A study of refugee migration and adjustment in India provides insights into the processes and consequences of mass dislocation. The continuities and discontinuities outlined suggest that transformations did not occur uniformly, and while, expectedly, some groups won and the others lost during periods of intensified, enforced social change, the pattern was much complex. The presence of a large number of refugees forced the society to restructure itself. Linguistically, culturally, climatically and economically, there was little difference between the East Punjab and West Punjab. Thus, for a vast majority of the refugees, the psychological trauma of displacement was cushioned because new homes were available within a familiar environment. Moreover, the Punjabi refugees never had to experience the sense of alienation, which confronted most refugees since they were not regarded as aliens. Some resentment did arise among the indigenous population, but the issues were economic rather than cultural, and the right of the refugees to be in India was unquestioned.

The establishment of migrant communities was common in most modern cities, especially Delhi. Once several persons from a village or a city went to an area, it was not unusual for them to be joined by family members. This practice had been well-documented throughout the world and it accounts for the existence of many homogenous migrant communities. For this reason, migration can be viewed as a self-sustaining process which creates its own momentum. Once it becomes known that a migrant community exists in a city, other persons sharing a similar background will consider going to the same place.

Delhi inherited refugees from virtually every region of the sub-continent. A number of factors explain why Hindu refugee group was

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2 Ibid.
represented in Delhi in significant numbers. A large number came in as it was the capital of India. There were government officials and military personnel who "opted" for India when offered the option several months before the partition. Propinquity was a significant factor as well. For others, preconceived notions of cultural compatibility influenced their locational decision. Many resettled here because they were city dwellers and did not possess the skills to become agriculturalists. Others simply drifted to Delhi in the absence of alternatives. It was never easy for refugees to relocate in rural areas without direct intervention on their behalf by the host society. Indigenous power structures organized around land rights and obligations tended to coalesce to prevent outsiders from settling in large numbers to alter established relationships. Cities offered less hostility to resettlement because the association between land and political power was unimportant. It would not be surprising to discover that refugees benefited most from the Muslim exodus. Educated locals already possessed desirable jobs and the uneducated were ill-equipped to compete for upper income positions. Moreover, a large percentage of refugees came from urban jobs similar to those vacated by the Muslims. The fact that a large percentage of the refugees who had lived in large cities before coming to Delhi facilitated their economic growth.

Relying upon cooperative societies to develop housing for the refugees had resulted in specific social consequences. A significant percentage of India's population resided in ethnically homogenous units. Most cities grew, gradually, by attracting migrants. As a process, migration was demographically and spatially selective. Certain categories of persons tended to migrate while others did not.

The impact of selectivity on cities was great, for a migrant typically knew something about his destination before he arrived. Frequently, a person from his native village (often a relative) who had preceded him served as an intermediary. A migrant, therefore, did not enter the city in a vacuum, he probably knew in advance where he would relocate. It was likely that because
of the intermediary, he would reside in a homogenous cluster. Thus, urban growth through migration tended to be neighbourhood selective. These clusters formed the distinguishable ethnic wards of larger cities, with the result that migration, selectively, had definite structural consequences for a city.

There had been many forced movements in the history of mankind, but they were mostly due to wars or tyranny. They were caused by a number of factors; either they tried to escape religious and political persecution or it was the memory of persecution and extermination and the fear of their recurrence which drove them away from their homes. Even forced transfer and exchange of ethnic groups is recorded in history. There are countries where a mass of humanity has been deported for forced labour or even exterminated. At times, war had resulted in exchange of population as a repatriation movement. But in the case of refugees from Pakistan, it was a different movement. Invariably, a forced movement of population results in loss of citizenship to the refugees. But in the case of the refugees from West Punjab, there was no question of granting them new nationality. When men and women from Pakistan sought refuge, they were met neither with hostility, nor coolness or reserve. They were hailed as co-religionists, compatriots re-entering the fold. They were integrated at once in the country of their refuge. Their integration was almost instantaneous and complete. A refugee may be defined as a person who would not like to migrate from his homeland but for reasons beyond his control—political, religious or economic, that might have rendered his life unbearable and unlivable. Thus, for all intents and purposes, the migrants from the Western Punjab were refugees. Under the U.P. Refugee Registration and Movement Act, 1947, a refugee was defined as a person who had migrated into the state in consequences of communal disturbances from the area which now constituted Pakistan.

