

Socio-Economic Change Brought by Forced Mass Migrations in 1947

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Abstract – The partition of the Punjab "enforced movements of the people on a scale absolutely unparalleled, in the history of the world. It is probably true that there has never been such a huge exchange of population. In the East Punjab and the West Punjab, the minorities were made to quit their homes in the most adverse circumstances, created by communal riots and they had to reach the country of their destination very often as paupers. The massive exchange of population that attended the partition of the Punjab and the conditions under which it took place are almost unprecedented in history. This task was successfully accomplished by the East Punjab Government with mature guidance and financial support of the central government.

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INTRODUCTION

The partition of India was a grim tragedy which overtook the Punjab on August 15, 1947. A people living together for centuries in healthy tolerance were estranged overnight. Never in human history had there been a migration of people. On such a large scale as the one that followed the creation of Pakistan. Nearly five million Hindus and Sikhs were evacuated and resettled in various parts of India. The need of the hour was to provide the much needed relief and rehabilitation. This challenge was taken up by the East Punjab Government, with the support of the Central Government.

In the East Punjab, it had been planned to have one big camp with a capacity of five lakhs at Kurukshetra and a second line of camps at Amritsar, Gurdaspur, Jalandhar, Ludhiana and Ambala. The transit camps in the border districts served as feeders to the second line camps and the Central Kurukshetra Camp. The central government of India and the provincial government of the East Punjab had to open Rehabilitation Department for the reception, care and rehabilitation of refugees.

RESETTLEMENT OF LANDOWNERS

In the East Punjab, the agriculturists belonging to a particular district of the West Punjab were directed to proceed to the specific districts in the East Punjab under the following arrangements.

	Refugee Landholders of West Punjab	Resettlement in the East Punjab
1.	Lahore and non-colonists from Montgomery Districts	Ferozepur District
2.	Rawalpindi, Sheikhpura & Gujran Wala Districts	Karnal District
3.	Shahpur and Gujrat Districts	Ambala District
4.	Multan Districts	Hissar District
5.	Jhang and Muzafargarh Districts	Rohtak District
6.	Dehra Ghazi Khan and Mianwali Districts	Gurgaon District
7.	Sialkot District	Hoshiarpur, Amritsar and Gurdaspur Districts

About 3,50,000 peasant and cultivator families from the West Punjab were moved straight to the Muslim evacuee villages by the East Punjab government. The immediate problem of resetting the landowners was solved by putting them temporarily on the evacuee land left by the Muslims in the Indian Part of the Punjab. Each family was temporarily allotted a plough unit of 10 acres of land and given loans to buy seeds and agricultural equipment.

The Sikh and the Hindu landholders suffered a heavy loss by migrating to the East Punjab. It was estimated that out of 18.8 million cultivable acres in the West Punjab, about 6.7 million acres belonged to

the non-Muslims. The Muslims in the East Punjab owned 4.7 million cultivable acres out of a total of 14.2 million acres. In order to promote an equitable distribution, the government adopted the following scheme of grade-I cuts in such a way that the small landholders were to have a minimum cut.

Area Abandoned	Net Allotment
10 acres	7½ acres
30 acres	21 acres
40 acres	27 acres
50 acres	32½ acres
60 acres	37½ acres
100 acres	51½ acres
150 acres	66½ acres
200 acres	79 acres
250 acres	89 acres
500 acres	126 acres
1000 acres	176½ acres
3000 acres	281½ acres
4000 acres	326½ acres
5000 acres	376½ acres

By the middle of 1950, an area of 24,66,833 standard acres had been allotted to the displaced landowners.

