

## **CHAPTER IV**

### ***Migration and settlement issues: from 1971-1979***

In July 1905 it was announced by the viceroy of India that the first partition of Bengal would be executed. But, in 1911 the proposal of partition of Bengal was annulled to appease the Bengali sentiment. But the British sowed the seeds of future division of India and ultimately reaped the harvest of division of India in the year 1947. The founding fathers of partition did not find any cartographic absurdity in it. The two wings of the new country were separated by a massive land i.e. India, had no corridor or connection other than religion which served as a link between the two wings. It is the grim irony of history that where religion is supposed to bind people together, but now the bond turned to be fragile. East Bengal came to be known as East Pakistan from 1947 and in 1971 became the independent state of Bangladesh after a successful war of liberation with Pakistan. The name Bangladesh means “country of Bengal” in Bengali language. It is bordered by India on the north, west and east and it faces Bay of Bengal to its South. Due to political exclusion and linguistic discrimination by the politically dominant western wing an agitation grew. Total economic neglect was also another reason. The agitation gave rise to a secular, cultural, nationalist movement. These causes led to the declaration of Independence and Bangladesh liberation war in 1971. As a result of the war a new state endured poverty, famous military coups and political turmoil. The country faced a number of major challenges, including over population, corruption and vulnerability to climate change. But gradually the country increased life expectancy and achieved gender parity in education. It reduced the growth of the population and improved maternal and child health. Dhaka and Chittagong are the country’s two largest cities and they have been the driving force behind much of the recent growth.

Curzon’s partition of Bengal in 1905 was one of the legends of freedom movement. Legends and myths arouse protective emotions that shield people from scrutiny. A noted Bengali writer, Ashoke Mitra, raises the question “If the partition of 1905 were allowed to stand”. The crisp answer was that eastern Bengal might not have followed Mohammed Ali Jinnah’s line. Curzon’s original decision, whatever its motive had

offered hope of rapid economic and social progress to Muslim masses in Bengal. They bore the brunt of under development of agriculture and the economy in general, under British colonial rule, besides the suffering of the repression and oppression let loose by the Hindu *zamindars*. Had the decision to divide Bengal been allowed to stand, the spread of education amongst the Muslims would have led to the quick emergence of a sensitive Muslim intelligentsia with a heightened and social consciousness. Perhaps from within this category there would have sprung an exciting crop of thinkers and ideologues which would be inclined to define objective reality in terms of class and not divide on the basis of the religion. Had all these things happened the Muslim League would have become cropper even as the bigoted Hindu oligarchies were stopped in their track? To sum up if the partition of 1905 was allowed to stand there would have been no partition of either Bengal or India in 1947. For that matter Calcutta might well have continued as the country's capital. The most affected ones as a result of partition were none other than women<sup>1</sup>.

The creation of Bangladesh was the greatest achievement for the people of the then East Bengal. Their relentless struggle for the creation of Bangladesh under the inspiring leadership of Sheikh Mujib-ur- Rahman a new chapter of history was opened and Mujib-ur, architect of Bangladesh, became the father of the new nation and bestowed with the prestigious reward *Bangabandhu*. The seed of creation of Bangladesh remained dormant since 1947 after the attainment of independence on the basis of religion which was known as Pakistan and East Bengal was converted politically into East Pakistan and became the integral part of Pakistan. The distance between West Pakistan and East Pakistan was nearly about 1200km. It was crystal clear that an independent country based on religious fanaticism could in no case be survived for a pretty long time. The slogan "All Muslims are brothers" was nothing but the slogan of hypocrites. Following that heinous hypocrisy and conspiracy, the glorious tradition and dignity of Bengalis of East Bengal was shattered into pieces. East Bengal was converted as East Pakistan which was governed by the orthodox Bengali haters of the Western Pakistan leaders. Within the span of seven months after the attainment of independence the dark cloud of uncertainty engulfed the political horizon of Pakistan. On 19 March, 1948 the so called Father of Pakistan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah visited East Pakistan and delivered a speech on 21 March in the Race course Maidan. He announced with confidence that Urdu would be the state language

of Pakistan. The announcement of Jinnah was instantly rejected by the thousands and thousands of Bengali Muslims. The air was rent with the slogan “no no no” as a result Mr. Jinnah was puzzled, annoyed and apprehensive regarding the repercussion of his statement.

On March, 24, the obstinate Mr. Jinnah on the occasion of convocation in the Curzon Hall of Dacca University reclaimed the demand of Urdu to be regarded as national language of Pakistan. The whole auditorium simultaneously shouted against the introduction of Urdu as the National language of Pakistan and it was highly applauded. Jinnah diplomatically tried to humiliate the dignity and glorious tradition of Bengali literature, culture and tradition through introduction of some Urdu words instead of Bengali words. The united efforts of Bengalis foiled their conspiracy and evil design. In 1952 the united patriotic Bengalis took a sacred vow to uphold the dignity of their mother tongue and mother land. They shouted slogans to introduce Bengali as national language of Pakistan instead of Urdu.

In the general election of Pakistan in December 1970, the opposition political party Awami League strengthened the demand of autonomy of East Pakistan. They got absolute majority. But the president of Pakistan, General Yahya Khan, disagreed with the demand of the League. Mujib-ur Rahman was not allowed to form Government in East Pakistan. The situation worsened when Yahya Khan suddenly stopped the dialogue with the League and sent troops into the streets of Dhaka. Meanwhile Mujib-ur declared the independence of East Pakistan over a clandestine broadcasting system. Yahya replied with army.<sup>2</sup> In the year 1971 the whole East Pakistan was consolidated under the banner of Sheikh Mujib-ur-Rahman. Finding no other alternative the inhabitants of Eastern Pakistan waged war against the autocratic administration of Pakistan. This war of liberation was known as ‘Mukti Yudhdha’ ( War of Liberation). At the cost of lives, property, abduction, rape, humiliation and atrocious tortures of Pakistani soldiers the patriotic Bengalis launched war against Pakistan with active help and cooperation of Indian soldiers.

The war lasted for about nine months and the cherished desire of Sheikh Mujib-ur-Rahman was translated into reality and independent country known as Bangladesh was created. Mujib-ur declared with confidence and pride-“This may be my last message. From today Bangladesh is independent. I call upon the people of

Bangladesh wherever you might be and with whatever you have to resist the army of occupation to the last. Your fight must go on until the last soldier of the Pakistan occupation army is expelled from the soil of Bangladesh and final victory is achieved.”<sup>3</sup> During the august visit of Mulk raj Anand, the academician once appealed to the people of Bangladesh in this fashion that the heart rendering tragic incident that took place in their country it was rather shameful. He also advised them that they once took up sword instead of ink, but now they should leave the sword and take pen. If the occurrences remained unventilated and unpublished their sorrows and grievances would never be honoured in future and would be in mystery.