Ibid., p. 3.
The care of this uprooted mass of humanity constituted a major problem. The refugees were frightened, frustrated, dislocated and confused; with no ideas of the future. They had lost all they had and had been cut off from their own family members without knowledge of what had become of them. Added to this was a new type of frustration they had to face. Refugees everywhere in the world have found, at first, a warm response from those among whom they are placed, but with the lapse of time, they develop a feeling that they are not really getting what they had counted upon; their sufferings have not been properly appreciated; and that they are, generally, misunderstood. In the case of the refugees from West Pakistan, another complex had developed. Their sudden uprooting from their homes due to political reasons led them to believe that the Republic of India was the direct outcome of the immense sacrifices made by them in their homeland. Hence, they could, legitimately, expect more consideration from the local population. This led to the development of more aggressive attitudes among them. In terms of interpersonal relationship, it was a question of who lost more or who lost less in the struggle for freedom.

The minds of the refugees when they came to India, were highly agitated, even dazed, to a certain extent. Their nerves were so “jumpy” that any minor or insignificant incident was enough to create panic and disorder. But things gradually began to settle down. When they started realizing that this state of life was only a temporary phase and they had to plan for a future based on their present environment, their actual resettlement began. The process implied “a pushing of new roots and an acceptance and nourishing of these roots by the new environment.”

The displaced persons suffered a considerable amount of deprivation insecurity and uncertainty which, ultimately, reached compelling proportions. In the beginning, it was natural for them to be touchy and in some respects even hostile but their pessimism was remarkably little. Though their difficulties were great and their grievances real yet there was an attitude of
optimism. All that they needed at that time was substantial and judicious help in defining a new goal and working towards it, which could create confidence in them. But more vital to their rehabilitation was their mental adjustment to the new environment. They did not permit themselves to be overcome by feelings of frustration and resignation. If any proof is needed, not even a single refugee was found begging. The old refugees, who had actually gone through the harrowing experiences did show same signs of their suffering; but the younger generation, definitely, registered a positive attitude. They had faith in themselves and confidence in their future. There is no evidence of their disintegration.

When these displaced persons came to India, all that they needed was substantial and judicious help, which would create confidence in them. This was a stupendous task and needed concerted effort from governmental and non-governmental agencies. The Central and the State Governments both got busy working on the rehabilitation of the refugees. But the uprooting was so complete that the refugees lost all contact with their homes and they were dependent on the resources available in their new land. Thus, the expectations from the government for helping them were many and of great magnitude. As a result of the gradual assimilation of refugee population, they were now faced with a greater competition with the local population due to which they had found the economic struggle hard. In the absence of any special protection, they were faced with general unemployment as well as economic hardships to which the middle class was exposed and this led to some dissatisfaction, which in turn, gave rise to a healthy rivalry in the course of identification with the local population.

The problem of refugee assimilation in India did not appear to be difficult in the absence of plurality of cultures, there being one culture of the people of West Punjab and East Punjab. The process of assimilation was

\[5\text{ Ibid., p. 6.}\]
facilitated by the consciousness of cultural uniformity and racial affinity. These refugees were of like attitudes, heritage, institutions, traditions and social practices and as such they could easily discard their regional differences, atleast their distinctive elements and merge their interests in the body social. Interactions and accommodations were greater between the homogenous than the heterogeneous groups and through a change in their thought and emotional content, the refugees were effectively and completely assimilated in familiar racial environment.

