

Chapter-V

Socio-Economic & Political Impact of the Refugee & Migration Problems in West Bengal

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West Bengal got the status of a State on 1st May 1960 and among the 28 States in India it occupies 13th position in terms of area¹ having a total area of 88, 752 square kilometers and shares the 2.7% of India's total geographical area. West Bengal has national boundary with the States like Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa, Sikkim and Assam; and has international boundary with three countries like Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal. As per the Census of 2001, in terms of population West Bengal occupies 4th place in India having a population of 8, 01, 76, 197 consisting of 4,14,65,985 males and 3,87,10,212 females. Among these total population 5, 77, 48, 946 live in the rural areas and 2, 24, 27, 251 live in the urban areas. West Bengal has the largest density of population in India as according to the Census of 2001, 904 persons per square kilometer live in West Bengal.

It has already been noted that only 8 lakh or 25% 'Old Migrants' took shelter in the Government relief camps and they were considered eligible for Government's assistance. And the 'in-Between Migrants' did not find place in the camps ran by the Government of West Bengal and thus were not considered competent for rehabilitation. Furthermore, the 'New-Migrants' were considered competent for rehabilitation if they were agreed to go outside West Bengal for rehabilitation and accordingly they were left to their own fate. So, the refugees who did not take or find shelter in the Government camps or were not considered competent for rehabilitation or rehabilitation was conditional, tried to be resettled either by capturing the vacant land or abandoned barracks or houses. Some of them also took shelter in the rented house or built their new abodes along the railway tracks or along sides of the highways. All these people influenced the society, economy and polity of West Bengal to a great extent. Besides, the economic migrants from Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan have also left a considerable impact on the society, economy and polity of West Bengal. Furthermore, the impact of the inter-State migration on West Bengal especially in the economic field cannot be overlooked any way. They also took a considerable share of the State's employments by participating in the various fields and thus shrunk the opportunity of getting job for both the hosts and refugees. And

according to the Census of 1961 during the decade 1951-61, a total of 374,000 migrants from other States came to West Bengal in search of jobs. As per the Census of 1951 out of the total population of West Bengal, 84.20 % persons speak in Bengali, 5.42% persons speak in Hindi, 3.21% persons speak in Santali, 0.61% persons speak in Oriya and remaining 6.56 persons speak in other languages.² However, here the main emphasis will be on the refugees and migrants who were compelled, though the degree of compulsion varied, to take refuge into West Bengal and thus an attempt will be made to explore how these displaced persons influenced the society, economy and polity of West Bengal from 1947 to 2000.

Social Impact

While discussing about the impact of the refugees and migrants on the social set up of West Bengal it is to be borne in mind that by the term 'social impact' here an attempt has been made to cover all the aspects related to society i.e. demography; sex ratio; family system and changing role of the Bengali women; formation of the new villages; naming the places; and even cultural issues and so on.

I

Partition brought about a great change in the demographic scenario thereby produced many social changes in the age long society of West Bengal. The Census report of 1951, expressed that the enormous scale of increase in population in West Bengal by adding the influx of refugees from 1946 to 1951 amounted to fifty years normal population growth.³ According to official figures, by 1973 out of a total 44 million people of West Bengal 6 million were refugees and thus, almost 15 percent of West Bengal's total population and one in four of those who lived in towns were refugees. Due to the continuous arrival of the refugees and migrants Calcutta was welded together into a single and gigantic metropolis surrounded by extensive suburbs. As a consequence of the increase in the number of population of the adjacent areas of Calcutta, these areas were subsequently added to the jurisdiction of the Calcutta Municipal Corporation. One account observed, 'In 1951, the southern part of Tollygunge was added to Calcutta. In 1984, the Municipality of Garden Reach, the South Suburban Municipality of the Behala region, and many non-municipal areas were added to the jurisdiction of the Calcutta Municipal Corporation, bringing the total area under the Corporation to 187.33 square kilometers from the earlier 104 sq. km.'⁴

And the following table⁵ gives an idea about the way through which urban spread had taken place in and around the City of Calcutta:

Comparative Growth of Population in the City of Calcutta and Six Municipal Towns,
1901-81

Urban Places	Census Years					
	1901	1941	1951	1961	1971	1981
Calcutta	(a) 934	2167	2698	2927	3149	3305
	(b) 100	232	289	313	337	354
Haora	(a) 176	430	497	634	738	744
	(b) 100	244	282	360	419	422
South Suburban	(a) 26	63	104	186	273	378
	(b) 100	242	400	715	1050	1454
Garden Reach	(a) 28	85	109	131	155	191
	(b) 100	304	389	468	554	682
Baranagar	(a) 25	54	77	108	137	170
	(b) 100	216	308	432	548	680
South Dumdum	(a) 11	26	61	111	174	230
	(b) 100	236	555	1009	1582	2091
North Dumdum	(a) 10	6	12	38	64	96
	(b) 100	60	120	380	640	960

Notes: (a) Absolute populations in thousands adjusted for boundaries. (b) Index Number of (a) with 1901 as base of 100.

As the refugees and migrants poured into the City of Calcutta in ever increasing number, the number of *bustees*⁶ mushroomed here and there. Thus, an account rightly observed that ‘There are at least 2,000 *bustees* so defined listed in the Calcutta Municipal Area; counting Haora, the total exceeds 3, 500, with some 20 lakh occupants. In the Calcutta Urban Agglomeration as a whole, the number of *bustee*-dwellers comes to more than 30 lakh. Each square kilometer of Calcutta is occupied by 28, 571 people. 51 percent of them live in kutchra dwellings (i.e. without a concrete roof). The bottom 25 percent of the city dwellers occupy only 7 percent of the land.’⁷ The following table⁸ shows how the density of population of Calcutta went high from 1941 to 1961.

Density of Population per Square Mile in Calcutta

Year	persons
1941	54, 527
1951	67,886
1961	73,642

The demographic atlas of Nadia also took a sudden turn whose population before the Partition had been in decline. But by 1951 Nadia had experienced the most rapid growth in population than any other District of West Bengal due to the continuous influx of the displaced persons in this District. Ranaghat, Chakdah and Nabadwip which were formerly small and sleepy townships witnessed growth in population and hummed with the various activities of the new comers. By 1961 the population density of Nabadwip had reached 16,000 people per square mile that was staggeringly high. The *thanas* of Basirhat, Baruipur and Hasanabad that belonged to 24 Parganas had witnessed a phenomenal growth. By 1961, there were over 6.2 million people in the 24 Parganas and had become the most populous District in the whole of India. In short, with the coming of the refugees, West Bengal witnessed a rapid growth of cities and towns and thus, by 1961 the number of cities of West Bengal having population over 100,000 became four times in comparison to 1941. At the same time, during these two decades, the number of towns with between

50,000 and 1, 00,000 inhabitants virtually became double. The following table⁹ gives an idea about the rapid growth of urbanization in West Bengal from 1941-1961:

Class of towns (and population)	1961	1951	1941
i. (100,000 or above)	12	7	3
ii. (50,000 to 99,999)	19	14	10
iii. (20,000 to 49,999)	46	29	30
iv. (10,000 to 19,999)	45	41	27
v. (5,000 to 9,999)	50	18	25
vi. (Less than 5,000)	12	11	10
Total	184	120	105

Another important impact of the arrival of the migrants in West Bengal was that there arose a huge number of pavement dwellers in Calcutta and ‘No other facet’, as Ambikaprasad Ghosh wrote, ‘of the city’s demographic situation has received more national and international exposure than the life of the pavement dwellers’.¹⁰ The Census and the Calcutta Metropolitan District Area survey of 1971 recorded 48,802 pavement dwellers while in 1987 another Calcutta Metropolitan District Area survey found their number as 55,571.¹¹ ‘They are not refugees, nor are they a respectable work-force. Their arrival in the city initially benumbs them with a sense of helpless inferiority: ‘We don’t know any trade.’ Their forefathers in the villages might have been weavers, smiths, barbers or washer men.’¹²

Partition became a blessing in disguise as it paved the way for increasing in the number of females in Calcutta. The years between 1941 and 1951 witnessed a dramatic rise in the number of the females reversing the decline of previous forty years. In 1901, there were only 518 females for every 1,000 males in Calcutta, by 1941, this number again fell, and the ratio became 456 for 1,000. But after the Partition, the ratio of females in Calcutta had risen to 580 for 1,000 males and accordingly by 1961 the ratio went high indicating 612

women to every one thousand men. The following table¹³ shows the number of males and females in Calcutta Municipal Corporation Area 1951-81:

Years	No of Wards	Area (in sq.km)	No. of males	No. of females	Total Population	Ratio of 4 to 5
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
1951	32	83.71	1,623,211	925,466	2,548,677	0.36
1961	80	95.62	1,805,383	1,109,029	2,914,412	0.38
1971	100	98.79	1,924,505	1,224, 241	3,148,746	0.39
1981	100	104.0	1,930,320	1,374,686	3,305,006	0.42

At the same time, the birth rate went up as the number of the women and adolescent girls in urban West Bengal grew, particularly in such cases, where most women had a little control over their reproductive capacities. In 1947 the population of West Bengal was estimated to be just over 20 million but by 1961 it grown to almost 35 million. The following table¹⁴ shows the growth rate of the density of the population per square kilometer in West Bengal as a whole from 1941 to 2001;

Years	1941	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001
Density of population	264	299	394	504	615	767	904
Increase	-	+35	+95	+110	+111	+152	+134

II

The arrival of the refugees had strengthened the concept of nuclear family system. The refugee families were forced 'to break away from the age-old system of joint family

living.’¹⁵ When the refugees came, they were first inoculated and then were told to present themselves as a ‘family grouping’ to an officer of the Relief and Rehabilitation Department. The idea of family grouping must have puzzled many of the refugees who were habituated to living in large joint families and thus were alien to the concept of smaller and nuclear units that the officers sought for. On the basis of the appraisal of the officers, joint families were split up into male headed groupings and after the issuance of the certificate they were directed to particular types of camps such as worksite-camps for families which included an able bodied male bread earner and permanent liability camps for the widows, children and physically disabled.¹⁶ Thus, the big refugee families which could somehow find asylum in the various refugee camps got minimized and since then the concept of smaller families came into being in wider range.

Simultaneously, the traditional role of the Bengali women in the family also thoroughly got changed. ‘Women’s domain, sphere and place have traditionally been inside the home and they have, across epochs and cultures, been associated with a private world juxtaposed with a public world of men.’¹⁷ In East Pakistan the houses were situated in more rural areas with less density of population. Most of the houses were designed for huge joint families having an *andarmahal* or separate women’s quarter with its emphasis on kitchen space and inner court yard. Sometimes, there were arrangements for separate kitchen for preparing vegetarian and non-vegetarian food also. Sometimes, the *andarmahal* would be an entirely separate building having its own pond for bathing and washing kitchen utensils. Thus, the women’s world was designed to be physically separate from the *kacharighar* or office and from the *bahir* (outside men’s living space).¹⁸ Although the rigidity of the division between *andar* and *bahir* depended upon the individual family’s desires but it could reasonably be accepted that the women folk enjoyed lesser freedom. But the Partition of Bengal has changed that scenario to a great extent. When they came to West Bengal, particularly to Calcutta, they got their space shrunk as their families could not build a separate *andarmahal* for them because of their poverty. In the darkness of the empty field there stood a few huts surrounded by a *darma* (bamboo strips) fence. In reality the huts were no more than four posts, joined with *darma* fence and topped with a few clay tiles.¹⁹ Thus, the women had to share their space with men and sleep in the same room and in this way one of the physical barriers between public and private disappeared. It must have made them familiar with the new ideas, business and political matters the men talked about. ‘The refugee women’s emergence in the public domain, their pursuit of

education, their search for employment, and their participation in the activities of the colony life changed the social milieu of West Bengal.²⁰

Most of the squatters' colonies were situated by the roads and were densely populated where they had an opportunity to interact with each other or when the male refugees went out of the home for earning livelihood the women refugees sometimes went to market for purchasing required commodities. As one of the refugee women of Bijoygarh colony disclosed that, 'I had never been to the market before, but because my husband worked very awkward hours, I went to Bijoygarh Bazar.'²¹ Moreover, the refugee women who hitherto kept themselves confined into the *andarmahal* played a great role in rebuilding their new houses in the unauthorized occupied land. They played a crucial role in fending off the raids, by the police or the hired men of the owners of the land, and in defending their newly constructed thatched houses. They would provide shelter and food to those who fled in fear of the attackers and spread the news of probable raid across the colony beforehand. They formed a model resistance of strategy on the ancient form whereby women refugees stood before the phalanx of the refugees adorned with their household weapons and met the police and land lord's men face to face. It was felt that the attackers would be flustered by the sight of the armed women that in practice, proved to be wrong, as there were many instances of killing and injuring the women in course of the raid.²² The pace and fervor of the demonstrations got a new impetus in the wake of the passing of the West Bengal Act XVI of 1951. The campaign against eviction of the squatters brought women out onto the street.²³

As the space of the women got shrunk thus, certain traditional rituals disappeared- 'rituals relating to purity and cleanliness, discriminations (*chhuchibai*) in the kitchen, and innumerable restrictions imposed and mandatory rituals observed by widows...separate kitchens (*habishi ghar*) for cooking vegetarian food for widows were impossible to maintain; now, vegetarian food had to be cooked on the same *chulla* (earthen stove) as non-vegetarian food'.²⁴ This adjustment helped in broadening the outlook and social attitudes and thereby breaking orthodox customs.

The Partition of Bengal and thereby the huge influx of the refugees and the migrants from the then East Pakistan changed the traditional stand point and image of the Bengali women. In order to support their families the educated Bengali refugee women, looked for jobs and took up ordinary profession what they earlier considered as inferior to their

status. The earlier concept- education of women for marriage-partially disappeared. Rather, many educated women could not think of getting married since there was no proper place to live and sufficient money to buy food. The result was that West Bengal had so many unmarried girls who in the struggle for survival forgot about the 'families of their own'. Furthermore, there appeared a new breed of women who appeared to be a true partner of man in the struggle for new existence thus challenged the patriarchal domination that traditionally held high in the all spheres of lives. Thus, as Cakravarty noted, 'In the post-Partition turmoil, daughters started to be gradually looked upon as sons- this was a new phenomenon'.²⁵

Changes also came into being in respect of food habits. The displaced persons of East Bengal who sought refuge in West Bengal had different food habits than that of the people of West Bengal. They were simply rice eaters and usually would take rice thrice a day and thus, were often taunted as '*Bheto Bangal*'. However, after their arrival in West Bengal they faced scarcity of food. Even the middle class families had to face starvation. 'There were times when our chulha was simply not lit. My sisters Bulu and Mithu drank plain water before going for their exams...There were days when all went hungry.'²⁶ Thus beside rice, *luchi* (fried flour bread) or *roti* made their rooms as early evening or morning snacks. The styles of food preparation also went through many changes. The people of East Bengal would prepare food in a way that was different from that of West Bengal. However, by the time the two process got inter mingled.

In the same way, the language spoken by the displaced persons of East Bengal was quite different from that of West Bengal. 'The spoken language in East Bengal, with its district variations, had a rural, rustic sweetness, lacking the sophistication of the urban dialect. However, the migrants gradually acquired the West Bengali terms for innumerable things of everyday living.'²⁷

The sudden loss of the age long habitation made the displaced persons compelled to take an uncertain journey towards West Bengal. They had to pass through a tough time as they had to spend days together in the Sealdah Station and had to have meals with the people belonged to various castes. Thus, the caste rigidity began to be affected. Simultaneously, in the refugee colonies *Durgapuja* used to be arranged as a community effort. During and after the *Puja* people belonging to various castes would have *Prasad* sitting together irrespective of their castes and creeds. 'Instances of Purohits sharing meals with non-

Brahmins became more prevalent...inter-caste marriages began to be accepted, as economic hardship loosened the structure of religious orthodoxy.²⁸

The refugees and migrants also influenced the prevailing education system of West Bengal. In the first wave of the influx, refugees from the well to do families took shelter in West Bengal. And they had a great passion for education. In a sense, these people possessed the higher rungs of the society because of the educational, cultural and economic prosperity. Even when they were about to cross the boundary for West Bengal they carried books with them from East Bengal. Asoke Sen and his family carried three trunks of books with them from their ancestral home in Dashora village, in Manikgunj in the Dhaka District.²⁹ The refugees themselves established many schools thereby contributed a lot to the prevailing education facilities of West Bengal. In Jadavpur area only, almost in the same time, a number of schools, spreading over different refugee colonies, came into existence such as Adarsha Sikshayatan, Bagha Jatin Balak Balika Vidyalaya, Santoshpur Rishi Arobindo Balika Vidyalaya and Bagha Jatin Sammilito Udvastu Balika Vidyalaya.³⁰ In all of the cases, the refugees raised funds themselves even they went through the streets of Calcutta with boxes in hands to collect money. The teachers worked for very nominal salaries. The Government provided aid in the later period. In this way by 1960-61, 1,385 refugee schools came into existence.³¹

III

Besides the economic rehabilitation of the refugees; attempts were also made for their psychological rehabilitation and Dr. Roy made a cordial attempt for it. Though at the initial stage, a section of the refugees opposed it yet at the end they gave up opposition. The *Gananatya Sangha* of the Communist Party made arrangements for entertainment through various drama and songs related to electoral publicity in the refugee colonies. Through the arrangement of such drama and singing programmes the Folk Entertainment Section, the own Cultural Department of the Government of West Bengal came into existence.³² At the same time, a considerable number of Bengali writings and cinemas based on the tragic history of Partition of Bengal and struggle of the refugees for their survival came into being; to name a few '*Upanagar*' of Narendranath Mitra, '*Sonar Cheye Dami*' of Manik Bandyopadhyay, '*Nilkantha Pakhir Khonje*' of Atin Bandyopadhyay etc. The first cinema based on the struggle of the refugees for their survival in West Bengal

was Nimai Ghosh's '*Chhinnamul*'. In this way, the refugees and displaced migrants had also enriched the cultural world of the Bengalis.

Because of the coming of the displaced persons some English words made their room in the colloquial language of the Bengalis such as 'Refugee', 'Refugee Camp', 'Colony', 'Home', 'Hawker' etc. Besides, from the refugee camps and colonies a new society came into existence consisting of such people who were termed as '*Mastan*' (hooligan). *Mastan* culture was absent before the Partition. The word *Mastan* and a group named '*Mastan* group' was largely the product of Partition and thereby of migration.³³

The Partition of Bengal and thereby the huge influx of the refugees and migrants from East Bengal had deprived East Bengal from retaining a large number of noble souls who in the wake of Partition sought refuge into West Bengal and in the subsequent period made it enriched by their respective brilliance in various fields. Some of the notable persons of this kind were: Amartya Sen (Dhaka, economics/academia), Bijon Bhattacharya (Faridpur, cinema), Chuni Goswami (Kishoreganj; football), Comrade Muzaffar Ahmed (Noakhali; politics), Jibananda Das (Barisal, poet), Jogendra Nath Mandal (Barisal; politics, First Law Minister, Pakistan, 1947–1950), Jyoti Basu (Dhaka; politics, Chief Minister, West Bengal 1977-2000), Humayun Kabir (Faridpur; literature and academics), Ila Mitra (Rajshahi, human rights activist), Mahasweta Devi (Dhaka; literature, human rights), Megh Nad Saha (Dhaka; science), Mrinal Sen (Faridpur; cinema), Ritwik Ghatak (Dhaka; cinema), Suchitra Sen (Pabna, cinema), Sunil Gangopadhyay (Faridpur; writer), Utpal Dutta (Barisal, theatre, Cinema), Bhanu Banerjee (Dhaka, Cinema) etc. Excluding these, there were also many who once entered into West Bengal as refugees or migrants but in the subsequent period held many important posts by dint of their sheer merits.

