

CHAPTER II

Historical background of Partition of India and issues of migration

Construction and destruction; addition and subtraction; ups and downs; rise and fall; hopes and despair-all these are the regular and unavoidable events of the universe. These events though relevant in nature and in the similar way these are adequately appropriate and also properly applicable in the history of human civilization of different countries of the globe. A good number of reasons are playing key roles in this respect; it may be political reason, social reason, ethnic reason, religious fanaticism, motivated interests of some political personalities and economic reasons also. In respect of India the division of India was such an unprecedented phenomenon that was the outcome of copious reasons. Partition of India in 1947 was a cataclysmic event of history that constituted and reconstituted different communities. Despite vehement successive healthy protests and strong oppositions from various avenues of India, the goodwill mission of nationalist and patriotic leaders of India received a serious blow through the vivisection of India. Some political opportunists, orthodox communities and separatists capitalizing religion brought about significant changes. Since 1947 Indian subcontinent had witnessed the triple partition of India viz. India, Pakistan and Bangladesh in quick succession. The nationalist Indians after being consolidated and united voiced their demands against the separation of Indian subcontinent. The honest efforts of the nationalist leaders were ended in smoke. They were compelled to surrender meekly to the separatist forces. Brushing aside all odds the British imperialists showed green signal in materializing the act of division of India in 1947. It could rightly be argued that Partition of India was a turning point, after 1947 the atlas of India was fractured and re-drawn.

After the decline of Rome, Europe was plunged into darkness; on the contrary the economy of Indian subcontinent was fast developing. Culturally India was also flourishing which lured the foreign invaders from Middle East, Iran, Afghanistan also from Europe. In spite of incessant invasions India did not budge an inch from its multidimensional development. Gradually with the advancement of modern science and technology some superior powers like Dutch, Portuguese, French and British further invaded India in the form of colonialism. Particularly the British imperialists

became successful by executing the policy of 'Divide and Rule' in a skillful manner. After long standing subjugation of the Indians under the British colonialism, a new wave of nationalism became vibrant. The Indians started to organize movement to emancipate themselves from the bondage of British rule. Their ceaseless and successive agitations and protests paved the way of achieving independence from the British rule. The British quit India dividing the country with the serious wounds and planted the poisonous trees of rivalry and communalism.

Reasons behind the division of India:

The partition was the 'political earthquake' that rocked Bengal and the Punjab. It is more than seventy years since India was divided, but the reasons behind that vivisection are still keenly and hotly debated. Partition is "a concentrated metaphor of violence, fear, domination, difference, separation, unsatisfactory resolution of the problems, in one word past".¹ First of all, the division of India occurred on the basis of religion, more clearly the Partition was a logical and inevitable outcome of the irreconcilable antagonism between the Hindus and the Muslims. According to some historians the major reasons of Partition of India was the unwillingness of the Hindus to accommodate with the Muslims. The conflicting religious outlook of the Hindus and Muslims was one of the prime hindrances on the way of their peaceful coexistence.² During the British regime in India the Muslims comprised of approximately 25 percent of the total population of the country. However, the racial discrimination between the Hindus and the Muslims were getting more pronounced. The Muslims, though differing in ethnic character and language were scattered across the country, especially in the erstwhile Bengal and Punjab regions where they had formed a majority of the population. The Muslims also varied in their societal and economic status ranging from solvent businessmen to urban and rural poor class. However the religious differences between the Hindus and the Muslims despite their co-existence had been marked. Such religious differences also translated into sharp social differences. The Muslims were apprehensive of the fact that they would suffer a lot if the constitution and governance of India were being controlled by India after the attainment of Independence. They also became afraid that the Hindu majority would severely interfere on them. It can't be denied that the Hindu communalism came into

effect probably from 1930 onwards.³ The political set-up in late 40s was proceeding towards a deadlock very hastily. Very soon an atmosphere of mistrust began to grow among the people of both the communities.⁴

The pertinent question was who was responsible for partition? Whether the Congress or the Muslim League 'obstinacy or the concluding behind the scene act performed by Louis Mountbatten that led to this undoing?'⁵ These questions remained unanswered for over seventy years of independence. According to B. R. Nanda there was a tendency to search for the main cause partition in any particular episode in the months and years preceded the event of partition. He argued that partition was a culmination of a movement of the Muslim separatism which became strong from the very foundation of M.A.O. College in 1877. Syed Ahmed Khan, the founder of the college vehemently opposed the Indian National Congress from its very infancy.⁶ Syed Ahmed laid down the idea of separation of India. Syed Ahmed in his early life was a non communal and open minded person. In a lecture delivered in 1884 he made it clear that he wanted to serve the nation with cordiality, earnestness and sincerity. The 'nation' according to him was both the Hindus and the Muslims. To him the meaning of nation was nothing but the Hindus and the Muslims as a whole.⁷ But for the reasons unknown a magical and mysterious change came over his attitude and philosophy of life. This radical change was undoubtedly an evil omen for future India. This attitude of isolation of Syed Ahmed paved the way of British administration to fulfill its mission of divide and rule that expedited the act of partition.

Sir Sikandar Khan, the Premier of Pakistan expressed the view that there were several schemes on the part of Pakistan. Chaudhury Rahmat Ali's scheme was P for Punjab, A for Afghanistan including Pathanistan i.e. the North West Frontier Province, K for Kashmir, S for Sindh and 'tan' for Baluchistan. In 1908 Mohammad Ali in a public speech stated that the interest of the Muslim was far different from the interest of Hindus and the Muslims would be in trouble if they accompany Hindus in their political agitation. He firmly admitted that Muslims were not supposed to become martyrs for the sake of Indian unity and they were not to be left at the mercy of Hindu majority.⁸ With the introduction of separate electorates in 1909 the question of safeguards for Muslim community got momentum. The National Congress headed by Parsi leaders like Dadabhai Naoroji, Firozshah Mehta, and Gokhale hastily noticed

in themselves the end of the wedge, and realized that it would bring asunder for Hindus and Muslims.⁹

When Rahmat Ali proposed a separate state for Muslims, at the same time Iqbal also placed an identical proposal in 1930. According to his proposal he wanted to establish a separate state for the Muslims including Punjab, North West Frontier Province, Sindh and Kashmir within or outside the British Empire.¹⁰ Iqbal presided over an annual conference of Muslim League in Allahabad in December, 1930 where in presidential address he uttered the demand for separate and independent Muslim state. He stated “The religious ideal of Islam, therefore, is originally related to the social order which it has created. The rejection of the one will eventually involve the rejection of the others. Therefore the construction of a polity on national lines, if it means a displacement of the Islamic principle of solidarity, is simply unthinkable to a Muslim”.¹¹ In the same speech Iqbal asserted that the Muslims were of seven cores in number and they were more homogenous in comparison to other communities of India. According to him the true definition of a “nation”, was applicable only for the Muslims. So their demand for separate state was lawful, reasonable and legitimate.¹²

Dr. S.A.Latif formulated another scheme which had elaborated in his book ‘The Muslim problem in India’. It was a scheme for the unification of India on natural lines and the outlook was entirely from Indian’s perspective. It also sought to have a federation of culturally identical states for India for the formation of a nation at least in the type of Canada where two different races could work together for a common country, while living in separate areas of their own.¹³ In short he was in favour of establishing a minimal federation through the inclusion of homogeneous cultural zones.¹⁴ In 1913 Moulana Muhammad Ali proposed a totally different scheme to hand over the Northern India to the Muslims and the remaining portions be handed over to the Hindus. Similarly Mohammad Gul Khan, a Pathan, proposed to establish a motherland for the Muslims extending up to Agra. In 1890 Abdal Halim Sharar assumed that if the Hindus and the Muslims failed to accommodate themselves to live in peace and respect, then separate states for both the communities and exchange of population was the only solution.¹⁵