As a result of the partition, there was a sharp decline in the morals of the people. The serious economic crisis created by the forced migrations provided a climate for immorality. The prevailing lawlessness common in the East and the West Punjabs removed all social restraints and scruples. About fifty thousand women were abducted in both the Punjabs. The violent communal riots, murders and heinous crimes brought the people’s moral to the lowest ebb. The partition caused an upheaval in the social structure. The refugees found themselves aliens in their new surroundings. Though there was not much difference to be found in the cultures, the displaced people were required to spend their lives and develop new relationships which were unfamiliar. This created a feeling of frustration and discontentment among the refugees.

The partition of the Punjab gave a severe blow to the common village traditions. Persons belonging to the same ‘baradari’ were scattered over different villages and towns in the same and even different districts, with the result that social restraint exercised by the baradari was relaxed. People were invariably strangers to their neighbours, because belonging as they did to different places, they had settled at one place. There was much antipathy

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among the refugee settlers in the same village that it sometimes resulted in thefts and abduction of women in the East Punjab.9

The partition of India and the subsequent mass migrations introduced the new element of refugees in the social set up of the country. The mingling of the population led to many new social developments. A large number of the Sikhs and the Hindus from Rawalpindi and Multan Divisions, who were engaged in trade, resettled in the backward towns and villages of the East Punjab and this quickened the pulse of social life.10 The drab bazaars with ill-kept shops were completely changed, yielding place to well-stocked and orderly shops. The refugee shopkeepers greatly increased the circulation of goods even in the villages inhabited by the parsimonious Jats of the Rohtak side.11

The townsmein in the districts of the East Punjab were socially backward and their women kept purdah. The vivacious refugee women, particularly from the Rawalpindi Division, brightened the town life. The free and easy culture of the West Punjab had a liberalizing influence on the women of the East Punjab, who, emulating the example of their sisters from the West Punjab, began to discard the purdah.12 The social space was widened for Punjabi women who migrated to Delhi from Pakistan after Partition. The most important impact on cultural tradition had been on removing the restrictions on inter marriage, on the age at marriage, on purdah, on women’s mobility and on gender division of labour due to economic crisis. In addition, formal education, especially college education, had become an accepted fact for girls and women.13 Careers had become available to some of them but the choice was restricted to feminine jobs, especially teaching. By and large, education had enabled them to step out in the narrow physical sense and had also enlarged the feminine social spaces.

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11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
yet it had not changed the ideological framework or the expectations from education. Education was viewed as an investment for future utility and not to develop their self-worth or for independent training or to break out of the patriarchal mould. Education had been an enabling factor for women in families where other supports were available.

In the context of employment too, the constraints of ideology, underlying seclusion and concern with sexuality permitted these women to work only within the contours of a family. The ideological framework, which emphasised virginity, purdha, early marriage, dowry, son-preference, tended to keep women within the home. Though these women started stepping out but they were unable to disentangle themselves from the ‘traditional feminine role models’. Thus, changes in gender-roles seemed to be survival strategies in response to the reformist movement but also in order to deal with a crisis situation and tackle new opportunities. However, the division between the domestic and the public domains remained.

**Economic Significance:**

The mass migration was as much a surprise to the persons affected as to the Governments themselves as very few among the millions that were affected dreamt before August 1947 that they would have to leave once and for all their land, property, occupation and other means of living. The sadness of partition made all attempts towards a planned exchange of population an impossible task. There had been cases in history where large-scale migrations had taken place on account of various reasons, such as political dissatisfaction, religious persecution, racial hatred and dissatisfaction with the opportunities available for a decent standard of living. But the migrations of displaced people during the partition of India could not be classified under any one of these heads. With the partition, a vast section of people in the contiguous areas of both the countries were filled with fear and threat to their way of life, their property and

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14 Ibid.
their very existence. They felt that the political, religious, cultural and economic relationships and links they had with the neighbouring provinces would no longer be possible. At one stroke, millions in either country found that they had become aliens in the land, where they and their forefathers had earned their livelihood for centuries.