Partition was followed by sectarian violence in 1946 which prompted the two-way movement of Hindus to West Bengal and Muslims to East Pakistan. In Punjab, however, the exodus of Hindu refugees eventually overtook that of Muslims and has continued sporadically through the brutal civil war in Pakistan in 1971 The partition brought about a national disaster as well as individual trauma for the victimized. The appearance of over 8 million refugees from East Bengal irrevocably shaped West Bengal’s political economy <sup>4</sup> The disputed schematization of Government of India about the population displacement from East Pakistan helped the refugees to assess their predicament. 9 million Hindu and Muslim refugees from the war of 1970-71 in East Pakistan were not included in the aforesaid schematization.<sup>5</sup> The United Nations estimated that the majority of these refugees returned home.

### **Who were the refugees?**

According to the traditional theories regarding migration it was the dynamics of population flow in post-partition period in South Asia, more specifically from Bangladesh to West Bengal, can be a frustrating exercise. According to Ranabir Samaddar this frustration is more acute in the context of persistence of the differential notions of refugees, migrants and displaced persons. The International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences (1968) considered migration and refugee as totally different subject. William Peterson considered the UN definition of migration (1953) as arbitrary and misleading because it excluded deliberately refugees and refugees constituted a large portion of total population movements.(William Peterson,286-292),. In 1953, Jacques Vernant opined that “a refugee is someone who has been compelled to abandon his home”<sup>6</sup> So it is evident that the refugee may be the victims

of earthquake, flood, war and also of persecution.<sup>7</sup> Here in case of India and more specifically of West Bengal it was found that different factors like political disorder, economic stringency and natural calamity so far as the fear of violence provoked large scale migration in West Bengal from Bangladesh. The illegal migrants were defined in this study as those who had entered West Bengal from Bangladesh without valid document in the post 1971 period. Since Bangladesh is not a secular state religion does play a role in migration.

Actually it was difficult to distinguish refugees from migrants. Even 'violence' cannot effectively make a difference between the refugees and migrants. Samaddar raises a vital question that if the refugees are absconders from violence then what about those migrants those were the women sex workers from Bangladesh or those women were engaged in different forms of sweat labour? They have migrated to India due to fear of 'endemic violence' from males of their family as well as the men folk of outside world.<sup>8</sup> The refugees of East Bengal were very anxious about the retaliatory recurring nature of the violence on either side of the border. The personal experience of a noted journalist of East Bengal Prafulla Kumar Chowdhury highlighted the communal violence in East Pakistan. According to him the Muslims right from the time of the League tried to create a separate Islamic state for their identity. They formed the provincial government in 1946 at the period of the Great Calcutta Killing. In 1950, after the creation of Pakistan, it was alleged that Muslims were being murdered in India and as revenge they started murdering the Hindus in Barisal, Dacca and Chittagong. Journalist Chowdhury in an interview with Nilanjana Chatterjee, an Anthropologist, mentioned the papers like 'The Azad' where it was narrated that Hindus in no case be trusted, they would even kill their parents and they would also strangle Muslims to death. In the pretext of burglary of a relic from Kashmir in 1964 instigated communal disturbances in Khulna. Again in 1971, during the war of independence of Bangladesh, the army of West Pakistan earmarked Hindus as anti-nationals. Mr. Chowdhury asserted that even after the victory of the Awami League, the Muslim communalists took upper hand upon the Hindu minorities.<sup>9</sup>

The political factor was the main reason for migration in West Bengal up to 1971. Migration caused by political factor forced most of the Hindus to abandon their native

place. But both political and economic factors were the underlying causes of migration for post 1971 period. After coming over to West Bengal they had to undergo various problems including acute financial stringency. As single income was not enough for the poor family, female members tried to look for job in unorganized sectors. Easy availability of information for job from those who already engaged in West Bengal was very much helpful for them. Those women could engage themselves as flowers and vegetables sellers. They could also be engaged at lowest possible wage. Political instability, fear of riots and terrorism in Bangladesh, inhuman attitude and activities of the political leaders, absence of democratic rights, religious fundamentalism, religious instigation by political leaders, insecurity feeling of Hindus etc. were the major crucial issues that worth to be mentioned as political push factors. About 80 percent of the respondents interviewed in course of research were of the opinion that due to domination of religious fundamentalists, due to insecurity of the minority group or due to discriminating law and order against Hindus might be the factors that motivated the Hindus to migrate from Bangladesh to West Bengal.<sup>10</sup>

The most of the refugees interviewed during the course of the study, moved towards West Bengal not only due to monetary stringency or to fulfill their dreams for settling over to West Bengal as it was a land of opportunity. Following political disturbances they were forced to abandon their sweet abode in quest of certainty in Indian Territory. This political development had created a psychological impact. That is why most of them decided unanimously to settle down in West Bengal state of India leaving behind their ancestral relations. A sense of insecurity and uncertainty prevailed among the minority Hindus of Bangladesh. Not only the communal turmoil but the fear of physical assault instigated them to be migrated. For the safety and security of their daughters the Hindus made a prompt decision to take asylum in the safely abode of West Bengal. It is worth noting in this context that the Hindus hailed from East Pakistan just after the partition belonged to the upper class i.e. *bhadralok*. They had some previous connections with West Bengal. Some affluent businessmen also came to settle in West Bengal who by dint of their economic solvency could easily establish themselves in the alien land. After few years mostly middle class people shifted over here in West Bengal. They mostly belonged to small business. People of some professional classes also came over to India.<sup>11</sup>

A general opinion was that the non-Bengali Muslims were the real perpetrators behind such violence and brutality. They used the tools of communalism to shatter the unity among the people of East Bengal and tried to obstruct their struggle in sake of social justice. Muslim nationalism and motivation for statehood were solely responsible for the genesis of Pakistan and subsequently the birth of Bangladesh. From the narratives of refugees the experiences of victimhood, the violence they were subjected to was painfully articulated in course of conversation with the researcher. The general impression derived from the interviewees was that most of the Muslims could not be trusted though some of them were beyond average Muslims.

A major cause of displacement from East Pakistan was diplomatic ruptures in Indo-Pakistan relations and also the tensions between East and West Pakistan which finally terminated in the east's separatist movement for Bangladesh. The tussle between Hindus and Muslims in each nation sparked retaliatory hostility in the contiguous countries. This was a depiction of events that clearly indicated that the partition was principally based on religious lines. The migrants of post-1971 were earmarked to be ineligible for having settlement assistance in India. But the clandestine inflow of evacuees in subsequent decades remained affected despite the prevention policy of the Government. All the Muslims who migrated to India from Bangladesh were labeled as "infiltrators" by the Indian state.<sup>12</sup> The prime reason of displacement in the 1980s was economic hardship in Bangladesh that involved both Hindus and Muslims, while in early 1990s the Hindus of Bangladesh became the victims of communal violence following the demolition of the Babri mosque in India. Those who roamed the streets of Dhaka seeking support for the partition could not even visualize that as a reward for their gesture to agree for leaving, they would be forever labeled 'refugees', a word that was more violence to the idea of a home than any other in any language.<sup>13</sup>

### **Historic Rights:**

The Refugee Central Rehabilitation Council (RCRC), was a refugee wing of the Revolutionary Socialist Party in West Bengal organized a refugee convention and issued a pamphlet adopting a resolution for strengthening their position. It also resolved to establish their entitlement for the protection and assistance in India as an incontrovertible right. That very right was not dependant on the pity of host people or

government's mercy or whim. The persons migrated from East Pakistan tried to build their own abodes in Indian soil depending upon their own right and they also decided not to take any undue advantage from the local people. They were not *sharanarathi* (supplicants) but *kshatipuraner dabidar* (claimants to compensation for losses)<sup>14</sup> This quote was displayed in a pamphlet entitled “Oitihashik Odhikar” or “Historic.Rights”. It was published by the East Bengal Minority Welfare Association advocating the refugee rights for post 1971 migrants.

