

CHAPTER XX

REHABILITATION

The Independence of India also resulted in its partition, and was followed by a mass migration of populations from the territory now comprising Pakistan, especially West Pakistan, to the Punjab and *vice versa*. Lakhs of Hindus and Sikhs moved from West Punjab to East Punjab, and almost a similar number of Muslims travelled from East Punjab and U.P. to West Pakistan. This movement was one of the most massive in history involving inevitable hardships, miseries and also tragedies. The refugees moved on foot in convoys, in buses and by rail under the protection of the Military Evacuation Organisation. In spite of official efforts to protect the migrating refugees, lawless elements, on both sides, played havoc with many convoys. Communal feelings had been aroused and accentuated, and regrettably human-beings often behaved barbarously in those days.

Refugee Camps

Transit camps were established at Amritsar, Gurdaspur, Jullundur, Ludhiana, Ambala, and a particularly large one at Kurukshetra with a capacity of 5 lakhs. Two camps were established at Rohtak in November 1947, with a capacity of 50,000. All available buildings, including educational institutions, were utilized for sheltering refugees and large tented colonies were also set up in addition. The maximum possible amenities were provided in these camps by way of lighting, sanitation, etc. Teachers and students assisted in the maintenance of these camps, and the latter were given certificates/degrees by the Panjab University for rendering three months' social service, without undergoing examinations. Free rations, multi-vitamin tablets, fruits and medicines were also provided which reduced mortality in the camps very substantially.

Steps were taken speedily to re-settle the rural refugees in villages, evacuated by Muslims, while urban refugees were sent to towns to pursue their normal avocations. For those unfortunate women and children, whose families had been disrupted, special homes were set up to rehabilitate them. The Mahila Ashram, Rohtak was started early in 1950 with a capacity of 1,500. The inmates were given food and clothing and a cash personal allowance. A

training-cum-production centre was established in the Ashram, where women were taught tailoring, weaving, dyeing and hand embroidery. In 1964 this camp was converted into an infirmary.

Emigration and Immigration

No accurate figures are available to show the precise number of Muslim evacuees, but the diminution of about 1.63 lakhs in the Muslim population in the census figures of 1941 and 1951 indicates roughly the extent of their migration to Pakistan. Most of them were Afghans, Baluches, Rajputs and Sheikhs. About 1.24 lakhs of Hindus, Sikhs and others settled in Rohtak were from the districts of Jhang, Multan, Muzaffargarh, Lyallpur and other parts of Pakistan. The refugee population in Rohtak in 1951 was as under :

District of origin	Number of persons settled in rural areas				Total	Number of persons settled in urban areas	Grand total	
	Sonepat tahsil	Rohtak tahsil	Jhajjar tahsil	Gohana tahsil				
Jhang	858	18,984	86	10,342	30,270	27,537	57,807	
Multan	257	856	120	1,177	2,410	11,209	13,619	
Muzaffargarh	11,068	620	2,167	478	14,333	14,904	29,237	
Lyallpur	189	1,389	83	296	1,957	4,502	6,459	
Other parts of Pakistan	1,698	1,214	428	1,141	4,481	12,042	16,523	
					Total	53,451	70,194	1,23,645

RURAL REHABILITATION

To hasten the re-settlement of rural refugees living in camps, and to facilitate the sowing of *rabi* crop of 1947-48 temporary allotments of lands abandoned by Muslims, were made to groups of cultivators, who were bound by ties of kinship or friendship. This was done to maintain the homogeneity of such settlements. These temporary allotments were later converted into quasi-permanent allotments in April 1948, to encourage cultivators to improve the lands allotted to them. This was a preliminary step towards their re-settlement. Claims were invited from displaced persons, and

orally verified at tahsil-headquarters. Unfortunately, in spite of their sufferings many unscrupulous, displaced persons made exaggerated claims, and obtained excessive allotments. To defeat these tactics the Government obtained the original revenue records from Pakistan and verified the claims of the displaced persons. These also showed that there was substantial difference between the land left behind in Pakistan by the incoming displaced persons and that abandoned by Muslims in East Punjab. The latter was less. To overcome this problem the available land was converted into standard acres, and graded cuts were applied in making allotments to displaced claimants. The cuts were in proportion to the size of the claim. Bigger claimants lost more in comparison with the smaller claimants.

The quasi-permanent allotments were followed by the conferment of proprietary rights in 1955. While doing so, bogus and excessive allotments were cancelled, and only the genuine claim of each displaced person, verified from the revenue record received from Pakistan, was admitted. This resulted in the return to the evacuee pool of lakhs of acres of evacuee lands usurped by unscrupulous displaced persons.

Evacuee lands in the Rohak district were allotted to displaced persons mostly from the Jhang district and the Alipur, Leiah and Kot Adu tahsils of the Muzaffargarh district, and indigenous colonists who were forced to abandon lands in the canal irrigated areas of Lyallpur, Montgomery, Sheikhpura, Multan, Shahpur, Sind and Bahawalpur. Every effort was made to allot land of the same or similar quality as was left behind by the claimants in West Pakistan. Suburban lands or lands carrying additional valuation were allotted to claimants of higher categories.