The impact of the net influx of more than 2.5 millions on the limited resources of India meant new difficulties for the newly independent nation. The concentration of refugees in a few urban areas meant overcrowding, heavy, congestion and inevitable fictions. There was a wide disparity in the occupations pursued by the immigrants as against those of the emigrants. The gap that was left by the emigrants could not, therefore, be filled by the immigrants. The standard of life which the refugees had enjoyed in Pakistan, was definitely higher than that which the emigrants were accustomed to in India. The value of property that was left and the earnings of those who came from Pakistan were high, compared with those of the emigrants who left India. The land on which the immigrants were used to farming, had facilities of perennial irrigation. Areas like East Punjab and PEPSU had fewer irrigation facilities. A large number of factories were situated in West Punjab, whereas East Punjab and PEPSU were relatively backward in industrial development. The strong urban bias of those who migrated to India was in contrast with the predominantly rural character of the Muslims who left India. Those who came to India could not be settled until the problem of evacuee property was solved. The economic conditions in India created further difficulties in the way of speedy resettlement. The search for greater economic opportunities had been the motive force behind many migration movements. But the displaced millions of India and Pakistan had little time to weigh the economic advantages and disadvantages of migration. In order to prevent tendencies towards migration in the long run, it was necessary that both the countries should take steps to guarantee the same degree of economic security for the minorities as
for the majority. The declaration of fundamental rights of the minorities, which was incorporated in the Nehru-Liaquat Agreement, was a welcome step in this respect.\textsuperscript{16} The Constitution of India had guaranteed equal rights to all citizens of India, irrespective of caste or community.

While the migrants in the West were more or less balanced, in the East there was a net influx of nearly 3 million displaced persons.\textsuperscript{17} This sudden and unexpected pressure on the already overstrained economic resources of India created enormous difficulties for the provision of food, clothing, and housing for these people.\textsuperscript{18} India was left with inferior land after the partition. In consequence, the pressure of population on the limited food resources of the country had been increased. The same effect was brought about in the East by the net influx of more than three million persons without any corresponding increase in food production. Along with the problem of provision for food, was the problem of providing adequate housing facilities to the displaced persons. The houses that were left particularly in India, by the emigrants were crude as compared with what the immigrants left in West Pakistan. The mass frenzy that preceded and followed the partition also resulted in the destruction of some valuable property. The large amount of relief expenditure that had to be provided in order to meet the minimum needs of displaced persons had an inflationary effect on the price level of some commodities, as the rate of increase in production was not commensurate with the sudden increase in demand. Some among those who were fortunate to migrate to India with their wealth intact, bought houses and business concerns by paying fancy prices.

The occupations of a large number of displaced persons, who came over from Pakistan, were different from those of the Muslims who left India. The following table gives the occupations of West Pakistan refugee earners, in Pakistan before the partition and later in India.

\begin{table}
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|}
\hline
Occupation & Before Partition & Later in India \\
\hline
Agriculture & 100 & 50 \\
Trade & 20 & 30 \\
Industry & 10 & 15 \\
Services & 5 & 10 \\
Others & 5 & 5 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}


\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., p. 129.

\textsuperscript{17} Census of India, 1951.
Table 1: Occupational Distribution of Refugee Earners from West Pakistan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>No. of earners in West Pakistan before migration</th>
<th>No. of earners in India after migration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculturists</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Artisans</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professions</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade and Business</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>746</strong></td>
<td><strong>499</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The largest class of refugees coming from West Pakistan depended on trade and business. The next largest class consisted of agriculturists, a number of them being large land-holders. Services and professions providing rural artisans and industrial workers, however, constituted the smallest class of earners. As against this, the Muslims who left India were mainly cultivators and artisans. This disparity between the occupations followed by the Muslim and non-Muslim refugees had rendered the problem of rehabilitation most difficult and had upset the economic structure in both the countries. India had particularly suffered as a result of the exodus of urban and rural artisans. The Muslims of India were specialists in weaving, leather - working, tailoring, trade in provisions, meat and fish, etc. Besides, the Muslims of East Punjab and PEPSU formed a large portion of semi-skilled labour in East Punjab industries.