*The partition left us homeless, bereft of everything. We did not fight for independence in order to lead the lives of beggars. Those of us who cannot remain in East Pakistan are not doing anything wrong by seeking shelter in India. Why should the police push us back? Why should we live in hovels next to rail-tracks? Why should we be the object of people's mercy? ... it is only right that those who struggled and sacrificed for independence be repaid.*<sup>15</sup>

### **Refugee problem after 1971:**

Refugee exodus was inter-twined with the history of post partition India and West Bengal.<sup>16</sup> The exodus of Hindu refugees from East Pakistan continued unremittingly even after the birth of Bangladesh. This refugee exodus virtually became natural in the context of post colonial history of India. But if we take into account the record of migration from East Pakistan to West Bengal of Indian Territory it surpassed all previous records. The exodus of Hindus from East Pakistan was undoubtedly a continuous process but it became slowed down gradually in post partition period. Again influx of evacuees from East Pakistan started from 1970 and continued to rock West Bengal. From 1947-71 Bangladesh was a province of Pakistan. Since 1947, the Hindu population in Bangladesh has been reduced from 30% to less than 10% because of religious persecution and political terrorism. The migrants from East Bengal could enjoy the advantage of rehabilitation assistance in India after being duly recognized as ‘refugees’.<sup>17</sup> According to the assessment made by Sucheta Kripalini in a seminar, 1971 “We have welcomed refugees many times in the past 22 years; but this time there is an unending streams of refugee coming in”. This remark is aptly justified and appropriate because she was closely associated with this post partition refugee problem.<sup>18</sup>

The constant migration from East Pakistan after 1970 acquired a new name 'infiltration'. Actually a partition refugee or displaced person was he who was a habitant in the territories belonged to East Pakistan migrated to India due to civil disturbances or due to the vivisection of India.<sup>19</sup> West Bengal is still struggling over the refugee issue till today. In the first three years of partition the Government of India had to confront with the exodus problem of East Pakistan amounted almost 5 million. The number was 2.3 million by 1950.<sup>20</sup> In 1950, refugees in West Bengal at one time totaled 3.5 million.<sup>21</sup> The number went down drastically when almost 1.2 million returned to East Pakistan following Indo-Pakistan agreement on minorities in April 1950.<sup>22</sup> Afterwards a considerable number of refugees came back to West Bengal. From that time onwards refugee influx became an endemic feature of West Bengal so far as the eastern India was concerned. According to Hiranmoy Bandopadhyay, commissioner of the Refugee Rehabilitation Department, West Bengal, around 2.7 million moved into West Bengal till 1954.<sup>23</sup> According to a publication from Government of India it was clear that 2.8 million refugees came over to West Bengal in 1951 and around 4million in 1956.<sup>24</sup> By 1970 the number of refugees from East Pakistan shot up to 5 million.<sup>25</sup> Up to 1971, over 4.7 million Hindus had sought asylum in India, especially in West Bengal. The volume of reverse flow of Muslims from India to East Pakistan was unknown. But in 1971 due to military junta of Pakistan 10 million people crossed border to come to India.<sup>26</sup> Fear of Persecution was another justified reason for migration over India and more specifically in West Bengal. But the official definition was not clearly defined regarding the preconditions of fear on basis of which State would accept in meriting shelter in India.

Again due to the political turmoil in East Pakistan the exodus once again sparked off in March, 1971. Over 3 million refugees crossed the border within two months following March 26, 1971. But consequently during August 71, a military violence broke out in East Pakistan following which 8 million people pushed to India within a span of 5 months.<sup>27</sup> According to P.N. Luthra, the then additional secretary of the Department of Labour and Rehabilitation 70 refugees migrated in a minute, 1700 refugees every hour and in the month of May one hundred thousand every day and in June 68000 refugees daily came over the Indian territory!<sup>28</sup>

The following table presents a distinct picture of refugee influx during March to December, 1971.

**Table-4.1**  
**Month wise rate of influx**

Month,1971	Rate of influx
March 26-31	17000 daily
April	40000 daily
May	3.5 million
June	6 million
July	7.1 million
August	8 million
October- November	9 million
December	9.9 million

Source: Sandip Bandopadhyay, "Millions Seeking Refuge: The Refugee Question in West Bengal:1971", in Pradip Kumar Bose(ed),*Refugees In West Bengal :Institutional Processes and Contested Identities*, Calcutta:2000, Calcutta Research Group,p.34

The refugee exodus in 1971 disrupted the normal life of West Bengal and also brought about a drastic demographic change in four border districts, viz. West Bengal, Tripura, Meghalaya and Assam. By August 1971, 6.3 million refugees stepped into the territory of West Bengal while in Meghalaya the number of refugees increased to a considerable level and the number was 36 million.<sup>29</sup> Those uprooted people who entered India in 1971. West Bengal was the sole recipient of 76% refugees from East Pakistan. As a matter of fact West Bengal bore the main burden of the exodus which resulted in an increase of the density of population, e.g. In West Dinajpur the density of population rose from 507 to 600 persons per square kilometer. In the border districts of West Bengal the refugees at one point of time constituted 32% of the total population.<sup>30</sup>

India declared war on Pakistan formally on 6<sup>th</sup> December, 1971. Long before the breaking of war between India and Pakistan on 6<sup>th</sup> December, 1971, India took active initiative in providing shelter to the refugees of East Pakistan. Luthra, the then

Additional Secretary of the Department of the Labour and Rehabilitation, was entrusted with the charge of the Secretariat set up in Calcutta. Luthra was given full liberty in exercising his power in implementing various programme concerning the refugees according to the demand of the situation.<sup>31</sup> So far as the policy of providing shelter to the refugees was concerned it was made clear by August 1971 that 5.7 million refugees out of 8 million could be rehabilitated in makeshift camps and the rest would have to live with their friends and relatives.

