of the community to bake *rotis*⁴⁸”. The culture of eating out with families in the newly mushrooming *dhabas* and restaurants also began.

The political field too, was not bereft of changes. Right wing organisations like the Hindu Mahasabha and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) ran few refugee camps in the city and used these places to indoctrinate new followers to their ideology. In fact, these camps became “a pond of party politics” where anti-

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Shashi Bhushan Deo, ‘Capital Cuisine’, *The Hindu*, July 28, 2018.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

government (and thus, anti-Congress) feelings were aroused⁴⁹. After having gone through tremendous suffering at the hands of Muslim hooligans during the partition riots, the refugees showed “a propensity to become ‘vote bank’ for communal and sectarian politics”⁵⁰. Barring two general elections (1957 and 1984), in all elections since partition the BJS/BJP secured more than one-quarter of the total votes polled in Delhi. In 2014 general elections the BJP won all the seven parliamentary seats here. The 2015 state legislative elections, however, chose an alternative to the Congress and the BJP in the form of Aam Admi Party (AAP), which riding on the plank of development and anti-corruption won 67 out of 70 seats. The politics of 21st century Delhi, it appears, has become more fluid with people now voting beyond communal and caste considerations. In the 17th general elections 2019, the BJP has again won all the seven Lok Sabha seats from Delhi.

Going through various refugee accounts, we also saw the kind of struggle they went through to resurrect their lives. In this task, the government too played a very important role through its plan of rehabilitation. This was an enormous task which the newly independent state undertook right at its birth. A task so daunting and complex, that it can be said to be the first case of disaster management in the country. The sheer numbers and heterogeneous character of refugees made the task very difficult. However, the government began an all out effort to deal with the task at hand. On September 6, 1947 the government established a separate ministry to deal with the issues concerning the refugees. It was named as the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation. A Rehabilitation and Development Board was also set up later in 1948 to further expedite the process of resettling the refugees.

Prime Minister Nehru made it clear his government’s resolve of rehabilitating refugees and added that this was “not merely a humanitarian task but one affecting the future of India” and therefore “we cannot permit the real wealth of India as represented by millions of men & women, who have been dispossessed and driven away from their homes, to waste away with no opportunity of settling down again and taking full part in creative and constructive activities of nation. We cannot permit the

⁴⁹ Mridula Sarabhai Private Papers, ‘Note on the Mood of the Refugees from West Pakistan in India’, File No. JN/1947-48, Dated 11.1.1948, NMML, New Delhi

⁵⁰ Tai Yong and Gyanesh Kudaisya, *The Aftermath of Partition in South Asia*, Routledge Publication, London, 2000, p. 196.

growing population to be deprived of home and education and training and opportunities of becoming efficient and productive citizens of India’⁵¹.

Very soon a number of housing schemes were launched. By April 1948, the government had begun the task of setting up three satellite townships at Sheikh Sarai, Kalka ji and Tihar, along with the development of Shadipur extension scheme⁵². The Delhi Improvement Trust provided special facilities to the refugees for the grant of plots of land within its jurisdiction.⁵³ All unallotted plots and plots not earmarked for specific purpose in the New Delhi Northern Extension Scheme, Industrial Area Scheme and Western Extension Karol Bagh Scheme as well as the whole of the new Shadipur Scheme with the exception of the area required for Poor Class Slum Clearance Rehousing was also reserved for allotment to refugees. As a result of these efforts, a number of housing colonies in Delhi came up around this period like Lajpat Nagar, Rajinder Nagar, Nizamuddin, Punjabi Bagh, Rehgar Pura, Jungpura, Karol Bagh, Greater Kailash, Defence Colony etc. By the end of 1950, about 27 refugee settlements had cropped up in Delhi.

Even then, the problem of housing was not solved completely. The Ministry of Rehabilitation’s Progress Report published in 1952 claimed that most of the refugees have been settled in their new conditions. However, the newspaper reports of the time contested these government claims. Often the bureaucratic hurdles imposed by the officialdom posed problems in the allotment of houses. The terms and conditions for the allotment of it were strict and also incomprehensible to refugees. There were also cases of fraudulent multiple allotments. By the end of 1958, the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation had provided Delhi with a total of 69,400 dwelling units sheltering about 53 per cent of the refugee population. One-third of the refugees had already settled in the homes evacuated by the Muslims. The government also came up with a proper evacuee property law in 1954 to legally settle the issue.

