

# Introduction

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*And what happened in Palestine . . . was then repeated in India on a large scale involving many millions of people. Since the Peace Treaties of 1919 and 1920 the refugees and the stateless have attached themselves like a curse to all newly established states on earth which were created in the image of the nation-state. For these new states this curse bears the germs of a deadly sickness.*

Hannah Arendt<sup>1</sup>

Indian independence took the form of the partitioning of British India into Muslim-majority Pakistan and Hindu-majority India. The twinning of partition with independence has long disrupted any celebratory narrative of the arrival of the nation-state in South Asia.<sup>2</sup> In northern India, and especially in Punjab, it was accompanied by communal violence that was unprecedented in its scale and brutality.<sup>3</sup> In the divided provinces of Bengal and Assam, minorities usually faced covert forms of social and political marginalisation that occasionally escalated to violent riots.<sup>4</sup> All over this partitioned landscape, millions of minorities felt ‘stranded’ on

<sup>1</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (London: André Deutsch, 1986), p. 290.

<sup>2</sup> Historians of India have struggled to contain the contradictory motifs of national birth and partition within a singular narrative. Mushirul Hasan, in ‘Memories of a Fragmented Nation: Rewriting the Histories of India’s Partition’ in *Inventing Boundaries: Gender, Politics and the Partition of India* (New Delhi, 2000), pp. 26–44, clearly privileges fiction as the ideal means for capturing the popular history of partition. In ‘Partition, Pakistan and South Asian history: In search of a narrative’, *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 57, 4 (1998), 1068–95, David Gilmartin suggests approaching partition as a moment of re-negotiation of the relationship between high politics and everyday life in South Asia. Gyanendra Pandey, in *Remembering Partition: Violence, Nationalism and History in India* (Cambridge, 2001), deconstructs the unitary notion of a single political partition into its multiple meanings and negotiations while Ranabir Samadhar, in *Reflections on Partition in the East* (New Delhi and Calcutta, 1997), argues that South Asia’s discontent with the settlement of 1947 might well warrant the renaming of the post-colonial period as ‘post-partition’ times.

<sup>3</sup> For details see Swarna Aiyar, ‘“August Anarchy”: The Partition Massacres in Punjab, 1947’, *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 18:1 (1995), 13–36; Paul R. Brass, ‘The Partition of India and Retributive Genocide in the Punjab, 1946–47: Means, Methods, and Purposes 1’, *Journal of Genocide Research*, 5: 1 (2003), 71–101.

<sup>4</sup> See Nilanjana Chatterjee, ‘Interrogating Victimhood: East Bengali Refugee Narratives of Communal Violence’, (<http://www.swadhinata.org.uk/document/chatterjeeEastBengal%20Refugee.pdf>, accessed 18 August 2015).

the wrong side and fled to their putative homelands. This gave rise to a refugee crisis of staggering proportions and complexity. While no accurate numbers are available of Hindu and Sikh minorities who left Pakistan for India, or of Muslims who left India for Pakistan, the total number of refugees is estimated to be anything between 11 to 18 million.<sup>5</sup> In recent decades, histories of partition have privileged quotidian negotiations of this political rift, highlighting themes of displacement, loss and violence.<sup>6</sup> These new histories explore partition as a process instead of an event, where the long-term struggle to rebuild lives and communities continues well beyond 1947.<sup>7</sup> A particularly rich analytical prism is provided by regional studies that investigate the long afterlife of partition in directly impacted geographies, which are variously conceptualised as divided polities, fractured trade networks, new borderlands or ‘capitol landscapes’.<sup>8</sup> The figure of the displaced minority, variously classified as migrants, refugees, displaced persons, *muhajirs* and evacuees, emerges