After 1947, another major refugee crisis happened during Bangladesh war of independence in 1971, when millions of refugees migrated from the country to India. This brought about a sudden spike in population in the states bordering Bangladesh. The massacre in Bangladesh escalated an estimated 10 million refugees fled to India. 1971, India had formulated a massive rehabilitation programme on an emergency basis to accommodate the refugees hailing from Eastern Pakistan to West Bengal. Taking into account the gravity of the situation the Government of India entrusted Mr. P. N. Luthra with the charge of the Secretariat and was awarded responsibilities for planning a programme as situation demanded. The first and foremost concern of the secretariat was to provide foodstuff in various places. Eight additional magistrates were engaged in the border districts of West Bengal to cope with the burden of influx of population due to incessant flow of migrants from Bangladesh. In other states additional secretaries and directors were appointed by the Secretariat. Refugee departments were also set up in different states. The Government of India allotted huts to the 50% of the refugees and the rest were accommodated in camps and in tents. Out of 8 million refugees came over to West Bengal, 5.7 million of them were provided with provisional camps, whereas the rest of the refugees took refuge in the houses of friends, relations and near and dear ones. In West Bengal 500 camps were set up out of 825 camps of India in mid 1971.<sup>32</sup>

### **Migration in the districts of North Bengal after 1971:**

The incessant inflow of migrants for over few decades in North Bengal brought about a drastic change in the demographic index of the region. This migration was mainly due to partition of India and also due to Bangladesh war of liberation. Moreover a huge number of people from other states migrated over here.

**Table- 4.2**  
**Growth of population in North Bengal during 1971-1981**

Districts	Area Sq. Km	1971	1981
Darjeeling	3,386	781.8	1,024.2
Cooch Behar	3,075	1,414.2	1,771.6
Jalpaiguri	6,245	1,750.1	2,214.8
West Dinajpur	5,206	1,857.9	2,404.9
Malda	3,713	1,612.7	2,031.8
North Bengal	21,625	7,418.7	9,447.6

Source: Census reports of 1971, 1981

After the massive exodus of 1947 again in 1971 West Bengal experienced clandestine evacuees from East Pakistan which continued unabated for decades together. The Government of Bangladesh after its creation committed safety and security of the common people that to some extent decreased the inflow of migrants from Bangladesh. After the establishment of military of military jawans the relentless inflow of Bangladeshi migrants continued unremittingly. Some miscreants of Bangladesh used to cross Indian border forcefully at night in spite of tight security. Those regular affairs created a situation of anarchism. Those intruders looted the properties of innocent dwellers of boundary regions and decamped with the valuables. They also stole cattle and send those to Bangladesh unlawfully. The border areas like Chengrabandha, Shitalkuchi, Berubari, Hemkumari were badly affected by the chaotic activities of Bangladeshi miscreants.<sup>33</sup>

Even after the creation of Bangladesh the minority Hindus crossed boundaries due to fear of more communal violence. The Muslims used to exploit the minorities in every possible way. To kidnap ladies from Hindu families became rampant. The news paper 'Trishrota' pulished from Jalpaiguri cited an example of a family of Bagura that was the worst sufferer of Muslim torture. It was also reported that almost every day in 1979 a sizable number of migrants came to India through Jalpaiguri border. Some agents took active initiative to allow them to step into Indian Territory in lieu of money. This continuous migration from Bangladesh had worsened the economy of

West Bengal so far as India was concerned. It had a far reaching impact for the days ahead.<sup>34</sup>

Due to torture of militants of Pakistan during the reign of Yahhia Khan nearly ten thousand people both Hindu and Muslim communities came from Nilkhamari, Dorwani, Dosh mile khuti etc and marched towards Dewanganj, Haldibari and Manikganj in the month of April, 1971. It was found that many orphan infants were lying on the courtyard of many buildings in Haldibari town crying in starvation. Many were found to take shelter under the trees.<sup>35</sup> In the early period of the same year the Pak militants started their massacre in the northern districts of Eastern Pakistan viz. Nilkhamari, Rongpur, Dinajpur, Pochagarh, Boda, Debiganj, Thakurgao etc. The militants torched specifically the houses of the Hindus who were the supporters of Awami League. The Hindus were brutally assassinated and following which the Hindus abandoned their home and hearth. Movements of Hindus in thousands towards India became a regular feature along with their small household belongings and domestic pets like cattle and goats.

The reign of terror prevailed in the area. Crossing the borders the affected Hindus both male and female moved towards Haldibari and Dewanganj of North Bengal. They also arrived at Manikganj after crossing the border. They were accommodated temporarily in the premises of Manikganj High School, two schools of Haldibari, rail storehouse, rail platforms, markets, the storehouse of Dewanganj, Halkhola, Netaji Vidyapith of Torol para and in the camp of Ghugudanga school.<sup>36</sup> Those who were accommodated in the camps were allotted Government assistance. Those who failed to be accommodated were deprived of getting any sort of assistance from the Government. More so the paucity of space in different camps were the vital reasons to stop fresh entrants. When the Government failed miserably to provide the people in camps they were forced to take shelter under trees, under open sky, on the vast fields and by the sides of the Highways. Torrential rainfall made their lives more complicated and unbearable they had to face new problems. Sanitation problem became more acute.<sup>37</sup>

The refugees of Rongpur were accommodated at Sitai, Mathabhanga, Dinahata, Haldibari, Mekhliganj, etc. According to the reports as available from the Ananda Bazar Patrika during the war of Independence at least 5000 refugees took shelter in

Cooch Behar from Lalmonihat. Rabindra Nath Trivedi in his book accumulated statistics from the Government of India, nearly one crore refugees took asylums in different relief camps of India. According to his report the refugee population in Assam was 3,13,000, Behar 9000, Meghalaya 6,88,000, Tripura 14,13000 and West Bengal 74,93000.<sup>38</sup> The refugee inflow in Cooch Behar from Rongpur, Maymensingh, Tangail etc. were 3,93,106 excluding those who took shelter in places other than camps.

**Table-4.3**

**Refugee inflow to Cooch Behar from Lalmonihat**

Sl no.	Sub division	Number of camps	Number of refugee
1	Cooch Behar Sadar	15	18,316
2	Mekhliganj	14	42,778
3	Mathabhanga	39	1,20,563
4	Dinhata	36	1,91,289
5	Tufanganj	7	20,160

Source: Dr. Muhammad Manirujjaman 'Char shatabdir Lalmonirhaat'(2008).p.237 cited in 'Mukti Juddhhe Rongpur',Rangpur Gabeshana Parishad,2013,p.244.

With the frequent attacks of Pak militants in different localities in East Pakistan and in border districts of both East Pakistan and India were equally affected. Following barbaric attack of the Pak terrorists upon the people of Bara sashi a region just two miles off from Berubari of Indian border, the terrified people of the locality trekked towards Indian Territory.<sup>39</sup> A sizable number of evacuees took refuge in Alipurduar subdivision of Jalpaiguri district. The number of evacuees rose to almost twenty thousand till 10 May, 1971. They were accommodated at various camps namely Barabisha, Kamakhyaguri, Buxa camp etc.<sup>40</sup> In those days of migration the bulk of refugees whose who entered to the Indian Territory through the borders Haldibari and Berubari carried with them their domestic animals like cow, buffalo, goat etc. But when the strangers were shifted to various camps they failed to keep their domestic animals with them. Some miscreants and touts taking the advantage of the helplessness of the new comers compelled them to sell their domestic animals at a very cheap price. Even their valuable utensils were purchased at Rs. 10 per kilo gram.