Jinnah's political mission has elaborately discussed by Joshwant Singh. He threw a very pertinent question that how far Jinnah was responsible for partition. According to him Jinnah who was intimately involved with the Indians for over the first forty seven years of his life; Jinnah was acknowledged as the ambassador of the Hindu- Muslim unity; it was none but Jinnah who was acclaimed as the 'sole spokesman' by Ayesha Jalal, how a drastic transformation came over his long political career? It is still in mystery. Why he was considered to be solely responsible for the creation of a separate Muslim state known as Pakistan? In this respect the lectures of Loyed and Susan Rudolf may be cited. The lecture stressed on the fact that Jinnah was generous, patron of multi culture attitude and true advocate of secularism. Jinnah was committed towards India's unity and was described by Viceroy Lord Linlithgo as the 'Congress more than Congress'. Then a debatable question arose in the minds of general public why the partition took place which was totally unthinkable even in the early years of 1940s.¹⁶ There was no shadow of doubt that bifurcation was a national disaster and the British colonialists were frequently blamed for their inability to retain peaceful atmosphere and at the same time to maintain the fervour of national integrity in the Indian subcontinent. A good number of reasons were highlighted in support of partition and it was also stated that the event of partition could have been averted. On the other hand Pakistan believed that partition was imminent and settled fact. It could in no case be averted. Pakistan had strong conviction that Muslim nationalism was active and predominant prior to partition and they made a correlation between Muslim nationalism and creation of a Muslim nation.¹⁷

For the first time, Partition as a political device along with communal implication, was applied in case of Bengal in 1905. The colonial Bengal was divided into two separate provinces, i.e. Eastern Bengal and Assam and West Bengal. Apparently it was an administrative arrangement for the convenience of the colonial Government. Bengal was indeed a big province which comprised 78 million populations and was considered to be administratively unwieldy. Due to this unmanageable size the division of Bengal Presidency was considered to be an act of necessity. So Lord Curzon mooted the idea of partition of Bengal in 1903. Despite widespread and vehement agitation from all walks of life the final form of the proposal was announced on 19 July, 1905. It was decided that a new province of the East Bengal and Assam would be carved out in which the Muslim consisted of 18 million out of

31 million total population, so it would become a province with Muslim majority. The remaining portion would be known as Province of Bengal where the total population would be 54 million. Out of the existing population 9 million would be of Muslim population. If the Hindi and Oriya speaking people were to be amalgamated then Bengali speaking people would be outnumbered in this province.¹⁸

This was obvious that the main purpose of the partition was to spoil the rising tide of nationalism among the Bengali *Bhadralok*. The real motto of partitioning Bengal was not only to weaken the hold of Bengali gentlemen but also to prop up Muslim community against Hindus. The bulk of the Muslims were landless labourers and they had grievances against Hindu landlords and money lenders. This resentment of the Muslims was capitalized by the British to implement their policy of 'Divide and Rule'. It is needless to mention that this proposal of partition of Bengal was not accepted by upper caste Hindu educated gentlemen. They staged state wide massive demonstration against Curzon's evil design of division of Bengal. This anti-partition movement paved the way for the outbreak of Swadeshi movement. A good number of intellectuals participated in anti-partition movement. Ultimately the decision of partition was annulled in 1911. Actually things were not going in a right direction on the part of Muslim League. The euphoria of Muslim League centering round the introduction of separate electorate soon radically diminished and with the annulment of partition of Bengal the pro British passion of Muslims reduced to a considerable extent.¹⁹

The peasantry in East Bengal mainly comprised the Muslims where as the landlords were predominantly Hindus. According to the historian Badruddin Umar partition of Bengal "became possible because of the presence of certain non-antagonistic contradictions by the British rulers".²⁰ Renowned historian Sugata Bose had expressed a well researched view on this argument. He mentioned that the Muslim majority districts comprised of peasantry. This peasantry had a 'symbolic relationship' with the Hindu landlords, moneylenders and with the traders who supplied the basic needs of credit in a highly monetized agrarian economy. The prolonged depression of 1930 had destroyed all those rural credit, lending etc, and shifted the balance of class power in favour of the peasants.²¹ The conflict of agrarian class that broke out in eastern Bengal from 1930 onwards was used by the self serving

politicians for their own ends, “Operating in higher level political arenas communal constituencies, the gift of government’s successive constitutional reforms, these politicians unflinchingly used religion to mask an essentially economic conflict”.²²

Previously both the religious communities were relatively less organized and less connected with the institutional politics. Later on owing to a strong class character those communal conflicts showed two kinds of convergences viz. the class and communal identities tended to converge and the communalism of elite tended to converge. This created a polarization of the entire population in two communal blocs. Each bloc was led by the respective elites succeeded in mobilizing the mass.²³ Joya Chatterjee had made an argument about the Hindu population. Chatterjee commented that “communalism in Bengal was essentially a Muslim phenomenon” and that “a parallel Hindu communalism did not emerge, or that if it did, it was too limited and peripheral to have contributed in any significant way to the conflicts that led to Pakistan.”²⁴

The polarization of Hindus and Muslims occurred during just a couple of decades of twentieth century. By the middle of the century the both sides realized that it was hardly possible for adherence of two religions to coexist peacefully. The Hindus and the Muslims turned on each other during the chaos unleashed by the Second World War. In 1942 the Japanese seized Singapore and Rangoon and trekked rapidly through Burma towards India. The Congress Party of India lodged a campaign for the Quit India movement. Prominent leaders including Gandhi and Nehru were arrested. While they were thrown into prison, Jinnah, who was loyal to the British, accumulated opinions behind him as the best protector and saviour of Muslims against the Hindu dominance. Meanwhile the war was terminated and the Congress party leaders were released from their imprisonment. Although Nehru and Jinnah knew each other for three decades, the disagreement between them became intensely personal. Nehru thought that League represented “an obvious example of the utter lack of the civilized mind”,²⁵ and Gandhi calling him a ‘maniac’ and ‘an evil genius’. Violence broke out in open streets between the Hindus and Muslims following which the people moved away from, or were forced out of mixed neighbourhood and took refuge in increasingly polarized ghettos. Tensions were often heightened by local and regional political leaders. H.S. Suhrawardy, the ruthless Muslim League nominated chief Minister of Bengal, made confrontational speeches in Calcutta provoking riots against

the Hindu populace writing in the newspaper that “bloodshed and disorder are not necessarily evil in themselves if resorted to for a noble cause”.²⁶

Meanwhile a congenial political atmosphere was created between the Congress and Muslim League. So they could act through joint front. The Act of 1909 created a void of disappointments among the moderate leaders. At the same time the demises of Congress stalwarts like G.K.Gokhale, Firozshah Mehta etc. created a vacuum. Only the ray of hope was Tilak. In the meantime the Bombay Congress of 1915 under the president ship of S.P.Sinha passed a resolution demanding the measures of constitutional reforms in order to give people effective control over the governance. The Bombay Congress authorized All India Congress Committee and Muslim League to develop a scheme on constitutional reforms. The draft prepared by the joint committee of Congress and Muslim League was approved in 1916 in the Lucknow Congress. As Lucknow Pact was inked in 1916 and the Congress leaders believed that it was final settlement of political differences between Hindu and Muslim. Tilak and Annie Besant had a key role in bringing Congress and Muslim League in an agreement with an aim to achieve Hindu-Muslim unity. It is worth noting that the Pact was motivated with a view to wipe out the fear of minority from the yoke of majority dominance.²⁷