18 Millions on the Move, Govt. of India, Publication, p. 37., New Delhi.
19 Census of Displaced Persons, 1948, pp. 31-33.
like woollen, hosiery, engineering and metal works, and in railways. Their migration had resulted in acute shortage of skilled artisans. On the contrary, most of the refugees who had come from Pakistan had no aptitude for these occupations. A number of them belonged to the trading and professional classes. They could not follow their original pursuits in the areas to which they had migrated, because these occupations were already overcrowded and there was limited scope for them. Since the non-Muslims were mainly accustomed to intellectual pursuits or had developed a high business ability and they could not adapt themselves to manual labour in India for which there was a considerable demand. Similarly, the large land-holders, most of whom were not accustomed to doing any manual work, could not adapt themselves to any available employment. Refugee businessmen, hawkers and traders had been looked upon by the local population as their competitors and this had resulted in apathy towards them. They were called refugees by the local populace as an insult. It was thus difficult to fill the occupational gap caused by the exodus of Muslims by substituting non-Muslim refugees in their place.

Among the immigrants from both West and East Pakistan, there were a good number of lawyers, doctors, teachers, managers and clerical workers. Some of these professions required great specialisation and training. It was difficult for such persons to transfer themselves to other jobs. With the expansion of social security schemes like health services and education programmes, many of these persons were absorbed. At the same time, due to larger amount of industrial activity being undertaken, a number of persons who were connected with trade and business were absorbed. Adequate loans and grants were provided by the Government as these refugees could carry very little of equipment or capital with them.

According to the figures given by the Census of Displaced Persons, 1948, more than 50 percent of the total number of earners followed urban professions while in Western Pakistan. The all-India percentage of urban, as

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20 Personal Interview with Dayal Singh, a businessmen established in Karol Bagh, New Delhi.
against the total population was only 14. The influx of refugees had thus created special problems. The industrial centres of West Punjab like Karachi, Rawalpindi, Sialkot and others were largely built by the enterprise and initiative of non-Muslims. Even though several non-Muslims owned agricultural land, they were residents of cities. In Sind also, Hyderabad and Karachi flourished on account of the spirit of enterprise shown by non-Muslims. In the East also the same was the case. In consequence, Delhi, Bombay and Calcutta became heavily overcrowded with refugees.\textsuperscript{21} There was also the fact that some opportunities for employment lay in the cities. Proper inquiries revealed that it was too much to expect that persons who had spent their lives and earned their livelihood in cities should, all of a sudden, take to rural vocations. That was why attempts were made to see that these persons got the necessary facilities in the new towns and suburban centres that were being built. The ability of the rural areas to absorb a larger number of population was limited. The future of these refugees thus lay mainly in cities and towns.

It was well known that owing to the acute shortage of building materials, there had not been any notable expansion in building activities in the cities till 1948 and the problem of accommodation had persisted with equal rigour in Delhi, Calcutta and Bombay.\textsuperscript{22} The capacity of these cities to provide adequate urban services like transport, water supply or medical facilities was also limited. During the war and the post war period, these cities witnessed a tremendous increase in population on account of internal migration. The public utility services in the cities were overburdened and overstrained. That was why the influx of refugees created increased burdens and resulted in some friction between them and the original residents of these cities. The price level of essential products and services also went up with consequent discontent among the existing population.