In this way they lost their last penny which they acquired.<sup>41</sup> Out of lacks of displaced persons from East Pakistan just few months before the *Muktiyuddha* at about one lack of people took shelter in Duars in the first ten days of the month of May in 1971<sup>42</sup>. Among them three thousand refugees were provided in Buxa camp. Rs 1.25 paisa was allotted per head and they were provided with 400 gm rice, few potatoes and a small quantity of salt. As the camp was situated in the hilly areas so the place was not suitable and congenial for the people of the plain. Due to many other problems they might be shifted to Dangi, Sonapur and in Jayanti camps.<sup>43</sup> Among the districts of North Bengal West Dinajpur was the recipient of major population of refugees. One of the major reasons of refugee inflow towards West Dinajpur was that the said district was surrounded by the borders in three sides. According to the assumption of the reporters of Janamat nearly 15 lakhs of people from East Pakistan entered into Balurghat. As the Hili border was ultimately converted into a military station the refugees had utilized the two other borders to enter into West Dinajpur. Almost all the educational institutions were packed with the new comers from East Pakistan. Besides, some relief camps were also built to meet the requirements of the incomings distressed. Apart from the camp dwellers a considerable number of migrants were forced to stay outside owing to acute dearth of accommodation in the camps. Those who were accustomed to lead a peaceful and comfortable life, all on a sudden within a short span their dreams and aspirations were shattered into pieces.<sup>44</sup>

Dhupguri of Jalpaiguri district had a miserable experience regarding the toiling masses of Hindu migrants who happened to come over in Dhupguri. Not far away from Dhupguri motor stand there was place known Daukimari *Hath* where a camp for the evacuees where two hundred tents were set up for the provision of nearly three thousand people. It was noticed that the tents were not adequately prepared to protect the inmate of the tents during rainy season. The local B.D.O of that period Sudarshan Nandy requested the Government that the residents of the camp would be benefited if the existing tents were replaced by tin shades. The other camp under the Dhupguri Police station was Rangati camp situated in the bank river Rangati where nine hundred tents were built. Each and every tent was situated within the distance of seven to eight feet. There was a wide road passage of twenty feet in between two rows of the tents. There were approximately eight thousand people in the Rangati camp. In two miles distance from the Rangati camp there was another camp near Lakhmikanta

Bagan with a population of two thousand. There were three more camps within the ambit of five or six miles from the camp near to Lakhmikanta Bagan. Near about fifteen thousand people were allotted refuge.<sup>45</sup> On November 18,1971 the then President of India V.V.Giri visited two refugee relief camps namely Balaram hat and Bandhu Nagar of Jalpaiguri district. During his brief stay at those aforesaid camps he delivered a speech expressing his sympathy towards the displaced persons. He also expressed the inability of the Government to face such a Himalayan problem. He was also optimistic that the inmates of the camp would soon be able to go back their motherlands when the situation would come into normality.<sup>46</sup>

The refugees who were denied of accommodations in camps were in a pathetic condition. It was a matter of great bewilderment that despite pressure of adverse circumstances how they could survive. Following malnutrition and inadequate medical facilities they were often afflicted by infectious and epidemic diseases like diarrhea, small pox, chicken pox etc.<sup>47</sup> They also suffered from virulent types of fever and malaria.<sup>48</sup> In West Dinajpur the deadly disease cholera was broken out among the inmates of the camps.<sup>49</sup> In different refugee camps the infants were the worst sufferer of malnutrition and lack of medical treatment. Most of the infants of the relief camps were the chronic patients of dysentery, blood dysentery, diarrhea, bronchitis, fever, ache on shoulder etc. whereas the adult female members of the camps were suffering from anemia<sup>50</sup>. Deaths for cholera were regular occurrences of the camp life. The temporary refugee camps Salsalabari and Patkapara of Alipurduar witnessed the death of five persons within twenty four hours on 18 June,1971 was reported and published in a local news paper named The Janamat. In the Dangi camp of Alipurduar almost fifty thousand people took shelter. A huge number of deaths due to cholera and other contagious diseases in the camp were reported. The alarming incident which was shocking to note that due to non availability of funds the guardians of the deceased could not make arrangements for their cremation, as a result the wild animals took the bodies into the jungles and disfigured the bodies which were beyond recognition. The camp dwellers had to pass their days under such pathetic circumstances.<sup>51</sup>

The migrants towards North Bengal districts due to their helplessness and ignorance about the environment of the new territory they became the targets of some anti socials and miscreants. They applied different tricks in cheating the new comers. Most of the people were made tempted in involving them in gambling and as a result they

became totally penniless. In the act of conversion of currency they sold the currency of Pakistan in cheap rate, where as they purchased the Indian currency in higher rate. It was also a kind of deprivation.<sup>52</sup> Not far from Moynaguri a daring robbery took place in the office of the Bloc Development Officer (BDO) and looted the relief materials kept for the refugees were looted. Such inhuman activists engaged themselves in such crimes for the fulfillment of their own interests.<sup>53</sup> In the railway stations and adjoining places like Alipurduar, Hasimara, Dalgaon, Odlabari, Siliguri Junction, Malbazar etc were infested with anti-social elements. Those places became the epicentres of anti socials.<sup>54</sup> The Government of India had to incur a massive expenditure for the uprooted persons. The amount would have been estimated more than two crore per day.<sup>55</sup> It was quite evident that India had to face acute financial stringency for the cause of the refugees migrated from East Pakistan on a phased manner from 1947 -1971.

The March 28, 1971 a huge number of refugees of Rongpur who took refuge in the adjoining border districts of West Bengal, specially at Cooch Behar. Primarily they settled at Sitai locality. The new comers in the midst of extreme sorrows and suffering set up cultural organizations known as the '*Biplabi Sangskritik Parishad*' and '*Bangladesh Sangskritik Mukti Parishad*'. Literary personalities, poets, writers, musicians, theatre personalities and other social activists were the active members of the organizations. They published a news paper the '*Saptahik Ranangan*' that ultimately renamed as the '*Mahakal*' and again the '*Dabanal*'. It should be remembered that the genocide that took place on April 3, 1971 accelerated the movements of the Rongpur refugee to West Bengal<sup>56</sup>

### **Relief measures:**

The spontaneous inflow of the hungry and panic stricken people from Bangladesh became a regular phenomenon. Due to dearth of dwelling places the refugees, sometimes were forced to take shelter even in the circular water pipe. They took refuge in school buildings and in office buildings. Those buildings were almost converted into camps. They had to live in an unhygienic atmosphere and suffered from epidemic diseases like cholera, enteric etc. By October 1971, 1100 medical centres were set up by the Secretariat to eradicate the diseases on war footing. Various

voluntary organizations extended their hands of cooperation to provide medical assistance to the refugees who were the worst victims of various diseases.<sup>57</sup> Several voluntary organizations like Ramakrishna Mission, Bharat Sevasram Sangha, Abhoy Ashram, IMA, Red Cross Society, Oxfam etc came forward with their helping hands for relief works. Those organizations individually helped the refugees and sometimes they assisted the officials for functioning.