Under the backdrop the issue of Khilafat came to the fore front. In 1919 Gandhi became the elected president of Khilafat conference. Gandhi started his non cooperation programme on August 1, 1920. The moderates and the extremists made a ready response to the call of Gandhiji who perceived the idea for attaining the long cherished dream of Swaraj within the empire. The Hindu-Muslim unity apparently acquired by Gandhi in 1920-21 proved to be unrealistic in nature without changing the mind set and attitude of the two communities.²⁸ When the impact of non cooperation movement was in a declining stage, the age long conflict between the two communities re-emerged. Now the Muslims turned their attention to their previous goal of attaining individual or communal facilities through the act of cooperation with the Government. In this respect Muhammad Ali Jinnah in his presidential address in the annual session of the Congress held in Canada in December 1923, expressed the opinion that the comparative advantages of cooperating with the Hindus and the British Government for achieving Pan-Islamic objectives.²⁹ There was no possibility

of retrieving the spirit of cooperation between two antagonist communities despite earnest appeal of Jinnah.

Pakistan's political history began with the birth of the All India Muslim League in 1906 to protect Muslim interest, in the midst of neglect and to oppose National Congress. In 1930 Sir Muhammad Iqbal called for an autonomous new state in north-western India for Indian Muslims. Later on Muhammad Ali Jinnah of Muslim League advocated the Two Nation Theory of Sir Sayed Ahmed and as a consequence the League adopted the Lahore resolution of 1940. The Resolution actually demanded the formation of an independent state in the East and West of British India. The tireless efforts of Jinnah eventually made him triumphant. Jinnah in his inaugural speech of the Muslim League council in Bombay on 27th July 1946, made it clear that the demand of Pakistan was the only way out open to the Muslim League. The Muslim League Council after discussing the matter for three days summarily rejected the proposal of Cabinet Mission and passed a resolution. For achieving 'Pakistan' the council decided to resort direct action.³⁰

From 1923 onwards communal riot broke out which vitiated the political scenario of India. Apart from a sense of distrust and suspicion, various factors were equally responsible in keeping the two communities as two separate entities in spite of staying together in India for more than seven centuries.³¹ There were series of communal riots in different parts of India from 1923. There were instances of communal riots in Peswar in 1910, Ayodhya and Faizabad in 1912, Agra in 1913 and Behar in 1917. The Simon Commission report estimated about 112 major communal riots between 1922 and 1927.³² The brutal frenzy of killing each other among the Hindus and Muslims continued in various corners of the state reached to its climax through Partition.

In the annual session of Muslim League at Lahore in March 1940 Jinnah addressed that Islam and Hinduism were different and distinct social orders. They could never evolve a common nationality and democracy which was unsuited to India.³³ The Muslims "must have their homeland; their territory and their State".³⁴ As a matter of fact the seeds of separatism were sowed and British reaped the harvest through 'Divide and Rule'. The Hindu dominated Indian National Congress led by Jawaharlal Nehru was in favour of United India. This was, of course, a very probable political

claim on the part of Nehru. Following the impending emancipation of the country it was crystal clear that the Government to be formed would have an overwhelming majority of the Hindus. As the Muslims were scattered all over the country, the British Government was in a tough situation in deciding that how sovereignty could be granted to the Muslims, keeping in mind the demands of Muslim League and Jinnah. Punjab proved to be a difficult proposition where Muslims were a prominent majority and Hindus a minority.

The British Government tried its best to make an amicable and mutually acceptable proposal between I.N.C and the Muslim League after a long deliberation. The British had arrived at the blue print of the allocation of power between the Hindus and the Muslims. It was a complicated political arrangement under which Minority Muslims in different states of India would be granted sovereignty and autonomic functions. Jinnah readily accepted and agreed with the proposal where as the Sikhs of Punjab refused to agree with the proposal because the Sikhs expressed their reluctance to be under the Muslim sovereignty. Initially the I.N.C agreed with the proposal but after much rethinking Nehru thought the agreement as politically unsound. Such an attitude of Nehru left on Muslim League and Jinnah a sense of distrust. India by this time sitting on a bed of gunpowder of communal violence, witnessed the conflict reached to an alarming extent. The disturbance reached to a flashpoint on August 16, 1946. The Muslims identified and marked the aforesaid day as 'Direct Action Day'. The activities of the 'Direct Action Day' announced as apolitical demonstration degenerated quickly into a communal riot. At the initial stage those disturbances were in form of sporadic looting and murder. After that arson began and spread gradually, the role of the Pakistan Ambulance Corps in Calcutta during this period of turmoil was really highly communal in character. A report published by the Government of Bengal described that the riot assumed the character of a civil war'.³⁵

Ayesha Jalal in her famous book 'The Sole Spokesman' highlighted the fact that the horror dipped in inhumanity performed on the black letter day i.e. Direct Action Day. Jalal presented Jinnah as blameless leader who hardly had an idea of communal frenzy and mishap. Her own version was "16th August was the day the League had nominated for 'direct action'. Forty eight hours before, Jinnah had urged Muslim to remain calm; 'direct action' day should be a day of peaceful reflection, not a day 'for

the purpose of resorting to direct action in any form or shape³⁶ Jalal remained mute regarding the role of Suhrawardy in this regards. There was no doubt that Suhrawardy was directly involved with the entire period of massacre. Actually Jinnah had called the 'Direct Action Day' as a mark of protest against the British because of their denial to recognize Pakistan. According to Nitish Segupta when riot broke out in Calcutta the British were rather in a safe position.³⁷

Joya Chatterjee in one of her noted works *Bengal divided: Hindu Communalism and Partition, 1932- 1947* presented a deeper insight on the dreadful climax that Bengal had reached during the period of turmoil. In the book the role of Hindu communal forces as well as the preparedness of the Hindu community for strong vengeance was emphatically emphasized. She argued that Hindus of Calcutta considered Direct Action not as a well planned strategy or not as a distant negotiations at all India level to do with interim governments and constituent assemblies, but as a threat close to them which they were ready to confront till death. "This was the context in which the Great Calcutta Killing took place. The rioting, in which at least 5000 died, was not a spontaneous and inexplicable outburst of aggression by faceless mobs. Both sides in the confrontation came well-prepared for it. Direct Action Day in Calcutta was not a flash in the pan but a product of developments which had long been coming to a head. In part it was the outcome of the growing arrogance of the leadership and rank and file of the Muslim League, heady with their success in the recent elections and confident of their ability to get for Bengal some form or other of Pakistan; and in part it flowed from the determination of the Hindus to resist what they regarded as 'Muslim tyranny'".³⁸

