CHAPTER V

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

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

When we talk of class in the Indian context what really distinguishes our case from the others is a certain overlap between categories of caste and class as forms of social inequality. However, here we make an attempt to focus exclusively on aspects of class that influenced the social life of Hindu Punjabi refugees in Delhi, which involves their relocation, resettlement and rehabilitation.
The aspect that assumes utmost importance is how the class structure crystallized among the refugees after partition. Further, we explore how the class factor influenced the social life of these refugees once they were relocated in Delhi. Thus this chapter tries to look at how class influenced an entire gamut of issues concerning the social life of the people ranging from their movement across the border, relocation in Delhi and further their resettlement and rehabilitation processes thereafter. Here, it is essential to highlight whether or not class structure that existed prior to partition among the people replicated within the new settings.

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

**INFORMANTS' PERCEPTION OF CLASS STRUCTURE**

Informants in general classified class structure as comprising of three different layers – upper, middle and lower class. The general trend was that the informants (56%) placed themselves in the middle class category. In fact some even used the term ‘upper middle class’ to describe their class position in the two localities classified as an affluent and middle class one in this work. Those in the slum locality invariably placed themselves in the lower class category. However, informants did recognize the sub-division of these class categories further.
Informants from different class groups perceive of the social class structure in different ways (see table V.1). Among the lower class informants, sixty-eight percent perceive of only two social classes, that is, one of the rich and the other of the poor; while sixteen percent perceive of three social classes – poor, middle and rich. About sixty-seven percent of the middle class informants perceive of a three-class structure comprising of the upper, middle and the lower class. Twenty-five percent of the informants from the middle class category perceive of a four-class structure whereby, they further segregate the middle class group into two: the upper middle class and the lower middle class. Eight percent of the informants pointed out that there were more than four classes and that the lower class could be further segregated into many other categories based on other factors such as occupational status etc.

The upper class informants perceive of the class structure in a varied way than the informants from the other two class groups. Forty-two percent of the informants from the upper class category pointed out that there are no social classes and that all are equal. Thus they try to present an idealistic picture of society.
Table V.I. INFORMANTS’ PERCEPTION OF THE NUMBER OF SOCIAL CLASSES

- **Lower Class**
  - 68% perceive of two classes
  - 16% perceive of three classes
  - 16% have no opinion on number of classes

- **Middle Class**
  - 67% perceive of three classes
  - 25% perceive of four classes
  - 8% perceive of more than four classes

- **Upper Class**
  - 42% perceive of no classes
  - 36% perceive of two classes
  - 22% perceive of numerous classes based on saving spending and lifestyle patterns
Their view is based on what a society should be like rather than what it is now. In the words of informant UUFU 10:

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

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

Thus the informants described the class structure in varied ways. When questioned on the aspect of how they came to formulate their opinion on the number of classes that exist in society, they responded that for this they relied on the fact of existence or non-existence of certain traits/characteristics among members of different social classes. At times, the informants perceived of social classes in terms of a single trait, at other
times, they perceived social classes in terms of a complex of traits. Broadly stated, four criteria/traits have been pointed out by the informants in perceiving social classes. These are that of income and property, occupation, education and lifestyle. Finally, it is also important to point out that informants relate social class to certain psychological factors that make up the attitudes of individuals and families which is related to all the above mentioned four factors.

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

Further, the interrelationship of these aspects is brought out by the fact that the level of income immediately places individuals and families into certain categories which determine other factors such as occupation
they are pursuing, their educational level, their pattern of lifestyle and their mindset and thought processes. Thus in order to study the class dimension among the Hindu Punjabi refugees it is required that one adopts a holistic approach rather than exclusively focusing on any one aspect of class. It is therefore necessary to focus on the background of the informants with respect to these four aspects to bring out the class structure among the Hindu Punjabi refugees in Delhi.