\textsuperscript{21} Home and Political Department, Subject File No. 12, Maharashtra Archives, Mumbai, p. 9.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., p. 18.
The refugees who came to India, particularly those from Western Pakistan had large landed and immovable properties as well as a large stake in industrial activities. The relative wealth of these persons and of those who left India showed a remarkable difference. Some of the richer tracts in West Punjab belonged to non-Muslims. The East Punjab Government estimated that out of 18.8 million acres of cultivable area in West Punjab, 6.6 million acres of land belonged to non-Muslims. This was corroborated by the fact that the Hindus and Sikhs of West Punjab paid as much as 34 percent of the total land revenue in spite of the fact that they formed a minority and compared with this, the Muslim population of East Punjab paid only 27 percent of the total land revenue to the State. Out of a total area of 14.2 million acres in East Punjab, only 3.4 million acres belonged to the Muslims. The non-Muslims had thus left behind in West Punjab about 3.2 million acres of land in excess of what the Muslims had left behind in East Punjab. Lands in West Punjab were more valuable as they were supplied with perennial canals and distributaries. In N.W.F.P., Sind and Baluchistan also non-Muslims owned a considerable portion of fertile lands. Although the non-Muslims formed a minority of the population in West Punjab, it was estimated that nearly 80 percent of the industrial undertakings belonged to them. According to a survey conducted by the Punjab Board of Economic Inquiry in the year 1945-46, the non-Muslims were reported to have contributed as much as Rs. 5 crores in the total investment of Rs. 6 crores in the Lahore factories. They owned 167 factories out of a total of 215 indigenous factories in that city. It had been estimated that nearly 95 percent of the deposits of large joint-stock banks of Western Pakistan were reported to have been held in the accounts of non-Muslims. 75 percent of the urban immovable property in terms of value, belonged to non-Muslims. In Lahore, it was reported that non-Muslims paid nearly three times the property tax paid by Muslims. In Karachi, which was the city built by the

24 Ibid., p. 19.
25 Ibid.

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enterprise of Sindhis, 80 percent of the landed property belonged to non-Muslims. The best areas of Karachi were inhabited by them. Similarly, the bulk of the trade of West Pakistan was manned by non-Muslims.

The above figures give a graphic picture of the great prosperity which non-Muslims had enjoyed in West Punjab; the sacrifice and the suffering that the partition and the mass migration had enforced on them can very well be imagined. It took many years before these persons could recover the wealth that they had left in West Punjab. The Great Displacement had at one stroke brought about equality in poverty among all these persons. On account of the larger wealth that the refugees possessed in Western Pakistan and on account of the specialised occupations which they followed, they were accustomed to income levels higher than those of the Muslims who went from India. It was well known that West Punjab and Sind were highly prosperous. The available figures for refugees coming from Eastern Pakistan show that a large proportion of the non-Muslims who came over from East Bengal were accustomed to good incomes. To provide these displaced persons with at least a decent income was indeed a formidable task. Increased business and trade activities followed increased industrial prosperity. Unless India was able to increase its pace of industrialisation, it was difficult to preserve and maintain the standard of living, which the displaced persons had enjoyed earlier. A high level of income meant increased demand for goods as well as increased savings which went into investment activities, either through contributions of Government loans or through private initiative. On account of the displacement, large, though imperceptible, repercussions on the economy were felt. Thousands of persons who were able to provide for technical training or education out of their own incomes, had been forced to let their young dependents fall back upon the state. On account of the suddenness of the mass migration, it was not possible for a large number of refugees to carry along with them their resources like

20 File #RDB/B/53/48. Rehabilitation Division Record, National Archives, New Delhi, p. 11.
21 File # RHAR/30/2/53. Rehabilitation Division Records, National Archives, New Delhi, p. 23.
22 Personal Interview with an entrepreneur based in Kalkaji.
equipment and machines or even liquid capital. Though it was possible for some refugees from Sind to transfer their banks accounts, this was not the general rule. In fact, conditions at the time of the partition were such, that it was impossible for the refugees to sell their property and convert their fixed assets into cash. The dangers in carrying property or cash were also so great that nobody could think of a physical transfer of property or cash. In consequence, most of the refugees came to India with bare hands. This rendered the problem of rehabilitation of ten million refugees exceedingly difficult.