The Quit India movement sponsored by Gandhiji in the year 1942, the rebellions of the Indian National Army, the rebellion of the Navy, the spiraling unrest in India and above all the cost of the war were the vital reasons behind the prompt execution of the partition of India. When the World War II came to an end, the premier of Britain Mr. Attlee of Labour party decided to get out of India as soon as possible. Taking the advantage of the decision made by the Labour party Premier Mr. Attlee, Jinnah and the Muslim League did not hesitate to voice their demand for separate Independent state for the Muslims. Following the changed circumstances the Congress High command took active initiative to hold negotiations with Jinnah of Muslim League

and the British Government in London as well as in Delhi.³⁹ Unfortunately Hindu spoke persons from Bengal were not allowed to take part in the Negotiation table. In the month of May, 1946 the Cabinet Mission proposed to give more power to Muslim provinces. In apprehension *Bhadralok* community arrived to a unanimous decision to divide Bengal for securing a Hindu majority state. The bifurcated territory for the Hindus would be treated as West Bengal state within Indian Territory. It was the grim irony of history that once Bengal was the province which boldly foiled Lord Curzon's plan to divide Bengal, but in 1947 the complexion of the situation changed altogether, In 1947 Bengal moved forward to translate into action another plan of vivisection. But the main reasons of the two partitions were totally different, where the first was due to political reasons but in 1947 the partition was due to communal divergences.⁴⁰ Virtually after the atrocious and shocking riots in Calcutta in the month of August 1946 and in retaliation a colossal and hideous riot broke out at Noakhali. Thence forth campaign for the partition of Bengal got a momentum.⁴¹

Supporting the demand for separate entity for the Bengali Hindus various organizations and people from different corners of the state extended their hands of cooperation for the fulfillment of the desired dreams of the Hindu Bengalis. The noted political personality Sarat Chandra Bose, a renowned political personality of the time, launched a strong protest against the partition of Bengal and he made an earnest appeal to different political party leaders to stop the process of partition of Bengal. But they turned deaf ears to his appeal and proposal and it failed miserably. At a press conference, reported on 1 October 1947 that Bose described the idea of transfer of population as 'suicidal', ill advised and wholly unprincipled'. He also pronounced that it was no remedy for the 'blunder of partition'.⁴² The Congress accepted it with some unwillingness. Finding no other alternatives on March 8, 1947 the Congress Working Committee declared that if India was to be divided the Muslim majority provinces of Bengal and the Punjab would have to be partitioned. Both Mountbatten and Attlee on behalf of Royal British Administration clearly asserted that there was no way out except the vivisection of India.⁴³ But this division of India opened a social, historical and geographic wound that has yet to fully heal.

It was said that Mountbatten initially was not agreeable to shoulder this responsibility. But ultimately he had to take over the charge with a prior condition that within the specific period the heavy task of transfer of power would have to be performed.

Mountbatten acted accordingly. He set foot on India on 14th March, 1947 and decided to declare the partition on 15th August of the same year. The interim period of few months were not at all a pleasant one. He realized that India was practically covered with darkness and if he could not initiate immediate steps then civil war could have been broken out. In this connection Mountbatten was not practically instructed that after execution of the partition the transfer of power could not be performed. In the month of May Mountbatten announced that he was against all sorts of divisions. He also stressed that he did not want to apply force. He also said that Indians were entitled to take exact decision of their own.⁴⁴ According to his statement it was nothing but an act of insane. As a result the economy of the country would be hampered. He also asserted that he was ready to divide India on the plea of communal fury.⁴⁵ Mountbatten executed perfectly the important task braving all adverse criticism. At last, the much awaited independence of both the countries was achieved but it created a permanent wound bifurcating the country into two nations.

So the birth of Pakistan became inevitable and Pakistan appeared as a separate country in the world atlas. Radcliffe line became the official border between Pakistan and India on August 17, 1947. Pakistan borders India in the east, Afghanistan and Iran in the West and China is on the north. In the long run the creation of Pakistan came into reality and awarded separate country on 14th August, 1947. At last the fateful moment appeared in 1947. On 3rd June of the same year Attlee declared that the British would quit India in ten week's time. On 15th August 1947, transfer of power would be executed from the British Indian Empire to two successor states viz. India and Pakistan. Lord Mountbatten decided the day to bring down the curtain finally. But it was not so easy task to transfer the power to both India and Pakistan on the same day. So it was decided that Pakistan would be given freedom on 14 August where as India was given freedom on the midnight of 14 August. The provinces where majority of India's Muslims lived were in Bengal and the Punjab, so those two provinces would also be partitioned. Adjoining districts of Bengal and the Punjab with Muslim majorities would be handed over to Pakistan. The provinces with their non Muslim majorities would retain in India.⁴⁶ The ugly memories of dreadful event of partition were imprinted in the minds of the millions. The partition has sowed the seeds of enmity, bitterness, mistrust and suspicion between the two neighbouring countries.

Though seventy years have already been elapsed, the complexion of the situation remained static and unaltered.⁴⁷

The Muslims for the first time made their presence visible in India as invaders. Due to passage of time they started to live together with the Hindus which were a sort of adjustment. The pity of whole thing was that those Muslims adopted hostile attitude and animosity against the Hindus and was eager to set up a separate state for themselves. India accommodated with the Muslims of Middle East and they were intermingled with Indians. Eventually they became part and parcels of India. It was a matter of bewilderment that in spite of India's philanthropic attitude towards the Muslims they remained as invaders and nothing else. If true unity persisted during the period it was not possible for Jinnah to utter that 'Muslims are separate nation'. Mr. Jinnah has had the political ability to stop the partition of India. There was a long history behind it and Jinnah was the supreme head of speculation. The non-communal movement as sponsored by Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Nehru, Abul kalam Azad, Badshah Khan and Subhas Chandra Bose under the leadership and guidance of Gandhiji. If Jinnah along with his political leaders shook their hands with Gandhi and others, the curse of partition of Indian subcontinent could have been averted.⁴⁸ But alas! It could not. Jinnah could not overcome the prevailing circumstances. More so, he made it more complicated. Gandhi was compelled to surrender meekly to the situation.

Boundary Commission:

Through the initiation of British Administration and under the leadership of Sir Cyril Radcliffe a committee was instituted to chalk out the process and criteria in the herculean task relating to the division of Indian Territory. Sir Cyril Radcliffe, a London barrister was given only five weeks to draw the new border. There was no instance and no outline relating to division planning. He alone was responsible for the entire scheme resulting armed conflict which still persists today. He had never been to India before and never returned after completion of the task of demarcating boundaries. He confessed his guilt through his utterance "I suspect they'd shoot me out of hands, both sides". He candidly admitted his inability to one of his interviewer.⁴⁹ It was also known to Mountbatten that the Radcliff Award would not

satisfy any of the parties. The whole Himalayan task took even less than five weeks to complete. Bengal got Radcliff award on 9th August where as Punjab got it on 11th. Radcliff returned back to his country on 14th August, 1947 and it was published after six days i.e. on 17 August. The Viceroy even did not go through the whole document. Actually the Boundary Commission was ready by 12 August but Mountbatten decided to make it public after the Independence of India.⁵⁰

The leading English journal of Calcutta ‘The Hindustan Standard’, explicitly noted in an editorial column that the setting up of the Boundary Commission had been ‘meaningless formality’ and ‘it would be misleading to describe it as the impartial decision of the tribunal; for the entire schemes Sir Radcliffe alone is responsible’(Hindustan Standard,1947, The Award’, 20, August,⁵¹. Radcliffe became, almost overnight, the poster boy of the hypocrisy of the British Authorities. Different News journals expressed their views in different ways. The Amrita Bazar Patrika commented it ‘A departing kick of British imperialism’. The Hindustan Standard opined it ‘Self contradictory’ and The Dawn considered it to be ‘Territorial murder’⁵² N.C. Chatterjee an outstanding member of the Hindu Mahasabha lodged a strong protest describing it ‘an outrage on the principle of self determination and all canons of political morality’ and maintaining that it had ignored the cultural and economic needs of the people of Bengal.⁵³ A speech by N.C. Chatterjee, at University Institute Hall). It will not be out of place to mention in this context that the Royal Government of England empowered such a person like Sir Cyril Radcliffe, a retired civilian who had practically no knowledge or little knowledge about the boundary of Indian subcontinent.