SITUATING THE INFORMANTS IN CLASS STRUCTURE

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

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

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

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Upper Class</th>
<th>Middle Class</th>
<th>Lower Class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional/Technical</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Graduate</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Secondary/Matric</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary/Middle</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-primary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illiterate</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

G-I  Generation 1     G-II Generation 2     G-III Generation 3
Figure V.1 Education Level of Persons according to Class Group

Upper Class

Middle Class

Lower Class

Legend:
- G1 - Generation I
- G2 - Generation II (Informants)
- G3 - Generation III
- I - Illiterate
- PP - Pre-primary
- P - Primary
- S - Secondary
- HS - Higher Secondary
- I2 - Intermediate
- G - Graduate
- PG - Post Graduate
- P/T - Professional/Technical
Table V.3 Classification of Persons according to Occupation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Upper Class</th>
<th>Middle Class</th>
<th>Lower Class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional/Academician</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Officer</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Officer</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Businessman</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer/Landlord</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worker</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Menial Worker</td>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unspecified (including housewives)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

G-I Generation 1  G-II Generation 2  G-III Generation 3
Figure V.2 Occupation of Persons according to Class Group

Upper Class

Middle Class

Lower Class

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

G1 - Generation I
G2 - Generation II (Informants)
G3 - Generation III
From table V.3 it is clear that in the informants generation from the upper class there are a large percentage (48%) officers. They are also highly educated as seen from table V.2 In fact, over the generations among the upper class there has been a considerable shift (44%) to professional/academic occupations. The middle class pursue business activities of a medium scale and in their case the change from the informants' generation to the following one has been from officers to businessmen. A majority (80%) of the lower class informants are into cleaning and sweeping jobs. For the lower class individuals there has not been a change in their own status due to the congruence of lower caste and class categories.

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

From table V.2 it is clear that the upper class informants have higher levels of education, while the middle class informants are scattered
throughout the different educational ladder and the lower class informants have the lowest educational level.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Associated with urban living patterns (for a majority of the refugees settled in Delhi came from urban areas) and their class position, the factors such as a good educational background which was helpful for them to be
well-informed, their contacts at high levels, that is in other words the 'social capital' especially in terms of social network that they possessed, better organizational skills etc. which were an outcome of the fact of belonging to certain classes made them plan and execute the plans regarding movement and settlement in a better manner.

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

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

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

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

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

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

She agreed that good care was taken of her. However, if one tries to analyze this aspect one finds that the family when in Pakistan was able to take care of their relatives only because of it belonging to a rich strata. Once this family was in India their previous privileged position in the class structure was facilitating to ensure them a good treatment and care when they were in need.
The economic position of informants was not only helpful in ensuring that they could re-establish themselves economically, but had also ensured that they were safely moved from Pakistan to India. It was because of contacts at the higher level that some of the people from the higher classes were escorted by the military to reach India safely. Alternatively, they had the means to afford airfare to come to India quickly and safely. Informant MMMB 17 pointed out that:

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

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

Thus here one finds that the legacy of belonging to a rich family in Pakistan was advantageous to many in the new context. However, in actuality the material condition of these families was not the same once they were in India. Yet such families have achieved a lot and their class position has substantially improved from what it was when they first arrived in India. In contrast, many of the low caste individuals and families
have remained in the low class categories after their arrival here. Finally, there are also instances of individuals and families who have experienced only moderate downward mobility from a situation of high class to middle class. Thus one finds that there are diverse experiences and not a single type of experience in the process of resettlement.

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

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

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

These refugees were enterprising people who worked hard to achieve success and made situations and opportunities turn in their favor. Thus success was partly on account of the psychological make-up of these refugee individuals and families. In fact, psychological make-up of individuals, attitudes and patterns of behaviour are related to one's socialization patterns and are governed by social conditions. In this
context, therefore even class as a system of stratification had its impact on this aspect of individuals and families. These ingrained patterns of behavior were carried to the new contexts and were used in making their resettlement process easier.

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

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

For most of the refugees, 'economic capital' in terms of wealth and money was no longer there. However skills, education, social network, political connections and techniques of social impression management of certain classes of refugees were carried on in the new contexts and these played a vital role in the process of their resettlement in the new areas.
In some cases there may have been congruence in terms of these three different types of capital – economic, cultural and social. There could be a 'composition' between these aspects so that those who have one type of capital also possess another type of capital. There can also be situations where 'decomposition' has taken place. In rapid large-scale migration such as partition, such a 'composition' in terms of different aspects gave way to the aspect of decomposition (Wesolowski 1979:115) so that those with high levels of education found themselves with low level of income and certain other inverse relations between different aspects. In such a situation, individuals and families strive for 'composition', which could only be achieved gradually over a long period of time.