The Ramakrishna Mission played a pioneering role by establishing 13 camps in 4 border districts of West Bengal along with medical centres. The Ramakrishna Mission spent 2,73,000 for the relief of the refugees. R.K. Mission also provided relief of Rs. 1,70,000 refugees.<sup>58</sup> Since 19 April, 1971 Ramakrishna Mission launched a massive programme in serving the destitute individuals of East Pakistan in the event of the atrocities and turmoil that nakedly broke out in East Pakistan. To render relief to the destitute a relief camp was set up in the school premises of Manikgunj of South Berubari. The camp comprised three thousand people. The Ramakrishna Mission distributed per head 400 gm. Rice, 200 gm pulse, 25 gm mustard oil, spices of 10 paisa and 200 gm potato. The mission acted continuously and silently for those suffering human beings.<sup>59</sup> The Ramakrishna Mission made arrangements for the relief of the destitute from East Pakistan on the eve of Bangladesh war of Liberation. The mission established their relief camp in Radhikapur in Dinajpur border in order to extend their help in different ways. The Mission authority made earnest appeal to the general public to donate generously with money and kinds for the welfare of the distressed people through their Mission.<sup>60</sup> The Ramakrishna Mission of Jalpaiguri, after the war of independence of Bangladesh, made arrangement of relief for the uprooted persons of Bangladesh. During the aforesaid period shouldered the responsibilities of a relief, situated in the border of East Pakistan at Sakati village. At about 38,000 evacuees were accommodated in the said camp.<sup>61</sup> Ramakrishna Mission of Cooch Behar also generously helped the evacuees who took asylum in and after 1971.<sup>62</sup>

Most of the people who came over to North Bengal in 1971 belonged to poor peasant community. They came here empty handed. To accommodate them with all sorts of help such as food crops, clothing, warm cloths and other essential commodities were

distributed among them by different voluntary organizations. The Bharat Sevashram Sangha established 14 camps and provided food and other daily essential commodities and necessary articles to the uprooted persons.<sup>63</sup> The Akhil Bharat Vivekananda Jubo Mahamondal of Maynaguri of Jalpaiguri district took a leading role in collecting and distributing cash and kinds to the displaced persons. Accompanying the people of all ages the organization arranged to collect clothing and other things through singing the patriotic song composed by Tagore '*Amar sonar Bangla ami tomay bhalobasi, chirodin tomar akash tomar batas amar prane bajay bansi*'. This organization also made arrangements for the nutrition of the babies in camps where the government supply of milk powder was alleged to be not suitable for the babies. So they shouldered the responsibility of supplying barley to the infants of different camps.<sup>64</sup>

The Red Cross Society opened medical units in the border districts. The Red Cross Society also helped the patients through medical assistance and through vaccinations. The organization also supplied milk powder and medicines and precautionary measures were also taken. The organization also supplied milk to the infants in different camps of North Bengal. They had made wonderful job in Dangi camp of Alipurduar. The members of other organizations like Oxfam, Baptist Mission came forward with their helping hands in this camp. They rendered a valuable service in various camps of North Bengal.<sup>65</sup> Different organizations like Lions' Club, Women's coordinating council gave financial assistance to the refugees.<sup>66</sup> There were instances of providing pecuniary help to the 80,000 helpless migrants in Madhyamgram and Salt Lake areas of North 24 Parganas by Oxfam. As a matter of fact the Oxfam offered monetary help to some relief organizations like Abhoy Ashram and Bengal Rural Welfare Societies. The Oxfam in collaboration with Gandhi Peace Foundation in Tripura and Balurghat in West Bengal worked for the migrants. It also supplied medicines to the displaced persons and organized workshops in order to train the young doctors who treated the uprooted persons.<sup>67</sup>

**Effect:**

Rationing system was introduced in Cooch Behar for the evacuees who took shelter in the houses of relatives other than camps. The constant agitation demanding to

introduce rationing system among the new comer migrants in Cooch Behar residing in different places other than the camps ultimately crowned with success.<sup>68</sup> The local schools, colleges and local clubs took active initiative to assist the uprooted evacuees from Bangladesh. The colleges and universities also joined hands with several relief committees to expedite the speedy disposal of the articles meant for the migrants.

There was no doubt, due to excessive flow of evacuees from East Pakistan and afterwards from Bangladesh created a number of problems in West Bengal as well as in North Bengal, scarcity of food was one of them. Exchange of currency became a profitable business for one section because after coming over to India they had to make their currency exchanged following which some Indians became more financially benefited. In this critical juncture, the menacing price hike of food grains was noticed particularly in Balurghat. Previously rice was sold at Rs. Twenty five to twenty six per mound. But with the influx of refugees the situation changed altogether. The price of rice decreased considerably as the evacuees carried with them sufficient quantity of rice for their daily consumption. During the period of political turmoil some interested traders collected rice from the border areas of Pakistan and sold it in the Indian market with considerable profit. In the meantime with the intervention of border security force this illicit trade was hampered to a great extent. Due to spiraling price hike the general public could not make both ends meet.<sup>69</sup>

### **Rehabilitation outside West Bengal:**

The refugees of the Andamans were accorded cordial reception in Portblairs. The refugees of Eastern Pakistan were granted temporary accommodation in the Andamans for six months. Kalinpur, Manpur, Hamifresganj, Monlutan, Naya sahar and wondur were earmarked for their habitation. There were vast areas of cultivable lands. Those lands would be distributed among the refugees. Initially the Government itself would bear the expenditure of their livelihood and a committee was instituted for the purpose.<sup>70</sup> It was decided that 83 families would soon be deported to Andaman Islands. People of business communities and ordinary general public were selected to be sent to Andaman Islands. In the meantime 350 families were sent to Andaman. Many applied for Andamans but a few were allowed to go. Out of 350 families only 20 families expressed their unwillingness to return.<sup>71</sup>

Innumerable uprooted persons with a view to searching refuge in the territory of West Bengal rushed towards the state in thousands uninterrupted. Punjab in the western boundary witnessed and experienced the same eventualities like their counterparts of East Pakistan. During the war of liberation, Bengali Muslims of Eastern Pakistan, by the pressure of adverse circumstances had to come over to India as refugees or shelter seekers. After the attainments of independence most of the Bangladeshi evacuees returned back to their newly created Bangladesh. It was noticed with bewilderment that the population specially the Hindus who migrated from Eastern Pakistan to West Bengal during war of Bangladesh independence almost remained unattended and uncared by the Government of West Bengal. The Government of India also remained inactive, passive and disinterested of the massive exodus. The former chief ministers of West Bengal Dr. Prafulla Ghosh and Dr. Bidhan Roy apprised the Government of India relating to the pathetic conditions of East Pakistan refugees. But the Government of India lent deaf ears to their appeals.