The boundary Commissions of Bengal and the Punjab consisted of panels of four judges under the chairmanship of Radcliffe. All those judges were politically appointed and nominated by the Congress and the Muslim League. The ‘Official’ Bengal Congress chose judges upon whom they could rely to serve on the Bengal Boundary Commission.⁵⁴ Cyril Radcliff quickly chalked the boundary line of 2,736 kilometres. This drawing of boundary line ‘redrew the personal geographies of lakhs of East Bengalis’.⁵⁵ In accordance with the Boundary Commission’s terms of reference it was clearly stated that the western districts of Bengal would be merged with Indian Union. Khulna, a non-Muslim majority district was proposed to be transferred to western Bengal. The local Muslim League of Malda district where

majority thanas were densely Muslim populated had dared to hoist the Pakistan's flag. On 15th August, after a couple of days the Malda district was handed over to Indian Territory. In a similar fashion Hindu community of Khulna unfurled Indian flag in retaliation. Two days later, after the announcement of independence, the Boundary Commission announced its pending decision on August 17, 1947. Apprehending and sensing impending civil war the British Administration handed over the constitutional control to India. To accommodate 35.14 percent of population in almost 36.36 percent of land of West Bengal was earmarked. On the contrary East Bengal was allotted 63.6 percent of land to accommodate 64.85 percent population. Both the states possessed equal number of majority and minority population. The approximate ratio ascertained or measured was 70:30.⁵⁶

The Boundary Commission had segregated five districts of Bengal VIZ. Jessore, Dinajpur, Nadia, Malda and Jalpaiguri. The district of Murshidabad played a key role in this connection for the survival of the Hooghly river system and it was assigned to West Bengal. On the other hand Khulna which was initially allotted to West Bengal was finally granted to East Bengal.⁵⁷ The Commission selected non-contiguous portions of Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri to be annexed with West Bengal. The Commission awarded the non-Muslim territory of Chittagong Hill areas to East Bengal where as Calcutta remained as an integral part of West Bengal as expected. The two princely states of India, Coochbehar and Tripura were also under India's authority. Surrounding sixteen districts of East Bengal were brought under the Independent, Sovereign administration of India. East Bengal was rendered to be the longest international boundary of India. After the attainment of independence India had got 130 enclaves. On the other hand East Pakistan and Pakistan got 95 enclaves within Indian Territory.⁵⁸ The inhabitants of those enclaves were regarded as 'State less people'. It can be mentioned in this respect that the long standing struggle and strife of the enclave dwellers for their peaceful settlement, identity, security and above all the citizenship became fruitful after a long meaningful discussions and conferences among the Government of India under the guidance of Prime Minister of India Norendra Modi, Mrs. Sheikh Hasina, the premier of Bangladesh and the active cooperation of Miss Mamata Banerjee, the Chief Minister of West Bengal. The most notable and historic event was that the enclave dwellers of Indian Territory after acquiring Indian citizenship exercised their franchise on 5th May, 2016.

Migration problem in Pakistan and West Bengal:

After three hundred years of foreign subjugation the British in India finally determined to quit India through declaration of Independence on 15th August, 1947. After the bifurcation of Indian sub-continent into two Independent nation states: Hindu majority India and Muslim majority Pakistan emerged. Thence forth the movement of refugees became frequent in both sides of the border. The partition of Indian sub-continent in 1947 has been the single most important factor in determining the destiny both India and Pakistan. The influx of refugees from erstwhile East Pakistan was a major crisis in Indian history. The trickle commenced in the year 1946 and became deluged after the partition of the country. The average arrival of refugees in West Bengal after 1950 was 4000 every day.⁵⁹ The number presumed to be a catastrophic proportion in April, as the figure showed that refugees trekked to West Bengal on 1st April 4000; 3rd April 2350, 4th April 3600, 5TH April 4480, 7th April - 4500 and so on.⁶⁰

Marked by the twin features of massacre and migration, Partition did not mean the same thing for Punjab and Bengal. The vivisection of Punjab was a onetime event that was marked by a two way exodus. Whereas Partition of Bengal was a continuing process, the migration happened there pre-dominantly in one direction i.e. from East to West Bengal. In other words there was more or less equal exchange of population on the western border in 1947 which was not applicable in case of West Bengal. Secondly, compared to the nature of border and boundary in the West where political, strategic and military consideration converted the entire Punjab region into two rigid divisions. The dividing line in the East remained permeable and flexible and it also facilitated the refugee movement. The third and the most important difference regarding the nature of partition of both Punjab and Bengal was the attitude of the centre towards the problem on both the borders at the time of its happening.

After the formation of Pakistan the most crucial problem emerged in the socio political canvass of Pakistan as well as India was the migratory problem. Immediately after partition of India the history of one of the greatest migrations started, millions of Muslims marched to West and East Pakistan while millions of Hindus and Sikhs headed towards opposite direction. Across the Indian subcontinent, different communities coexisted for almost a millennium but it was a matter of great

bewilderment that they attacked each other through terrifying outbreak of sectarian violence, with Hindus and Sikhs on one side and Muslims on the other, an unexpected and unprecedented gruesome act of genocide broke out in Punjab and Bengal provinces which were neighboring to India's borders with West and East Pakistan respectively. The carnage was intensified with massacres, arson, forced conversions, mass abductions and savage sexual violence. Ayesha Jalal, a renowned historian has called the Partition "The central historical event in twentieth century South Asia". She also writes "A defining moment that is neither beginning nor end, Partition continues to influence how the people and states of post-colonial South Asia envisage their past, present and future".⁶¹

There was no large scale uprooting of people from their homelands and no exchange of population in the Eastern borders. Those who came did so out of political convictions and also in anticipation of what they felt would be a second class treatment in Pakistan. Thus, the specter of violence which dominated administrative and scholarly imagination in the West would become a factor in the East only in 1950 and once again much later in 1964. It was this difference in experience of violence which led to a difference in state policy towards the refugees from East Pakistan. Likewise, in the scholarly works as well, it was this difference which had led to the pre-dominance of a Punjab-centred analysis of Partition and its aftermath.

After the partition of India the Muslim majority from East Punjab of India marched towards West Punjab of Pakistan. It is worth to be mentioned that on the eve of the partition of India, Punjab was divided into two parts, East Punjab, where the population mainly consisted of Hindus and Sikhs, and the West Punjab was mainly Muslim populated. During the Partition, the civil and military official of the Punjab were given the opportunity or option to choose between the two states. Naturally most of the Hindu and Sikh officers shifted their alliance with East Punjab; on the contrary the Muslim officials expressed their views to stay in West Punjab. As a result Hindu and Sikh officers were empowered in charge of the administration of East Punjab and Muslim officers were appointed in charge of West Punjab. Kamala Patel, a noted Social activist and the follower of Gandhi observed that those who were deployed in charge of maintaining law and order in West Pakistan were in favour of creating Pakistan. They indirectly or intentionally encouraged the rowdy element in their state.