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

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

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

Class in the context of measures for rehabilitation

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

Rehabilitation involved measures for the proper settlement of the refugees in the new areas of habitation so that gradually over a period of time they could be at par and in a similar condition as the local population. This was necessary to ensure that they like the others had an equal opportunity and similarity of conditions in order to compete in a healthy manner to ensure their prosperity.
Therefore, the Government of India started a number of programmes for rehabilitation of the refugees, a mention of which has been made in chapter III. It is important to analyze here the extent to which these measures helped the refugees to re-establish themselves in their new habitat. Further, it is necessary to explore who benefited and in what context did they benefit from these programmes.

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

The government extended its compensation programme extensively to the owners of immovable property. Under this system all those who had immovable property left in Pakistan, could file applications for compensation. However, full compensation could not be paid because there was a vast disparity between the property left behind by the non-Muslims in the Pakistan Punjab and what could be provided for in Delhi. Thus, a system of 'graded cuts' was introduced by which smaller claimants were ensured larger compensation (Rai 1986:148) and vice-versa. This therefore was an important measure for it ensured that those who had property in Pakistan were compensated for the same at a lower rate. This was also a
measure to ensure that there was not a wide disparity between the property given as compensation to refugees irrespective of the size of their property in Pakistan Punjab. Through this measure the government tried to ensure that refugees could resettle easily in the new areas. As pointed out earlier, there were a number of colonies in Delhi (see table III.1) where land was allotted to the refugees at concessional rates under the scheme of compensation.

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

The area of the plot of land on which one lives, is a mark of social status and is generally invoked by people to ascertain class position. In fact, in the context of our study it is an important determinant of one's social status. The above-mentioned factor, along with the locality in which one resides immediately places individuals in certain class categories. This can be related to Marx's emphasis on ownership or non-ownership of property.
Therefore, one can say that the government measure of compensation for rehabilitating refugees was to ensure that the settlement of the refugees could be done in a manner that did not disturb the old social order. The allotment of property was based on the size of property held by the informants in Pakistan. However as full compensation could not be paid and because of the fact that the government devised a compensation plan which tried to ensure a more equitable distribution to all, the total replication of the old class structure could not be ensured. However, this to a certain extent worked towards the replication of the old class structure as only those who had property in Pakistan could claim for property in India. But this does point to the interrelationship between the previous class position of refugees and the compensation measures adopted by the government.

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

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

This informant from an upper class background found it below his dignity to live in a refugee camp. This kind of feeling was seen to be prevalent among a large number of upper class informants. The comment by informant UUFB 20 confirms this:
We did not want any help from anyone. We wanted to be self-reliant. After all we could not have lost our honor. We had lived all along due to our own efforts, so there was no reason now to seek help from someone. We did not want to be like beggars.

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

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

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

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

That is, once in India the replication of a similar kind of class structure could not take place as new ways of conceptualizing class have developed. This was also due to the fact that many were confined to certain traditional occupations while in Pakistan. But once in the changed context the refugees took up new occupations, they attempted to explore fresh options. Furthermore, refugees were greatly attracted to education. Thus
today it is important to emphasize that it is not an improvement or deterioration in terms of earlier lifestyle, rather what we find is a changed lifestyle.

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

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

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

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

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

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

It is important to note here the aspect of marriage alliances where class is openly seen to be a dominant factor. This aspect has to be analyzed in terms of a comparison with respect to two factors. First, the aspect of caste and second, the aspect of class. As pointed out in chapter IV though caste is still a dominant factor for fixing marriage alliances, certain new dimensions have emerged in the interrelationship between caste and class identity with respect to fixing up of marriage alliances. It has to be
admitted that as far as the upper three varna groups are concerned, there is relaxed attitude as intermarriages between the members of these groups is becoming more and more prevalent. This is not the case where the Shudra or Untouchable groups are involved.

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

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

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

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

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

Here it is important to mention that while comparing the class factor when in Pakistan and now in India about seventy-two percent of the
informants have maintained that there is a change in terms of the mindset of people with regard to the class factor. Lifestyle in terms of access to latest goods, membership of social clubs and associations, education, occupation, residential areas etc. have now gained significance to view the status of individuals and families in comparison to the more formally ascriptive dimensions such as the caste identity.

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

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

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

*We came to Delhi where my maternal uncle and his family were staying. There were also a number of their other relatives staying with them. Though in the beginning they were very helpful, over a period of time we got the impression that we were being perceived by them as a burden, so we decided to shift out. But from then on, our relationship*
could never be the same again. Therefore a relationship that had been nurtured with love for so many years, changed overnight.