The Census of Displaced persons from Western Pakistan and the personal interviews disclose that out of the total of 4.4 million persons enumerated, nearly 1.4 million persons were below 15 years of age. Taking into account the number of persons above 60 years (Three hundred thousand), it was found that the State had to take direct responsibility for providing proper educational, or living facilities, for about 1.7 millions persons or nearly 40 percent of the total displaced persons.\(^{29}\) If the refugee influx from Eastern Pakistan was also taken into account, the proportion of those below 15 years and those above 60 was to be the same; 1.5 millions more persons had to be provided for in the same manner.\(^{30}\) The State had thus to look after more than 3 million persons until the earners in the families were able to rehabilitate themselves. It was very necessary that the large number of young and tender persons who had been subjected to the catastrophe of mass migration should not be allowed to grow up without proper educational facilities. The nation had to harness their energies in the best possible way.

More than half the refugees who came from West Pakistan were in East Punjab and a large number of them was also absorbed by U.P., Delhi, PEPSU and Bombay. There was no systematic plan for the dispersal of displaced persons, though an attempt was made at the conference of Chief Ministers of


\(^{30}\) Ibid.
One difficulty in achieving balanced dispersal was that the refugees themselves were not willing to shift to far off areas. It was a natural tendency on their part to go to those areas where they had economic, political, religious, linguistic or social links. With proper economic opportunities provided for them, it was possible to convince them of the need for dispersing themselves evenly over different parts of the country.

The mass migration of refugees unfortunately coincided with a period of stagnation in industrial activity in India. If there were a larger rate of industrial expansion in India, it would have been possible to provide employment for a considerable number of the displaced persons. In fact, in the year 1947, there was an all round decline in industrial production owing to transport bottlenecks and labour capital disputes. The paralysis in the investment market which accompanied, also created difficulties. In such an atmosphere, it was a formidable task to provide jobs for the displaced millions. Though the Central and Provincial Governments made rules and regulations to give preference to displaced persons in Government appointments, their ability to provide employment was limited. In consequence, the private sector had the major burden of providing employment to these persons.

The refugee movement coincided with a period of inflation. Owing to the inconsistent policy of the Government regarding control and decontrol, the price level in India was showing a sharp rise. In such an atmosphere, any attempts at embarking upon schemes involving large-scale expenditure for purposes of relief and rehabilitation had aggravated these trends. Diversion of funds from productive activities for the purpose of relief and resettlement resulted in decrease in production. Expenditure on relief could not directly contribute towards production. The Government of India had to curtail its grants and loans to the different provinces in order to introduce economy in expenditure. This resulted in the abandonment or slowing down of several

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long-run projects like irrigation dams and hydro-electric schemes. Many industrial ventures proposed to be started by the Central or Provincial Governments had to be postponed or given up.

The Government of India as well as some of the Provinces had undertaken the policy of constructing new townships. There was thus an opportunity for taking into consideration modern techniques in town planning and for seeing that these towns were built to serve as models in the country. An experiment was made in Nilokheri in East Punjab to construct a township on a cooperative basis. As far as possible, the construction of these new towns made use of the initiative of the displaced persons. Townships were planned in areas where supplies of building materials were readily available and also where facilities for starting factories and business existed. In the allocation of scarce materials, the Government gave top priority to such schemes. Apart from the difficulties and dislocations that had been created by the refugee movement, the main problem was that of the pressure of about two and half million persons on the limited resources of India. The capacity of the country to absorb a large population on the land was limited; in fact there was already a surplus population on land.