Another important impact of the influx of the refugees into West Bengal was the growth of the Bengali labour force. The refugees could overcome the Bengali aversion to manual labour. They picked up jobs in the unorganized sectors also and there have been a considerable labour force in this sector. They started working as rickshaw-pullers, driving taxis, buses and trucks and the most astonishing factor is that the refugee hawkers constitute of about 80 percent of the total hawkers of West Bengal.³⁴

IV

Partition, through these fifty three years, has generated a grotesque reality on the border sides. On the both sides of the border, villages after villages have developed on the basis of the exclusive Hindu or Muslim solidarities instead of being mixed villages and Mcalpin would have called those villages as 'broken villages'. Caste solidarities have taken shape afresh, for instance, *Namasudra* villages and settlements are coming into existence in 24 Parganas (N) and Nadia, similarly *Chai- Mandal* solidarities has taken place on the border of Malda. A large number of Muslims who went to East Pakistan after 1947 have returned or their next generations have come back to West Bengal and as a result new settlements have come in to existence around the holy places and shrines in the places like Basirhat, Ghutiari Shariff, Purnea-Islampur, Murshidabad, and even at the road side or rail way side.³⁵ The new settlements that came into existence because of the coming of the refugees and migrants have appeared with old names. The Hindu refugees have kept the name of their *para*, colony, shops even houses after the name of the places of their forefathers that now belongs to Bangladesh. For instance, Chakmohan or Bilmashil of Pabna appears in Siliguri as Bilmashilpara, the refugees of Balurghat that belongs to Dinajpur District have kept the names of their colony as Pabna Colony, Bagura Colony and Dhaka Colony. At Haldibari in Cooch Behar there are two colonies named Rajshahi Colony and Pabna Colony respectively and in Jalpaiguri there are many such instances such as Maymansinha Para at Jateshwar, Dhakeshwari Colony under Bhaktinagar Police Station, Dhaka Udbastu Colony etc. In Kaliaganj of Uttar Dinajpur, Sahapur in Malda, Katoya in Burdwan, Chakdah in Nadia has a place named Pabna colony. There are villages and colonies named Barishal colony and Barishal Palli at Khagra in Midnapur and Murshidabad respectively. In Bangladesh there is a place called Kalia that belongs to Jessore and the refugees of that village after coming to West Bengal have formed *Kalianiwas Janapad* and *Kalianiwas Pathachakra*.³⁶ There are many examples to show that how the refugees and migrants tried to recreate a same place of their own where they were living earlier by giving the same name such as- Dhakapara at Shantipur in Nadia, Barendranagar at Ranaghat, Dhakapatti at Debendra Dutta Lane; Calcutta -7, Dhaka Kali Bari More at Prince Anowar Shah Road etc. Some people have also kept the name of their houses, especially those who were the resident of the big cities, after the name of their respective villages as famous historian Dr. Surendra Nath Sen gave the name of his residence as 'Mahilara' as he was born in the Mahilara Village of Barishal.³⁷ Many of them have kept the name of their

shops or enterprises under the name of their respective villages or even Districts where they were earlier living in, for instance, Dhakeshwari Bastralaya (Hasanabad, North 24 Parganas), Kumilla Rajrajeshwari Stores (Sodepur), Dhaka Oushadhalay (Sreerampore, Hooghly), Dhakeshwari Bastralay (Calcutta) etc.

Another important impact of the Partition of Bengal and thereby of the arrival of the refugees and displaced migrants was that they have formed many *Samitis* and *Sammilanis* (Associations) in the memory and in the name of the land of their forefathers such as 'Bikrampur Sammilani', 'Chattal Kalyan Samsad', 'Chattagram Parishad', 'Masterda Smriti Samsad', 'Gabhar Sammilani' (famous village in Barishal), 'Nator Sammilani', 'Kashipur Sammilani' (Rajshahi), 'Kotalipara Sammilani' (Faridpur), 'Chandpur Sammilani' (Khulna), 'Pheni Sammilani' (Noakhali) etc. It can be said that the main objective of these *Sammilanis* were to bring the refugees and displaced migrants of their own region onto a same platform at the end of the year and at the same time create an opportunity for them to exchange views and greetings among them.³⁸

The attitude of the host population towards the new comers has also undergone certain changes. 'The residents of the settlement are addressed less as refugees and more as colony people.'³⁹ The '*Ghoti*' or '*Bangal*'⁴⁰ concept had also passed through the trial of history. Earlier the new settlers, as Mandal observed by carrying on a survey in Malda District refugee colonies, favoured to marry their children with persons of same origin but that is not the case for the third generations, thus she wrote 'Even in the late 1960s and early 1970s marital connections between the two communities were scarce... In the 1990s,... many residents were ready to approve a Bangal-Ghoti marriage...'⁴¹ In many cases, economy or profession, instead of *Ghoti* or *Bangal* stratum, has seemed to become the deciding factor, so far the issue of marriage is concerned.

V

Besides the Hindus, a considerable number of the Muslims had also crossed over to West Bengal throughout these fifty three years and influenced the demographic scenario of this State. However, it should be borne in mind that due to Partition, 34 police stations having majority of Muslim population and 54 police stations where the Hindus were in majority fell in the share of West Bengal and East Pakistan respectively.⁴² But the most interesting phenomenon is that even after the influx of a huge number of refugees and displaced

Hindus into West Bengal the proportion of the Muslim population in West Bengal has remained more or less same as it was in 1947. And the following table⁴³ bears this testimony:

% of Muslims & Non-Muslims in West Bengal from 1947-2001

1947		2001	
Non-Muslims	Muslims	Non-Muslims	Muslims
75.0	25.0	74.8	24.2

If it is accepted that the Muslims of West Bengal did not leave or opt for East Pakistan or Bangladesh even then their proportion would have been far below than the present proportion. Because, in 1951 the percentage of the non-Muslims in East Bengal was 23.1 % and it came down to 10.2%⁴⁴ or 11.4 million⁴⁵ in 2001. And it is not beyond the understanding even of a lay man that most of those displaced Hindus entered into West Bengal and thus their percentage in West Bengal would have gone up; but it was not the case in reality. Thus, it can reasonably be assumed that the steady migration of the Muslims from Bangladesh into West Bengal was the main reason that helped to maintain the present numerical strength of the Muslim population more or less same as it was in 1947.⁴⁶

The population growth rates of Bangladesh and its neighbouring states of India provide abundant evidence of large scale infiltration from that country to India. The Census report of Bangladesh of 1991 was not compatible with its fertility rate of 4.5 percent. The said report placed the annual PGR of that country during 1981- 91 at 2.1 percent, whereas United Nations Population Fund estimates it at 2.7 percent. This disparity was due to infiltration from Bangladesh to India.

The Census report of Bangladesh of 1991 talked of the unique phenomenon of missing population, estimated initially at ten million, and subsequently at eight million, comprising of 1.73 million Hindus and 6.27 million Muslims. There were two million missing voters whose names have been deleted from the Voters' list of Bangladesh during 1991-95. These obviously point towards large-scale immigration from that country.⁴⁷

The following table shows the District-wise demographic change in West Bengal in terms of the Hindu and Muslim population:⁴⁸

Regions	Religious Communities	1951	2001	% Change
West Bengal	Hindu	78.45	72.47	-5.98
	Muslim	19.85	25.25	+5.4
Darjeeling	Hindu	81.71	76.92	-4.79
	Muslim	1.14	5.31	+4.17
Jalpaiguri	Hindu	84.18	83.3	-0.88
	Muslim	9.74	10.85	+1.11
Koch Behar	Hindu	70.90	75.50	+4.6
	Muslim	28.94	24.24	-4.7
Uttar & Dakshin	Hindu	69.30	60.22	-9.08
Dinajpur	Muslim	29.94	38.47	+8.53
Malda	Hindu	62.92	49.28	-13.64
	Muslim	36.97	49.72	+12.75
Murshidabad	Hindu	44.60	35.92	-8.68
	Muslim	55.24	63.67	+8.43
Birbhum	Hindu	72.60	64.69	-7.91
	Muslim	26.86	35.08	+8.22
Bardhaman	Hindu	83.73	78.89	-4.84
	Muslim	15.60	19.78	+4.18
Nadia	Hindu	77.03	73.75	-3.28
	Muslim	22.36	25.41	+3.05

North 24 pgs*	Hindu	77.26 (1971)	75.23	-2.03
	Muslim	22.43 (1971)	24.22	+1.79
South24 pgs*	Hindu	72.96 (1971)	65.86	-7.1
	Muslim	26.05 (1971)	33.24	+7.19
Hugli	Hindu	86.52	83.63	-2.89
	Muslim	13.27	15.14	+1.87
Bankura	Hindu	91.16	83.63	-6.81
	Muslim	4.40	7.51	+3.11
Purulia*	Hindu	93.13 (1961)	83.42	-9.71
	Muslim	5.99 (1961)	7.12	+1.13
Medinipur	Hindu	91.78	85.58	-6.2
	Muslim	7.17	11.33	+4.16
Haora	Hindu	83.45	74.98	-8.47
	Muslim	16.22	24.44	+8.22
Kolkata	Hindu	83.41	77.68	-5.73
	Muslims	12.00	20.00	+8.27

Alongside the following table⁴⁹ shows the growth rate of Hindu and Muslim population in West Bengal since 1951 to 2001:

Years	Religions	Total population	(%) of the religions	Growth rate	
1951	All religions	24810308	-	-	1951 to
	Hindus	19462706	78.45	-	
	Muslims	4925496	19.85	-	
1961	All religions	34926279	-	32.80	1961
	Hindus	27523358	78.80	41.42	
	Muslims	6985287	20.00	41.82	
1971	All religions	44312011		26.87	1961 to 1971
	Hindus	34611864	78.11	25.75	
	Muslims	9064338	20.46	29.76	
1981	All religions	54580647	-	23.17	1971 to 1981
	Hindus	42007159	76.96	21.37	
	Muslims	11743259	21.51	29.55	
1991	All religions	68077965		24.73	1981 to 1991
	Hindus	50866624	74.72	21.09	
	Muslims	16075836	23.61	36.89	
2001	All religions	80176197		17.84	1991 to
	Hindus	58104835	72.47	14.23	

	Muslims	20240543	25.25	25.91	2001
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During 1951-2001 the growth rate of the Hindus was 198.54 percent while it was 310.13 percent for the Muslims in West Bengal.⁵⁰ And the border Districts of Uttar & Dakshin Dinajpur, Maldah and Murshidabad saw a high rate of growth of the Muslim population.

The serious implication of the illegal immigration from Bangladesh to West Bengal is that it has resulted into the growth of population to a high extent. The Population Growth Rate (PGR) of West Bengal was as high as 24.55 percent during 1981-91, though it came down to 17.84 percent during 1991-2001. However, the PGR in the border Districts of North 24 Parganas, Murshidabad and Malda was very high i.e. 22.64 percent, 23.7 percent and 24.77 percent respectively.⁵¹ The illegal migration from Bangladesh has become the greatest irritant in the relationship of India with that country. ‘Unfortunately the Bangladesh Government not only does not make any effort to stop it; it even denies their presence in this country.’⁵²

In 1995, the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) brought out an important study on smuggling across West Bengal’s border with Bangladesh. Essential articles of everyday use like cycles, livestock, parts of various machines, spices, vegetable oil, etc., are regularly smuggled from West Bengal to Bangladesh in huge quantities...on account of obvious socio-economic reasons, powerful syndicates, engaged in cross-border smuggling of arms, gold and narcotics, find it relatively convenient to recruit infiltrators for their deadly ventures.⁵³

There are many who expressed their concern over the illegal migration from Bangladesh and its impact on the social set up of West Bengal. Thus, Shankar Roy Chaudhury, General (Retd.), a Rajya Sabha member from West Bengal, told the Rajya Sabha in April 2000, ‘on account of illegal migration, Bangladesh’s demographic border intruded upon India’s political border over a 10-20 km deep area...’⁵⁴

The illegal migration from Bangladesh must have added some burden more to the already over burdened social settings of West Bengal. The growing population places increasing pressure on land as from it, almost all requirements such as food, fuel wood and timber are met. Furthermore, land is also needed for making house to live in. And this development

may lead to break down the existing peace and prosperity, what West Bengal could achieve throughout these decades after independence.

Besides the displaced persons and migrants from Bangladesh, a sizeable number of migrants from its neighboring country of Nepal also entered into West Bengal. The result was that the number of the Bengali speaking population in the District of Darjeeling faced a tremendous set back. However, as the Nepali migrants predominantly concentrated in the hilly areas of Darjeeling where the Bengali speaking people were previously less in number yet it led to the marginalization of the Lepcha community, the original inhabitant of this area. As Debnath noted ‘...because of Christianization and more and more intermarriages with the Nepalese; the Lepchas are losing their own ground of separate identity...In the midst of an overwhelming Nepali or Gorkhali majority, Lepcha identity, if not protected, will get vanished in the turbulent years to come’.⁵⁵

Economic Impact

The Radcliff Award, which came shortly after the severe famine that ravaged Bengal only four years earlier, brought the economy and indeed the entire social fabric of West Bengal on the verge of a collapse. Simultaneously, during the Second World War this area had to serve as the advance base for the allied war machine in South East Asia that no doubt strained the economy of this region ruthlessly. It is in this historical backdrop the economic impact of the refugee and migration problems in West Bengal will be discussed between the lines at the best.

Due to the Partition, the most fertile and thus the principal food grains producing part of the Gangetic delta fell in the share of East Pakistan. West Bengal could retain a narrow strip of land to east of the Ganges. By now only 2.7% of the total land of India is in West Bengal and of this 61.65 percent is agricultural land. And as per 1999-2000 statistical account the total cultivable land in West Bengal is 54.72 lacs hectares.⁵⁶ ‘This area is the least fertile of the whole delta. It is criss-crossed by dead or dying channels that, except during the rains, do not provide any navigable route connecting the numerous villages in the tract.’⁵⁷

The immediate consequence of the Partition was that the northern-most part of West Bengal got cut off from the main body of the State that however was reconnected by a narrow connecting corridor in 1956. But the water routes which established communication between the port of Calcutta and its Assam hinterland was disrupted as the river route between West Bengal and North-East India ran through East Pakistan. This line of water communication, since the Indo-Pak war of 1965 has stayed totally suspended. Thus, for a long time after independence the only means of communication between Assam and West Bengal was a meter-gauge rail way line.

At the time of Partition, jute industry was the most important industry in West Bengal and due to Partition the jute textiles were deprived of its raw material i.e. jute fibre which was mostly grown in the places now fell in the share of East Pakistan. Though, over the years the cultivation of jute in the various States of India has made tremendous progress however, so far the quality is concerned it seems to be still inadequate.

As almost all the big rivers fell in the share of East Pakistan thus, it has resulted in the loss of the richest and most extensive fisheries so far the case of West Bengal was concerned. It has left both psychological and physical impact on the people of West Bengal. On the one hand, fish which is the most favored item in the menu of a Bengali household went out of the reach of the vast majority of population there by creating psychological impact upon them, on the other hand, it reduced their intake of organic protein thus creating physical impact. Simultaneously, it resulted for many in the loss of the age long profession who survived by catching or selling fish.

‘However, grave the impact of these factors on the life and economy of this state; it pales into insignificance when compared to the social and economic dislocation created by the continuous influx of refugees from across the border.’⁵⁸ The huge mass of uprooted population a considerable number of whom has yet to be rehabilitated properly has imposed a horrendous burden on already overstrained resources of the truncated State of West Bengal.

It has earlier been noted that the refugees and the displaced migrants did not choose all the Districts of West Bengal equally to live in rather their movement was determined by beforehand calculations i.e. they sought shelter in those places in West Bengal where they had relatives and probability of getting jobs. From that point of view, the educated middle

class- refugees poured into Calcutta and other large towns and industrial centers of Hooghly, the 24 Prganas and Burdwan. Calcutta was the capital city, the administrative and academic centre of Bengal and thus was the largest employer of literates in its various universities, colleges and schools. At the same time, as a hub of business Calcutta housed many large corporations and small companies and thus the educated persons could hope to have some jobs there. And there were many who had already come from the other states of India and managed jobs in the various service sectors of Calcutta. Thus, the refugees also strived their best to manage jobs as per their physical and skill capacity in a bid to reconstruct their shattered life anew. Accordingly, along with Calcutta the bigger towns of West Bengal became powerful magnets of drawing middle class refugees on a large scale.⁵⁹ Almost for the same reasons, the artisans instead of going to the countryside preferred the cities and large towns so that they could continue to ply their traditional trades as before. A study on the Titagarh town that was dominated by the jute mills expressed that many refugees 'engaged in artisanal production, especially making bangles from conch shells, their caste work ... in East Bengal.'⁶⁰ Congress records express that after the Partition of Bengal thousands of Nath weavers settled in the town of Nabadwip.⁶¹ The peasant refugees who had worked on land in East Bengal ended to settle in the agrarian or semi agrarian tracts along the borders between the two Bengals especially in Nadia and 24 Parganas. A few of them also settled in the border Zones of West Dinajpur, Coochbehar and Murshidabad.

As a third of the total influx that remained within West Bengal preferred to settle in the region what now came to be known as Calcutta Metropolitan District enhanced the already existing pressure in this region. Accordingly, the Calcutta Metropolitan Planning Organization (CMPO) says:

Forced to flee their homes in the east following the partition of Bengal many came to live in the bustees of the city and added to the competition for jobs, for places in school and hospital beds. Land prices and house rents soared as people –old residents, migrants and refugees alike- hunted for places to live. Squalid, pathetic refugee huts crowded Sealdah railway station and the pavement outside, and ramshackle makeshift markets appeared on the footpaths as the refugee sought in petty trade a bare means of subsistence. Squatters' colonies sprang up through the CMD (Calcutta Metropolitan District), 149 of which after a decade of Government effort at rehabilitation, are still in existence, containing more than 26,000 refugee households. And despite deligent efforts on the part of some refugee colonies which have built schools and other community facilities of their own, they are not yet a real part of the city.⁶²

As soon as the refugees started coming into West Bengal, the price of land went high. And thus the CMPO continues to say that:

The suburbs closest to Calcutta-North and South Dum Dum, Kamarhati, Panihati, Garden Reach and the South Suburban area- have almost overnight become substantial communities. And within the city itself the fastest growth has occurred in the low lying, unsewered, poorly drained areas in Tangra, Tapsia and Kasba, along the eastern fringes of the city bordering its pestilent marshes of the Salt Lakes and in the wards of Tollygunge in the extreme south. On the outskirts of both Calcutta and Howrah, even low land liable to periodic floods, areas without sewerage or drainage facilities, with poor quality ground water supplies, and served by inadequate transportation facilities to link them to the central city areas, are beginning to show spectacular increases in market value as the search intensifies for living space..⁶³

However, as the displaced migrants continue to pour onto Calcutta with no signal of halt, the demand for urban services rose beyond the capacity of this city. 'The resident population, threatened with loss of their privileges and conveniences, felt aggrieved and estranged from these political immigrants... Left largely to themselves, the refugees in and around Calcutta slowly secured their placements in the urban economy and imparted new attributes to the process of urbanization.'⁶⁴

As Partition deprived West Bengal of its most fertile paddy lands thus by July 1950 West Bengal suffered an annual food gap of 200,000 tons of food grains.⁶⁵ The border Districts of 24 Parganas, Nadia, Malda, West Dinajpur and Jalpaiguri were no less flooded by the refugees, which led to both the rapid decline in the land-to-man ratio and per capita availability of food. Matters took worst shape as the agricultural production of these relatively less fertile regions failed to match the growth of population.⁶⁶ As a result, the price of rice and other necessary foods started spiraling out of control. This food gap grew each year wider keeping pace with the continual population growth of West Bengal causing food prices to shoot upwards. It had seriously undermined the little stability of West Bengal that its society and polity had managed to retain with much effort. Not only the food prices but also the prices of all sorts of essential commodities went high. According to an estimate in a period of 5-7 years the price of land and other commodities went up by five times.⁶⁷ The record levels of inflation after 1947 added enormous hardship to those who lived from hand to mouth. Household budgets of the people of all strata of society came under acute pressure. By 1951 most of the urban middle classes in West Bengal could feel the sheer pinch of poverty as the salaries had failed to keep up with the 'cost of living index since 1947-48.'⁶⁸

The refugees and displaced migrants, to whom survival became the primary motto, struggled heart and soul for acquiring new educational qualifications and skills that would pave the way for having paid work. And accordingly, the refugees became educated at a much faster rate than did the members of the host community in West Bengal. At the time of the 1951 census almost half of the refugee population could read and write and by 1956 the proportion of literates among the refugees had risen again by more than 25 percent and the table⁶⁹ furnished below proves that reality:

Literacy among refugees and the host population in West Bengal, 1950-55 (percentages)