Garden colonies.—As a part of the general rural re-settlement plan, garden colonies were also established to encourage fruit cultivation. Units of 10 to 20 acres each were set apart in compact blocks, and allotted to advanced farmers experienced in gardening after a corresponding cut in their other allotments. These garden colonies were organised on co-operative lines, and irrigation was provided to them from tubewells and canals. Modern facilities, like tractors, insecticides and pesticides, were provided and every endeavour was made to make them model colonies.

Three villages covering an area of 1,822 acres were allotted for garden colonies :

Village	Tahsil	Area	Number of 20-acre units	Number of 10-acre units
		(Acres)		
Lahli	Rohtak	433	18	6
Kharkhauda	Rohtak	589	26	4
Panchi Gujran	Sonepat	800	33	9

Agricultural loans.—The displaced persons were given further assistance by way of agricultural loans to purchase bullocks, agricultural implements, fodder and seeds and to repair wells and houses. Without it they might not have been able to make full use of the land allotted to them. The loans advanced to them from 1947-48 to 1953-54 are as under ; these were stopped after 1953-54 :

Year	Amount
	(Rs.)
1947-48	87,688
1948-49	4,62,365
1949-50	2,55,920
1950-51	3,39,720
1951-52	1,29,260
1952-53	72,040
1953-54	20,625

Rural housing.—Rain and floods had damaged a large number of houses abandoned by Muslims in Rohtak. According to the statistics available, there were 15,080 undamaged houses, 5,427 reparable houses and 8,382 houses damaged beyond repair. Even the available

houses were unevenly distributed. In some villages they were in excess of the requirements of the allottees while in others they were inadequate or non-existent. Like land they were also allotted temporarily and later quasi-permanently. After reserving some houses for common purposes allottees were given a choice according to their seniority on the merit list, which was based on the size of their holding. The bigger allottee was given a better house and the smaller one a less favoured one. Those who could not get a house were given cash compensation instead.

URBAN REHABILITATION

The provision of residential accommodation in urban areas was a major problem that faced Government after the Partition. All abandoned properties of Muslims were taken over as evacuee properties under the Punjab Evacuee Ordinance IV of 1947, later replaced by the Administration of Evacuee Property Act, 1950. Houses, shops, vacant sites, *kholas* (dilapidated houses) and industrial establishments were given to displaced persons on rent to begin with. Their permanent disposal began in 1953-54. Properties valued at less than Rs. 10,000 (below Rs. 50,000 for industrial establishments) were declared allottable, but those assessed above Rs. 10,000 were sold by open auction. Properties lying vacant or in unauthorised possession were similarly auctioned.

In the urban areas of Rohtak, Sonapat, Jhajjar, Maham, Gohana, Bahadurgarh and Beri, there were 11,015 evacuee properties: 6,633 valued below Rs. 10,000, 4,221 valued above Rs. 10,000 and 161 unacquired. These became a part of the evacuee pool for compensating displaced persons with verified claims.

Allottable properties were given away as compensation against verified claims while those occupied by non-claimants were leased out to them. The claimants were allowed to make up any deficiency in their claims for allotted properties by instalments. Many of the properties valued above Rs. 10,000 were sold by 1966 or allotted to Government departments or public institutions at a negotiated reserved price.

Housing schemes.—The housing problem remained acute because most of the Muslim evacuees were labourers and artisans and therefore their houses were unpretentious whereas the incoming displaced persons were businessmen and shopkeepers, used to better dwellings. To meet their requirements Government established new

townships, 8-*marla* (cheap) housing colonies and 4-*marla* (cheap) tenements. The new townships accommodated the rich and upper-middle classes whereas the housing colonies and tenements helped the lower-middle and poorer sections. The houses and plots valued at Rs. 51,63,739 in the new townships and 8-*marla* (cheap) housing colonies were sold at a reserve price under the East Punjab Refugees Rehabilitation (Buildings and Building Sites) Act, 1948. The price was recovered as loan in 30 half-yearly instalments. Later they were allowed to adjust these loans against their verified claims. Details of houses constructed and plots laid out under various schemes is given below :

New Township, Rohtak	200 houses	10 shops	252 plots
New Township, Sonapat	200 houses	10 shops	288 plots
8- <i>Marla</i> (Cheap) Housing Colony, Rohtak		249 houses	—
8- <i>Marla</i> (Cheap) Housing Colony, Sonapat		200 houses	17 plots
4- <i>Marla</i> (Cheap) Tenement, Rohtak		134 tenements	76 sites
4- <i>Marla</i> (Cheap) Tenement, Sonapat		108 tenements	—

Mud-hut colonies.—Mud-hut colonies were constructed in 1951 at Sonapat and Rohtak to provide dwellings to Scheduled Castes, other Backward Classes and landless persons. Proprietary rights were transferred to the occupants in 1953. They were required to pay the cost of the land and the superstructure. Non-claimants were charged only the cost of the land and the cost of the superstructure was treated as grant.