The measures undertaken by the government, though not without its shortcomings, went a long way to provide a permanent shelter to a substantial majority of them.

⁵¹ Nehru in a speech on 24th January 1948, *The Statesman*, January 25, 1948.

⁵² Deputy Commissioner’s Files, File No.B2 (37)/ General Branch, 1948 (Subject: Scheme for Rehabilitation Township near Delhi Cantt and Palam Aerodrome, 1948), Delhi Archives.

⁵³ Chief Commissioner’s files, File no. 3(60)/1948, R&R Branch, in a letter from Sir Arthur Dea, CIE,MC to the Secretary(R&R) to CC, Dated 10th April 1948

Later, it also passed the Displaced Persons Compensation & Rehabilitation Act, 1954 under which by the end of January 1955 itself over 41,000 displaced persons were paid a compensation amount totalling Rs 9 crores⁵⁴.

Another major task before the government was to bring the displaced population in the economic mainstream. For this purpose various schemes and programmes were launched by it. For the untrained, a number of training cum employment schemes was undertaken. These institutes provided technical and vocational training to the willing refugees. In addition to it, shops were also allotted at nominal rent to those willing to earn through business. The entrepreneurs among them were also encouraged to set up factories and government provided easy loans for it. For big businesses and industrialists, the government came up with another scheme of providing plants, equipments and machinery on hire-purchase system. For the agriculturist class and the service class too it began a number of schemes. For example, to aid the displaced teachers, a separate Refugee Section was set up in September 1947 and Transfer Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs and Employment Exchanges were asked to undertake the task of registration and providing employment to them. In June 1949, it was decided that some benefits of pay etc that was given to government and government-aided schools would be given to refugee teachers as well. For the lawyers too, the government took new policy measures. It made them eligible for loans up to Rs 3000 and also addressed the provincial High Courts and subordinate courts to relax their rules to enable them to practice in the courts. The architects among the refugees were also given the facility of loans up to Rs 3000. Similarly, the erstwhile government employees were settled in various government offices with proper perks and privileges.

Educating the refugees was another important task undertaken by the government for which it took a number of steps in the years following partition. In fact as early as 1st April 1947, a government circular was issued, relaxing the conditions of admission for the refugee students. In addition to increasing the seats in the classes, multiple shifts were also introduced. As the flow of refugees began increasing since August 1947, a separate education section was opened on 18th August 1947. A number of new

⁵⁴ File No. 29 (2) /1955, Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation, Press Information Bureau, Shree M.C Khanna's address to the Advisory Board, New Delhi on February 6, 1955

schools and colleges were opened. Steps were also taken to provide educational loans. By the end of 1948, twenty seven schools for boys and girls had been opened in various parts of Delhi. During the first five years ending March 1953, the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation claimed to have spent Rs 5 crores on the education of displaced students⁵⁵. By the end of 1955-56, the Government of India decided to hand over the entire responsibility of educating the refugees to the provincial governments⁵⁶.

An assessment of the government's efforts to re-settle the refugees in Delhi shows that a problem which plagued the functioning of the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation and its machinery, was the lack of co-ordination between the government of Delhi and the Central government. Though the Chief Commissioner was the person having direct responsibility for rehabilitation in Delhi, the Ministry often undertook some of the schemes directly under it, citing the compulsion of circumstances. Also, there were frictions regarding the financial matters and slow pace of work due to official red tapism. Prime Minister himself acknowledged this in an official note⁵⁷:

The Relief and Rehabilitation Ministry was formed to meet a grave crisis and was meant to function with speed and a subsequent development of this was the Development and Rehabilitation Board, which was meant to be autonomous so as not to get tied up in official red-tape and routine. Unfortunately, the power of red-tape was too great and the Relief and Rehabilitation Ministry partly succumbed to it and the Development and Rehabilitation Board could never function with any speed or independence.

Looking in retrospect, however, the government efforts, though not without its shortcomings, appear commendable, especially when seen in light of the personnel and financial constraints that it faced. It has to be noted that the country was facing a famine-like situation in 1947 and Minister of Food Rajendra Prasad had in fact warned of a grave famine. There was a deficit of five to six million tons of food grains because of the failure of Kharif and Rabi crops in 1946 and of the wheat crop in

⁵⁵ Chief Commissioner's Files, File No.F1(17)/54 A, No. 3/23/54-BUD., Dated 14th May, 1954, Department of Relief and Rehabilitation, Delhi Archives

⁵⁶ Chief Commissioner's Files, File No.F8 (5)/52, Letter No. RHA (E) 8 (50)/52. Letter from C.P. Gupta, I.C.S., Deputy Secretary, G.O.I. to all State governments, dated: 22nd April, 1953.