---	Migrants only (1950 survey)	Persons excluding migrants (1951 census)	Members of migrant families (1955 survey)
Male	68.6	36.3	78.3
Female	17.9	7.9	29.2
Total	41.8	22.7	52.9

The refugees made a serious attempt to acquire skills especially of reading and writing in the hope that these skills would help them a lot in getting a job in the highly competitive market place in West Bengal. The refugee women also took up the art of reading and writing with a rapid pace. Already by 1950, four times as women refugees were educated as women in the local population in West Bengal and in the following five years refugee girls and women attained a surprising increase of 60 % in their literacy rates.⁷⁰ Almost in the same way the report of a Socio-Economic Survey of the city conducted by the Calcutta University expresses that:

One thing that emerges from a close examination of the data relating to the displaced migrants is that most of them who are now found among the city's population belonged to the so-called middle class section of population. One is the fact of the prevalence of higher education among the displaced population. In fact, the percentage of illiteracy is the lowest among the displaced migrants-only about 15 to 16 p.c. as compared to 32 to 36 p.c. among the ordinary migrants and to as high as 29 to 32 p.c. among the original residents. The percentage of illiteracy among young persons belonging to the age group, 5-14, is as low as 7 p.c. among

displaced migrant males as against 35 p.c. among the two other sections of the population. 30 to 31 p.c. of the displaced migrants have received school education below the Matriculation standard whereas the ratio is only 18 to 22 p.c. among the residents and only about 13 to 18 p.c. among ordinary migrants. Some thirteen percent of them are Matriculates or under graduates as against 9 to 10 p.c. of both the residents and original migrants. Thus, the average educational standard of the displaced migrants is definitely higher than that of even residents of the city, to say nothing of other migrants.⁷¹

The refugees were in process of the reconstruction of their life in a new place with new environment. So, it seemed to be tough to afford all the necessities of life by a single bread winner. Even the well-off middle class refugee families considered it luxury to keep the women unemployed at home and thus the refugee women had to go out to work. Accordingly, the refugee girls were having education in ever increasing numbers who were thrown into the job market where they vied for 'respectable' jobs like clerks, school teachers, etc. They also became tutors, tailors and small shop managers. 'Like Khuki in Ritwik Ghatak's *Meghe Dhaka Tara*, the working woman with broken chappals (symbolizing the sacrifices women made for the family's survival) became a presence on the crowded streets of central Calcutta and on various types of public transportation.'⁷² They indeed got jobs in 'respectable' service and service related sectors. Thus, the refugee women 'paved the way for future generations of Bengali working women and activists.'⁷³ Official figures showed that till 1952, out of the total registered women in employment exchanges, 221 got jobs in government offices, and 2,633 got jobs in relief and rehabilitation department, among whom three were upper division assistants and 110 lower division assistants. 'The same data shows that the total number of displaced women who got employment after training under urban training scheme till 1952 was 456. The number of displaced women employed after their training in non-official and aided institutions was 784.'⁷⁴ And the Government surveys in the 1950s and 1960s expressed that the refugees who got themselves settled through their own efforts in West Bengal facing towering adversity managed to attain impressively high rates of employment. The table⁷⁵ furnished below shows that twice as many refugee workers got jobs in these sought after sectors as compared with the local population.

Occupational distribution of refugee families, 1956

Occupation	Thousand families
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	urban	rural	Total
Nil	9.8	8.5	18.3
Agriculture	5.4	141.1	146.5
Small industry	19.1	20.1	39.2
Trade	53.9	32.2	86.1
Hereditary Profession	5.5	14.0	19.5
Learned Profession	16.0	11.9	27.9
Government Service	44.1	16.2	60.3
Other Services (Excluding domestic)	50.9	16.4	67.3
Domestic services	2.6	2.8	5.4
Skilled Labour	9.4	4.2	13.6
Unskilled labour	5.3	9.3	14.6
Other Occupations	9.5	6.4	15.9
Total	231.5	283.1	514.6

The most interesting thing was that those who entered the labour market for the first time i.e. those who did not work when they were in East Pakistan, more than one in three found employments in the Government or private sector. And it was surely an indication that the educated refugees vied vehemently and effectively against the host population for having jobs which were covetable to all *bhadralok* Bengalis.⁷⁶ For instance, it may be noted here that 'in 1953, the State Statistical Bureau advertised vacancies for a few posts of temporary assistant investigators; it had almost 7,000 applicants of whom just under half were refugees, for a handful of jobs. Of these refugee applicants, eight in ten were educated at least up to matriculation standard'.⁷⁷ The refugees also competed successfully

for jobs in all the better- paid sectors of the economy and accordingly about 45% of refugees who approached the labor market for the first time attained jobs as skilled labour, which were well-paid and on demand.

And more interestingly a considerable number of the refugees opted for trade and commerce. Though, they started this venture as petty hawkers or stall keepers or finding a role for themselves on the lower rungs of the wholesale or retail trades yet there were instances to show that they quickly climbed these ladders and earned measurable commercial success. By 1956, the refugees preferred to work in the Government or private service, petty trade, commerce and small industries that offered descent returns but needed small investment in the form of capital or assets. The Statistical Survey expressed that one in three of all refugees was fully employed that indicated that the refugees had attained a higher rate of employment in comparison to the local population and by 1956 out of the 730,000 refugees who had found jobs in West Bengal 170,000 were in work for the first time.⁷⁸ The Statistical Survey further expressed that, of the 514,000 refugee families in the urban and rural areas only 3% did not have jobs. By 1956, as many as 83% of all refugees in the workforce could manage gainful employment.

Occupation of the refugees as compared to the general population and 'economic migrants', 1961.⁷⁹

Total persons (10,000s)	General population	Immigrants from other parts of India	Refugees
Cultivation	1,227	278	925
Agriculture labour	507	245	254
Mining, quarrying, livestock, fishing, hunting and plantations, orchards etc.	165	723	91

Household industry	140	88	201
Manufacturing other than household industry	378	1,859	613
Construction	43	187	63
Trade and commerce	250	927	565
Transport, storage and communication	112	562	223
Other services	444	1,308	860
Non-workers	6,684	3,823	6,205

As soon as the refugees had become educated and entered skilled labour market or various service sector; private, semi-private or Government the competition for every job become fiercer. Nirmal Kumar Bose had made a survey in Calcutta in 1964 that expressed that educated refugees had vied for jobs so successfully in Calcutta that the educated host population found themselves being driven out of their traditional positions in the services and thus they were forced to look for work in sectors they had rejected earlier.⁸⁰ These changes both in the life of the refugees and also in the life of the host people caused serious tensions and anxieties. It led to the student unrest and militant action by young men in 1950s in 1960s indicating the rapid transformations brought by a ballooning population and an expanding working force to the shattered economy of West Bengal.⁸¹ On the contrary as the supply of labour in West Bengal hugely outstripped demand in the decaying industrial economy of the state, the informal sectors grew at an unprecedented pace.⁸²

However, despite these impressive statistics given above, it would be wrong to suggest that the refugees who got themselves somehow settled at their own attempt were able to reconstruct their lives in their new homeland rapidly and successfully. Sadly in reality, in most of the cases this was far from being the case. Many of the ‘self-settled’ refugees who

lived in the sprawling slums or in pavement shanties and could find some work failed to escape grinding poverty as they were usually paid too little. Refugee men, women and children alike had no option but to accept grossly under paid work which provided not even the limited protection of the organized sectors. Thus, most of them had to move from one casual to another poorly paid part-time job in the unregulated informal sectors of the economy. Only a few fortunate refugee women were able to manage so-called respectable jobs as teachers or clerks. Many of the refugee women had to find job as domestic servants or *jhis* in the well-to-do households where they washed clothes, cleaned utensils and cooked for a pitiful small wages. Others acted as 'piece-workers' in the clothing industry where they sewed cheap garments for a pittance and worked long hours in poorly lit homes or crowded sweat-shops leaving their young ones at the care of slightly older girl children who should by rights have been at school or at play by then. These girls helped their mothers in doing the household works while their brothers labored throughout the day in the tea shops or food stalls in the hope of few scraps of food.⁸³ In the same vein, Chakravarty noted, 'Uneducated women worked as maidservants, washing utensils, cooking in people's homes, supplying office tiffins, selling flowers, fruits, and vegetables, and frying savories (*bhaja bhujji*) to sell along with puffed rice. Some would make paper bags (*thonga*) and sell them for whatever little they could earn. Women of the colonies worked as cooks, nurses, and attendants (*ayahs*) in the city areas. The maidservants from East Bengal did more work for less pay, often leading to acrimonious confrontations with those maidservants originally belonging to West Bengal. The young refugee men started selling eggs and potatoes, creating further unhappiness among West Bengal shopkeepers.'⁸⁴

And those who started their trading adventure as petty traders with the hawking of mainly ready-made garments on the sidewalks of the busy thoroughfares were also not in good condition. Long after the Partition of Bengal a considerable number of the refugees or their descendants were found to be unable to purchase or attain license of the land on which they hawked their wares. It may be noted that a sample survey pointed out that 68% of the hawkers in Calcutta were people from East Pakistani origins⁸⁵ and 46% of them were neither the owners nor the licensees of the land on which they were hawking. Thus, when in 1999 the Government of West Bengal took the decision to evict the hawkers from places like Gariahat, Esplanade, Shyambazar, Maniktala, Moulali, etc, under an operation code-named 'Operation Sunshine' the refugees from East Pakistan experienced

displacement for second time and lost their means of livelihood.⁸⁶ Under the 'Operation Sunshine', 24,000 hawkers were evicted.⁸⁷

The middle class refugees who managed better-paid works in the service and the professional sectors also could not keep themselves aloof from the long arm of misery. The 1956 survey found that the refugee families that earned the modest sum of Rs. 100 or more a month were also spending their days with much poverty. The reason was that the refugee families tended to be significantly larger than the average and grew in size faster. The refugees entered West Bengal as a whole family and contained many women of child-bearing age that increased the number of Women in Calcutta at the same time the city witnessed a population explosion, especially where the refugees tended to cluster, as more women lived permanently in wedlock with their husbands. As a consequence, in the quinquennium between 1951 and 1956, the birth rate among the refugees grew at a rate of 60 % faster than that of the local population. Thus, the size of the refugee families grew larger that increased their distress and poverty.

Larger families placed greater burdens on already strained domestic budgets and pushed most of the refugee families below the poverty line and thus, by 1956 two in three refugee families were deemed to be living in distress conditions.⁸⁸ Not only in the cities and towns, but the 1956 survey found even more impoverishments among the refugees living in the countryside than in the towns. It noticed that in the cities only six in ten refugees were in distress conditions whereas in case of the rural areas seven in ten refugees were found to be suffering similar level of hardships.⁸⁹ The reason might have been that the refugees in the rural areas got, for the most part, little land and what they got was of such low quality that it could not feed them and their families.

Thus, while a section of the self-settled refugees created really an impressive record while another section seemingly majority in number led extremely hard lives. They started living in the densely crowded slums haphazardly by raising provisional huts with flimsiest of materials by the railway tracks or by the roads or in the rural shanties without having the minimum necessities of the modern life. Furthermore, they posed a serious challenge to the host populace as they started taking a share in each and every field of life. Unemployment, low wages, scarcity of food, ever rising prices of land and essential daily commodities all became the hall marks of the urban life in the post-Partition West Bengal. Towns in West Bengal and Calcutta in particular seemed to be on the brink of disastrous

social breakdown and had become a veritable powder keg ready to explode at any time. And during the food movement of 1959 and 1966 led by the Left Political Parties this discontent made its appearance in a more visible form.

However, as soon as the tottering of Partition was a little bit over the Government of West Bengal under took various initiatives to bring more and more land under irrigation through various projects and thus between the years 1951 and 1965 the area under irrigation got increased by more than 30 percent from 1, 129.33 thousand hectares to 1, 478.28 thousand hectares.⁹⁰ In the year 1965-66 about 26 percent of the total cropped area in the State was irrigated, against 19.5 percent for the country as a whole. Besides the Damodar Valley Corporation, sponsored jointly by the Centre and the States of West Bengal and Bihar, West Bengal undertook two major irrigation projects- Mayurakshi Reservoir Project and Kangsabati Reservoir Project.

Besides, two Acts relating to land system were passed in West Bengal. In 1953 The West Bengal Estate Acquisition Act and in 1955 the West Bengal Land & Land Reforms Act was enacted. The main aim of the West Bengal Estate Acquisition Act, 1953 was to put an end to the Zamindari system and the eradication of the intermediaries. However, the West Bengal Estate Acquisition Act, 1953 had many drawbacks and as a result even after the passing of this Act a large amount of land was found to be still lying in the hands of the big Jotdards, Zamindars and Raiyats. Thus, with a view to overcoming the shortcomings of the West Bengal Estate Acquisition Act in 1955 the West Bengal Land & Land Reforms Act was enacted and it was implemented in 1965 after the determination of its implementation policy. The West Bengal Land & Land Reforms Act, 1955 had three principles in the main i.e. (i) to settle on the ceiling of land holdings; (ii) to give out the land and; (iii) to reduce the rent of a Raiyat etc.⁹¹ However, the workings of land records over ceiling according to which lands in excess of 75 *bighas* (25 acres, fisheries, orchards and plantation were however exempted from the purview of this provision) got vested and giving out among the landless peasants in fact started from 1967 when a coalition Government came to power in West Bengal. Because, 'Though the Act provided that cases of transfers made after the introduction of the bill could be entered into and transfers declared to be malafide could be cancelled and the entire surplus land could be taken over, there have been widespread reports of illegal transfers having been effected to evade the provisions of ceiling.'⁹² The study made by Dr. S. K. Basu and Dr. S. K. Bhattacharya of

the University of Calcutta largely confirmed the belief that a number of malafide transfers were made in anticipation of the law.⁹³ An official account says, ‘Up to 31st May 1970, 8.50 lakh acres of agricultural land and roughly 5 lakh acres of non-agricultural land have vested in the state... *there is much more to be done regarding recovery of hidden land.*⁹⁴ Thus, the Jotdars and the big land lords lost major portion of their lands.

The Left Front Government after coming to power in 1977 had identified the land above ceiling and distributed that surplus or vested land to the landless people. As a result, ‘...in most of the places the land less people whether refugees or early landless inhabitants got vested lands...’⁹⁵ And a total of 25, 64,931 people were given a total of 10, 48,005 acres of vested land. Thus, each of beneficiaries, in an average obtained a plot of 0.408 or 1.22 *bigha* of land.⁹⁶ In the meantime the Left Front Government took the decision to empower the share croppers with the right not to be evicted from the land that he was tilling. And thus the peasants were allowed to get the land under share cropping recorded in their names and the whole process through which it worked came to be code named as Operation *Barga*.

The following table⁹⁷ gives an idea about the number of *Bargadars* registered in West Bengal.

Year	Number of Brgadars registered
Up to 1978	0.25 million
1981	1.20 million
1984	1.31 million
1991	1.43 million
1995	1.47 million
The total number of Bargadars registered	5.66 million

All these gave a new fillip to the production of various crops in West Bengal. Though, first 30 years after the independence, West Bengal witnessed a persistent growth in the number of the people living below the poverty line.⁹⁸ However, from 1983 there was a continuous decline in the number of the persons living below the poverty line.⁹⁹ In 1983 the percentage of poverty in the rural areas was 61.56 that came down to 28.49 in the subsequent period. During the same time the percentage of poverty in the cities was 14.8 percent that was far below than the National average of 25.7 percent.¹⁰⁰

Due to all these attempts on the part of the Government the economic condition of the refugees and the displaced migrants must have gone upward a little bit but their woes still exist. This hard reality is also evident from the countless homeless persons and street children who roam on the crowded streets of Calcutta or when people are seen lying wounded and asleep on the bare floor of the Sealdah Railway Station. Indeed, Calcutta is still bearing the stigma and legacy of Partition with its unsettling conditions, countless shanties and suffocating condition of livings. As per the study (2000-2001) of the Central Ministry of Labor there were 7 lacs 12 thousand child laborers in West Bengal.¹⁰¹ However, this is not the whole picture of Calcutta, and of course of West Bengal, this is rather a part. Nilanjana Chatterjee thus, observed:

Calcutta's tercentenary will be seen by people –locals, outsiders, those who love the city and those who are repelled by it-as a time for taking stock. Its image of an overcrowded and economically depressed city must be assessed in the light of its unique history as a city of migrants and refugees. The problems of the refugees and non-refugee populations in the city have aggravated each other over the years. But there are abundant indications that the creative energy which powered the rehabilitation efforts of refugees during every wave have not been dissipated: among prosperous communities in the middle class colonies of south Calcutta; slums along the Eastern Bypass where livings are earned by unpicking threads from rubber tyres; East Bengali traders doing business in 'Tangail saris'; refugee women from the rural areas of the Calcutta Metropolitan District riding local trains to work as daily help in city households. It is also a credit to the receptivity and adaptability of the host population. The lives of all these toilers, refugee and non-refugee, are bound together in the quest to realize Calcutta's full potential as a city of opportunity.¹⁰²

Political Impact

The refugees and migrants have unquestionably influenced the political landscape of West Bengal to a considerable extent. Because of the arrival of these refugees and migrants, the political course of West Bengal took a new turn. But it should be borne in mind that the refugees and migrants did not influence the northern part and the southern part of West

Bengal alike. From the official records it appears that in comparison to North Bengal, South Bengal witnessed a higher influx of refugees and displaced migrants from East Pakistan.

Interestingly, the people of the northern part of Bengal and the southern part of Bengal did not react to the refugees and displaced migrants alike. Considering the case of the Bengali refugees and migrants, more clearly of the Bengali Hindu refugees and migrants, it can be said that in south Bengal the local people, at the initial stage, were not ready to welcome them with open arms rather the hosts were very much calculative in doing so. Thus, in case of the southern part of West Bengal the news of commotion between the refugees and the hosts was very much common on the air. The Zamindars or the owners of the land whose land the refugees had captured under the cover of darkness, tried to overthrow them with the help of the police or their hired goons. But with the passage of time, the simmering wave became calm. As time rolled on, the gap between the refugees and the hosts reduced noticeably. Tensions must have been there as the refugees made their appearance in each and every field of life; they not only created extra pressure on the limited resources of West Bengal but created an environment of tough competition in the all walk of livelihood. However, the hosts did not acknowledge their defeat in the face of the refugees and migrants rather they strived their best to adapt themselves to the new situation in order to retain their previous status and position. Another important feature was that the town-based middle class refugees have stepped into the southern part of Bengal whose language, culture and religion were more or less common with the hosts. Thus, they did not face much difficulty to merge themselves with the mainstream of the society and culture of the southern part of Bengal and hence, the displaced Bengalis who once migrated into West Bengal as refugees could not retain that identity for long. And thus the '*ghoti*' '*bangal*' concept has gradually kissed the dust.

In case of the northern part of Bengal, the scenario was quite different. Here, at the initial stage, the hosts did not react against the refugees with negative gesture. Rather, there were many instances to show that the local people have supported, co-operated and assisted the Bengali refugees in many ways a lot in the mission of rebuilding their new homes. But as time rolled on, the situation took new turn. The gap which was supposed to be decreased between the refugees- and the hosts seemed to be gone up. The terms such as '*locals*' or '*deshio*' or '*sthanio*' and '*refugee*' or '*udbastu*' or '*sharanarathi*' are still in vogue in this

part of Bengal. As a result, the post independent northern part of West Bengal had witnessed a series of ethno-political movements mostly led by the ‘so-called’ ‘locals’ of this part of West Bengal. And in the hill and foot hill regions of the northern part of West Bengal, political situation have become more unstable. There the ‘*Gorkhas*’ have made a strong demand for the formation of a new state that they have termed as ‘Gorkhaland State’. Thus, the political impact of the refugee and migration problem on West Bengal would be discussed in two parts: (a) In the first part focus would be on the southern part of Bengal as political change in West Bengal came following the footsteps of south Bengal where the concentration of the refugees and displaced migrants was high; (b) In the second part, an attempt would be made to show whether the refugees and the migrants have contributed in any way to the ongoing social and political movements both in the plain and the hill region of the Northern part of West Bengal.