A total of 2,726 mud-huts were constructed; 1,996 at Rohtak and 730 at Sonapat. The cost of superstructure and land varied between Rs. 255 and Rs. 275. About 128 mud-huts were utilised by the Mahila Ashram, Rohtak.

House building and small urban loans.—A scheme for loans and grants to middle and lower class displaced persons was introduced in February 1948, to enable urban displaced persons to re-start their business, trade or calling. Under the East Punjab Refugees Rehabilitation (Loans and Grants) Act, 1948, the loan was limited to Rs. 5,000 to an individual, Rs. 20,000 to a group of 4 or more

displaced persons and Rs. 25,000 to a co-operative society. Grants were also given to unattached women, widows and others for their re-settlement. The maximum grant to an individual was limited to Rs. 500.

Small urban loans.—Small urban loans were advanced to traders, shopkeepers, artisans, industrialists, students, lawyers and medical practitioners. The table below shows the loans advanced after the Partition :

<u>Year</u>	<u>Amount</u> (Rs.)
1948-49	8,14,700
1949-50	4,35,750
1950-51	2,28,940
1951-52	—
1952-53	18,850
1953-54	4,260
1954-55	12,900
1955-56	24,000
1956-57	20,000

These loans were discontinued in 1956-57.

House building loans.—The following house building loans were advanced between 1949-50 to 1955-56 :—

<u>Year</u>	<u>Amount</u> (Rs.)
1949-50	3,80,125
1950-51	1,43,375
1951-52	2,97,750
1952-53	3,97,420
1953-54	71,250
1954-55	1,10,000
1955-56	3,39,225

Payment of Compensation

Compensation was paid to displaced persons who had abandoned immovable property in West Pakistan, after verifying their claims, under the Displaced Persons (Claims) Act, 1950. Interim compensation was sanctioned for certain categories of displaced persons who were in urgent need of relief. The interim scheme was later replaced by the Displaced Persons (Compensation and Rehabilitation) Act, 1954. Under it scaled compensation was prescribed. It gave more to smaller claimants, and less to the bigger claimants. This compensation was paid out of the compensation pool, to which the Central Government had contributed.

The rehabilitation of refugees has been completed, and only minor residuary problems remain, e.g. correction of clerical mistakes in allotments or rectification of deficiencies, if any. The Rehabilitation Department at present is heavily busy with the disposal of surplus evacuee properties purchased by the erstwhile Punjab Government from the Central Government. The properties situated in Haryana are being auctioned by the Tahsildar (Sales), specially appointed, mostly in auctions restricted to Harijans. This process also helps in the detection of usurped properties and their disposal thus bringing in some revenue to Government.

The Impact of Refugees on the Local Population

Displaced persons had a catalytic effect on the residents of Rohtak. It is generally acknowledged that both the urban and rural sections, formerly inhabiting West Punjab, were more advanced and more prosperous than their counterparts in East Punjab. The farmers were more progressive and better off because of larger cultivations in canal colonies and superior irrigation provided by one of the most modern canal systems in India. The Agricultural College at Lyallpur taught the most up-to-date techniques known then. Likewise, the business community of West Punjab were cleverer and more cunning than the less sophisticated urban dwellers of East Punjab. With the arrival of displaced persons in Rohtak a new system and competitive spirit came into being. Well-to-do agriculturists and traders, who had lost practically everything in Pakistan, had to make a fresh start. Life was hard, and there was a survival of only the fittest. However, the displaced persons soon got down to hard work and introduced their superior skills in cultivation and trade. They soon gained at the expense of their local rivals, but in the process modernised them too. Agriculture improved and East Punjab soon became a surplus State. Drab bazaars were transformed into better

establishments with a variety of wares, e.g. cosmetics, soaps, face powders, mirrors, oil, sophisticated toys, etc. Dresses and fashions also changed. Bushshirts, trousers and pyjamas replaced the old types of shirts and *dhotis*. Locals took to *salwar* and *qamiz* (the tighter versions came later), the traditional dress of displaced women, and the women of Rohtak also emulated the displaced persons in their style of ornaments and make-up. *Purdah* became less popular and more and more women were seen in towns riding rickshaws and eating in *dhabas* and public places. The simple vegetarian diet of Rohtak was also replaced by an assortment of meat dishes, fruits and more sophisticated vegetables even in villages. In towns ice-cream, lemonade and other aerated drinks became fashionable. Bicycles, rickshaws and scooters were also introduced providing employment to displaced persons and amenities to the locals.

In short, the impact of displaced persons on the local population has been a beneficial one in a variety of ways. Hard work has replaced lethargy, and smartness has replaced sloppiness in all walks of life. Agriculture, business, transport and society generally have been improved and modernised. Men and women today of the Rohtak district are better clad, more attractive and much more sophisticated. Thus the tragedy of the Partition has had a silver lining for East Punjab in general and Rohtak in particular. It also integrated people of diverse dialects, different outlooks and almost different cultures.