⁵⁷ Nehru in a Note written on 14th November 1948, File No. 29(108)/48-PMS. As cited in: See, S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of J.L. Nehru*, Second Series, Volume 8, Pub. by Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1989, p.144

1947⁵⁸. In addition to the precarious economic situation there were urgent tasks of maintenance of communal unity, dealing with Pakistan's intrusion in Kashmir from October 1947 onwards and also the complex task of unification of states, to name a few. "The gigantic dimension of the task" as Sardar Patel pointed out, required "honest and efficient working of the administrative machinery in full blast⁵⁹". As Prime Minister Nehru said in a debate in the Dominion Legislature on the problem of refugees and their rehabilitation on November 29, 1947, he did not know what the future generation might say about their handling of this problem, but he did think history would record that, vast and colossal as the problem was, something which might have shaken the Government and the whole social order, the people of India stood up to it bravely, tackled it, and, he hoped, ultimately solved it to the advantage of the nation⁶⁰. In that light, the State's efforts for rehabilitation for the partition refugees in Delhi appears reasonably successful.

Many refugees, however, are reluctant to recognise State's effort to rehabilitate them and claim to have resurrected their lives on their own. Going through their personal accounts, one could feel their suffering and the amount of resilience that they showed against heavy odds. That the second generation of the refugees could live a reasonably comfortable life under secure conditions and plan for a better future, can be largely attributed to the toil and hard work of the first generation of the refugees.

The identity of a refugee or migrant, it seems, remains forged out of the reality of having two homes. He lives with two homes in his mind- nostalgia marks one, and the endeavour the other. And the mind expands to accommodate both.⁶¹ A refugee's world view primarily rests on two emotions: being prepared for the worst, because the worst had happened to you, and an aching for lost homelands in the blood- childhood that can never be recovered, legacies that can never be inherited, rooms that can never be inhabited.⁶² It is therefore, interesting to see if the first or the second generation of the refugees have the urge to travel back to their ancestral places and whether there is

⁵⁸ See, S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of J.L. Nehru*, Second Series, Volume 4, Pub. by Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1986, p.70

⁵⁹ Sardar Patel in an appeal made to public servants on 3 September 1947 'to realise the gravity of the unprecedented situation that imperilled the lives of millions of their countrymen on other side of Punjab...' as in P.N. Chopra (ed), *The Collected Works of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*, Volume XII (1 January 1947-31 December 1947), Konark Publishers, New Delhi, pp. 196-97.

⁶⁰ *The Hindu*, November 30, 1947.

⁶¹ Neel Kamal Puri, 'The Outsider', *Seminar* 567, November 2006, p.27-29.

⁶² Malavika Sangghvi, 'Refugee Recollections', *The Times of India*, April 8, 1999.

nostalgia for the lost home. Once we go through the accounts of the refugees, we see that the answers to these questions are not simple. Very often, the responses, as Ravinder Kaur argues⁶³, “depend on the way questions are framed to the respondents, that is, focussing on Pakistan may elicit a different response than when asked about Punjab.” She argues further that: “Often the role of states in creating popular discourses is underestimated. The creation of a dominating discourse around high-pitched nationalism, patriotism and territorial integrity may sideline counter-discourses.” Furthermore, “what we chose to remember or forget, to publicly speak or remain silent about, are deeply political gestures” and therefore, we cannot read the responses of the refugees without keeping in mind the dominant political narrative of the time⁶⁴.

Another important issue is the identity of being a ‘refugee’. The second generation among the partition refugees express their deep displeasure at being called a ‘refugee’. This is the case not only with those settled in India but also with those settled abroad. Partition, it appears, continues to exist in the lives of those who were caught in the whirlwind of it. “Grave and invisible legacies” of it lives “on in less tangible ways, in emotional scarring and sporadic political friction” which still runs “through individual lives, families and whole regions, pitching Indians and Pakistanis into new conflicts and paving the way for the troubled bilateral relationship which blights South Asia to the present day⁶⁵”.