South Bengal

The Partition of Bengal in 1947 had greatly transformed its political landscape as it lost two-thirds of its territory to Pakistan and thus only 89 of the 250 constituencies in the Assembly of the undivided Bengal left with West Bengal. This changed the standpoint of the every political party in West Bengal. Before the Partition of Bengal in 1947 the provincial arms of the Muslim League and Congress dominated the politics of Bengal. However, some other parties including the Communist Party of India and the Hindu Mahasabha had its presence in the province. But except Congress and Muslim League, neither the Communist Party of India nor the Hindu Mahasabha performed well in the election of 1945-46. The following table¹⁰³ shows the votes polled by parties in all contested seats in undivided Bengal, 1945-46:

Parties	Total seats contested	Total Votes polled	% of total votes cast in the election
Congress	82	2,378,324	42.91
Muslim League	111	2,036,775	36.74
Communists	20	159,304	2.87
Krishak Praja	44	131,191	2.36

Scheduled Caste Federation	8	97,204	1.75
Hindu Mahasabha	27	79,187	1.43
Kshatriya Samity	5	43,451	0.78
Jamait-ul-Ulema	12	27,756	0.50
Emarat Party	3	16,941	0.31
Muslim Parliamentary Board	10	15,816	0.28
Radical Democrats	16	10,747	0.19
Nationalist Muslims	5	4,426	0.08
Independents	152	542,168	9.78
Total	495	5,543,290	100

The most obvious sufferer of Partition was the Muslim League; as it collapsed in West Bengal following the Partition of Bengal. Another important phenomenon was that according to the political scene prevailing in 1947 the Hindu Mahasabha was expected to do best out of Partition however, the Mahasabha in West Bengal collapsed while the Communists gained strength keeping pace with the passing days. In the Punjab and Delhi the refugees more or less backed the Congress however, those refugees who got disappointed with the Congress tended to move not to the parties of the Left but to the Hindu right.¹⁰⁴

After the Partition of Bengal, the Bengal Provincial Congress seemed to be divided into two groups i.e. the Hooghly Group and the East Bengal Group. The leading members of

Hooghly Group were a handful of Gandhians and followed Mahatma Gandhi. They had taken up spinning, weaving, good works and the village welfare in the mid 1920s and were mainly situated at the Arambag Sub-division of the Hooghly District and in Bankura. Prafulla Chandra Sen became the leader of the Hooghly faction and his protégé Atulya Ghosh became the organizer and fixer of the faction that now had to dodge and weave in its bid for power.¹⁰⁵ However, even after the Partition, until the middle of 1948, the Bengal Congress was 'dominated by the members from the eastern Bengal'¹⁰⁶ who made a haste move towards West Bengal with the very first wave of the Hindu migrants. On 15th August 1947, Dr. Prafulla Chandra Ghosh with the Centre's blessings took the Charge of the State Government of West Bengal. He was a disciple of Gandhi from Abhoy Ashram in the Comilla in the east and a protégé of Acharya Kripalani (President, All India Congress). And Surendra Mohan Ghosh, a central figure of *Jugantar*, erstwhile terrorist organization of Mymensing (East Bengal) continued for time being as the President of the Bengal Congress. But all these were not liked by the Hooghly faction that was determined to break the dominance of the East Bengal Group.

Right from the time of Dr. Ghosh the refugee problems in west Bengal assumed a complex shape. And the greatest weakness of his Cabinet was that including him, Speaker Sir Iswardas Jalan, Deputy Speaker Asutosh Mallick and Kalipada Mukherjee, Bimal Chandra Sinha, Dr. Suresh Banerjee, Nikunja Maity, Jadapbendranath Panja all these Ministers were inexperienced.¹⁰⁷ They did not have any previous experiences in the administrative affairs and thus faced great difficulties to solve all those problems which made their sudden appearance in the post-partitioned West Bengal. At that critical juncture, he compiled the 'West Bengal Security Act' to get relief from the communal strife and political tug-of-war. As the Act created a huge hue and cry thus instead of reducing; the Act increased his problems. The agitation of the opposition took a simmering outline. Not only the opposition leaders but also the Congress leaders protested against this Act. Ultimately, the Bill was passed in December 1947 and remained in vogue till March, 1967. This Bill was one of the great reasons behind the downfall of Dr. Ghosh.¹⁰⁸ However, he remained in office till 15th January 1948; in all he had been the Chief Minister of West Bengal for five months only.

After becoming the Premier of West Bengal Prafulla Chandra Ghosh welcomed the public servants and the officials from East Bengal and asked them to serve in his Government.

The Hooghly Group took his invitation as a pretext to raise the anti-refugee sentiments among the local people of that District. Jadabendranath Panja from Burdwan who had recently joined to Atulya Ghosh in leading the Jatiya Banga Sangathan Samiti, insisted that 'West Bengal People were not in a position to give shelter to all east Bengal Hindus'.¹⁰⁹ However, Mr. Ghosh had harmed the interest of the refugees from East Bengal in other way. He was convinced that the refugees would go back as soon as the political turmoil became calm a bit. Thus, he did not make any protest against the step motherly attitude of the Central Government against the refugees from East Bengal. This also definitely pushed the refugees into difficulties and increased their sufferings a lot. Furthermore, it helped the Central Government to use as a pretext to deprive the East Bengali Hindu refugees from proper relief and rehabilitation.

Alongside, the Hooghly group had been making a careful planning to wrest control over the Congress Party Organization from the *Jugantar* faction of the Eastern Bengal. They, at the outset, tactfully struck wedges into the fissures dividing their more numerous opponents from East Bengal and joined hands with the *Jugantar* to drive Prafulla Chandra Ghosh out of office; lent its hands of supports to Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy who being a personal physician to both Gandhi and Nehru had connection in high places in Delhi that the canny politicians of Hooghly Group needed very much. Very soon, they had a chance when in April 1948 the All India Congress Committee at its Bombay session finally decided that the Congress in East Bengal had to be disbanded and that West Bengal required to be given a Provincial Congress Committee of its own. And the members from East Bengal were permitted to get their names included into the new West Bengal Congress only if they made a formal declaration that they had made West Bengal their home before 30 April 1948 and could prove 'they were not members of the legislature, Constituent Assembly or any Political Organization in Pakistan.'¹¹⁰ In addition to that, a sub-committee was set up to scrutinize the applications from the would-be members from East Bengal to join the West Bengal Congress. And Atulya Ghosh was among the two people given the task of overseeing this scrutiny. The result was that the East Bengal Contingent in the Provincial Congress Committee of West Bengal was slashed to 149 delegates from its earlier strength of 346. It gave a dead blow to the dominant role of the easterners inside the Bengal Congress. Finally, when in September, 1950, elections for the West Bengal Congress were held the verdict of the polls went in favor of the Hooghly

Group. Atulya Ghosh who was by now faction's unquestioned boss became the President of the Provincial Congress Committee of West Bengal.

Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy took the charge of the Premier ¹¹¹ of West Bengal on 23rd January 1948. After becoming the Premier of West Bengal Dr. Roy invited Kiran Shankar Roy who was a Zamindar of Teota in East Bengal and the leader of the Congress Assembly Party in Dhaka to join his Cabinet as Home Minister. The most controversial and criticized step that Dr. Roy took after coming to power was the declaration of the Communist Party as unlawful. Kiran Sankar Roy, 'much to Nehru's irritation' duly banned Communist Party in West Bengal.¹¹² As Randive's call for insurrection, took most wide-spread and violent shape in West Bengal and the result was that the Party was banned in West Bengal on 25th March, 1948 and continued till January, 1950.

The infighting between the Congressmen of East Bengal and West Bengal had pushed the refugees into great difficulty. As Atulya Ghosh and his allies with a view to destroying East Bengal's influence in the Congress, deliberately unleashed potentially dangerous 'sons-of-the-soil' sentiments among '*Ghotis*' of the West Bengal against the *Bangaal* refugees from the east.¹¹³ The anti-*Bangaal* slogans raised by the West Bengal Congressmen alienated the refugees who had already been infuriated by the State Government's failure to give them required relief and rehabilitation. The attack of the ruling group on the East Bengal Congress leaders steadily forced those politicians out from the Congress who were best able to soothe their annoyed refugee voters and keep them on side.

The hostile attitude of the West Bengal Congress men towards the refugees; the unfulfilment of the promises made by the Government in respect of the relief and rehabilitation and branding the refugees as foreigners by Nehru in the Jaipur Session of Congress in 1948 made the refugees gradually anti-Congress and they turned towards the Left Parties. Chatterji had given a reason why the refugees actually rushed towards the Left Parties. She noted, 'The distinctive factor in Bengal was that the refugee movements developed a reciprocal dynamic of their own which made them receptive to overtures from the left. The failure of the centre and of the state government to address the problems of the refugees, and the stubborn indifference of Nehru to their woes, did not at a stroke drive the refugees into the arms of the Communists. But government's failure served in time to undermine refugee allegiance to the Congress'.¹¹⁴

Almost in the same way Chakrabarti noted: ‘The struggle against the threat of eviction and participation in the election campaign of 1952 are two interrelated landmarks in the radicalization process of the refugee masses. In the brief period of ten months-May 1951 to February 1952 –the refugee masses of the colonies, barracks and bustees within the organizational frame of the UCRC had taken a sharp veer to the Left. The pronounced pro-Congress orientation of the uprooted population had gradually turned into hatred and at this particular point of time swung to the left.’¹¹⁵

The gradual shift of the refugee allegiance from the Congress to the Left Parties came to the notice with the victory of Sarat Chandra Bose, the founder of the Republican Socialist Party, against the Congress Candidate Suresh Das in the by-election of 1949 that may be regarded as another notable incident of the Bengal politics after Partition. Sarat Bose formed the nucleus of a united Left Front and the Congress candidate lost the election by a margin of 13,550 votes.¹¹⁶ The result of this by-election not only worried Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy about the future of his cabinet but also made Jawaharlal and Sardar Patel equally worried.¹¹⁷ After seven days of that defeat it was published in the news papers that Nehru told in a political conference that it could be understood from the poor result of the south-Calcutta by-election that the constituents of that center had been dissatisfied with the activities of the Government led by Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy and the Provincial Congress. The Cabinet that lost the confidence of the people should resign.¹¹⁸

But Dr. Roy was not ready to digest the humiliation and thus wrote a letter to Nehru expressing his intention to resign from the Chief minister-ship. In a letter dated 20th June, 1949 Dr. Roy strongly opined that the opinion expressed by Prime Minister Nehru was not correct. However, he would not move a step back to resign accepting all the moral responsibility of south Calcutta by-election.¹¹⁹ And in response to Dr. Roy’s protesting letter Nehru wrote him a letter on 22nd June, 1949. In that letter Nehru mentioned about the deep respect and confidence in Dr. Roy repeatedly. He further mentioned that not whole the people of West Bengal rather the people of south Calcutta only lost confidence in Roy’s Government. So, there was no reason to resign the Cabinet at this moment. However, the necessity of General Election in West Bengal could not be ignored completely; that would help to measure the public opinion. Hence, it would be wrong to undertake any prompt decision by now.¹²⁰

Though, the Hooghly group was very much hostile to the refugees perhaps because of their unwillingness to be dominated by the East Bengali Congress leaders yet Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy, after coming to power, tried to maintain a balance between these two groups. Thus, it was fixed that Atulya Ghosh would look after the Party Organization while Dr. Roy would handle the administrative affairs.¹²¹ He drew the notice of the Central Government regarding the insufficiency of the fund provided by the Centre to the Government of West Bengal for the relief and rehabilitation of the Bengali refugees. Dr. Roy wrote a pair of letters to Nehru expressing his growing concern for the refugees from East Bengal. But what the Central Government did at best on its part was to sign different pacts to halt the influx of the refugees from East Pakistan and under pressure allotted some funds miserly for them.

In such a situation, on 5th April 1950 the Assam Provincial Organizing Council issued a political letter (No. 4150) which excerpted extensively an article published in the theoretical Soviet Journal called *Bolshevik* that argued that the Partition of India did not in any way solve the communal situation of the country. On the contrary, it had accelerated the problem and gave birth to thousands of refugees in both India and Pakistan. Therefore, the political letter suggested that the initial task of the Communist Party would be to expose the exploiting classes and their reactionary allies by relentless propaganda among the refugees through meetings, leaflets and posters and to take part actively in the agitation of the refugees through mass organizations for relief and rehabilitation. In order to carry forward the refugee agitation for rehabilitation different refugee organizations should be made and the Students' Federation, the Krishak Sabha and the Mahila Samiti should form special organizations for the refugee students, peasants and women in different districts. These organizations, if necessary, should take to direct action against the Government and all these refugee organizations must be coordinated with the people's organization of the province.¹²² Later on, same ideas were echoed in the printed Bengali Provincial Circular under the title 'Take the lead in relief work among Hindu and Muslim refugees'. The circular also criticized both the Nehru and Roy Government in the Centre and the State respectively for their failure to provide relief to the refugees. It thus, advocated all the members to organize the refugees through the peace movement and relief work and expose the actual importance of the Government policy of disrupting the working class movement with the help of the refugees.¹²³ However, the call of both the circulars fell on deaf ears of the party members.¹²⁴

However, sincere party workers like Anil Sinha, Gopal Banerjee and some others who were themselves refugees and shared the sufferings of the refugee existence came forward and took decision that their immediate task was to organize the refugees for stopping riots in Calcutta and getting relief from the Government. As soon as the riot displayed its back, Anil Sinha and his fellow workers started organizing meetings and processions of refugees for systematic relief work by the Government. They also demanded relief and shelters for the people living in the indescribable misery on the Sealdah Station platforms, in vacant houses, barracks and on pavements. The NVBKP and DKSBS in the meantime had organized the squatters' colonies in the northern and southern suburbs of Calcutta respectively. Besides, numerous other small bodies also started working among the refugees living in Calcutta and other suburbs. Thus, there appeared a need of the emergence of a central organization that would coordinate, consolidate and direct the work of these refugee organizations towards a particular goal i.e. the economic rehabilitation of these displaced persons. As a result, finally on 12 August 1950, the Central Committee of the United Central Refugee Council was formed and in the Committee apart from the CPI, the representatives of other Left Parties and the Hindu Mahasabha found their places. And on 13 August 1950 the UCRC came into being that marked the beginning of an era of refugee meetings, processions and demonstrations.¹²⁵

In 1950 the Government of West Bengal under Bidhan Chandra Roy drafted the 'Eviction Bill' to protect the urban property owners against the refugee squatters. And in the following year it passed the Calcutta Municipal Act, according to which the vote in municipal elections was restricted to the richest 10 percent of the city. In this way, it ensured that the property-owners, landlords and shopkeepers would uninterruptedly dominate the Calcutta Corporation.¹²⁶ In the 'Third Chapter' of this thesis it has been discussed elaborately how the UCRC had fought with the help of the refugees tooth and nail against Act XVI of 1951 and the eviction notices issued by the competent authority. In fact, the UCRC by the time became the sole representative of the refugees. And as the majority of the leaders of the UCRC were from the left parties thus it has mainly become a left party influenced organization.

After Partition a considerable number of voters in West Bengal came from the lower castes and tribes and most of them engaged in the plantations, mines and factories where the Communists were active since long. Most of the electorate now started living in the

overcrowded urban and semi -urban areas majority of whom were Bengali-speaking and were without a job. The entering of refugees into West Bengal reinforced these trends, ‘all of which were grist to the electoral mill of the parties of the left’.¹²⁷ By 1950 in West Bengal one out of the every ten persons was a refugee.¹²⁸ And by 1967, one in five was either a refugee or was born in a refugee family. By then there was hardly a refugee camp and colony committee which the Left Parties had not been infiltrated into. As for their part, from the early 1950s the comrades of the Left Wing engaged themselves actively into the scheme to rally the refugees behind them. In fact; while the Mahasabha got collapsed, on the contrary, the parties on the Left in Bengal after independence made large advances in the forthcoming polls. Particularly the Communist Party of India, the Forward Bloc and the Revolutionary Socialist Party gained ground with the new electorates in Bengal and coalition became a durable and effective opposition to the Congress.¹²⁹ And the following table¹³⁰ bears a testimony to that fact.

Percentage of Votes polled by the Left-wing opposition in West Bengal Legislative
Assembly Elections (1952-69)

Party	1952	1957	1962	1967	1969
Communist Party of India	10.60	17.82	24.96	6.53	6.78
Communist Party of India(Marxist) (Founded in 1964)				18.11	19.55
Forward Bloc	5.29	3.84	4.61	3.87	5.40
Forward Bloc (Marxist)	-	0.85	0.32	0.21	0.19
Forward Bloc Ruikar (merged with PSP after 1952 elections)	1.51	-	-	-	-
Revolutionary Socialist Party	0.86	1.24	2.56	2.14	2.75
Socialist Unity Centre	-	0.75	0.73	0.72	1.48
Revolutionary Communist Party of	0.43	0.42	0.42	0.31	0.37

India					
Worker's Party of India	-	-	0.28	0.34	0.35
Total	18.69	24.92	33.88	32.23	36.87

In the first Assembly Election the Communist Party fought 71 seats and won 28 of them. And in the Lok Sabha it got five out of nine seats. 'It was a very significant success considering the situation that was prevalent in those days. We emerged as the single largest opposition in the Assembly'.¹³¹ In fact, the election of 1952 seemed to have turned into a battle of life and death both for the refugees and the Communists. The party was to prove its popularity among the common masses. As 'the Congress government had taken it for granted that the Communist Party would be finished by the onslaught of terrorism and atrocities. That the people had not forsaken us despite some errors made by the party during 1948-50 was established in these elections'.¹³² On the other hand, the refugees from East Bengal, in most of the cases worked whole heartedly in this election for their own benefit i.e. (a) the refugees had to save their newly attained houses on the different squatters against the continuous onslaught of the hired hooligans of the owner of the land; (b) the competent authority was issuing notices for the eviction of the squatters from the land they had occupied unlawfully. Furthermore, there was the question of having adequate relief and their rehabilitation in West Bengal.

On 2nd December, 1951 the UCRC convened a convention of the squatters at Deshbandhunagar where the UCRC's draft resolution was accepted with minor amendments. After that the UCRC immediately sent a circular (No.11/51) to the different colony committees with a series of instructions to implement the resolution agreed to by the convention. The UCRC circular concluded with an important and vibrant appeal that was as under-

'Friends the General Elections (1952) are drawing near. It has provided us with a unique opportunity for the realization of our demands. We have to make proper use of this opportunity. It will be suicidal if we fail to take full advantage of this opportunity.

A democratic Government would have fulfilled our demands. But the present Congress Government has paid no heed to our demands and will not do so in future. The coming Elections are an opportunity to install

a new coalition Government of the democratic parties of West Bengal. If the democratic parties win the elections, a coalition of these parties will replace the present Congress Government. We can then hope for a fair solution of our problem. Even in the event of a Congress victory, it will not be possible for any Government ignore our demands, for we shall acquire strength and power through our efforts during the General Elections.