Whereas Hindus and Sikhs who had vehemently opposed the formation of Pakistan. Following which a massive massacre broke out, brutal display of organized violence, atrocities, loot of property became rampant and the Police officer turned a blind eye.⁶²

The terms 'refugee' and 'displaced' are often treated as identical, create much perplexity. In post Second World War period, the term 'displaced persons' was used to categorize those people who had been deported from their abode due to war, more specifically those nationals who were removed from their homes as forced labour. But the term refugee is defined as a person who flees from his native country, will not return back to his native place, at least not to that circumstances which compels him to run away.⁶³ There was a mass exodus just after the partition in the eastern region of India and the Government of India termed the shelter seeker as 'displaced' as a displaced person is one who had entered India and who he left or rather compelled to leave his ancestral home in East Pakistan on or after October 15, 1947 due to disorder or fear of turmoil or may be for setting up of the two dominions of India and Pakistan".⁶⁴ The Hindus, who escaped from East Pakistan due to communal frenzy before 15 October, 1947, were excluded from the aforesaid definition. Though the passport system was not introduced so far- it was considered as exclusively a special case since the refugees had citizenship right of both the states. For that reason the Indian Government might have considered the term 'displaced' more appropriate than 'refugee'. The access of the migrants to avail rehabilitation assistance depended totally on their recognition as 'refugee'. When fear of persecution and impending violence were considered as the justified reasons for mass exodus, the official definition was also imprecise regarding the preconditions of fear which the state would recognise for providing necessary shelter in India.⁶⁵ It was reported in the Amrita Bazar Patrika that "The public are well aware that there is great panic among the Hindus of North and East Bengal and there is general exodus to West Bengal because they fear that what has happened in Punjab may also happen in East and North Bengal. It is difficult to blame persons who are leaving their hearths and homes because they are afraid that neither their lives and properties nor what is more precious the honour of their women are safe under the Government of East Bengal".⁶⁶

The High Commissioner of United Nations for Refugees opined that "A Refugee is a person who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race,

religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality." As India was not a signatory in United Nations Convention for Refugees in 1951, the refugees in India did not come under this category. In India the refugees were treated under the Indian Passport Act of 1967 And the Foreigners Act of 1946 because of the absence of any domestic law. For many south Asian countries, India was a host nation. People from Tibet, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Bhutan, and Sri Lanka used come to India as refugees in quest of a safety and security.⁶⁷

The government of India paid heed to some specific cases in Pakistan and had a deaf ear to the allegations of 'everyday' regarding insecurity. Government declared quickly that it was totally unaware of the fact that the Hindus of East Bengal had problem and also ignorant of any 'incident' that was justified for population displacement.⁶⁸ Afterwards those displaced people were identified as 'migrants', which was further divided into 'old migrant' and 'new migrants'.⁶⁹ The term 'Incident' was used to mean an incontrovertible and life threatening violence. State as a matter of fact wanted to make a distinction between 'voluntary' and 'forced' migrants.⁷⁰ The poverty, struggle and insecurity imprinted on the life of those people to such an extent that the term 'refugee' became a disparaging word to judge the social status of the people. The Government also started using the word 'displaced people' instead of using the derogatory word 'refugee' from 1950s. But the use of the word 'refugee' continued and the term became more derogatory as they created pressure on the urban life and destroyed the peaceful ambience.⁷¹ Many uprooted persons marched towards West Bengal from 1958-1964 were excluded from the definition of migrants. A good number of people came over to India from East Pakistan with migration certificates, were treated as refugees. Sometimes they were given shelter in camps as they were in urgent need of relief and rehabilitation.⁷²

The refugee crisis in Punjab was considered to be a national emergency, to be tackled almost in utmost promptitude because the communal violence turned into genocide in the West. The Government considered it to be its moral and sacred responsibility to arrange prompt rehabilitation measures for the migrants. This sense of urgency was totally lacking on the Eastern border as the magnitude of the violence was not the

same as in the West. The Hindu minorities in the East Bengal were not considered to be in grave danger, on the other hand the movement of refugees to westwards was regarded mostly as the product of imaginary fears and unjustified rumours. It was the firm conviction of Nehru that exodus in the East could be stopped if the Government in Dacca could be persuaded to deploy “psychological measures” to restore confidence among the Hindu minorities.⁷³ This difference in attitude and perception of central Government regarding the nature of crisis facing the two borders translated itself strikingly into the expenditure on refugees in the West and the East.⁷⁴ A difference in the way of dealing with its refugees would have permanent and awful for the state of West Bengal.

In India the Central Government had extended its maximum cooperation for the relief, settlement and over all rehabilitation of nearly six million refugees hailing from Pakistan, who had deserted their properties and near and dear ones. The crucial predicament to rehabilitate the refugees from West Pakistan had been fully and almost successfully managed by 1951. But the difficult task of rehabilitation and resettlement of the refugees from East Bengal was a far more complicated one. The fleeing of the Hindu refugees from East Pakistan unremittingly persisted for decades together and continued even after 1971. On the contrary a sizable number of Hindus in East Pakistan was rather forced to remain there in the initial years after partition. The structured and systematised violence against the Hindus that broke out in East Pakistan resulted relentless flow of evacuees. In case of East Punjab, the migrants hailing from West Punjab of Pakistan occupied a vast lands, properties and assets left by the Muslim emigrants from East Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan. From the point of linguistic resemblance it was convenient for West Punjab and Sindhi refugees to settle in western Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, and Delhi.

In West Bengal the picture was quiet reverse. The resettlement of the refugees from East Bengal could take place only in Bengal and to some extent in some parts Assam and Tripura. As a result, a very large number of people who were engaged in agricultural occupations before their displacement from homeland were compelled to seek shelter in semi urban and urban context as the underclass. West Bengal however became the destination of uprooted persons from East Pakistan due to geographical proximity, cultural similarity and above all linguistic resemblance. In the first phase of the exodus during 1946 -1952, the number of refugees came over West Bengal was

2.52 million. The number of evacuees reached to its highest point in West Bengal in 1957 was 3,16,000.⁷⁵ Initially, the Government of India attempted to discourage the migration of refugees from East Bengal to India. It became evident from the instruction given by Mohanlal Saksena, the then Rehabilitation Minister of the Government of India to the representatives of Tripura, Assam, Bihar, Orissa and West Bengal. In a meeting, held in the Writers' Buildings on March 2, 1950, it was clearly stated that the Government's work would be limited within the relief measures rather than rehabilitational tasks. Virtually Saksena was interested in establishing the relief camps in the border areas in order to ease the way of the refugees for quick returning to their home. But in the East the problem of refugee failed to make any significant headway even in the threshold of 1950s. As an immediate effect of the Nehru-Liaquat Pact (1950), a large number of Muslims who had left West Bengal before March 31, 1951, returned back to West Bengal. They reclaimed their deserted lands and property which were already captured by the Bengali Hindu refugees from East Pakistan. It is worth to be mentioned in this respect that the Muslim evacuees returned to West Bengal from East Pakistan, but on the contrary, there was scarcely any reverse population flow of the Hindus from West Bengal to East Pakistan. The refugees who left for West Punjab were much more in number than those who came to East Punjab. Of the 49 lakhs of refugees who migrated from West Pakistan, only 24 lakhs settled themselves in East Punjab while 40 lakhs left for Pakistan. But in West Bengal 30.9 lakhs came in the eastern zone by 1956 and 2,58,117 Muslim evacuee who had migrated to East Pakistan came back by 1952.⁷⁶

The partition of India caused a massive migration from East Pakistan to West Bengal. The new state of West Bengal comprised 21 million population and approximately 25% or 5.3 million were from Muslim population. "A mere stroke of the cartographer's pen reduced the Muslims in West Bengal from being part of a ruling majority into being a much reduced and vulnerable minority". On the other hand among the 39 million in East Bengal the Hindus consisted of 11 million. Overnight those Hindus converted into subjects of the independent state of Pakistan. Both the Hindus in East Pakistan and the Muslims in West Bengal could contemplate a future as minorities with any equanimity. They had to face a harsh and unpleasant choice whether remaining on unprotected or differentiated against by their new

administrators or to move towards a new destination as refugee leaving everything. In East Bengal Hindus were not a homogeneous community and their population was unevenly distributed. The bulk of the Hindu population used to live in the southern part of East Bengal which ‘historically had been the strongholds of Hindu chief stains, broad tracts of territory which included Khulna and Jessore, North Borishal, South Faridpur and Dacca’.⁷⁹