⁶³ Ravinder Kaur, ‘Locating State In ‘non- State’ Spaces’, *Seminar-56*, November 2006, pp.58-62. The interviews were conducted by her in various resettlement colonies in Delhi during the aftermath of 1999 Kargil conflict, the immediate background being the attack on Indian parliament in 2001, the period of intense hostility between India and Pakistan. And again in 2004-05 when there was a thaw in the relationship evidenced by the goodwill tours of the national cricket teams and resumption of the Wagah bus service. She found that, “The responses [of the interviewees] differed in these contrasting political scenarios, particularly with respect to how freely the respondents could express themselves without conjoining the issues of patriotism and nationalism with their remembrance of homeland.”

⁶⁴ Ravinder Kaur, ‘Curating the Wound: The Public Memory of Partition Remain Woefully Caste-Blind’ August 8, 2017, <http://www.caravanmagazine.in/vantage/public-memory-partition-remains-caste-blind>, accessed on: February 27, 2019.

⁶⁵ Yasmin Khan, *The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan*, Penguin Books, New Delhi, p.187.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. PRIMARY SOURCES

Delhi State Archives

Chief Commissioner's Files

- Relief and Rehabilitation Department (1947-1959)
- Department of Industries and Labour, Delhi State, 1955
- Delhi Improvement Trust, LSG, 1949
- Local Self Government, 1959

Divisional Commissioner's Files (1947-1950)

- NDMC, General Branch, Labour & Municipal Report

Nehru Memorial Museum & Library, New Delhi

Private Papers

- Rameshwari Nehru Papers
- Mridula Sarabhai Papers (Microfilm)

Newspapers

- *Hindustan Times*- 1947, 1948, 2010, 2016
- *Indian Express*- 2007
- *Mail Today*- 2009-2011
- The Economic Times*- 2009
- *The Hindu*- 1946, 1947, 2004, 2010, 2013
- The New Yorker*- 2010

- *The Statesman*- 1946-1948

- *The Times of India*-1946, 1947, 1948, 1949, 1950, 1952, 1987, 1997, 1999, 2007, 2010

-*The Wall Street Journal*- 2011

PUBLISHED PRIMARY SOURCES

After Partition, Modern India Series, The Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, Delhi, 1948.

Chopra, P.N. (ed), *The Collected Works of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*, Volume XII (1 January 1947-31 December 1947), Konark Publishers, New Delhi.

Durga Das (ed.), *Sardar Patel's Correspondence 1945-50*, Vol. IV, Navjiwan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1966.

Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Vol. 15, Second Series, Vol.1, Vol.2, Vol.4, Vol.5, Vol.6, Vol.7, Vol.8

The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. LXXXIX (89), The Publication Division, New Delhi, 1983.

The Indian Annual Register: An Annual Digest of Public Affairs of India, Vol. 2, July-December 1946, Published by The Annual Register Office

Mansergh, Nicholas (ed), *The Transfer of Power 1947-47: The Cabinet Mission 23 March-29 June 1946*, Vol.7, London, 1977

Mansergh, Nicholas (ed), *The Transfer of Power 1942-47: The Interim Government 3 July-1 November 1946*, Vol.8, London, 1979

Mansergh, Nicholas (ed), *The Transfer of Power 1942-47: The Fixing of a Time Limit 4 November 1946-22 March 1947*, Vol.9, London, 1980

Mansergh, Nicholas (ed), *The Transfer of Power 1942-47: The Mountbatten Viceroyalty Formulation of a Plan 22 March- 30 May 1947*, London, 1981

Mansergh, Nicholas (ed), *The Transfer of Power 1942-47: The Mountbatten Viceroyalty Announcement and Reception of the 3 June Plan 31 may- 7 July 1947*, London, 1982

Kumar, Ravindra (ed), *The Selected Works of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad*, Vol.3 (1947-48), Atlantic Publishers, New Delhi, 1991

Tandon, Purushottam Das, *To Noakhali- With the Congress President*, New Literature, Allahabad, October 1946

Shankar, V. (ed), *Select Correspondence of Sardar Patel: 1945-1950*, Vol.1, Navjivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1977.

II. SECONDARY SOURCES

BOOKS:

Arnold, David and Hardiman, David (eds.) *Subaltern Studies VIII: Essays in Honour of Ranajit Guha*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1994.

Bandyopadhyaya Sekhar, *Nationalist Movement in India: A Reader*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2009.

Basu, Aparna, Mridula Sarabhai: *Rebel with a Cause*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1996.

Bhalla, Alok, *Memories of a Lost Home*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2006.

Bhattacharjea, Ajit, *Countdown to Partition: The Final Days*, HarperCollins Publishers India, 1997.

Bolitho, Hector, *Jinnah: Creator of Pakistan*, Oxford University Press, 1954.