Thus, in view of the importance of the present situation, the UCRC calls upon all the refugees and refugee organizations to proceed in the following manner. They should approach each and every candidates of their locality for support, issue statements and voice them in all election meetings. They should participate in all election meetings to popularize our policy of rehabilitation. They should also mobilize all their forces to ensure the election of the candidates of democratic parties.¹³³

Almost the entire refugee population worked actively for the candidates of the Left parties. They canvassed for the Left Candidates, organized meetings and processions, raised campaign funds and did all clerical works related to electioneering. When the result of the election was declared it became evident that the Left Parties became successful in areas with concentration of the refugees in large number. The Provincial Committee (PC) of the CPI recognized the key role of the refugee workers in the general elections and admitted that the success of the party candidates was mainly due to the activities of the refugee workers. It was therefore proposed at a meeting of the fraction of the refugee front that as the ordinary refugee volunteers rendered greater services in the elections than the party members, they should be immediately admitted into the party and activist group should be formed with refugee volunteers in the colonies and camps.¹³⁴

Tram Fare Enhancement Resistance Movement and the Refugees: the General Elections of 1952 gave a fresh confidence to the Leftist parties. Calcutta and its adjacent areas were in turmoil. Before the turmoil was over Calcutta erupted in July 1953. The Calcutta Tramways Company made an upward revision of the second class fare by a pice i.e. $\frac{1}{64}$ th part of a rupee. And it was to come into effect from 1st July 1953. But this minimal increase in the tram fare met with organized resistance in no time. The reason was that, as Chakrabarti noted, ‘The Leftist parties were spoiling for a fight in order to demonstrate their strength...It was an accident that the issue of the extra pice came up around the time when the Leftist parties were seeking to measure their strength with the Government. The explosion would have occurred...It would have then been other issue’.¹³⁵ The Opposition made a Tram Fare Enhancement Resistance Committee (TFERC) and Dr. Suresh C. Banerjee became the Chairman of the Committee. On 1st July,

the volunteers of the TFERC boarded the second class compartments of tramcars and discouraged the passengers to pay the hiked tram fares. The passengers denied paying the enhanced fare and the result was that collections of fare from the second class compartment fell precisely. The police took the volunteers into custody that provoked fresh disturbances. Attempts were made to set the tramcars on fire and stones and crackers were thrown at them. On 3rd July tram services were suspended and 710 demonstrators including four Opposition MLAs namely Jyoti Basu, Ganesh Ghosh, Jyotish Joardar and Subodh Banerjee and three women were arrested.¹³⁶ It was followed by violent clashes between the police and the city mob which practically led to the near paralysis of life in Calcutta and its suburbs. The second round of the movement was played out between 5th and 15th July. The pattern of the activities during the second round of agitation was the same. The only exception was that it was more intense than the earlier one. Another important feature of the second round of the struggle was that the two rival refugee organizations i.e. the UCRC and the RCRC were now fused within the TFERC. The TFERC 'may be regarded as the present-day Left Front in embryo. It was a front of all Left and Left-of-Centre parties. The leadership of the TFERC as well as that of the UCRC-RCRC combine remained the same. But this leadership now claimed to represent the radical opinion of the whole of West Bengal... The lineaments of a Left Front Government were clearly visible during this movement'.¹³⁷ The second round of the movement reached its highest pitch with the successful general strike of 15th July. In the meantime, the Tramway Workers' Union (Communist) and the Tramway Mazdoor Panchayat (Socialist) joined the fray and jointly called upon their members to go on a 5-day strike from July 18 for the realization of their demands.¹³⁸ On 25th July the TFERC celebrated the success of the movement. There was a mammoth rally at the foot of the Monument where all the parties of the Left and men from all walks of life joined. The meeting resolved that the movement would continue till the six-point of demands¹³⁹ were met. Finally, Dr. Roy answered in a written form to the six-point demands saying that the question of the enhancement of tram fare is already before the Tribunal and no increases would be considered before the judgment of the Tribunal is given and representative public opinion taken. The TFERC reacted to Dr. Roy's reply in such way:

'The TFERC's object was to resist the enhancement of second class tram fare. The mighty people's movement has compelled the Government for the time being to stay the enhancement. This is a significant victory. The Chief Minister has now referred the matter

to the Tribunal and has agreed not to enhance the fare in any case without taking representative public opinion.’¹⁴⁰

The TFERC celebrated what it called the second round of victory on 4th August at a Wellington Square rally where the Leftist leaders gave an explanation of the concessions recently gained by the committee. They also greeted the people for their support to the movement. In this way the TFERC movement came to an end.

But the most important thing that needs to be discussed in pros and cons is to assess the role of the refugees in the movement launched by the TFERC. The Government record gives an idea about the extent of the participation of the refugees in the movement. ‘The entire male population of refugee colonies in the immediate suburbs of Calcutta appeared to have joined the movement.’¹⁴¹ During the month-long agitation of the TFERC the colony leaders would take contingents from their colonies to the Calcutta streets where they boarded the second class compartments and dissuaded the passengers to pay the enhanced fare. ‘They shouted slogans, participated in street demonstrations threw crackers and bombs at tramcars and policemen and rounded off the day with a tramcar in flames. They were, of course, not the sole participants in the daily drama in Calcutta streets... But the refugee participants were the most numerous, consistent and combustible.’¹⁴² The total refugee population in the suburbs of Calcutta got involved in the TFERC movement. The police came down heavily on the colonies and the UCRC protested against the police repression when it met on 25th July 1953.

The Food Movement and the involvement of the refugees: after the Partition of Bengal there appeared an acute food crisis in West Bengal. The price of essential commodities went high and thus the common people felt it difficult to afford. ‘A dhoti of Rs. 10 was selling at treble the price.’¹⁴³ The opposition tried to draw the attention of the people to the refugee problems, unemployment, food and rehabilitation problems and so on. On the contrary, the Congress argued that Partition and the increase in the number of the population was the root of the problems and it had failed even after trying to solve it.¹⁴⁴ Dr. Roy in his speech entitled ‘Problems of West Bengal’ opined that ‘The unemployment problem is not new, but on account of certain socio-economic changes, it has become acute in the recent years. Owing to various causes, such as the rapid growth of population, partition of Bengal, unemployment consequent on the mechanization of industries in its transitory period, etc.’¹⁴⁵ But Nehru appeared to have viewed the food

problems in West Bengal in the same way as he viewed the crisis of refugees and the allied problems of unemployment in West Bengal. In a confidential note dated 22nd June 1949 which was sent for the consideration of the Congress Working Committee Dr. Roy gave emphasis on the fact that deficiency of food was an integral part of even the undivided Bengal and it had become more after Partition.¹⁴⁶ Thus, he cabled from Paris to Nalini Ranjan Sarkar, the acting Chief Minister and who was to deputize for him in the Working Committee meeting of 23rd June 1949 to 'press for improved food contribution from the Centre.'¹⁴⁷ Dr. Roy even went to the extent of writing to Sardar Patel how 'every attempt we made to give relief to our people by increasing the quota of food has been turned down by the Food Ministry'.¹⁴⁸

The food crisis affected the all walks of the people of West Bengal. And due to the movement against the enhancement of the second class fare West Bengal was in a state of extreme nervous tension. In such a situation, as a consequence of the acute food crisis, hunger rallies were being organized in various places and the single most key cry was for food. On 21st April 1951, a 5,000 strong hunger rally was brought in Cooch Behar town. The police however, lathi-charged and opened fire at the rally that resulted in the death of five people and at least 40 people left injured.¹⁴⁹ However, the first movement was launched by the Left Opposition in the summer of 1952. The RSP with Forward Bloc and some other Left groups had set up Famine Resistance Committee. The CPI formed its own committee. 'These committees were formed to bring into focus the food situation in West Bengal and to gather together the accumulated discontent for non-availability and high prices of food grains every year during the lean season.'¹⁵⁰ The food-marchers made demand for increase in the ration quota of rice and wheat in particular for the manual workers. They shouted slogan for more food at cheaper rate. From 1952 to 1957 various movements that came one after another rocked the whole West Bengal- the food movement of 1952 was followed by All Bengal Teacher's Associations' movement and the movement against the Bengal- Bihar merger issue. In all these movements the Left Political leaders took the lead and formed public opinion. The result was that in the elections of 1957 the representations of the Left Opposition in the Assembly went to 80 from its earlier strength of 57.

In 1959 the food movement was started with new enthusiasm. In that very year there appeared an acute food crisis in West Bengal and the price of essential commodities

touched its apex. However, by the end of September the Food Movement of 1959 slowly died out. The important feature of the movement was that the students also supported the movement and joined with it, the result was that one thousand students were arrested all over the state.¹⁵¹ But in 1964-65 the food crisis again took an alarming form as by then an acute food crisis gripped the entire country. The result was that the food movement again got momentum obviously under the leadership of the Left Opposition. However, the movement of 1966 as Chakrabarti noted was different from the earlier ones in two respects. Firstly: 'the impending general elections in early 1967' and secondly 'Change in the character of the movement due to the Massive mobilization of the people'.¹⁵² On the other hand, Shyamal Chakraborty wrote, 'in the Food Movement of 1959 the rural peasants came to Calcutta and faced bullets. This time the movement spread village-town everywhere.'¹⁵³ In principal, all the Left parties supported the new food policy of Prafulla Chandra Sen but they made objection to the certain points of his programme. Thus, the Left Parties had fixed March 1966 for launching a state-wide movement on different policies of the Government- the issue of food, the D.I. Rules and the release of detainees. But the movement erupted suddenly before the proposed time and took the Left Parties by surprise. The movement was sudden and spontaneous in which the refugees also played their part forming the violent crowds that took part in the movement. In such a situation, the leaders of the political parties hurried to lead the leaderless mob to 'direct the movement along the accustomed channel'¹⁵⁴ According to an estimate, the casualty list of the disturbances till 11th March 1966 consisted of 50 dead, seriously wounded 300 and 7,000 persons were arrested.¹⁵⁵ From the study of Prafulla K. Chakrabarti it appears that in the food movement of 1966, the refugees took part in swarms. He noted:

The places where the incidents occurred were refugee-concentrated areas. The Barackpore sub-division, the Rishra- Konnagar-Hind Motor areas, Jadavpur, Behala, Barisa, Sarsuna, Sakherbazar and the other fringe areas of Calcutta were crammed with refugee settlements. In Nadia district the refugee population outnumbered the local population and the total number of refugees in Calcutta, 24 Parganas and Nadia districts comprised one-third of the total refugee population in the State. The shanties which lined both sides of the railway tracks from Sealdah to Krishnanagar, Diamond Harbour and Budge-Budge and from Howrah to Bandel were almost all erected by the refugees whose life was as provisional as the shacks they lived in. The army of children who invaded the railway tracks did not come from faraway places. On the morning of the Bandh they simply emerged from these shacks and did their work of destruction and disappeared into the shacks when the hurly-burly was over...But the basic and most numerous component was the refugees. Even in North Bengal this was the case. There the disturbances mainly took place at Falakata and Alipore Duar which again were heavily refugee concentrated areas.¹⁵⁶

The united Left, in spite of the turmoil in 1966, was not successful in effecting a breach in the Congress vote bank in the rural areas. 'It was dissidence within its own ranks and Opposition unity that brought about the Congress debacle.'¹⁵⁷ Ajoy Mukherjee, the president of the WBPCP supported the Left-sponsored Bangla Bandh on 10 March. The result was that he was expelled from the Congress and thus formed the Bangla Congress shortly after his expulsion from Congress. And thus what the Congress lost was achieved by the Bangla Congress. The majority of the seats that the Congress lost in the elections of 1967 were won by the Bangla Congress. 'The Congress gained only 127 seats. But the Bangla Congress won 30 seats. The Communist Parties and the Marxist Left gained some additional seats. But the Congress and the Bangla Congress nearly maintained the 1962 percentage of seats...'¹⁵⁸ However, it cannot be ignored that the numerical strength of the supporters of the Left Political Parties in West Bengal gradually went up and in this process the UCRC appeared to play a deciding factor. As Chakrabarti observed:

The UCRC directed the refugee struggle against the establishment and discreetly propelled the refugees towards the Left and when in 1959 the UCRC was taken over by the CPI the refugee veer to the Left particularly to the CPI was more or less complete.

The near complete allegiance of the refugees to the CPI provided for it a mobile, violence-prone and huge following. In less than a decade the control of the CPI had been established over millions of refugees, although the party did not make much of a dent among the peasants in the countryside. The allegiance of the working class remained divided between the INTUC and the AITUC, CITU, UTUC etc. the refugees became the striking arm of the CPI and subsequently of the CPI (M) during the period of 1951-1967. Of necessity the party had to limit its activities to the refugee concentrated areas within a radius of 100 km from Calcutta. It was in this restricted political stage that the drama of Leftist movements was played out. ..The vitality of Leftism during this period is demonstrated by the fact that the series of Leftist movement succeeded in completely paralyzing the administrative machinery in the teeth of brutal repression through political action of increasing intensity until it crescendoed to the convulsive orgasm of the food movement of 1966 and the sequential debacle of the Congress in the general elections of 1967. The UCRC was the catalyst of this change in the political scenario of West Bengal.¹⁵⁹

Thus, in the sixties and seventies the refugees extended their support to the Left parties in the hope of getting permanent rehabilitation and means of livelihood. However, in the latter years some sorts of discontents made its room in the mind of the refugees as the Left Front Government appeared to be futile to meet all the demands of the refugees raised under the leadership of the United Central Refugee Council. At the same time, a large number of refugees who earned their living as Hawkers in the city and suburbs were

uprooted and thereby they became helpless and hapless for the second time. This was coupled with the problems of unemployment, inadequate facilities for education and health service etc. The result was that there appeared a shift in political support from the Left Front to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) or Trinamul Congress (TMC). Thus, the CPI (M) at the end of 1991 parliamentary elections, in a report, mentioned some reasons responsible for its poor performance in West Bengal. The report noted,

The review made by the West Bengal State Committee has noted that in the rural belt in villages and towns dominated by middle class our influence has declined. Similarly, the youth belonging to the middle classes have been turned away from us...sections of the refugees from Bangladesh have rallied to the BJP-TMC combine.¹⁶⁰

The recent shift in their support to right wings political parties can be imagined from the some of the electoral data. In the Lok Sabha election of 1989 BJP shared only 1.71 percent vote. However, its share of vote got increased to 11.65 percent in 1991. In the subsequent elections there was a further rise in BJP's vote share resulted in winning of the prestigious Dum Dum parliamentary seat in 1998 and the Krishnanagar seat in Nadia district in 1999.¹⁶¹

North Bengal

North Bengal or the northern part of West Bengal constitutes six districts i.e. Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling, North Dinajpur, South Dinajpur and Malda. Though the flow of the refugees was by and large towards the districts of south Bengal especially Calcutta and its adjoining districts yet a considerable number of them entered into North Bengal. The table¹⁶² furnished below gives an idea about the number of the refugees in North Bengal in 1958:

Districts	No of Camps and homes	Population in camps and homes	No of Govt. colonies	Population in Govt. colonies	Refugees outside camps and colonies	Total refugee population
Malda	—	—	12	2,939	69,004	72,924
West	1	989	11	3,865	158,095	162,949

Dinajpur						
Jalpaiguri	–	–	9	7,850	142,306	150,156
Darjeeling	–	–	2	3,375	26,668	30,043
Cooch Behar	1	1,159	12	6,550	222,118	227,827
Total	2	2,148	46	24,579	6,18,191	6,43,899

As time rolled on, the influx of the refugees and displaced persons, keeping pace with the other part of West Bengal, increased into North Bengal also. The Census Report of 1971 shows that 11, 59, 000 persons¹⁶³ entered these regions as refugees:

Districts	No. of refugees (1958)	No. of refugees (1971)	increase/decrease
Cooch Behar	2,27,827	4,42,000	(+) 2,14,173
Jalpaiguri	1,50,156	2,49,000	(+) 98,844
Drjeeling	30,043	48,000	(+) 17,957
West Dinajpur (north & south)	1,62,949	2,92,500	(+) 1,29,551
Malda	72,924	1,27,500	(+) 54,576
Total	6,43,899	11,59,000	(+) 5,15,101

Before the seventies the refugees of North Bengal did not come under the UCRC network. And though the UCRC was doing a lot for the refugees of East Bengal in and around Calcutta but it was practically absent in North Bengal.

I

On the eve of India's independence, the Scheduled Caste Federation of Bengal under the leadership of Jogendranath Mandal opposed the division of Bengal on the basis of the 'Two-Nation Theory'. And even if division of Bengal was inevitable then as an alternative, it placed the demand for the creation of 'Rajasthan State' for the scheduled caste people of this region in May, 1947. The proposed areas which were to come under the periphery of the Rajasthan State were Siliguri sub-division of Darjeeling District, some portion of the Purnia District of Bihar, whole Jalpaiguri District, both the Dinajpur Districts, north-western part of Rangpur District and whole Goalpara District of Assam. However, Jogendra Nath Mandal did not include Cooch Behar into the Rajasthan proposal, and the reason might be Cooch Behar was by then a Princely State. But there is no doubt that the Hindu leaders especially the Rajbanshi Kshatriya leaders of the Hitasadhani Sabha were supporters of Jogendranath Mandal on the issue of the Rajasthan State.¹⁶⁴ But, the Rajasthan State, demanded by the Scheduled Caste Federation, could not see the light at last.

Due to the Partition of Bengal, Cooch Behar, the Princely state got merged with the Union of India on 12th September, 1949 and in the subsequent period became a district of West Bengal with effect from 1st January 1950. Though there was a long history behind the final merger of Cooch Behar with West Bengal yet the present discussion has little to do with it. But it must be mentioned here that the *Deshi* or the local people, particularly the *Jotdars*, *Zamindars* and the intellectual class of the *Rajbanshi* community did not like and digest the idea of making a so called independent state as a part or district of a newly formed State of West Bengal. Thus, it was considered that by converting the independent State into a district the dignity and honor of Cooch Behar and its people had been lowered. In this way, a sense of discontent harbored in their psyche that found expression in the form of ill feelings against the high caste Bengali gentry of North Bengal who were well advanced in all walks of life. These ill feelings gradually got converted into antagonism against the Bengalis in general and Bengali language in particular. The situation was further deteriorated by the continuous influx of the refugees into this region.

II

Before independence the Rajbanshi community of this region started a movement of their own known as Rajbanshi Kshatriya Movement which has long history to speak. As the Rasbanshis were placed quite low at the caste hierarchy of the Hindu society thus they made an attempt to establish themselves as Kshatriyas under the leadership of Rai Saheb Panchanan Barma in the first half of the 20th century that assumed a form of a movement came to be known as Rajbanshi Kshatriya Movement. This movement in the long run acted as the base of the different ethno-political agitations in North Bengal.¹⁶⁵ As the Rajbanshi Community has mainly been at the forefront to lead all these movements in the plain North Bengal for creating a separate state of their own thus it would be wise to have a glance over the numerical strength of this community¹⁶⁶ in the various districts of North Bengal.

Districts	Total Population	All Scheduled Caste	Rajbanshi population	Percentage of Rajbanshi population
Koch Bihar	2479155	1242374	972803	39.24
Jalpaiguri	3401173	1248577	811567	23.86
Darjeeling	1609172	258881	129904	8.07
Uttar Dinajpur	2441794	676582	405140	16.59
Dakshin Dinajpur	1503178	432660	224988	14.97
Malda	3290468	554165	144158	4.38
Total	14724940	4413239	2688560	18.26

It appears from the above data that the numerical strength of the Rajbanshi community is higher in Cooch Behar district. Alongside, some of the tribal people of the region such as Rabha, Mech (Bodos) have also joined the Rajbanshis in their claim for a separate state as they consider themselves to be the 'son of the soil'.¹⁶⁷ 'They put forward the justification for separate state by citing the past glory of their illustrious history, namely the history of

Kamtapur in the 15th century. Even they go further back to the glorious days of Vaskarvarman of Kamrup in the 7th century and Bhagadatta of the Mahabharata days of Kamrup.¹⁶⁸

The local people of this region were mostly illiterate or semi-illiterate who practically lacked any connection with the higher ups. They were mostly engaged in the agricultural works. Though there were some *Jotdars* and *Zamindars* among the local people but most of local people were economically poor. Besides, this area lacked health, education and other required facilities which acted as hindrance on their way to material development. In such a situation, the displaced persons, many of whom practically left East Bengal with empty hands, entered into this region. After coming here they started their struggle for existence afresh. As this region was basically agro based hence they made a peep into the kindness of the local land owners and started cultivation in their lands as *adhiars* or share croppers. The local people who were following the traditional methods of cultivation failed to grow as much amount of crops as the new comers who had a better knowledge of developed methods of cultivation. Furthermore, they must have worked harder as survival became a challenge to them which also helped to grow more crops. As the new share croppers were able to produce more crops thus paid a higher amounts as share to the land owners. Thus, the land owners engaged the new comers as *adhiars* or share croppers even in some cases they evicted the local *adhiars* in the hope of having more crops.¹⁶⁹ Alongside, the price of land went high as the primary motto of the new comers was to manage a homestead that they had to sacrifice as a price of independence. Thus, those who could bring some money or some movable property with them or as refugees got some assistance in the form of loans from the Government purchased *bastu* lands with it to make their new homes. The local people sometimes in need or sometimes in the passion of getting handsome amount sold the land where the new comers appeared to be the purchaser.