<sup>5</sup> For a discussion of the inconsistent practices of enumeration of partition refugees, especially in Bengal, and the contradictory figures thrown up as a result see Abhijit Dasgupta, ‘The Puzzling Numbers: The Politics of Counting “Refugees” in West Bengal’, *SARWATCH*, 2:2 (2002), 64–73. In recent years, demographic data has led ‘official’ figures to be progressively revised upwards. The figure of eleven to eighteen million is taken from Prashant Bharadwaj, Asim Ijaz Khwaja and Atif R. Mian, ‘The Partition of India: Demographic Consequences’, June 2009, available at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1294846>. A higher figure of 20 million is mentioned in Joya Chatterji, ‘From Imperial Subjects to National Citizens: South Asians and the International Migration Regime since 1947’ in Joya Chatterji and David Washbrook (eds.) *Routledge Handbook of the South Asian Diaspora* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 187.

<sup>6</sup> Gyanesh Kudaisya and Tai Yong Tan, *The Aftermath of Partition in South Asia* (London: Routledge, 2004); Anjali Gera Roy and Nandi Bhatia, *Partitioned Lives: Narratives of Home, Displacement, and Resettlement* (Delhi: Pearson Education India, 2008); Amritjit Singh, Nalini Iyer, and Rahul K. Gairola, *Revisiting India’s Partition: New Essays on Memory, Culture, and Politics* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2016); Urvashi Butalia (ed.), *Partition: The Long Shadow* (New Delhi: Zubaan/Penguin, 2015); Yasmin Khan, *The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008); Deepti Misri, *Beyond Partition: Gender, Violence, and Representation in Postcolonial India* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2014).

<sup>7</sup> Of particular importance is the term ‘long partition’ used by Vazira Zamindar, which shifts the emphasis from partition’s impact to looking at partition as a long-term process. See Vazira Fazila Zamindar, *The Long Partition and the Making of Modern South Asia: Refugees, Boundaries, Histories* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

<sup>8</sup> Willem van Schendel, *The Bengal Borderland: Beyond State and Nation in South Asia* (Anthem Press, 2005); Sarah F. D. Ansari, *Life After Partition: Migration, Community and Strife in Sindh, 1947–1962* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Ravinder Kaur, *Since 1947: Partition Narratives Among Punjabi Migrants of Delhi* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007); Joya Chatterji, *The Spoils of Partition: Bengal and India, 1947–1967* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Ilyas Chattha, *Partition and Locality: Violence, Migration, and Development in Gujranwala and Sialkot, 1947–1961* (Karachi : Oxford University Press, 2011); Haimanti Roy, *Partitioned Lives: Migrants, Refugees, Citizens in India and Pakistan, 1947–65* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012); Debjani Sengupta, *The Partition of Bengal: Fragile Borders and New Identities* (Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

as a central figure in these histories. The centrality of displaced persons in histories of partition is not merely born of the scale and complexity of the refugee crisis unleashed by the hurried division of British India; it is also indicative of a peculiar feature of partition refugees. The refugees who sought shelter in India and Pakistan in the aftermath of partition claimed to be *both* refugees and citizens of their putative homelands. This allowed partition refugees to occupy a visible and central place in the post-partition politics of South Asia. The significance of this simultaneous iteration of refugee-ness and national belonging is the point of departure of this study. This unlikely conjuncture transformed the project of rehabilitation of partition refugees into a richly contested sphere of governance where refugee visions of rights and belonging clashed with official ideals of governance and citizenship.

The political leadership of India and Pakistan did not anticipate any large-scale movement of minorities. As a result, in both India and Pakistan, policy lagged behind ground realities. When refugees started pouring in from Punjab, along with reports of 'stranded' minorities facing mass slaughter, the authorities were forced to improvise. In the face of escalating violence and complete polarisation along ethnic and religious lines, initial hopes of restoring peace in Punjab and repatriating refugees rapidly gave way to a bilateral military operation to evacuate stranded minorities. The Hindu and Sikh minorities who were rescued in this manner and brought 'home' to India could not be excluded from the emerging community of citizens. The evacuation of minorities from Punjab was completed by January 1948.<sup>9</sup> In the eyes of the state, this was an exceptional measure, adopted in order to deal with an emergency situation. It nevertheless drew force from prevalent discourses of ethno-nationalist belongings, in which India and Pakistan were seen as the respective homelands of Hindus and Muslims.<sup>10</sup> The evacuated minorities, who were initially housed in government-administered refugee camps, were seen to belong to the new nation-states. In post-partition India, this led to equivalence between becoming a Hindu or Sikh refugee and becoming a *de facto* citizen. The violent arrival of the nation-state in