Bopemage, A. *Delhi: A Study in Urban Sociology*, Bombay, University of Bombay Publications, 1957.

Brass, Paul, *Language, Religion and Politics in North India*, Cambridge University Press, 1974.

Brien, Charmaine O', *Flavours of Delhi: A Food Lover's Guide*, Penguin Books India, 2003.

Butalia, Urvashi, *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India*, New Delhi, Penguin Books, 1998.

Chakravarty, Gargi, *Coming out of Partition: Refugee Women of Bengal*, New Delhi, Srishti Publishers & Distributors, 2005.

Chandra, Bipan et al., *India's Struggle for Independence*, Penguin Books India, 1988.

Chopra, Vinod K., *Partition Stories: Mapping Community, Communalism and Gender*, New Delhi, Anamika Publishers and Distributors,

Chughtai, Ismat, *My Friend, My Enemy: Essays, Reminiscences, Portraits*, Tr. By Tahira Naqvi, Kali for Women, New Delhi, 2001.

Dharmvira, *Reminiscences*, New Delhi, Vikash Publishing House Pvt. Ltd. 1990.

Dhulipaa, Venkat, *Creating a New Medina: State Power, Islam and the Quest for Pakistan in Late Colonial North India*, Cambridge University Press, 2015.

Dupont, Veronique, Taylor and Vidal Denis (eds.) *Delhi: Urban Spaces and Human Destinies*, Delhi, Manohar Publishers, 2000.

Engineer, Asghar Ali, *The Gujarat Carnage*, Delhi, Orient Longman, 2003.

Frykenberg, R.E., (ed.) *Delhi Through the Ages: Selected Essays in Urban History, Culture and Society*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1993.

Gilmartin, David, *Empire and Islam: Punjab and the Making of Pakistan*, University of California Press, 1988.

Godbole, Madhav, *The Holocaust of Indian Partition: An Inquest*, Rupa & Co., New Delhi, 2006.

Goyel, Purushhotum *Delhi's March Towards Statehood*, UBSD, New Delhi, 1993.

Gulzar, *Footprints on Zero Line: Writings on the Partition*, Translated by Rakshanda Jalil, Harpers Collins, UP, 2017.

Hasan, Mushirul, *The Partition Omnibus*, OUP, New Delhi, 2000

Hajari, Nisid, *Midnight's Furies: The Deadly Legacy of India's Partition*, Penguin Books, Delhi, 2016.

Jain A.K., *The Making of a Metropolis: Planning & Growth of Delhi*, Delhi, National Book Organization, 1990.

Khan, Yasmin, *The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan*, Penguin Books India, New Delhi, 2007.

Kidwai, Anis, *In Freedom's Shade*, Tr. By Ayesha Kidwai, Penguin Books, New Delhi, 2011.

Khosla, G.D., *Stern Reckoning: A Survey of the Events Leading Up To and Following the Partition of India*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1989.

Mahajan, Sucheta, *Independence and Partition: The Erosion of Colonial Power in India*, India, Sage Publications, 2000.

Mahajan, Sucheta (ed.), H.M. Patel, *Rites of Passage: A Civil Servant Remembers*, Rupa & Company, New Delhi, 2005.

Menon, Ritu and Bhasin, Kamla, *Borders and Boundaries: Women in India's Partition*, Kali for Women, New Delhi, 1998.

Mitra, Ashok, *Delhi Capital City*, Thomson Press (India) Limited, Publication Division, New Delhi, 1970.

Moon, Penderel, *Divide and Quit: An Eyewitness Account of the Partition of India*, Oxford University Press, 1998.

- Moore, R.J., *The Crisis of Indian Unity, 1917-40*, Oxford University Press, 1974.
- Nanda, B.R., *Witness to Partition: A Memoir*, New Delhi, Rupa & Co., 2003.
- Page, David, *Prelude To Partition: The Indian Muslims and the Imperial System of Control 1920-32*, Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Pandey, Gyanendra, *Remembering Partition: Violence, Nationalism and History in India*, Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Philips, C.H. & Waiwright, M.D. (eds.), *Partition of India: Policies and Perspectives, 1937-47*, Allen & Unwin Publication, London, 1970.
- Sarila, Narinder Singh, *The Shadow of the Great Game: The Untold History of Partition of India*, Harper Collins Publishers, 2005.
- Settar, S., & Gupta, Baptista (eds.), *Pangs of Partition*, Indian Council of Historical Research, Manohar Publications, New Delhi, 2002.
- Shankar, V., *My Reminiscences of Sardar Patel*, Vol. 1, Macmillan Company, Delhi, 1974.
- Shaikh, Farzana, *Community and Consensus in Islam: Muslim Representation in Colonial India 1860-1947*, Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Singh Amrik, (eds.), *The Partition in Retrospect*, New Delhi, Anamika Publishers and Distributors, 2000.
- Singh, Anita Inder, *The Origins of Partition of India 1936-1947*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1987.
- Talbot, Ian, *Punjab and the Raj, 1849-1947*, Manohar Publications, New Delhi, 1988.
- Talbot, Philips, *An American Witness to India's Partition*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2007.
- Tarachand, *History of Freedom Movement in India*, Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1961.