The ceiling laws according to which lands in excess of 75 *bighas* got vested gave a new twist to the situation. As a result, the *Jotdars* and the big land lords lost major portion of their lands. They were now to sell the lands under their control for their livelihood. And the lands were incidentally purchased by the new comers who were desperately in need of land for eking out a livelihood. The Left Front Government after coming to power in 1977 strengthened the three-tier Panchayeti system and started land reform with new spirit. It

identified the land above ceiling and distributed that surplus or vested land to the people without land and thus the landless people whether refugees or early landless inhabitants got vested lands. Alongside, the Left Front Government empowered the share cropper with the right not to be evicted from the land that he was tilling that was known as Operation *Barga*.

Operation *Barga* had brought about a new lease of hope in the mind of the toiling masses of the countryside of West Bengal and thereby of North Bengal. Henceforth, the sharecroppers paid more attention to cultivate the land in a better way. The result was that the amount of yield noticeably got increased. It in its turn, to some extent, helped to alleviate poverty in the villages thereby paved the way for the economic betterment for the *bargadars*.¹⁷⁰

However, Operation *Barga* was not all flawless. It invited further complications into the traditional agro-based infrastructure of the rural society. It struck at the very root of the age-long mutual trust between the *bargadars* and the land owners. The *bargadars* exploited every opportunity of the situation created by the Operation *Barga* and got the lands under their plough recorded in their names. This led to the creation of a chaotic situation in the agro-based countryside. 'Although the measures for tenurial security to sharecroppers met with a greater success, the distribution of land to the landless could not meet the demand for land of the entire landless population in the rural areas'¹⁷¹

Due to the reformatory measures undertaken by the Left Front Government such as Land reforms, Operation *Barga* and strengthening of the three-tier *Panchayet* system the Rajbanshi landless peasants and the *bargadars* were benefitted. It led to the switch over of the political allegiance of the Rajbanshi peasants to the Left political parties. A considerable number of candidates from the Rajbanshi community were elected in the seats of *Panchayets*, *Anchal Pradhans*, *Panchayet Samity* and *Zilla Parishad*. However, the *Jotdars*, *Zamindars* and the big land lords, who predominantly belonged to the Rajbanshi community and local Muslims; and were supporters of the Hitasadhini Sabha and afterwards the Congress, were in wait to find out means that would help to re-strengthen their position. As after losing the land to the landless peasants and the *bargadars* due to *khas* land distribution and recording of lands under share cropping in the name of share croppers they practically became penniless, powerless and disappointed. Furthermore, whatever land they could retain even after the application of the ceiling laws

got reduced as in the meantime the erstwhile joint families got broken and lands passed into the hands of their heirs. Thus, the income of the erstwhile *Jotdars* and land lords got shrunk. As the *Jotdars* and land lords did not have other profession other than the landed property thus, they were compelled to sell lands whenever they fell into difficulties. As a result, the descendants of the erstwhile *Jotdars* and land lords who once possessed 200-500-1000 acres of land now became practically landless. Without having any means many of them became agricultural labourer and took up other such professions. The pangs of want and poverty haunt them. Whenever, they think of their past, the nostalgia eats into them, they are burnt in the memory of losing everything. As a result, anger enters into them which very often take the form of violence.¹⁷²

Besides, though the Operation *Barga* temporarily helped the share croppers to elevate their economic condition but in the long run it failed miserably. Because the lands which they got were mostly un-irrigated thus the amount of yield per acre was not up to the expectation. 'Devoid of much yield in the land and without governmental help the *bargadars* failed to reap the benefit of Barga Operation.'¹⁷³ On the contrary, Operation *Barga* spoiled the age long relation of the share croppers and the land owners. Earlier the share croppers used to borrow paddy from their land lords during the off season as loan and used to give it back when they reaped the new paddy. But after Operation *Barga* the share croppers were deprived from that opportunity as by now onwards their relation was not good with the land lords.

In the academic and service sectors also the local people of this region met with a tough competition offered by the new comers. With the first wave of the influx the educated people who used to dominate the higher rungs of the socio-economic and the political ladder in East Bengal made a hasty rush towards West Bengal and got settled in the urban and semi-urban belt of this region. There were many service holders also, who taking the advantage of the Government's rule of 'Option' opted for their job in West Bengal¹⁷⁴ and got settled in the urban region where all necessities of modern life were easily available. This group of people within a short span of time got resettled and their children became well educated and, in most of the cases, got the desired jobs. Even the Namasudra peasants who made their journey towards West Bengal in the wake of the deadly communal riot of 1950 and had been a better pursuer of education by then as their leader Harichand Thakur and Guruchand Thakur inspired them to be educated at any cost.¹⁷⁵

Thus, though the Rajbanshi community was entitled to enjoy the special facilities as schedule caste however, because of the arrival of the Namasudra peasants and other such groups, who were also entitled to enjoy the same, threw a tough competition at the educated locals.¹⁷⁶

However, at the initial stage when the refugees were pouring into these regions in ever increasing numbers the local populace of these regions had strived their best to stand by them. As time rolled on they could not help the incoming displaced persons any more as it went beyond their capacity. Furthermore, there was no sign of stopping that influx of refugees from East Pakistan and later on Bangladesh. Lack of agro-based or any other industry and employment opportunity complicated the situation further. Thus, there arose a sense of deprivation in the minds of the 'son of the soil' of North Bengal that gave birth to a misconception that the new comers or the *Bhatias* were mainly responsible for the impoverishment of the locals.¹⁷⁷ And the best way, that they considered, through which they could come out of their present deplorable condition was to form a separate state of their own. This notion gave birth to a series of organizations i.e. the Uttarkand Dal (UKD), Uttarbanga Tapasili Jati O Adivasi Sangathan (UTJAS), Kamtapur People's Party (KPP) etc. which unleashed a series of movements such as Uttar Khand Movements, Movement of the Uttarbanga Tapashili Jati O Adivasi Sangathan, Kamtapur Movement, Greater Cooch Behar Movement, Uttar Banga Sanskriti Movement etc. and highlighted the socio-economic and political issues.

The Uttarkhanda Movement: the 'Uttarkhand' as an organization for a separate state was first used in a conference held in Darjeeling in 1949. However, on 5th July 1969 a new Uttarkhand Dal (henceforth UKD) came into being in the complex of the historic Jalpesh Temple situated in the Maynaguri Police Station of Jalpaiguri district. Though, in the subsequent period Jateswar, situated in the district of Cooch Behar, became the centre of its vigorous activities. The Uttarkhanda Movement, a movement of the section of the Rajbanshis, led and mobilized by Panchanan Mallick, started a peaceful movement through public meeting covering almost all the villages of North Bengal with a view to saving the people, especially the people of local origin of North Bengal against the unequal treatments and exploitations by the Calcutta based leaders.¹⁷⁸ The UKD fought the elections of 1971, 1972, 1977 and 1982 without desired success. The UKD expressed its concern over the refugees through its election manifesto in 1972 and suggested for

‘vesting of surplus houses or homestead plots of the city owners to solve the refugee problems’.¹⁷⁹ And over the citizenship issue in a charter of demands in 1989 the UKD demanded, ‘Following the Indira-Mujib agreement, 1971 should be the base year for citizenship.’¹⁸⁰ At the initial stage the UKD did not raise the demand for the creation of a separate state. Its main agitation was against the unequal distribution of the per capita expenditures.¹⁸¹ However, as time rolled on the UKD for fulfilling its demands gave a call for the creation of a separate state out of the five districts of North Bengal. But the most interesting thing was that it made an appeal to the all sections of people irrespective of caste, creed and religion in support of their claim for the creation of a separate Kamtapur State in North Bengal.¹⁸² Perhaps the leadership of the UKD could comprehend that if a separate Kamtapur State would have to be created then the support of the all section of people irrespective of caste, creed and religion was very much needed. Though the UKD failed to attain its desired goal yet it paved the way for the birth and growth of the subsequent movements on the soil of North Bengal.

The Movement of Uttarbanga Tapashili Jati O Adivasi Sangathan: the Uttarbanga Tapashili Jati O Adivasi Sangathan (UTJAS) was established with a view to opposing the socio-economic, political and cultural discrimination in this area of North Bengal. Dharendra Nath Das noted; ‘The problem of influx of migrants, cultural differences between the migrants and local Scheduled Castes and Tribes and other Backward Classes, restricted job opportunities for indigenous middle class, immobility of the people of Scheduled Castes and Tribes...language domination or sense of insecurity of language-culture-religion etc. badly impacted on the minds of North Bengal people compelled to unite under the umbrella of UTJAS, as an alternative political platform.’¹⁸³

The foundation conference of the UTJAS took place on the first part of 1981 at Narasingha Vidyapith at Kadamtala in Darjeeling District.¹⁸⁴ Like the UKD the UTJAS also expressed its concern over the influx of the refugees and migrants in North Bengal and thus, it along with other issues included in its objective discontinuation of the ‘foreigners’ infiltration that has threatened the existence of indigenous people in respect of their social, economical, cultural and political life and that has also threatened communal harmony.¹⁸⁵ Thus, in the beginning of 1981, the UTJAS gave a call for a three-day long Second Convention which finalized 27 demands taking into account the interest of the all groups of *dalits*. And the demands which were related to the refugees and migrants of

North Bengal were 'immediate stoppage of foreigners' infiltration' and 'exclusion of the names of foreign nationals from the voter list'.¹⁸⁶ And in the third Convention of the UTJAS which was held at Raiganj, in Uttar Dinajpur District, it added three more demands to its agenda out of which the first one dealt with the refugees and migrants as it demanded that refugees to be distributed throughout the nation and if the Bangladesh Government failed to protect its Hindu/indigenous people then a homeland within Bangladesh should be created for them.¹⁸⁷

In October, 1986 the members of the organization held a rally at the Esplanade East, Calcutta which was attended by the members of the listed castes and tribes from all the districts of North Bengal. The organization submitted two memorandums addressing to the Chief Minister and the Governor of West Bengal respectively that contained a 15 point charter of demands including the issue of the refugees and migrants in North Bengal. Though the main demand was 60% seat reservation for the students of North Bengal in its various higher educational institutions however, it demanded that steps to be taken for stopping the infiltration of foreigners into North Bengal and it further demanded that 'the names of all foreigners who came into North Bengal after 1971, be struck from the electoral rolls...'¹⁸⁸

Towards the end of 1990, the *Sangathan* lost its ground when its leaders started nourishing the dream of being the national leaders coming out the nucleus of the local leadership thereby began to be associated with some other organizations whose approach was not in favor of the policy of reservation. And the relation of the UTJAS with Kishan Organization of Mr. Mahendra Sing Tikayat gave the finishing blow to it.¹⁸⁹

The Government however, in the face of agitation formed the Uttarbanga Unnayan Parshad (UUP) for dealing with the problems of the people of North Bengal in an especial way. However, the UUP failed to fulfill the needs of the people of this region as it was not given the sufficient amount thus failed to deal with the problems of the people of this region properly. In such a situation, there arose another organization under the name of Kamtapur People's Party (KPP).

The Movement of Kamtapur People's Party: the Kamtapur People's Party (KPP) was formed on 7th January, 1996 in a meeting in Daukimari in Dhupguri, in the district of Jalpaiguri under the leadership of Atul Roy. The indigenous people of North Bengal under

the banner of this organization organized public meetings and processions in a democratic way for making the people aware to fight against the vested interests. And public contact was made irrespective of caste, creed and political opinion. The movement was needed; they tried to convince the people, as the Government had proved to be a failure to look after the interest of the common people of North Bengal.¹⁹⁰ The main motto however, behind the formation of the KPP was to create a separate state of Kamtapur, at a point of time comprised the area from Rangpur-Ghoraghat of Bangladesh to the Koshi River, Jhapa Morung area of Nepal and the entire North-east, within Indian Union and the recognition of the Kamtapuri language. They believed in 'Do or die, Kamtapur chai' (we want Kamtapur at any cost) justifying the demand of separate state with the history of the king who ruled in Kamrup during the 13th century. They also included in their charter of demands that 'North Bengal has become a den of refugees from all directions and this has to be stopped'.¹⁹¹ Jitendra Nath Barman wrote:

'The influx of East Bengal refugees, people of South Bengal and outside Bengal has converted the sons of the soil into landless people and 90% of agriculturist indigenous people are landless labour today. Devoid of self respect, social position, cultural tradition, they are now labour only. The descendants of the landowners of Siliguri and adjacent areas are now rickshaw pullers, maid servants or supply-labours to the masons in Siliguri.

The same conditions prevail in Jalpaiguri, Coochbehar, Malda and both Dinajpur districts. Everybody knows there is limitless deprivation these people are subjected to. Only 3% of West Bengal's industry is in North Bengal; only 2% of total electricity of West Bengal is consumed in North Bengal. North Bengal has huge natural wealth which has been exploited by South Bengal people. Only 1.5% of West Bengal's capital has been invested in North Bengal. The agricultural lands of Duars have been converted into tea gardens, from which South Bengal people have earned crores of rupees. Agricultural lands near Siliguri, Jalpaiguri and Dinajpur and even some areas of Coochbehar are being converted into tea gardens...Such is the reaction of Atul Roy and other members of KPP, if you ask for the justification of a separate state.'¹⁹²

Thus, besides the issue of migration into North Bengal the step motherly attitude of the Government of West Bengal is held accountable for the deplorable condition of the sons of the soil of Kamtapur. And they found a way out from this condition through the creation of a separate state i.e. Kamtapur. On 6th November, 2000, there was huge mass rally of the Kamtapuri activists in Cooch Behar followed by a massive meeting on the Airport ground. In this meeting the demand for a separate state was explained and got approved.¹⁹³ The Party also attained recognition of the Election Commission as a political

party under the name of Kamtapur Progressive Party instead of Kamtapur People's Party.¹⁹⁴

Greater Kuch Bihar Movement: in the meantime North Bengal has witnessed the birth of another movement under the name of Greater Kuch Bihar Movement. Regarding the origin of this movement Sukhbilas Barma wrote, 'An investigation into the documentary evidence brings out that such movement originated in 1998 and ventilated through an 'Appeal' dated 20.10.98 circulated by one Arun Kumar Roy on behalf of 'The Greater Kuch Behar People's Association.'¹⁹⁵ Afterwards the Association got divided into two groups- the first group was led by Arun Kumar Roy and Anilendra Narayan and got their association registered under the name 'The Kuch Behar Peoples' Association' while the second group was led by Banshi Badan Barman and Jyotish Chandra Sarkar and started agitation under the name of 'The Greater Kuch Bihar People's Association'. At the initial stage, as it appears, the main aim of the original Association was to get Kumar Anilendra Narayan who was a distant relative of the king of Kuch Bihar, mounted to the post of the President of the Debuttar Trust Board. However, as Bansi Badan Barman took over the reins of 'The Greater Kuch Bihar People's Association' it demanded, as it included in the Memorandum submitted to the District Administration for onward transmission to the President, Prime Minister, Home Minister and the Chief Election Commissioner, under "*Dangar Kuch Bihar Basir Koyta Katha*" (A few words of the residents of Greater Kuch Bihar) pointing out that:

'The people of Cooch Behar have been deprived of all constitutional rights after the merger of Cooch Behar with West Bengal and that West Bengal and Assam Governments have been administering this area illegally and without constitutional rights...that the Assembly Election of West Bengal should not be imposed on the people of Cooch Behar and a Care Taker Ministry should be formed to administer the affairs of the 'C-category' State of Cooch Behar'.¹⁹⁶

Because the Greater Cooch Behar People's Association argues that:

King Jagaddipendra Narayan signed the document for merger of Cooch Behar with India only and not specifically with West Bengal; and Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy at the instigation of some people of Cooch Behar other than the son's of the soil over-utilized his own political influence and mettle on the Prime Minister and the Home Minister practically annexing Cooch Behar to West Bengal, which, according to them, was not less than a *coup-de-etat*. They claim that after the king had signed the instrument of accession,

Cooch Behar enjoyed the status of a province; therefore, the option of returning Cooch Behar to the status of a province or union territory by revoking its merger with West Bengal still remains, and Cooch Behar be declared as a separate state.¹⁹⁷

In the meantime, the Greater Kuch Behar People's Association faced division because of the difference of opinion among its leaders and one faction of it of late formed a new party named 'Greater Cooch Behar Democratic Party'. And in a bid to strengthen their struggle for a separate statehood Greater Cooch Behar Democratic Party, Kamtapur Progressive Party and Assam's All Koch Rajbanshi Student's Union have formed a joint forum 'Greater Kamta United Forum' demanding formation of a bigger Cooch Behar State with 11 districts of Assam, 6 districts of North Bengal and 2 districts of Bihar which according to them have one culture and one people.¹⁹⁸ However, the activities of the KPP were labeled as secessionism or separatism.¹⁹⁹ And the party organization has suffered a major setback as in November, 2000, at least 500 leaders and activities of the KPP were arrested.²⁰⁰

In a bid to strengthen the demand of the separate State, some over enthusiastic indigenous youths have formed an organization came to be known as KLO or Kamtapuri Liberation Organization which is stamped as the extremist wing of the KPP, 'although the KPP leaders denied their connection with the KLO.'²⁰¹ The members of the KLO took up arms for the purpose of attacks on the soft targets thereby creating terror in the mind of common masses. The first gruesome incident which was executed by the KLO was a series of horrible murder of the CPI (M) Party leaders and activists in Jalpaiguri District of West Bengal in the year 2000.²⁰² And due to the attacks of the KLO, the Bhatiyas became more worried and terrified because the *Bhatiyas*, in most of the cases, fell victims to the bullets of the KLO. Because, as Debnath noted, '...secret ire of the sulking terrorists was that only the Bhatiyas had all connections with the Calcuttans and southern Bengal and they were against the formation of Kamtapur as a state'.²⁰³ However, the Military crackdown in Bhutan and severe measures of the Police virtually broke the spine of the K.L.O.²⁰⁴

The discussion made above expresses that all these movements were directly or indirectly expressed their concerns over the issue of the refugees and migrants or the *bhatiyas* which

as they considered played havoc to the interest and advancement of what they termed as *deshi* people. In order to find out the actual causes for such movements which took place one after another, an impartial enquiry into the situation is very much needed. Facts expressed that the numerical strength of the refugees and migrants who entered into this region from East Pakistan or present day Bangladesh was far low in comparison to the districts of South Bengal. As till 1958 there were only two refugee camps and homes in North Bengal. There must have been some Government Sponsored Colonies, Private Colonies and Squatters' Colonies in North Bengal. But as it appears that the Government must have purchased land for the establishment of the Government Sponsored Colonies and the Private Colonies were mostly established at the initiatives of the refugee people under the *Baynanama* Scheme according to which the new settlers had to find out the land of his choice at his own enterprise, he had also to convince the owner of the land for the sale of the land and after that he could have the required amount as loan for the purchase of that plot of land. Regarding the squatters' colonies, as per the R.R & R Manual, Calcutta, it can be asserted that most of these colonies which were established under the cover of darkness in North Bengal were situated either on *vest* land or Lands belonged to the various department of the Government. There are also some instances to show that some of the refugees and migrants had exchanged their houses and properties situated in East Pakistan with some of the Muslims of this region who opted for East Pakistan. Under the circumstances, the role of Bengali refugees and displaced migrants in creating discontent in the mind of the local people of this region is needed a proper scrutiny.

Firstly: the refugees and migrants of East Pakistan who entered this region were mostly farmers in profession thus after their arrival their main target was to purchase a piece of land. Alongside, as they were basically cultivators thus they made an attempt to make their livelihood either acting as agricultural laborer or *adhiars* or share croppers. And in both the cases they created pressure on the limited landed property of the region and threw challenge to the previously existing agricultural laborer or *adhiars* or share croppers. The situation became worst as the most of the lands of North Bengal were un-irrigated and relatively less fertile. Furthermore, North Bengal being a non-industrial zone could not offer any alternative jobs other than in the agricultural field to both the locals and the new comers. And in the field of the business, the *Marwaris* had already strengthened their position. Some of the new comers, as time passed, must have entered into the field of petty

business or acted as agent of the *Marwaris* in matter of purchasing goods for his *Marwari* lords but in turn it created bad impact on the mind of the locals as they held the new comers responsible if they faced any loss in selling any goods even if the current market price was like that.