The left parties of West Bengal took a pioneering role in minimizing the sufferings of the refugee populations. In the mean while the Government of India without making any discussions with the different political parties decided to send the migrated Hindu refugees to Dandakaranya of Madhya Pradesh. On the eve of creation of Bangladesh due to the relentless flow of Hindu migrants the West Bengal Government finding no other means decided to shift them towards Assam, Tripura and Meghalaya state. They were sheltered in different refugee camps of the aforesaid states. The Government of India extended their hand of cooperation by supplying daily essential commodities, food and medicines free of cost to ameliorate their distress.<sup>72</sup> The India Government also decided to send the 'excess' refugees outside West Bengal to places like Dandakaranya of Madhya Pradesh and the Andaman & Nicobar Islands. Number, approximately more than one lack displaced individuals of Bangladesh being denied of securing homesteads in West Bengal territory were compelled to move towards Dandakaranya of Madhyapradesh. They had to move towards Dandyakaranya according to the sweet will of the Indian Government. The greatest hardship was faced by those who were transported to the places outside West Bengal. Those uprooted came to West Bengal again were transported from Bengal.

It was decided at the executive level that the refugees belonging to the so called lower castes like Namasudras, Kshatriyas, Pundra Kshatriyas were compelled to go to Dandakaranya as they took shelter in the refugee camps receiving doles from the Government. According to Prafulla Chakraborty “the agriculturist, petty traders and craftsman in government relief camps who were under sentence of deportation to Dandakaranya”.<sup>73</sup> However, the refugees were reluctant to go to the dry, ‘alien land’ of Dandakaranya. The Government, finding no other alternatives stopped their doles temporarily. When the refugees were again forced to push back to Dandakaranya by the Government, the refugees unitedly made demonstration and revolt. They launched massive civil disobedience movement in the Gandhian way and as a consequence more than 30,000 camp refugees were arrested. Though the movement was short lived, still it left a major imprint on the psyche of the refugees. It helped them to come out of their shell. The refugees who were deported to Dandakaranya or Andaman had to face more hostile environment in comparison to that place where they were before.

Shaibal Kumar Gupta, the Chairman of Dandakaranya project assumed the charge of the project in 1963 opined that in the year 1959 for the first time refugee rehabilitation programme was executed in three villages of Pharasgaon. Till the year 1964 the number of old refugee families comprised 7500. Among them 7261 families were rehabilitated in agricultural land.<sup>74</sup> Dandakaranya the Mana transit camp was the biggest one. It was constructed long before. Under the Mana transit camp there were many other camps like Mana, Manabhata, Kendri, Kurud and Naogaon camps. Except Mana the other camps were set up after coming of the refugees from East Pakistan in 1970. All those camps lacked minimum needs of life. The male inmates of the camp were engaged for the building of villages, construction of roads, reclamation of jungle areas etc.<sup>75</sup> Virtually up to 1954 the number of refugees in camps of West Bengal rose to 5,57,544 and after that it was beyond the capacity of the camps to accommodate the refugees any more.<sup>76</sup> Even after that the clandestine flow of refugees from East Pakistan continued unabated. ‘Dandakaranya project’ was meant for the rehabilitation of the peasant class from East Pakistan. The surplus displaced person from Eastern Pakistan were booked for Dandakaranya for their rehabilitation. The uncongenial atmosphere, unhygienic surroundings, scarcity of cultivable land, acute scarcity of drinking water, non cooperation of the local public, inadequate supply of food, non availability of the food for the infants were the main problems that they had to face

for years together. Amidst various problems the inmates of the camps had to face the deaths of their near and dear ones following mal-nutrition, lack of medical treatment, scarcity of medicines and acute monetary stringency. It was reported heaps of dead bodies were kept in a big field for mass cremation.<sup>77</sup>

To minimize the long standing grievances of the camp dwellers in Dandakaranya a committee was formed in 1973 known as ‘Udvastu Unnyanshil Samiti’ under the initiative of Satish Mandal and Rangalal Goldar. Under their leadership the camp refugees were united to voice their demands.<sup>78</sup> They decided to go back to West Bengal. The inmates of Naogaon camp first proceeded towards West Bengal and they were intercepted at Kharagpur railway station by the police and were forcefully deported to Taota project of Madhya Pradesh. Following the incidence 144 was enforced in camps of Dandakaranya. Police patrol was intensified and red alert was sounded in the camps.<sup>79</sup> The refugees became the victims of frequent changes of station without the fault of their own. Apart from the aforesaid camps there were other places in Madhyapradesh viz. parulkot and Jamri of Bastar district where refugees were rehabilitated. Beside Madhya Pradesh Orissa was also a recipient of refugees. In Koraput district there were three zones viz. Umakot zone, Raigarh Zone and Malkangiri zone for the rehabilitation of refugees.<sup>80</sup> 24 villages of Umakot and other 24 villages of Raigarh were set up. In Umrakot 1240 refugee families were provided where as in Raigarh 2546 families were also accommodated.<sup>81</sup>

### **Marichjhapi operation:**

The noted poet Subhas Mukhopadhyay opined that there were the children of cow dung collectors, where they went they were treated harshly, the doors where they used to go were treated ruthlessly. The real pictures of those displaced persons were just like the cow dung collectors. In 1977 when the Left Front Government under the leadership of Jyoti Basu came to power, the settlers of Dandakaranya saw the ray of new hope and dream to settle in West Bengal. The displaced persons unanimously decided to go to ‘Morichjhapi’ of the Sundarbans. Before their departure towards Sundarban’s Morichjhapi some refugees were settled in some areas of Orissa, some parts of Maharashtra and some parts of Andhra Pradesh. The refugee centre ‘Morichjhapi’ was established in Dandakaranya. The slogan ‘Sundarban cholo’

became the slogan of protest of the refugees. A prominent refugee leader Shri Satish Mondal enrolled himself to be the leader of Sundarban movement. The 'Bharat Sebashram Sangha', a philanthropic organization, came out with their helping hands. No arrangements for the distribution of relief materials to the refugee victims were made by the Government of West Bengal. The above said reports were available from the reporters of different journals of that period.