Varadarajan, Siddharth, *Gujarat, the Making of a Tragedy*, Delhi, Penguin Books, 2002.

Wolpert, Stanley, *Jinnah of Pakistan*, Oxford University Press, 1985.

White-Spunner, Barney, *Partition: The Story of Indian Independence and the Creation of Pakistan in 1947*, Simon & Schuster India, New Delhi, 2017.

Yong, Tai and Kudaisya, Gyanesh, *The Aftermath of Partition in South Asia*, London, Routledge Publication, 2000.

Yong, Tai and Kudaisya, Gyanesh (ed.), *Partition and Post-Colonial South Asia*, Vol.1, Routledge, London and New York, 2008.

Zakaria, Rafiq, *The Price of Partition*, Mumbai, Bhartiya Vidya Bhawan, 1998.

ARTICLES:

Alexander, Horace G., 'Free India and Her Problems: II-Refugees and Resettlement', *The Manchester Guardian (1901-1959)*, October 1, 1951.

Ashraf, Ajaj, 'Why Memories of Gujarat 2002 Stay', *The Hindu*, April 12, 2013.

Bagchi, Jashodhara & Dasgupta, Subhoranjan, 'The Problem', *Seminar* 510, February 2002, pp.12-14

Bhalla, Alok 'Memory, History and Fictional Representations of the Partition', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.34, Issue No.44, October 30, 1999, pp. 3119-3128

Bhardwaj, Anjali 'Partition of India and Women's Experiences', *Social Scientist*, Vol.32/ 5-6 May-June 2004, pp.69-86

Butalia, Urvashi 'Community State and Gender', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.28, Issue No.17, April 24, 1993, pp.ws-12-21

Butalia, Urvashi, 'The Stuff of History', *Hindustan Times*, August 13, 2016.
<http://www.hindustantimes.com/static/partition/comment/the-stuff-of-history-urvashi-butalia/>

Chanana, Karuna, 'Partition and Family Strategies: Gender-Education Linkages among Punjabi Women in Delhi', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.28, No.17, April 24, 1993, pp.ws25-ws34

Daiya, Kavita "Honourable Resolutions": Gendered Violence, Ethnicity, and the Nation', *Alternatives* 27, 2002, pp. 219-247

Dalrymple, William 'The Great Divide: The Violent Legacy of Partition',
<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/06/29/the-great-divide-books-dalrymple>

Gautam, Satya P., 'Partition, Memories and Reconciliation', *Seminar* 567- November 2006, pp. 62-65

Gilmartin, David, 'Partition, Pakistan and South Asian History: In Search of a Narrative', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol.57, No.4, November, 1998, pp.1068-95.

Gulati, Shilpi, 'Dere Tun Dilli', *Subversions*, Vol.1, Issue No.1. 2013, pp.1-22

Gupta, Ashoka, et al, 'East is East West is West', *Seminar* 510, February 2002

Hasan, Mushirul, 'Memories of a Fragmented Nation: Rewriting the Histories of India's Partition', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.33, Issue No.41, October 10, 1998, pp.2662-2668

Hasan, Mushirul, 'The Fear and Loathing', *Outlook*, June 7, 2004

Jalal, Ayesha, 'Secularist, Subaltern and the Stigma of Communalism: Partition Historiography Revisited', *Modern Asian Studies*, 30, March 3, 1996, pp.681-737

Kalra, Virinder S and Navtej K. Purewal, 'The Strut of the Peacocks: Partition, Travel and the Indo-Pak Border', in Tai Yong Tan and Gyanesh Kudaisya (eds), *Partition and Post-Colonial South Asia*, Vol.3, Routledge, U.K., 2008, pp.305-317.