But in case of South Bengal the scenario was totally different. There must have been some commotions at the initial stage between the new comers and the locals but as time rolled on the simmering got merged in the wave. There were instances to show that the local people of south Bengal took the initiative to resettle the refugees without waiting for the Government's assistance alone.²⁰⁵ The reason might have been that in south Bengal the new comers did not need to depend upon the land only. Because Calcutta, 24 Parganas and Howrah, where 4,489 factories (81 percent of the total) out of the 5,658 registered factories in West Bengal in 1966²⁰⁶ were situated, were very close to them and they could pick up any profession as per their capability. Furthermore, the quality of most of the lands of South Bengal was far better than that of North Bengal and irrigation facility was strong there. Thus, the amount of yield was definitely higher than that of North Bengal.

Secondly: the application of ceiling laws and Operation *Barga* had further complicated the rural environment of North Bengal. The refugees and migrants had already given the *Jotdars*, *Zamindars* and big land lords an alarming signal by establishing squatters' colonies by capturing some of the private properties. In such a situation, application of ceiling laws and recording of the lands under share cropping in the name of the *bargadars* made the situation more complex. In North Bengal the *Jotdars* and the big land lords had mainly depended upon their landed property while in South Bengal the case was not the same; beside land, many of them were involved in business and other professions there.

Thirdly: the local people of this region earlier were the supporters of the Hitasadhani Sabha and then Congress. And later on they also turned to be the supporter of the Left Parties. On the contrary, the refugees, being disappointed with the Congress Government on the issue of relief and rehabilitation, turned themselves as the followers of the Left Parties at the earliest and the candidates of the Left Parties own the election wherever the refugees were in highest number. Thus, as the land distribution and land recording was done under the guidance of the Left Parties and the refugees were mostly the supporters of the same at the same time land less thus issue of the refugees and migrants might have received the first consideration. And this was surely not whole heartedly welcomed by the

local peasants as they were also desperately in need of the same. Thus, it seems that a tensional environment was created in the rural North Bengal at first at the lower level and then at the higher level.

Fourthly: though the modern model of secular state was very much in use in Cooch Behar long before its implantation in the other Princely States of India yet the local people of Cooch Behar followed a policy of exclusiveness as far as the issue of the outsiders is concerned. And keeping in mind that exclusiveness the Hitasadhani Sabha whose origin, according to Professor Ananda Gopal Ghosh is shrouded in obscurity had launched a crusade against the caste Hindus i.e. the outsiders or the *Bhatias*. They raised the slogan of *Bhatia Hatao* and Abbas Uddin Ahmed the noted folk singer, had rightly pointed out that the predominance of the outsiders was the main cause behind that slogan. As a consequence, a new kind of ethnic and caste based communalism developed in Cooch Behar which found its expression through the Election of 1946 when the Hitasadhani Sabha attained a thumping majority in the election.²⁰⁷ Though with the merger of Cooch Behar with West Bengal the Hitasadhani Sabha went into oblivion yet with its remnants a new wing of politics commenced in a different way. The difference was that the basic issue was revised and enlarged. Thus, the fuel of discontent was already there and the influx of the refugees and migrants in the wake of the Partition of Bengal just added fire to it.

However, things could have been different and the statehood movement in Cooch Behar even after the 53 years of its merger could have been avoided had the State Government paid due attention for the all round development of North Bengal. Being a farthest zone from that of Calcutta it failed to attain the due care and attention of the Government in power. Threats of poverty, lack of proper facility of health, education, electricity and communication are the common features of rural North Bengal. Furthermore, the rapid expansion of tea gardens in this region has no doubt left bad impact on the production of the audible crops. As Debnath has rightly noted:

‘Now after 50 years of the merger they find Cooch Behar is decaying, and lagging behind most other districts of the southern delta of West Bengal. The rural areas are getting bleached into skeletal shapes of economic resources. Thousands of jobless people are migrating to other states in search of works and means of earning and living. On account

of this mounting frustration owing to the dispossession of the way of life, they have become emotional in their outburst against the government and people in power.²⁰⁸

Hills under Upheavals

It has already been discussed in the introductory part that how the Nepalese people gradually and virtually ceased the hilly areas of North Bengal due to their continuous influx from neighboring Nepal. Here an attempt will be made to draw a pen picture how the continuous influx of the migrants from the neighboring states of Nepal, Bhutan and Tibet into the hilly areas of North Bengal have influenced the political scenario of that region throughout these decades after independence.

The history of Darjeeling had many twists and turns since its creation in 1835 which is however not a part of the present discussion. It would be wise to have a look at the circumstances through which the Nepali population in these hill regions went high in an astonishing manner. L S S O' Malley noted,

When the British first acquired the hill territory in 1835, it was almost entirely under forest...It was, in fact, estimated that the whole of this tract, comprising 138 square miles, contained only 100 souls. This state of affairs was soon altered by Dr. Campbell, the first Superintendent, whose object it was to inspire the aboriginal people of the hills with confidence in British rule, to induce the neighboring tribes to settle in the territory, and to render Darjeeling the commercial centre of the hills... When in 1869 a rough census was taken of the inhabitants in this tract, it was found that they aggregated over 22,000 persons.²⁰⁹

The first regular census of the district in 1871-72 expressed that the number of population was further shot up to 94,712 persons with an average density of 81 persons per square mile.²¹⁰ And the census of 1901 recorded 249, 117 populations that meant that the number of inhabitants was by now 2¹/₂ times as great as it was 30 years ago.²¹¹ There were two main causes behind this phenomenal growth of the population – (a) the development of the tea industries and (b) the entry of the migrants to take advantage of the waste land of the district. It was recorded that in 1876 among the inhabitants of Darjeeling some 34 percent population was of Gorkha or Gurkha ethnicity.²¹² After the independence Darjeeling got merged with the state of West Bengal. A separate district of Darjeeling was formed out of the hilly towns of Darjeeling, Kurseong, Kalimpong and some portions of

the *Terai* region. When in 1950 Tibet was annexed by the People's Republic of China thousands of Tibetan refugees also settled across Darjeeling district.²¹³ The steady growth of the Nepalese population in the hill regions of Darjeeling left far reaching consequences on the political atlas of the post independent West Bengal.

The communists from the 1940 onwards were stressing the issue of Gorkha identity. And in pursuance of that they developed the plan of a separate state of Gorkhastan and using this as a propaganda plank they created a popular base especially among the tea plantation workers of Nepali origin in the hill areas. Ratanlal Brahman and G.L. Subba, Nepali Communist leaders from Darjeeling and were very vocal in the demand for regional autonomy thus they along with some junior activists formed the district committee of the Communist Party. In 1944 the District Committee passed a Resolution asking for regional autonomy for the three hill sub-divisions of Darjeeling. After the Resolution was approved by the State Committee of the CPI, Brahman and Subba, the secretary of the District Committee, received encouragement to formulate the 'Gorkhastan' plan and made stern attempt to get the plan accepted by the All India Gorkha League (AIGL) which was established by Dambar Sing Gurung, a representative from the hills in the Provincial Assembly on May 1943 with the objective of securing the future of the Gorkhas, in case India attained freedom. The League built up its political agitation on two important issues- (a) the recognition of the Nepali language and (b) conferment of the citizenship on the Indian Gorkhas. The rapid spread of AIGL in Darjeeling and even outside made the Hill men's Association, came into being in 1917, irrelevant and in due time useless. At the same time, the members of the AIGL planned to 'merge the district of Darjeeling with the province of Assam'²¹⁴ or 'preferred making the area a union territory under the national government.'²¹⁵ The plan of the CPI was to form a 'Free Gorkhastan in Free India' by joining the 'three contiguous areas of Darjeeling district, southern Sikkim and Nepal.'²¹⁶ The AIGL however consistently opposed the idea of separate Gorkhastan as the AIGL leader Deoprakash Rai explained his refusal to hold up the 'demand of the CPI'²¹⁷ by telling that 'the people are already waiting for the bugle call not for creation of any 'sthan' but for the onward march in the struggle for survival as equal human beings.'²¹⁸

On 29th April 1952 the AIGL submitted a memorandum to the Government of India which presented three alternatives for Darjeeling- (a) to build Darjeeling a separate administrative unit straightly under the Centre; (b) a separate province with Jalpaiguri,

Cooch Behar and Sikkim and (c) amalgamation of Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri with Assam. And the common point in all those three alternatives was the separation of Darjeeling from West Bengal.²¹⁹ This however, could not be materialized in fine. However, in 1957 the Communists in collaboration with the Congress and the AIGL submitted a representation to the Prime Minister of India with a view to attaining regional autonomy for Darjeeling.

After the publication of the census report of 1961 which shot the percentage of the Nepali speaking people in Darjeeling to 60%, the Nepali language was given the official status of the lingua franca by the State Government in the three hill sub-divisions of the Darjeeling district. In 1967 the AIGL joined the United Front Ministry in West Bengal with the express objectives of persuading the Government for – (a) Autonomy of Darjeeling district within West Bengal and (b) the recognition of Nepali language. The State Assembly, supporting the claim for regional autonomy, passed a resolution. However, the resolution was quiet on the disposition and the extent of the autonomy. To agitate for the Constitutional recognition of the Nepali Language in 1972 the All India Nepali Bhasa Samity (AINBS) was formed.²²⁰ As time rolled on, the AIGL started losing its organizational strength. And with the death of the AIGL supremo D. P. Rai in 1983 the party more or less became nonfunctional. However, when the AIGL was counting its last days by then (in April 1980) another organization under the name of the Pranta Parishad came into being which appeared to be the first organization to claim in a bold and uncompromising way for a separate state and nothing less than that. Madan Tamang, formerly an AIGL supporter broke away from that and took the leadership of the Parishad. The first notable task of the Parishad was that it unambiguously submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister of India in April 1980 for the creation of a separate state of Gorkhaland, consisting of Darjeeling and the Doors of Jalpaiguri, outside West Bengal. But the Parishad could not have an easy passage. It became inconsequential when many of its members assembled under the banner of the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF), a party formed by Subhash Ghishing, an ex-army man on July 24, 1980. The GNLF highlighted many issues and the main issues were:

- (a) Creation of separate homeland for the Nepalese in India;
- (b) Recognition of the Nepali language in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution;

- (c) Abrogation of the Indo-Nepal Friendship Treaty of 1950 with a view to removing uncertainty in the Nepalese minds;
- (d) Employment of the 'son of the soil', with emphasis on more recruitment in the army; and so on

After the formation of the GNLF, Ghising wanted to test the political situation by boycotting the Municipal Assembly and the Lok Sabha elections from 1980 to 1984 but it went unnoticed. Then he wrote a letter to the Prime Minister of India pleading for a separate state of Gorkha Land outside West Bengal. And after few months he sent a telegram to the Chief Minister of West Bengal with the same objective in mind. However, neither the Prime Minister of India nor the Chief Minister of West Bengal did give any ostensible response to these communications.²²¹ By July 1985, Ghising mobilized adequate number of students and youths towards GNLF. On June 2, 1985 he delivered a speech at Kurseong that stridently raised the demand for Gorkhaland. His speech at Kurseong was widely circulated in audio cassettes in the hills and attained instant popularity. The reason was that according to the treaty of 1950 those who had come to India from Nepal were not Indian citizens and thus India could disown them at any time. And Ghising succeeded in touching the correct chord by stoking the basic fear in the minds of the Nepalese in India through his speech.²²² Though Ghising was telling again and again that he was willing to continue the movement for a separate state within the frame work of the Indian Constitution in a peaceful way yet very soon GNLF movement took a violent turn. Long term *bandhs* and severe disturbances became the common features of the Darjeeling hills. Even there was a call for a 40-day *bandh* by GNLF started on 10th February, 1988. D. P. Patra noted, '...the mounting tension and the sudden spurt in number of violent incidents gave rise to a grave sense of insecurity accompanied by fear...Evening were rocked by blasts all over...Economic activity reached an all time low...Injuries, casualties, destruction of properties, disruption of services and general suffering reached an all time high'.²²³ In the face of near standstill situation in the hill a tripartite agreement was signed by the State Government, Central Government and the G.N.L.F. at the resplendent Banquet Hall of the Raj Bhawan in Kolkata on August 22, 1988 which resulted in the creation of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC). Furthermore, the GNLF, in the overall national interest and response to Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's call, agreed to discard the demand for a separate state what GNLF called as Gorkhaland²²⁴ and agreed to issue a call to its cadres to surrender all unauthorized arms to the district administration.

Accordingly the 'Arms Surrender' programme started on the 2nd October, the birth day of the worshipper of non-violence. Finally, the poll was held on 13th December, 1988 without major incident and when the result was declared it came to light that the GNLF candidates attained an overwhelming majority. Out of the 28 seats, the GNLF captured 26 while the CPI-M could manage only 2. The elected councilors took oath in the last week of December, 1988 and Subhas Ghising became the maiden Chairman of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council.²²⁵ Though in the Gram Panchayet election that was forced on the hills on 26-03-1195, the GNLF refrained itself from fighting the election under the banner of the party, yet it set up independent candidates and out of the 629 constituencies where the election took place the independent candidates won 577 seats. Out of the remaining seats CPI (M) own 47, Congress own 4 and CPI own 1 only. In the General Election of 1996 the GNLF participated in the Assembly elections and won all the three seats from the hill sub-divisions. And again in the DGHC election held on March 17, 1999 the GNLF won 27 out of 28 seats; the remaining one was won by Akhil Bhartiya Gorkha League (ABGL) and thus the CPI-M was drawn blank. In the Municipal Election, held soon after the DGHC election in May 1999, the GNLF became an undisputed victorious in Darjeeling, Kurseong and Kalimpong.

Ghising's increasing popularity made the CPI-M and Congress more or less routed from the hill politics. Both the parties must have tried to strengthen their respective influence over the hill people but without noteworthy success. And even after the formation of the DGHC, Ghising did not give up his demand for separate state. And on the issue of separate state another round of movement had started in the hills under the leadership of GJMM (Gorkha Jana Mukti Morcha) that is however not the part of the present discussion as it goes beyond the period of the study.

Thus, the influx of the refugees and the migrants has left a considerable influence on the political scenario of West Bengal in various ways. On the one hand the refugees and displaced Bengalis have played crucial role in bringing a political change under the banner of the Left Parties in West Bengal on the other hand their arrival in North Bengal acted as one of the many causes which brought about a series of socio-political unrests in this part of Bengal. Simultaneously, the influx of the large number of Migrants from Nepal has pushed the hilly region of Bengal into an environment of continuous upheavals. And now what is needed for the solution of the problem, if the further bifurcation of West Bengal is

to be avoided, is to meet the economic grievances of the people of this region at the best possible extent.

In fine it may be said, that the society, economy and polity of any state or any country are bound to be changed with the passage of time. This is, in fact, the principle of History. Changes come catching the hands of the various agents who act as the deciding factors in course of this transition. And in case of West Bengal the refugees, displaced migrants, economic migrants and the infiltrators have acted as strong agents of the social-economic and political changes which it witnessed throughout these fifty three years i.e. from 1947-2000.

Notes and references

1. At the time of independence the area of West Bengal was 75,187 sq. km. After the annexation of Cooch Behar in 1950 and French Chandannagar in 1954 the area of West Bengal became 78,572 sq. km. In 1956 as per the recommendation of the State Reorganization Commission Islampur subdivision of Uttar Dinajpur and Purulia were amputated from Bihar and added to West Bengal thus attained its present shape. Lekhak Samabay Samity, *Bangla Amar Bangla*, Published by Rupak Guha on behalf of the Lekhak Samabay Samity, Kolkata, 1985, p.3.
2. Census Report, 1951.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Chakraborty, Satyesh C. 'The Growth of Calcutta in the Twentieth Century' in Chaudhury, Sukanta, (ed.), *Calcutta-The Living City*, Vol. II, Oxford University Press: New Delhi, 1990, p.3.
5. *Ibid.*, p.3.
6. *Bustee* is defined as an area of land occupied by collection of huts standing on a plot of land not less than seven hundred square meters in area.
7. Bandyopadhyay, Raghav, 'The Inheritors: Slum and Pavement Life in Calcutta' in Chaudhury, Sukanta, (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.86.
8. *West Bengal –An Analytical Study*, Sponsored by The Bengal Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Calcutta, Oxford & IBH Publishing Co: New Delhi, 1971, p.65.
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10. Ghosh, Ambikaprasad, 'The Demography of Calcutta' in Chaudhury, Sukanta, (ed.), *op.cit.* p.57.
11. *Ibid.*, p.57.
12. Bandyopadhyay, Raghav, *op.cit.*, in Chaudhury, Sukanta, (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.83.
13. Bagchi, Jasodhara, 'Women in Calcutta: After Independence' in Chaudhury, Sukanta, (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.45.
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16. Weber, Rachel, 'Re (Creating) the Home: Women's Role in the Development of Refugee Colonies in South Calcutta' in Bagchi, Jasodhara and Dasgupta, Sukharanjan

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17. *Ibid.*, p.63.
 18. *Ibid.*, p.70.
 19. Roy, Sabitri, *Badwip*, Nabpatra Prakashan: Kolkata, 1972, p.52.
 20. Chakravarty, Gargi, *Coming out of Partition: Refugee Women of West Bengal*, Bluejay Books: New Delhi, 2005, p.80.
 21. Weber, Rachel, *op.cit.*, in Bagchi, Jasodhara and Dasgupta, Sukharanjan (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.72.
 22. *Ibid.*, p.74.
 23. Chakrabarti, Prafulla Kumar, *The Marginal Men: The Refugees and the Left Political Syndrome in West Bengal*, Lumiere Books: Kalyani, 1990, p.95.
 24. Chakravarty, Gargi, *op.cit.*, pp.83-84.
 25. *Ibid.*, p.92.
 26. *Ibid.*, p.85.
 27. *Ibid.*, pp.85-86.
 28. *Ibid.*, p.84.
 29. *Ibid.*, p.92.
 30. The word 'Udavastu' was later omitted.
 31. Rao, Bhaskar, *The Story of Rehabilitation*, Government of India: Delhi, 1967, p.173.
 32. Sengupta, Nitish, *Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy; Jiban O Samaykal*, Dey's Publishing: Kolkata, 2009, p.106.
 33. Ghosh, Ananda Gopal, *Swadhinata Shat; Prasanga Chhere Asa Mati*, Sahitya Bhagirath Prakashani: Cooch Behar, 1416, p.57.
 34. Chakrabarti, Prafulla K., *op.cit.*, p.419.
 35. Samaddar, Ranabir, 'Still They Come-Migrants in the Post-Partition Bengal' in Samaddar, Ranabir, (ed.), *Reflections on Partition in the East*, Vikas Publishing House Pvt.: New Delhi, 1997, p.98.
 36. Ghosh, Ananda Gopal, *op.cit.* p.123.
 37. *Ibid.*, p.123.
 38. *Ibid.*, pp.118-119.
 39. Mandal, Monika, *Settling the Unsettled- A Study of Partition Refugees in West Bengal*, Manohar: New Delhi, 2011, p.234.

40. *The term Bangaal* literally stands for a native of eastern Bengal. But it had pejorative connotations, implying that these people were not sophisticated and was of rustic in nature, while the *Ghotis* were considered to be the more sophisticated people of West Bengal. Chatterji, Joya, *Spoils of Partition –Bengal and India, 1947-67*, Cambridge University Press: New Delhi, 2007. p.221, See end note.
41. Mandal, Monika, *op.cit.*, pp.235-36.
42. Bandyopadhyay, Sandip, *Deshbhag-Deshtyag*, Anustup: Kolkata, 2010, p.58. Sinha, Kankar, *Deshbhag Sankhyalaghu Sankat Bangladesh*, published by Shubhapratim Roychaudhury, 2011, Kolkata,p.39.
43. Sinha, Kankar, *op.cit.*, p.32.
44. *Ibid.*, p.32.
45. Barkat, Abul et al, *Deprivation of Hindu Minority in Bangladesh-Living with Vested Property*, Pathak Samabesh: Dhaka, 2008, pp.66-68.
46. Sinha, Kankar, *op.cit.*, p.33.
47. Kumar, B. B. 'Introduction', in Kumar, B. B (ed.), *Illegal Migration from Bangladesh*, Astha Bharati: Delhi, 2006, pp.1-2.
48. Census of India, 2001, * Adjusted data cited in Ray, Mohit, 'Illegal Migration and Undeclared Refugees – Idea of West Bengal at Stake', Source: <http://www.asthabharati.org>
49. *Ibid.*
50. Pramanik, Bimal, 'Illegal Migration from Bangladesh: A Case Study of West Bengal', in Kumar, B. B. (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.140.
51. Kumar, B, B, *op.cit.*, in Kumar, B. B. (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.2.
52. *Ibid.*, p.3.
53. Ray, Jayanta Kumar, 'Migration from (East Bengal/East Pakistan) Bangladesh to India', in Kumar, B. B. (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.42.
54. *Ibid.*, p.45.
55. Debnath, Sailen, *West Bengal in Doldrums*, N.L. Publishers: Siliguri, West Bengal, 2009, pp. 250-52.
56. Bandyopadhyay, Barun, *Pschimbanga: Thik Kotota Pichhiye*, Prajanma Prakashan Sangstha: Howrah, 2011, p.5.