The refugee migrants entered and occupied without any resistance in the areas viz. Bagna, Kumirmari etc. It is worth to be noted here that the minister of that period Radhika Banerjee conveyed the message to the Central Government to grant Rs. 50 lacks for helping the refugees. The total number of refugees at Hasnabad was 11,106. The refugee population of Chor Hasnabad was 16,929 and at Kumirmari and Bagna was 5000. Defying 144 a strong crowd of 6000 refugees crossed the Ichhamoti river and took shelter at Hasnabad. The next day the local administration imposed 144 and debarred the refugees from entering Hasnabad. Consequently in the presence of ministers, District Magistrates, superintendant of Police, 30 additional superintendants of Police, and few companies of reserve Police were deployed but the turbulent crowd bravely encountered the challenge and they began to construct dwelling houses with bamboo structures. They spread oil papers over their roofs and began to live.<sup>82</sup> The then Chief Secretary of West Bengal Mr. Amiya Kumar Sen expressed his view in regard to the refugees of East Pakistan before the reporters that "I am looking in to the situation, I am watching where the refugees want to settle then I shall take step. The State Government does not want bloodshed in this matter". The Chief Secretary in his interview with the news papers reporters that 1200 refugees had taken temporary shelter on the Burdwan railway station, they did not seek any assistance from the Government. At least 500 refugees reached to the Shealdah station but they flatly expressed their denial to be shifted to any other refugee relief camp. During this period 50 individuals swam across the river and their destination was Bagna locality.<sup>83</sup>

The Morichjhapi operation was completed, the police administration of West Bengal claimed the operation as a complete and successful operation which would have never been possible by the military operation of India. The ill fated innocent people of East Pakistan, on the plea of seeking refuge at Morichjhapi were immediately arrested by the police and transported to other refugee camps through launches. The victims were

considered as the thieves, dacoits and criminals so they were mercilessly treated and inhumanly tortured by the police authorities. The Government planned to transport the refugees forcibly to Dandakaranya again. According to Atal Behari Bajpayi that in each and every day at least two thousands uprooted persons crossed the border braving the red eye of the police.

It is a matter of great disgrace and humiliation that following the apathy of both State and Central Government the innocent refugee victims became the puppets in the hands of the government. They were forced to move from one corner to other corners of India like shuttle cocks. The successive denial of settlement of the uprooted persons particularly in the Andaman Islands, Dandakaranya and Marichjhapi the problem mounted gradually. Now the most vital questions arises who was responsible for this catastrophe? But the question remained unanswered and it will remain unanswered to the generations to come. Since the very inception of Bangladesh in 1971 India had to confront with copious diplomatic problems, economic problems, social and ethnic problems consecutively. So, creation of Bangladesh had a tremendous impact upon India. India took a pioneering role of a saviour of Bengalis of East Bengal from the grip of brutal military administration of Pakistan under the inspiring leadership of Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India. Only for her active initiative Bangladesh was created and got international recognition as an independent state.

During the period of struggle for the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971, sizable residents who fled to India remained in Indian soil. About 10 million escaped from Bangladesh to India but after the war majority of the migrants returned back to their original residence. At the same time a good number of migrants remained permanently in West Bengal, Assam, Tripura and other North Eastern States.<sup>84</sup> In a report it was stated that the estimated 15 to 20 million illegal migrants, approximately eight to ten million have settled in West Bengal, six to eight million in Assam and the rest in Tripura and North Eastern States and other major cities as Delhi, Mumbai and Ahmedabad. In 1971 the concentration of Bangladeshi migrants had totally altered the demographic scenario of the border districts of Assam and West Bengal. The chief Minister of West Bengal had once said 'Bangladesh is a threat to India'. In Lok Sabha Shri Dinesh Singh highlighted the fact that the Indian Government had already got 7 million refugees till July, 1971 and there was a possibility of having five million

refugees from East Pakistan. He suggested that a well thought plan should be implemented for resisting that incessant flow.<sup>85</sup>

The then Governor of West Bengal Gopal Krishna Gandhi once uttered that the illegal immigration was 'a time bomb'. Sensing the alarming affairs of India and specially the West Bengal Bibal Pramanik said that not only the intruders but also unplanned parenthood of the Muslims, there would be explosion of children by 2018. Muslim population in West Bengal would be accelerated by 33,17 percent. So the creation of Bangladesh was a great challenge to India. An Italian writer and diplomat Niccolo Machiavelli said during sixteenth century that sending immigrants was the most effective way to colonized countries because it was less offensive than to send military expeditions and much less expensive.

The creation of Bangladesh was an epoch making event in the historical ambit of the world. With the creation of the new independent state the whole political complexion of South East Asia changed radically. Within a span of few decades partitioned India witnessed the creation of a new state amid bloodshed, horrible carnage and inhuman atrocities of the Pak militants upon the common mass, armless inhabitants and helpless individuals of the eastern Pakistan. Misfortunes were the shadow companion of the East Pakistan people. On 15<sup>th</sup> August, 1947 and on 14<sup>th</sup> August 1947, two independent states viz. India and Pakistan were born. At about two crores of people rendered homeless. It was unquestionably the biggest human convulsion. The Pakistani citizens considered themselves superior to their counterparts of East Pakistan. In 1948, the father of Pakistan nation and the Governor General of Pakistan Md. Ali Jinnah attended a meeting at Curzon Hall of Dacca University on the occasion of annual convocation boldly announced that 'Urdu' would be the state language of Pakistan. The very announcement had a tremendous impact upon the common people of East Pakistan and student's community in particular. They shouted the slogan demanding 'Bengali' to be declared as the state language of Pakistan instead of 'Urdu' as announced by Jinnah. As a protest the students and the other young people to voice their demands assembled on 21<sup>st</sup> February, 1952 to disperse the irate mob. The Pak militants fired indiscriminately and killed in gruesome manner the promising youths like Barkat, Soleman, Rafik, Jabbar, Safik etc. They became martyrs for the cause of motherland and mother language. The most dominant feature of the movement was the spirit of nationalism, love towards motherland, patriotism,

upholding the dignity of mother language acted as the guiding principles of the movement. The question continuously strikes us that what was the outcome of that long struggle? Those who roamed from one corner of India to other aimlessly and became puppets in the hands of the Governments, what did they achieve? Peace, certainty and happiness? All the questions remained unanswered for decades together.

It was reported in a news paper named Janamat that evacuees from East Pakistan moved towards India through the borders of Malda, West Dinajpur and Cooch Behar during 1970s. With the large number of refugees some spies of Pakistan also availed the golden opportunity of entering into Indian Territory. From confession of some arrested agents an indication of imminent communal riot in West Bengal was evident. From the version of some refugees who migrated to Islampur from the northern districts of East Pakistan it was clear that there was a possibility of communal disturbances in Pakistan and eventually there was a possibility of torture upon the Hindu minorities. Perhaps the prime reason behind the mass exodus from Pakistan.<sup>86</sup>

#### Notes:

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3. Jahangir Alam Jahan, *Mukti Yudhdhher Itihas*, p.66.
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18. Sandip Bandopadhyay, “Millions Seeking Refuge: The Refugee Question in West Bengal: 1971”, in Pradip Kumar Bose (ed.), *Refugees In West Bengal : Institutional Processes and Contested Identities*,p.34.
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20. Hianmoy Bandopadhyay, *Udvastu*, Calcutta: Sahitya Samsad,1970,p.94.
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47. *Janamat*, May17, 1971
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49. *Janamat*, June 14, 1971.
50. *Janamat*, June 21, 1971
51. *Janamat*, August 16, 1971
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