Kaur, Ravinder 'Locating State In 'non- State' Spaces', *Seminar-567*, November 2006, pp.58-62

Kaur, Ravinder, 'The Last Journey: Exploring Social Class in the 1947 Partition Migration', *Economic and Political Weekly*, June 3, 2006, pp.2221-2228

Kaur, Ravinder, 'Distinctive Citizenship: Refugees, Subjects and Post-Colonial State in India's Partition', Vol. 6, Issue 4, *Cultural and Social History*, 2009, pp.429-446

Kishwar, Madhu, 'Messy Legacy', *India International Centre Quarterly*, Vol.35, No. 314, The Great Divide (Winter 2008, Spring 2009), pp.312-329

Kochar, Jesse, 'Guests from the west: A look back at Delhi after 1947, Open Page, *The Hindu*, June 3, 2012

Kumar, Akanksha, 'Locating Dalits in the Midst of Partition and Violence', *Journal of Studies in History and Culture*, Vol.2, Issue 2, Fall-Winter, 2016, pp-1-33.

Kumar, Akanksha, 'The Wait is Still on...' *The Hindu*, October 18, 2013. <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/the-wait-is-still-on/article5246312>

Mahajan, Sucheta, 'Nothing 'untold' About This Story', *The Hindu*, March 05, 2006.

Major, Andrew J, "'The Chief Sufferers': Abduction of Women During the Partition of the Punjab", *Journal of South Asian Studies*, Vol. 18, 1995, pp.57-72.

Rahman, Mahbubar Md. and Schendel, Willem Van, "'I Am Not a Refugee': Rethinking Partition Migration", *Modern Asian Series* 37, 3, 2003, Cambridge University Press

Manchanda, Rita, 'Citizens and Aliens in the Subcontinent', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.42, Issue No. 51, December 22, 2007, pp.23-24

Menon, Ritu & Bhasin, Kamla, 'Recovery, Rupture and Resistance: Indian State and Abduction of Women during Partition', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.28, Issue No.17, April 24, 1993, pp. ws-2-10

- Meyer, Karl E, 'The Invention of Pakistan: How the British Raj Surrendered', *World Policy Journal*, Vol. 20, No. 1(Spring), 2003, pp. 77-92
- Menon, Jisha, 'Rehearsing the Partition: Gendered Violence in "Aur Kitne Tukde"', *Feminist Review*, No. 84, *Post Colonial Theatres*, 2006, pp. 29-47
- Mitra, Chandan, 'Has Delhi Lost Its Soul?' *The Times of India*, December 20, 1987.
- Mookerjee, Debali-Leonard, 'Jyotirmoyee Devi: Writing History, Making Citizens', *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, pp.1-39
- Mufti, Aamir R., 'A Greater Story- writer then God: Genre, Gender and Minority in Late Colonial India', in Chatterjee, Partha & Jeganathan, Pradeep (eds), *Community, Gender and Violence, Subaltern Studies XI*, Permanent Black, New Delhi, pp. 1-36.
- Noorani, A.G., 'The Partition of India', *Frontline*, Vol. 18- Issue 26, December 22, 2001
- Puri, Neel Kamal, 'The Outsider', *Seminar 567*- November 2006, pp. 27-29
- Pandey, Gyanendra 'Community and Violence', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.32, Issue No.32, Aug 9, 1997, pp.2037-2045
- Pandey, Gyanendra 'Partition and Independence in Delhi- 1947-48', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.32, Issue No.36, September 6, 1997, pp.2261-2272
- Pandey, Gyanendra, 'The Long Life of Rumour', *Alternatives 27*, 2002, pp.165-191
- uri, Neel Kamal, "The Outsider", *Seminar 567*- November 2006, pp.27-29
- Raj, Dhooleka Sarhadi, 'Ignorance, Forgetting, and Family Nostalgia: Partition, the Nation State, and the Refugees in Delhi', *Social Analysis*, Issue 44 (2) November 2000, pp. 1-5
- Ray, Bharati, 'Women and Partition: Some Questions', in Bharati Ray and Aparna Basu (eds), *From Independence Towards Freedom: Indian Women Since 1947*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1999, pp.1-18.
- Report of People's Union for Civil Liberties, "'We Demand Our Rights" Refugee Women's Long Journey', *Economic and Political Weekly*, June 8, 1989, pp. 1507-1510
- Sadarangani, Umeeta, 'Descendent of the Storm: On Being a Child of Refugees and Teaching Partition Narratives', *Modern Language Studies*, Vol. 38, No.1 (Summer, 2008), pp. 63-73
- Sanghvi, Malavika, 'Refugee Recollections', *The Times of India*, April 8, 1999.