RESETTLING OF URBAN REFUGEES AND DEVELOPMENT OF GARDEN COLONIES

The Hindu and Sikhs, who migrated to the East Punjab, had a greater urban element and a higher standard of living than the Muslims of the East Punjab. The Hindus and Sikhs Urban population left behind 1,54,000/- houses in the West Punjab towns, whereas the Muslims in the East Punjab left only 1,12,000/-. There are 51,000 shops and business premises abandoned in the West Punjab by the Hindus and the Sikhs, whereas the Muslims left behind 17,000 only. Consequently, a large number of the Hindus and the Sikhs who had very good houses to live in the West Punjab were forced to live in poorly built ones vacated by the Muslims. In the East Punjab, the short age of houses in the towns led to the development of townships and industrial areas near the principal cities. All essential amenities of life including school buildings were provided in the New Township at Government expense. To meet the shortage of business premises, the government sponsored shopping centres and Mandi Schemes.

Another step in the direction of rehabilitation of the displaced persons was the establishment of garden colonies. Twenty six garden colonies with a total of 22,000 standard acres were set up in the state. This step proved to be of great relief to the landless tenants who had been settled on such lands.

DEVELOPMENT OF INDUSTRIAL AREAS

The exodus of Muslims skilled labour from the East Punjab substantially crippled the industries like hosiery

metal works and railways, in which the Muslim formed about 90% of skilled labour. The East Punjab which was already backward in industrial development suffered much on this account. Most of the factories and workshops were closed. The textile industry, carpet and blanket-weaving, foundry and engineering industries, which were mostly in the hands of the Muslims, suffered a serious set-back.

In order to fit the displaced persons into the economy of the state, the Punjab government opened a number of industrial institutions in all the district towns in the East Punjab to provide technical training courses for small scale industries and sent demonstration parties to village to encourage the displaced persons to develop an aptitude for vocational training. Financial assistance was given to displaced students.

SOCIAL EFFECTS

As a result of the partition there was a sharp decline in the morals of the people. About fifty thousand women were abducted in both the Punjab. The violent communal riots, murders and crimes brought the people's moral to the lowest ebb. The partition of the Punjab caused an upheaval in the social structure. The refugees found themselves aliens in their new surroundings. 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. The townsmen 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.

POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE EFFECTS

After partition the East Punjab formed one of the smallest provinces of India. It had an area of 37,423 square miles and a population of 12.6 million. The partition of the Punjab solved the communal and minority problems in the West Punjab, as all the Sikhs and the Hindus migrated to the East Punjab. Similarly, it solved the Muslim and non-Muslim problem in the East Punjab; as almost all Muslims migrated to the West Punjab. The cross-migration of population improved the position of the Sikhs as a powerful minority. In the united Punjab the Sikhs were 13% whereas in the East Punjab after migration, they formed about thirty percent of the population. After partition however, the Sikhs formed majority in the districts of Amritsar, Gurdaspur,

Ferozepur, Jalandhar, Hoshiarpur and Ludhiana in the East Punjab.

In the field of administration the partition of the Punjab greatly reduced the efficiency of the services. Every administrative unit in the Punjab was bifurcated, resulting in inefficiency. The secretariat of new born state had to be reorganized. The partition of the Punjab and the reorganization of the secretariat caused a number of vacancies almost in every department. In order to fill up the vacancies rapid promotions were made, causing great inefficiency. As a result of partition, Lahore the, Lahore the ancient capital of the Punjab was left in Pakistan. As a temporary measure the government headquarters were located at Shimla. But it was subsequently found that it could never be a permanent capital on account of transport difficulties and expensive living conditions there. It was, therefore decided that a new capital should be raised at the present site of Chandigarh which enjoyed the advantage of being situated in a safe zone and was very central.

CONCLUSION

The mettle of the Punjabis has been tested time and again they have always come at the top from the worst disasters. The resettlement of nearly five million persons in the economic and social structure of the country within a short span of seven or eight years was a great achievement of the government. No doubt, the contribution of the administration was a great and praise worthy, but the credit for the singular success went in a large measure to the brave and uprooted people themselves without whose "will to live", it would have been impossible to forge ahead. With their hard work and will to overcome their adversity, the Punjabis brought the Punjab, once again on the road of progress and prosperity.

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