57. *West Bengal –An Analytical Study*, p.21.
58. *Ibid.*, p.22.
59. According to statistical survey 1956 just over half of all the East Bengal refugees ended up in towns, Chatterji, Joya, *op.cit.*, p.123. See end note.
60. De, Hanna, A, *Unsettled Settlers; Migrant workers and industrial capitalism in Calcutta*, Rotterdam, 1994, pp 68-69.
61. Kaviraj Biseswar Nath of the Nath community of weavers demanded that after partition 60,000 of his fellow caste members had settled in Nabadwip: Biseswar Nath o Maulana Azad, 2 September 1955, AICC-II, PB-21/1955, cited in Chatterji, Joya, *op.cit.*, p.123.
62. CMPO, Basic Development Plan, 1966-86, p.13 cited in *West Bengal –An Analytical Study*, p.25.
63. *Ibid.*, p.16, quoted in *Ibid.*, p.26.
64. Chakraborty, Satyesh C. *op.cit.*, in Chaudhury, Sukanta, (ed.), *op.cit.*, pp.5-6.
65. Chakrabarti, Saroj, *With Dr. B. C. Roy and Other Chief Ministers*, Vol.1, Published by Rajat Chakrabarti, Calcutta, N.D. , p.172.
66. Goswami, Omkar, ‘Calcutta’s Economy 1918-1970 The Fall from Grace’ in Chaudhury, Sukanta, (ed.), *op.cit.*, p. 94.
67. Luthra, P. N., *Rehabilitation*, Publications Division: New Delhi, 1972, p.6.
68. Chatterji, Joya, *op.cit.*, p.157.
69. *Rehabilitation of refugees, A Statistical Survey (1955)*, State Statistical Bureau, Government of West Bengal, Alipore, 1956, p.3.
70. Chatterji, Joya, *op.cit.* , p.145.
71. *West Bengal-An Analytical Study*, p.26.
72. Weber, Rachel, *op.cit.*, in Bagchi, Jasodhara, and Dasgupta, Sukharanjan, (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.75.
73. *Ibid.*, p.77.
74. Cakravarty, Gargi, *op. cit.*, p. 90.
75. *Rehabilitation of refugees, A Statistical Survey (1955)*, State Statistical Bureau, Government of West Bengal, Alipore, 1956, p.4. Chatterji, Joya, *op.cit.*, p.146.
76. Chatterji, Joya, *op.cit.*, p.147.
77. *Ibid.*, p.147. See foot note.
78. *Ibid.*, p.147. See foot note.

79. *Ibid.*, p.148.
80. Bose, Nirmal Kumar, *Calcutta, 1964, a social survey (anthropological survey of India) Bombay, New Delhi, Calcutta and Madras*, 1968, p.32.
81. Chatterji, Joya, *op.cit.*, p.157
82. *Ibid.*, p.157.
83. *Ibid.*, p.149.
84. Chakravarty, Gargi, *op. cit.*, p.89.
85. Das, Samir Kumar, 'India: Homelessness at Home' in Banerjee, Paula and others, (ed.), *Internal Displacement in South Asia-The Relevance of UN's Guiding Principles*, Sage publication: New Delhi, 2005, p.135.
86. *Ibid.*, p.135.
87. *Ibid.*, p.135.
88. Chatterji, Joya, *op.cit*, p. 150.
89. *Ibid.*, p. 150.
90. *West Bengal- An Analytical Study*, p.29.
91. Dutta, Ajoy Kumar and Roy, Joydip, 'Land Reforms & Socio-Political Tensions: A case Study of Alipurduar Block No.1' in Debnath, Sailen, (ed.), *Social and Political Tensions in North Bengal since 1947*, N.L. Publishers: Siliguri, 2007, p.266.
92. *West Bengal- An Analytical Study*, p.80.
93. *Ibid.*, p.80.
94. *Ibid.*, p.82.
95. Debnath, Sailen, *West Bengal in Doldrums*, p.81.
96. *Ibid.*, p.81.
97. *Ibid.*, p.85.
98. Bandyapadhyay, Barun, *op.cit.*,p.68.
99. *Ibid.*, p. 70.
100. *Ibid.*, p. 70.
101. *Yojna Dhanadhanye (Bengali)*, *Unnayan Mulak Masik Patrika*, May 2008, p.12.
102. Chatterjee, Nilanjana, 'The East Bengal Refugees: A Lesson in Survival' in Chaudhury, Sukanta, (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.77.
103. Chatterji, Joya, *op.cit.*, p.212.
104. *Ibid.*, p.291.
105. *Ibid.*, p.214.

106. As the eastern districts of Bengal sent as many as 344 delegates to the All India Congress Committee (AICC) while the western districts could send only 200 delegates to the AICC.
107. Sengupta, Nilendu, *Bidhan Chandra O Samakal (1948-62)*, Ekush Shatak; Kolkata, 2010, p.96.
108. *Ibid.*, p.98.
109. Chatterji, Joya, *op.cit.*, pp.221-22.
110. *Ibid.*, p.218.
111. 'The heads of the provincial governments were designated as Prime Minister or Premiers till the adoption of the Constitution on 26 January 1950.' G., Partha Sarathi, (ed.), *Jawaharlal Nehru-Letters to Chief Ministers 1947-49*, Vol. I, Oxford University Press: Delhi, 1985, p.1.
112. Chatterji, Joya, *op.cit.*, pp.224-25.
113. *Ibid.*, p.221.
114. *Ibid.*, p. 291.
115. Chakrabarti, Prafulla K., *op. cit.*, p.139.
116. Chakrabarti, Saroj, *op.cit.*, p.121.
117. Sengupta, Sukhranjan, *Banga Sanghar Ebang*, Nayaudyog: Kolkata, 2002, p.146.
118. *Ibid.*, p.142.
119. Chakraborty, Saroj., *op.cit.*, pp.122-123.
120. *Ibid.*, pp.124-125.
121. Sengupta, Nilendu, *op.cit.*, p.282. However, there arose a conflict between Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy and Atulya Ghosh on the issue that Dr. Roy showed a tender attitude towards Ram Chatterji, *Ibid.*, p.282.
122. Chakravarti, Prafulla K., *op. cit.*, pp. 67-68
123. *Ibid.*, p. 68.
124. As the moral energies of the party was exhausted by the trauma of more than two years of uprising and internal disagreement. Ajoy Ghosh and Ghate had given a description how the adventurist line of Ranadive and Rajeshwar Rao affected the Party: 'The party membership had dropped from 1, 00,000 to 20,000; complete stagnation and paralysis prevailed in the Communist trade unions; the peasant organization had been practically wiped out, and the party itself was in a state of

paralysis and disintegration.’ Chandra, Prabodh, ‘*On A note on the Present situation in our Party*’ PHQ Open Forum, No.12, October 1949, pp.4-5.

125. Chakrabarti, Prafulla K., *op. cit.*, pp. 76-77.
126. Myron, Weiner, *Party Building in a New Nation*, The Indian National Congress, Chicago, 1967, p.352.
127. Chatterji, Joya, *op.cit.*, pp.290-91.
128. Chakrabarti, Prafulla K., *op.cit.*, p.123.
129. Chatterji, Joya, *op.cit.*, p.275.
130. Franda, Marcus, *Radical Politics in West Bengal*, Cambridge, 1971, p.116.
131. Basu, Jyoti, *Memoirs: A Political Biography*, Aniruddha Chakraborty, National Book Agency Private Limited: Kolkata, 1999, p.78.
132. *Ibid.*, p.78.
133. Chakrabarti, Prafulla K. *op. cit.*, p.134.
134. *Ibid.*, p.139.
135. *Ibid.*, p.331.
136. *Ibid.*, p.334.
137. *Ibid.*, pp. 336-7.
138. Cancellation of the enhanced second class tram fares; withdrawal of the ban under Section 144 clamped on the city; immediate release of all persons arrested in connection with the TFERC movement; judicial enquiry into Jadavpur, Asansol and Amherst Street police firings. *Ibid.*, p.339.
139. ‘(1) Immediate and unconditional release of all persons arrested in connection with the resistance movement; (2) judicial enquiry into police atrocities; adequate compensation to the families of the killed and the injured; (3) Adequate compensation to the families of the killed and the injured; (4) non- victimization of the employees of Government and other institutions; (5) no increase in the second class tram fares;(6) pay for the period of strike and grant of loans to Tramway workers’ *Ibid.*, pp.342-343.
140. *Ibid.*, p. 343.
141. *Ibid.*, p.344.
142. *Ibid.*, p. 344-45.
143. Basu, Jyoti, *op.cit.* p.71.
144. Sengupta, Nilendu, *op.cit.*, p. 166.

145. Ghosh, Atulya, (ed.), *Towards a Prosperous India Speeches and Writings of Bidhan Chandra Roy*, Calcutta, July, 1964, p.207.
146. Cakrabarti, Prafulla K., *op. cit.*, p. 350.
147. Chakraborty, Saroj., *op.cit.*, p.131.
148. Cakrabarti, Prafulla K., *op. cit.*, p. 350.
149. Basu, Jyoti, *op. cit.*, p.71.
150. Cakrabarti, Prafulla K.,*op. cit.*, p.353.
151. Chakraborty, Shyamal, *60-70 Er Chhatra Andolan*, published by Aniruddha Chakraborty, National Book Agency, 2011, p.52.
152. Chakrabarti, Prafulla K., *op. cit.*, p.381.
153. Chakraborty, Shyamal, *op. cit.*, p.235.
154. Chakrabarti, Prafulla K., *op. cit.*, p.381.
155. *Yojna Dhanadhanye (Bengali)*, *Unnayan Mulak Masik Patrika*, July, 2008, p.13.
156. Chakrabarti, Prafulla K., *op. cit.*, pp. 399-400.
157. *Ibid.*, p.402.
158. *Ibid.*, p.403-404.
159. *Ibid.*, p.407.
160. *Communist Party of India (CPI-M), A Review of the 1999 Parliamentary Elections*, New Delhi: CPI-M, 1999, p.5.
161. The indifference of the Left Front Government towards the displaced Bengalis at the local level and the anti-Muslim propaganda and Hindu nostalgic agenda of the right wing political forces made them popular among the displaced persons living in the border districts, Calcutta and its suburbs. Dasgupta, Abhijit, 'The Politics of Agitation and Confession: displaced Bengalis in West Bengal' in Roy, Sanjay K., (ed.), *Refugees and Human Rights; social and political dynamics of refugee problem in eastern and north-eastern India*, Rawat Publication: Jaipur and New Delhi, p.126.
162. Chaudhury, Pranati, 'Refugees in West Bengal. A study of the growth and distribution of refugee settlement within the CMD', Occasional Paper No. 55, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, 1983.
163. *Census Report*, 1971.
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165. Barma, Sukhbilash, 'Preface', in Barma, Sukhbilash, (ed.), *Socio-Political Movements in North Bengal*, Vol. 1, Global Vision Publishing House: New Delhi, 2007, p. xi-xii.
166. *Ibid.*, p.6.
167. Barma, Sukhbilas, 'North Bengal and Its People' in Barma, Sukhbilas (ed.), *op.cit.*, Vol. 1, p.5.
168. *Ibid.*, p.5.
169. Dakua, Dinesh Chandra, 'A Journey from Hitasadhani to Greater Kuch Bihar' in Barma, Sukhbilas (ed.), *op.cit.*, Vol. 1, p.58.
170. The West Bengal Land Reforms (Amendment) Act, 1977 says that 'a person lawfully cultivating any land belonging to another person shall be presumed to be a bargadar in respect of such land if such person is not a member of the family of the other person whose land he cultivates', Chattaopadhyay, Subhas, 'Land Reforms and Rural Development in West Bengal', in Ray, Biswanath, (ed.), *West Bengal Today; A Fresh Look*, Mittal Publications: 1993, p.101.
171. Acharya, Sukanta, 'At 'Work' in West Bengal: The Bhdralok, Communists, Peasants and Others', in Jadavpur Journal of International Relations, Volume-7, 2002-2003, Department of International Relations, Jadavpur University, Kolkata, p.214.
172. Sutradhar, Kartik Chandra, 'Bhumi Samskar Andolan o taar Probbhab: Prasanga Uttarbanga', in K. C. Sutradhar, P. Bhaowal & M. Khatun (ed.), *Bibartaner Dharay Uttarbanger Samaj, Arthaniti O Sanskriti*, Deepali Publishers: Malda, 2010, p.72.
173. Debnath, Sailen, *West Bengal in Doldrums*, p.191.
174. The Government servants were told that they would have the opportunity to give 'option' for living either in Pakistan or India or leaving any of them. Bandyopadhyay, Sandip, *op.cit.*, p.38.
- Prafulla Ghosh, the Chief Minister of West Bengal in 1947 announced, all the Hindu officers of East Bengal would get the option to choose India as their base of operation. And thus eighteen out of the nineteen Muslim ICS officers in Bengal, opted to join the Government of Pakistan; while all the Hindu ICS officers opted to serve in India. Roy, Haimanti, *Citizenship and National Identity in Post-Partition Bengal, 1947-65*, A Dissertation submitted to the Division of Research and Advanced Studies of the University of Cincinnati, p.135.
175. The *Namasudra Kulguru* instructed; '*Vidya chhara katha nai, vidya karo saar. Vidya dharma, vidya karma, anya sab chhaar.* (There is nothing to say without education,

- make education your motto. Education is religion, education is work and anything else is worthless.) Pal, Babul Kumar, *Barishal Theke Dandakaranya;Purbabanger Krishijibi Udvastur Punarbashan Itihas*, Grantha Mitra: Calcutta, 2010, p.148.
176. Dakua, Dinesh Chandra, *op.cit.*, in Barma, Sukhbilas (ed.), *op.cit.*, Vol. 1, pp.58-59.
177. *Ibid.*, p.58.
178. Ray, Haripada, 'The Genesis of Uttarkhanda Movement' in Barma, Sukhbilas (ed.), *op.cit.*, Vol. 1, p.122.
179. *Ibid.*, p.121.
180. *Ibid.*, p.131.
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182. *Ibid.*, p.129.
183. Das, Dharendra Nath, *Regional Movements, Ethnicity and Politics*, Abhijit Publications: Delhi, 2005, p.85.
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187. *Ibid.*, p.159.
188. Das, Dhirendranath, *op. cit.*, p.107.
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190. Barman, Jitendra Nath, 'Why Kamtapur State?' in Barma, Sukhbilas (ed.), *Socio-Political Movements in North Bengal*, Vol. 2, Global Vision Publishing House, New Delhi, 2007, p.279.
191. Debnath, Sailen, *West Bengal in Doldrums*, p.195.
192. Barman, Jitendra Nath, *op. cit.*, in Barma, Sukhbilas (ed.), *op.cit.*, Vol. 2, pp.283-4.
193. *Ibid.*, pp.286.
194. *Ibid.*, p.290.
195. Barma, Sukhbilas, 'Greater Kuch Bihar-A Utopian Movement?' Barma, Sukhbilas (ed.), *op.cit.*, Vol. 2, p.362.
196. *Ibid.*, p.365.
197. Debnath, Sailen, *West Bengal in Doldrums*, pp.207-8.
198. Barma, Sukhbilas, 'Greater Kuch Bihar-A Utopian Movement?' in Barma, Sukhbilas (ed.), *op.cit.*, Vol. 2, pp.370-71.

199. Barman, Jitendra Nath, *op.cit.*, in Barma, Sukhbilash, (ed.), *op.cit.*, vol.2, p.289.
200. *Ibid.*, p.289.
201. *Ibid.*, p.289.
202. Debnath, Sailen, *West Bengal in Doldrums*, p.199.
203. *Ibid.*, p.204.
204. *Ibid.*, p.204.
205. '200 villages in Birbhum and Bankura only in 19 days made arrangement for the rehabilitation of the 2,600 refugee families who were lying at the stations of Calcutta. Arrangements were made for living and working for 13,000 refugees including male, female and children. Seeing it, 3,000 villages also made arrangement for the rehabilitation of the six lakhs refugees...the students carried the articles of the refugees by their own shoulder . Poddar, Samir Saha, *Ajker Unnayane Bidhan Roy-Ekti Mulyayan*, Calcutta, 2010, p.122.
206. *West Bengal –An Analytical Study*, p.47.
207. Ghosh, Ananda Gopal, 'The Hitasadhani Sabha-Power Struggle by the 'Cooch Beharis' in Barma, Sukhbilas (ed.), *op.cit.*, Vol. 1, pp.98-99.
208. Debnath, Sailen, *West Bengal in Doldrums*, p.210.
209. L S S O' Malley, *Darjeeling District Gazetteer*, Gyan Publishing House: New Delhi, 1907, p.35.
210. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
211. *Ibid.*, p.36.
212. Pradhan, Tushar, 'Gorkhaland or Ghishing's Land?' in Barma, Sukhbilas, (ed.), *op.cit.*, Vol 2, p.310.
- 'The term Gorkha denotes the disciple of a great saint, philosopher and Yogi named Guru Gorakh Nath who happened to live in Northern India...Guru Gorakh Nath had gathered many disciple and then taught and trained them. In course of time Nepalese and others who were his disciples...began to be known as Gorkhalese or Gorkhas.'
- Upadhyay, Purushottam, *Nepalese and Gorkhas in India*, Voice of Love Publications: Shillong-2, 1986, pp.7-8.
- However, the Gorkhas claim their descent from 'the ancient Hindu Rajputs and Brahmins of Northern India, who immigrated in present day Nepal from the West.'
- Baral, K. K., 'Issues and Challenges of Ethnic Integration in North-East India: A Case Study of the Gorkhas', in Chakma, Bindu Ranjan, and Dutta, Rajshree, (ed.), *Ethnic*

- Integration in North-East India: Issues and Challenges*, Excel India Publishers: New Delhi, 2013, p.69.
213. Pradhan, Tushar, *op.cit.*, in Barma, Sukhbilas (ed.), *op.cit.*, Vol. 2, p.309.
214. Samanta, Amiya K, *Ghorkha land Movement*, A.P.H. Publishing Corporation: New Delhi, 2000, p.98.
215. Pradhan, Tushar, *op.cit.*, in Barma, Sukhbilas (ed.), *op.cit.*, Vol. 2, p.310.
216. Samanta, Amiya Kumar, *op.cit.*, p.98.
217. ‘in consideration of the political situation after the Partition and independence, the CPI kept the demand for separate Gorkhastan a low key and eventually in 1951, ... (sic) revised its earlier stand. It asked for complete regional autonomy and regional Government ‘in substitution of the right of self determination of the national minorities. The boundaries of the proposed autonomus region were changed, by dropping Nepal and Sikkim from the plan... from 1952 onwards, the Communists did not reiterate the Gorkhastan demand.’ *Ibid.*, p.99.
218. *Ibid.*, p.99.
219. *Ibid.*, p.88.
220. Eventually in 1992 the Nepali Language was incorporated in the Eighth Schedule by the 71st amendment of the constitution. *Ibid.*, pp.85-86.
221. *Ibid.*, pp.120-121.
222. *Ibid.*, p.133.
223. Patra, D. P., ‘Seasons of Discontents’ in Barma, Sukhbilas, (ed.), *op.cit.*, Vol. 2, pp.327-328. In those days this had become a popular saying that ‘one can be merciful with a snake but not with those who opposes Gorkhaland.’ Sarkar, Swatahsiddha, *Gorkhaland Movement: Ethnic Conflict and State Response*, Concept Publishing Company Pvt. Ltd.: New Delhi, 2013, p.73.
224. Debnath, Sailen, *West Bengal in Doldrums*, p.157.
225. *Ibid.*, p.160.