Singh, Sukhbir & Gill, Manohar Singh, 'Social and Psychological Trauma of the Displaced: A Study of Partition of India', *Asia-Pacific Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol.I (1), January-June 2009, pp. 1-18

Singh, Amarjit, 'Muslim Communal Politics and Partition of India: Imperialist and Cambridge Historiography', *European Scientific Journal*, Special Edition No.2, June 2013, pp. 1-7.

Soofi, Mayank Astar, 'Our MB Man', *Hindustan Times*, September 3, 2010.

Talwar, Tanya, 'Home, Then and Now', *The Hindu*, August 13, 2010.

Viswanath, Gita & Malik, Salma, 'Revisiting 1947 through Popular Cinema: A Comparative Study of India and Pakistan', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 44, No. 36, September 5, 2009, pp.61-69

Wolpert, Stanley, 'A Mixed Legacy: From the Raj to Modern India', *Harvard International Review*, Vol. 32, No. 4, 2011), pp.36-39, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42763418>, accessed on: 16 March 2019

FICTION:

Haider, Qurratulain, *Aag ka Dariya*, Kitab Mahal, 1959.

Kamleshwar, *Kitne Pakistan*, Rajpal Publishing, 2000.

Raza, Rahi Masoom, *Adha Gaon*, Rajkamal Prakashan, 1966.

Manto, Sadat Hasan, *Kingdom's End and Other Stories*, Translated from Urdu by Hasan, Khalid, Penguin Books, New Delhi, 1989.

Sidhwa, Bapsi, *Ice Candy Man*, Penguin Books India, 1989.

Sahni, Bhisham, *Tamas*, Rajkamal Prakashan, 1972.

Singh, Khushwant, *Train to Pakistan*, Chatto & Windus Publishers, 1956.

SOURCES FROM THE INTERNET:

<http://www.indianstreetfoodco.com/blog/2016/8/8/origin-of-butter-chicken-indian-or-english>

Chopra, Preeti, "'Where Are You From?' Belonging After Partition' Tanqeed, August 2013, <http://www.tanqeed.org/2013/08/journeys-to-ancestral-homelands-in-pakistan-and-india/>

Mishra, Pankaj, 'Exit Wounds: The legacy of Indian partition', 13 August 2007, *The New Yorker*, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2007/08/13/exit-wounds>

Kaur, Ravinder, 'India and Pakistan: Partition Lessons', *Open Democracy*, 16 August 2007, http://www.opendemocracy.net/article/conflicts/india_pakistan/partition

Kaur, Ravinder, 'Invisible Delhi', *Outlook*, January 24, 2008. <http://www.outlookindia.com/website/story/invisible-delhi/236564>.

Kaur, Ravinder, 'Curating the Wound: The Public Memory of Partition Remains Woefully Caste-Blind', <http://www.caravanmagazine.in/vantage/public-memory-partition-remains-caste-blind>

Pant, Pushpesh, 'Disappearing Delicacies', http://www.india-seminar.com/2011/628/628_pushpesh_pant.htm

<http://www.expressindia.indianexpress.com/archive.php?month=08&year=2007>

Rehman, Azera, "60 Years after Partition, 'home' still beckons", *Daily News and Analysis*, August 8, 2007. <http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-60-years-after-partition-home-still-beckons-1114306>

'Partition Memories', August 13, 2007,

http://www.news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/6939997.stm

UNPUBLISHED MATERIAL:

Bardiar, Nilendra, 'New Delhi-Urban, Cultural, Economic and Social Transformation of the City 1947-65', Unpublished PhD Thesis Submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 2013.

Deo, Shashi Bhushan, 'Partition of India: Relief and Rehabilitation in Delhi, The Story of Resilience and The Struggle of Existence', Unpublished M.Phil Thesis Submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 2011.

Mehra, Rachna, 'Women Abducted During the Partition of India: A Critical Analysis', Unpublished M.Phil Thesis Submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 2008.

Kumari, Amita, 'Delhi as Refuge: The Rehabilitation of Partition Refugees, 1947-1956', Unpublished M.Phil Thesis Submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 2007.

Kumar, Akanksha, 'Dalit Refugees from West Pakistan in Post-Partition Delhi', Unpublished M.Phil Thesis Submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University, 2010.