A sizable number of Hindus lived in the northern part of East Bengal i.e. the districts of Rongpur, and Dinajpur. A good number of Hindus belonged to Rajbanshi community who were mainly agriculturist by profession. In the northern towns the presence *babu* community was noticed everywhere.⁸⁰ Where as, the other parts of East Bengal were inhabited by nomadic tribal people like Santals in Dinajpur and Rongpur, Chakmas in Chittogong hill tracts, Tippera and Mymensingh. During the period of 1941 census the aforesaid tribal people were enlisted as Hindus. For the huge migration of Hindu population from eastern Pakistan threw a question of dilemma among the Hindus. There were also some relevant reasons behind their leaving the country and the fear of persecution was one of the vital issues in support of their questions of staying or leaving. It is worthy to note here that the Hindus who were compelled to move towards Indian Territory even after the creation of Bangladesh, could not forget the fear of persecution.

From the initial stage of migration of refugees from East Pakistan, the national leadership was hesitant regarding its responsibilities toward the Bengali Hindu refugees. Nehru’s letter to Bidhan Chandra Roy, the then Chief Minister of West Bengal reflected that kind of ambivalence. To quote him: “It is wrong to encourage any large scale migration from East Bengal to the west. Indeed, if such a migration takes place, West Bengal and to some extent the Indian union would be overwhelmed ... If they come over to West Bengal, we must look after them. But it is no service to them to encourage them to join the vast mass of refugees who can at best be poorly cared for”.⁸¹ It made one thing obvious that the Indian Government’s policy toward rehabilitation of the Bengali Hindu refugees was not only inadequate, but also discriminatory in nature.⁸² Prafulla K. Chakrabarty, the author of *The Marginal Men*, and a major chronicler of the partition refugees in the East, identified two basic reasons behind the biased attitude of the Indian Government. Firstly, as the regions

where refugees from the West Pakistan migrated were more contiguous to Delhi, the capital of India; any difficulty on their part could destabilize the Government, whereas the geographical remoteness from Delhi however placed the refugees in the East in a vulnerable condition, Secondly, as most of the Punjabis belonged to Indian army and other armed forces there were every possibility of a military mutiny, if their near and dear ones were neglected.⁸³

The Planning Commission's report on the Rehabilitation of the refugees revealed that within the First Five Year Plan the hard task of rehabilitating the displaced persons of West Pakistan was completed. If we make a comparative analysis of distribution of funds and other facilities extended towards both East Pakistan and West Pakistan refugees we find a sharp disparity and step motherly attitude of the Central Government of India. The West Pakistan refugees derived extra facilities and monetary advantages where as East Bengal refugees were deprived of enjoying facilities as enjoyed by West Pakistan refugees. In the Second Five Year Plan a handsome amount was allotted for the purpose of further rehabilitation of the refugees. There were ample scopes for getting funds easily for the completion of approved housing schemes, and for mitigating the problem of unemployment of the displaced persons through setting of new industries. A report available from the Planning Commission at the end of the First Five year plan stated that the incessant flow of evacuees from East Pakistan to West Bengal created a chronic problem. Though the Second Five Year Plan provided Rs.668 million for the rehabilitation of the displaced persons in the eastern states, but in the third year of the Second Five Year Plan the Government of India decided to review the financial provision. In this respect the Government also assured to provide more funds if required.⁸⁴ It was hardly possible to tackle and solve the entire refugee situation in West Bengal with limited and inadequate funds allotted for the purpose.

By and large, the gravity of the refugee problem got immediate recognition in the Western India. Immediately after the Partition of India the central Government took the entire responsibility for rehabilitating the refugees hailing from West Pakistan. Initially refugees from West Pakistan were granted the scheme for the construction of their dwelling houses in an around Delhi. In order to rehabilitate permanently the displaced persons new townships were planned in Faridabad, Gandhi Dham, Rajpura,

Nilokheri, Tripuri, Sardarnagar, Ullasnagar, Govindapuri, Hostinapur and Chandigarh. Work centres and industries were also set up in those areas with the government aid. Basic amenities, like schools and health care facilities were also provided for them. In C.R.Park a huge number of plots were allocated among the refugee applicants in a minimum price.

East did not witness any such development. The attitude of the Central Government in respect of refugees from East Bengal was quite reverse in respect of West Pakistan refugees. It was observed that in 1952 the East Bengal refugees with the monetary assistance of the Government built 1.51 lakh houses were built by themselves. The Central Government provided grants to the West Pakistan evacuees whereas East Bengal refugees were allotted loan. It was quite evident from the statement of the former minister of Relief and Rehabilitation, Government of India that the Central Government was not at all interested for the settlement of East Bengal refugees. "Mr. Mohonlal Saxena, the then Minister of state for relief and rehabilitation in the Central Government publicly declared in course of his visit to Calcutta of Feb. 16, that Rehabilitation of East Bengal Hindu migrants was not an obligation of the Indian union, as they were Pakistan nationals".⁸⁵ The reception centres for the refugees in the West were of better in comparison to their counterparts in the East. The cash dole was provided in a standardized form in the West but it was totally reverse in case of East. In West each home was a complete unit provided not only residence but also imparted education, professional or practical training and also employment for at least a short period. But the East lacked such facilities available in the West.

To compare the rate of grant a sharp disparity was there between East and West. The grants allotted for West was also in a way more openhanded in comparison to that in the East. It was fixed at the rate below Rs.30 per month, seldom at a higher rate in accordance to the chosen professional training or courses. The rate of grant in the East was almost the identical but numerous categories were excluded from this advantage. Women refugees who were engaged in a course of training or in teaching or nursing in recognized institutions or hospitals were not entitled to enjoy the facility of stipend. They were even debarred from attending the vocational training centres mainly set up for the refugees. In addition to the stipends, the Government allotted shelter also provided establishment and equipment cost and a revolving cost of raw materials in

the West. On the other hand, except in Titagarh and Gariahat work centres, the grants for women under these heads in West Bengal were very insufficient.⁸⁶ In short, both the Governments (Government of India as well as the State Government of West Bengal) were slow in responding to the refugee crisis in West Bengal. Under the circumstances, relief and rehabilitation process was mainly restricted to those, who registered themselves in the official records and took shelter in relief and transit camps.⁸⁷ In other words, the problem as a displaced was sometimes more acute for those who crossed over to West Bengal in the early years of the partition.⁸⁸

In 1964 a large inflow followed by a massive exodus again in 1971. An estimated fifty eight lakhs refugees marched towards India by 1971, excluding those of 1971 exodus who stayed on. The census report of 1971 revealed that the population of the displaced persons in the state was nearly sixty lakhs as reported by the Planning Commission in 1974 by the Government of West Bengal. According to the Refugee Rehabilitation Commission's Report the number was assessed at eighty lakhs in 1981. The district and sub-division Relief and Rehabilitation offices were set up earlier to cope with the sudden influx of exodus from erstwhile East Pakistan. In the earlier stage, the government considered the partition to be the main reason for refugee influx of 1947. "Communal riots" were recorded as the official reason for the migration of 1950.⁸⁹ However it was revealed from the statement of refugees themselves that each episode in the massive and protracted flight from East Pakistan was related to a different cause. From the accounts of refugees' it was evident that the main reason of their displacement was *desh bhag* i.e. the division of the homeland. To them the lack of security of Bengali Hindus in East Pakistan was the principal reason behind the massive exodus. Actually the Muslims became very arrogant after the Partition. There was huge number of instances relating to the atrocities of the Muslims of East Pakistan upon the minority Hindu communities. Those incidents had been vividly narrated by refugees who were the victims of the said circumstances. The Hindus of East Bengal left their ancestral homes for contingencies of a number pressure due to riots, fear of riots and apprehension of persecution. The cultural insecurity, economic hardship and political mileage were vibrant for the massive exodus from East Pakistan. The existence of family as well as business connections in India from pre-partition period prompted the minorities to quit their homeland.