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

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

In a similar experience informant MMO 14 pointed out that:

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

Thus, one finds that people had bitter experiences to narrate about how class or economic dimension can change kin relationships. In this connection it would be interesting to narrate the experience of another informant whose own brother could not stomach his success and therefore
discouraged him from leading a better lifestyle. Informant MUMB 16 recalled his experience thus:

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

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

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

As informant MUMP 2 noted that:
Businessmen spend differently and live differently. There is no comparison. For most businessmen education is not important. Their children know from the beginning that they have to inherit the family business, so for them struggle to stand on their feet is not there, which is unlike the case of a professional's son.

Informant MMFP 11 is of the view that:

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

Informant MMBB 12 pointed out that:

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

Informant UUFB 20 asked the researcher:

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

Informant UMMB 24 is of the view:

I could not study as I never had any interest in it. But now I am making my children study hard. I want them to become big officers rather than a shopkeeper like me. There is no fun in doing this work.
Thus the kind of occupation one is pursuing to a large extent determines the kind of mindset and attitude one has. It is an indicator and a resultant of the style and standard of living that people maintain and the things to which they attach importance.

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

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

This greater emphasis on consumerist culture by refugees is often viewed by the local residents of Delhi as an attempt by the Punjabis to establish their superiority by ‘showing off’ their material success through indulging in uninhibited conspicuous consumption.
Table V.4  Informants' Grading of Occupations according to Material Benefit and Social Prestige

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<tr>
<th>Grading according to material benefit</th>
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<td><strong>Rank</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Business Men</td>
<td>1 Professionals/Technicians/Academicians</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Professionals/Technicians/Academicians</td>
<td>2 Officer level workers</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 Officer level workers</td>
<td>3 Business Man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Middle level workers</td>
<td>4 Middle level workers</td>
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<td>5 Workers</td>
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Thus the consumption of goods has served not so much to satisfy true needs or to provide what Veblen chooses to call the 'fullness of life', as to maintain social prestige-status (Kellner 1989:148). This further suggests that consumer culture is gaining considerable importance among the families of Hindu Punjabi refugees. The informants often conceive this aspect of their saving-spending pattern as a matter of enjoying life and a means to be happy.

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

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

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

**IS CLASS AN EGALITARIAN SYSTEM?**

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

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

*India is a democratic country. There are opportunities for all. Government does not stop anyone. The mindset of the people is also changing as there is an increasing degree of importance attached to education. We are moving towards a globalized era where there are a variety of job opportunities for individuals. With the opening up of education and job opportunities the possibility of change in the class system is there, making the system a fluid one.*
Similarly Informant MMFN 18 is of the opinion that:

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

Informant UUMO 4 expressed his opinion differently:

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

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

*You should know how to earn money. There is a knack to do that. You have to work hard, have ideas, then anyone can earn money. Look at us, we were not rich, we were middle class people but had the desire to work. You have to work hard to achieve things. Of course, God has been kind enough because if God does not help then all hardwork can also go waste. But if God wants, everything is possible.*
In the opinion of some other informants also, class stratification provides an example of a flexible system as it is an achievement-oriented device of stratifying individuals and families.

Finally informants articulated another view in the following ways.

Informant LLMW 15 pointed out that:

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

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

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

Similarly MMFO 6 pointed out that:

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

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

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

Finally, it is important to point out that in reality class has been a rigid system for some and at the same time been a flexible system for some others. It did provide ample opportunities for a number of people to move up as well as down in the social ladder. Therefore, as the earlier class
position was significant in the new context, class could not have provided an equal opportunity for all. However, the new situation did offer scope for some people to move up irrespective of their class origin. But the situation turned into a complicated one because there was an overlap between lower caste and lower class. This is mainly so because there is an interrelationship between the different dimensions of stratification.

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

Studies by Bauman (1982), Clark and Lipset (1991) among others suggest that 'class' is no longer a significant sociological concept. But they agree that there is substantial evidence to show that strata (within class) are very much an important phenomenon and differences between various strata are emerging along consumption and lifestyle patterns. Therefore, the total negation of the sociological significance and the role of class seems to be a false notion. Perhaps what is required is new ways of conceptualization, theorizing and understanding the class dimension. Class has to be understood with regard to consumption and lifestyle patterns, as consumption processes are becoming more important than the production processes in shaping social identities and explaining social behaviour (Crompton1996:113).

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

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

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

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

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