Those persons who were accustomed to canal irrigation, found it difficult to cultivate land in East Punjab. Those who came from West Punjab were accustomed to ownership of large tracts and in East Punjab, only small tracts were available. There was also the difficulty arising out of the different types of crops that were being grown in West and East Punjab. But the mass migration had provided an opportunity in East Punjab for developing scientific agriculture which, in turn, led to ‘Green Revolution’ in the state. This could be done by training the refugees in modern techniques and giving them opportunities to practise the same.

It was evident that the only way by which large number of displaced persons could be resettled in order to bring about a higher standard of living,
both for themselves and for others, was by planned industrialisation. Attempts were made towards large-scale industrialisation and the abilities of the displaced persons were harnessed towards this end. The amount of relief expenditure that was being incurred, proved a stimulus for increased industrial production. The private sector co-operated with the government sector, and the activities of both were co-ordinated. Besides, there was active co-operation between the Central and Provincial Governments. The starting of a large factory, for example provided employment to several thousand persons. The Central Government planned a number of factories which had to be located in the provinces. Each province desired that such factories should be located within its boundaries. But the Central Government insisted that if a factory was to be located in any Province, that Province should be willing to settle a certain number of refugees. The Central Government also provided large amounts by way of grants and loans. Such help also was conditional on the Provinces agreeing to take up their quota by refugees. But, ultimately, it was only on the basis of a national plan for rapid industrialisation that the large number of refugees were absorbed in gainful employment.

The government policy regarding rehabilitation could be criticised on the ground that no attempt was made to dovetail rehabilitation programmes into the schemes of general economic development. It was necessary to view the problem of resettlement of refugees as part of the general problem of economic development of India. In this connection, the Central Government had a great role and a heavy responsibility. They had shifted the responsibility of refugee welfare to the Provincial Governments. On the other hand, they had taken the initiative in planning and started many schemes of general economic development. Both the Central and the Provincial Government had spent large amounts for purposes of refugee resettlement. The Rehabilitation Finance Administration had distributed loans to displaced persons. Individuals or groups of refugees, even though they were offered liberal financial assistance,
were not able to start new businesses or industrial ventures. This was due to lack of adequate supplies of capital, equipment or the expectation or existence of slump conditions, or the absence of suitable atmosphere in which the refugees could work. In such circumstances, financial assistance given by the Government was bound to be frittered away on current consumption.

For a planned system of dispersal and resettlement, it was necessary to take certain things into account: (a) The ability and willingness of the displaced persons to move into any assigned area or region; (b) the measures necessary to introduce greater mobility among the displaced persons; (c) the ability and willingness of the different Provinces or States to absorb any given quota of refugees; (d) the measure necessary for making the Provinces or States and their inhabitants take an ‘interested’ attitude towards the resettlement of the refugees; and (e) steps necessary for providing facilities for the speedy assimilation of refugees in different areas.\(^{33}\)

The social, linguistic, cultural and family links that the refugees from West Punjab had in East Punjab made it difficult to expect greater mobility among the refugees. The willingness of a refugee to continue to stay in any particular area also depended upon economic factors. If he was already satisfied with the job and income he was getting or if he expected any particular job and income, then he was prepared to shift only if he was assured of a higher income and a more congenial job. In many cases, the age group of the displaced persons was important. Persons who were young were more easily persuaded to shift to other areas than those who were old. If it was possible for the refugees to resettle in groups in other regions or areas, they were more willing to re-disperse.

Absorption was not enough. Ultimately, the displaced persons were assimilated in the Provinces and States where they settled. This was, indeed, a difficult task. There was very little homogeneity between the displaced persons
and the people of some of the Provinces and States. Given a long period of years and adequate cooperation on the part of the people of the different Provinces, it was possible to complete the process of assimilation and the refugees became one with the local inhabitants in all respects. The difficulties of language, custom and religion got over after a period of time. The process of absorption and assimilation was bound to take time. One of the urgent tasks before the leaders of public opinion was the establishment of a psychological atmosphere of sympathy and receptiveness, which worked as a suitable background for the execution of different rehabilitation measures.

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