Hironmoy Bandyopadhyay described an encounter with an East Bengali refugee while touring a relief camp in Jalpaiguri in 1948. He asked the man why he left East Bengal when there were no outward signs of unrest. The man burst out: “It is true we have experienced no beatings or murder, but all people do not have the same degree of endurance.” He then recounted his reason for leaving East Bengal. One evening, he had heard a loud call outside his house, *Ho korta* (master of the house)! Are you home?” Thinking it was a neighbour or distinguished member of the village he stepped out and was surprised to see a Muslim tenant. The man smiled, “Korta, the English have left, the country is free, and we have our Pakistan. So I came to make friends with you.” Angered by his tenant’s loud tone of voice and familiar manner, the man remembered how, not too long ago, these very same people would have stood ten yards away to pay their respects. But it was “the time of Pakistan,” so he pretended pleasure. The tenant proceeded to walk right in to the man’s home “as if the house was his own property--and not to the sitting room outside, but right inside to the sleeping quarters.” Sitting down on the man’s bed without his permission he said in an unmistakable tone of threat, “Korta, this is Pakistan. Don’t forget (and he no longer used the respectful *apni* but the familiar *tumi*) we are no longer your inferiors (chhoto). Remember, from now on we have to be friends as equals.” The refugee exclaimed accusingly to Bandyopadhyay that after all these incidents it was beyond their imagination to stay in Pakistan.⁹⁰

For the elite community escape from East Bengal seemed the only way to avoid humiliation and so far as to avoid adjustment with those who used to judge them as socially substandard. The gentry of meagre earnings and even the people of lower strata like Namasudras also had to encounter the Muslim audacity and atrocities. In some cases the Muslims used to place proposals in support of inter community marriages violating the Hindu rituals and customs like touching their bodies, their food and water, or entering their homes or in their places of worships. Sometimes the minority Hindus were compelled to take proscribed food e.g. beef, All these above mentioned practices turned out to be regular complaints against the Muslims in East. The destructing and polluting the temples and deities along with constant threat of conversion were nothing but an attempt to destroy the identity and integrity of the Hindus. These bitter experiences of Hindu community compelled to lead them thinking that they had become the second-class citizen in Pakistan. The Hindus also

emphasized their sense of religious subordination by referring to themselves as *zimmis*--to denote subject hood, and to communal riots as *jihad*. According to a pamphlet issued on behalf of the refugees from Noakhali in India, "Repeated declarations that Pakistan is an Islamic State make both the Hindus and the Muslims think alike that Pakistan is ultimately meant exclusively for the Muslims"⁹¹. The implication of this was evident that the migration of the East Bengali Hindus was a settled fact.

Apart from religious point of view, the Hindus of East Pakistan became suspicious that their other elements like identity, history, cultural heritage and achievements would be jeopardised with the Islamic influence. The Hindus began to consider Pakistan as a betrayer of secular nationalism and aspirations. Pakistan was labelled as a theocratic state trying to destroy the culture and nationalism of the Hindus and to glorify Muslim victories. The chastity Hindu women both married and spinstar symbolized the honour and dignity of their community. The Hindu minorities complained about the violence against women which featured widely the wild-treatment on women in Pakistan. This ill treatment was also a matter of grave concern in West Bengal. The sexual possession of Hindu women by Muslim men was seen to stand for Muslim domination, i.e. "miscegenation," the loss and humiliation of the (male) Hindu self.⁹²

Migration to India was therefore an important phenomenon that precipitated the aspirations of the East Bengal Hindus for the national reconstruction in postcolonial era. Historian Jadunath Sarkar in his speech at the University Institute Hall in Calcutta in 1948 told the audience that like the Jews, the paradigmatic refugees who would convert Palestine to "a spark of light in the midst of the mess of Muslim misgovernment and stagnation," the East Bengali refugees would revitalize West Bengal's decadent culture and economy. Drawing positive analogous between the East Bengali diaspora and the migration of English Puritans to Holland and France, and then to Massachusetts; and of the French Huguenots to Holland and England, he declared that their going was a loss to their native countries and a boon for their countries of asylum.⁹³ "However crushed and benumbed they may look when they are unloaded from their third class wagons at Sealdah Station yard, the refugees are the most valuable elements of the population of East Bengal," he said, and urged West

Bengalis “...to engraft this rich racial branch upon its old decaying trunk and rise to a new era of prosperity and power”.⁹⁴

East Bengali refugees who sought shelter in India presented themselves as victims of Muslim communalism. They also claimed humanitarian assistance and the prompt recognition of refugee status. The rehabilitation of the refugees was a long drawn process. Due to dubious policy of the Government, a large number of frustrated refugees under their own initiative and enthusiasm started vigorously for their resettlement by squatting unoccupied and unused lands. Those available lands used for the settlement of the refugees ultimately led towards the construction of colonies. A large portion this occupied land belonged to the state, but for the major part the refugees settled in privately owned property including that belonging to local Muslims West Bengal. Particularly in the areas around the city of Calcutta, many refugee settlements were established on land “formerly inhabited by Muslim labourers and artisans” who were “replaced by displaced Hindus from East Pakistan”.⁹⁵ Many Muslims were dispossessed of their homes in the city leading to their “ghettoization” in a few neighbourhoods.⁹⁶ There was no doubt that the East Bengali refugee settlement across West Bengal affected the minority Muslim community most adversely.

In between 1949 and 1951, especially in the event of disturbance in Khulna about 1.5 million took shelter. Most of the displaced persons were disenfranchised because the Government of India had declared 25 July 1949 as the cut-off date. The refugees who used to arrive after this date were not to be offered Indian citizenship, as long as an act of Parliament making a special provision for acquisition of citizenship by such displaced persons. Healthy opposition from Dr. Shyamaprasad Mukherjee convinced the Home Minister Sardar Ballavbhai Patel and he summarily agreed to offer them citizenship. But it is a matter of great regret that the then Prime Minister of India Jawaharlal Nehru rejected the voting right outright on the plea that the electoral role at the late stage would delay the election. The refugees were not entitled to exercise their franchise, they had to apply for it and many of them could not manage it on time. The venture of Dr. Mukherjee and the ‘Jan Sangh’ remain unabated.⁹⁷ Afterwards, the refugees and their organizations were striving hard for their rights. The demands of different refugee organizations had similar attitude with the left front parties relating

to the right of citizenship. At last, the long struggle of acquiring citizenship of the refugees came into reality. In 1952 through general election the refugees exercised their franchise.

Notes:

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12. Bhabani Prasad Chattopadhyay, *Deshbhag: Paschat O Nepathye Kahini*, p.39.
13. Rajendra Prasad, *India Divides*, p.232.
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