<sup>9</sup> For details see U. Bhaskar Rao, *The Story of Rehabilitation* (Department of Rehabilitation, Ministry of Labour, Employment and Rehabilitation, Government of India, 1967), pp. 4–29.

<sup>10</sup> These discourses had deep roots in colonial historiography and nineteenth century literature that consistently portrayed Muslims as outsiders and invaders in India. For example, see Shahid Amin, 'Representing the Musalman: Then and Now, Now and Then', in Shail Mayaram, M. S. S. Pandian, Ajay Skaria (eds.) *Subaltern Studies XII: Muslims, Dalits, and the Fabrications of History* (New Delhi: Permanent Black and Ravi Dayal Publisher, 2005).

South Asia thus gave birth to the paradoxical figure of the citizen-refugee. Families displaced by partition became refugees and staked a claim to citizenship long before the new rulers of India had managed to define either a partition refugee or an Indian citizen.

The refugee crisis that engulfed post-partition South Asia posed a fundamental challenge to the emerging nation-states. The question posed by the millions of refugees who crossed the newly minted international borders of India and Pakistan was one which lies at the heart of the modern political system. The post-war international order of nation-states seeks to organise populations into national groups, each with their own sovereign state, or homeland. The modern refugee is the product of a world where the ground realities of multi-ethnic societies contradicts the political ideal of a seamless congruence between the territory and population encompassed by a state and the political community of a nation. Given that the nation, as an 'imagined community',<sup>11</sup> has seldom been free from ethnic or religious markers of belonging, where do ethnic and religious minorities belong? This question has been answered differently by various philosophers and political scientists, depending on the particular minority group they study, and the specificity of the historical context. Many scholars, beginning with Hannah Arendt, have cited India's post-partition refugee crisis as an example that illustrates how nation-states inevitably fail to shelter ethnic and religious minorities. A brief survey of this literature presents a curious anomaly. The partition of India is repeatedly evoked as an example of how nation-states generate refugees. However, this evocation is selective. Post-partition South Asia did not merely generate a large number of refugees; it also absorbed an overwhelming majority of these refugees within the rank of citizens. Thus, to cite partition refugees as an example of the inevitable incommensurability between nation-states and ethnic minorities is to tell only half the story. The history of rehabilitation of millions of refugees in South Asia calls for a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between emerging nation-states and refugees in the twentieth century.

Arendt argued, based on her experience of the first half of the twentieth century, that nation-states were prone to creating, through expulsion from their ranks of citizens, the 'curse' of refugees and stateless people. For Arendt, this expulsion was a symptom of the rise of totalitarianism, or the emergence of a kind of state that dealt with diversity through the expulsion of people who did not fit a prefigured ideal of citizenship. Arendt analysed the predicament of Jewish refugees in post-war Europe

<sup>11</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

to illustrate what she believed to be the inevitable fate of all minorities in modern nation-states. Writing in 1948, she cited the millions displaced in India and Pakistan as proof of her indictment of all states 'built in the image of the nation-state'.<sup>12</sup> Arendt's theorisation of the impossibility of minority belonging has been understandably influential within refugee studies, as it is usually displaced minorities who populate the category of the refugee. Aristide Zolberg expands Arendt's insight to argue that nation-building is a refugee-generating process that is neither limited to totalitarian regimes, nor unique to the twentieth century. He argues that the homogenising impulse of states can be traced back to early modern Spain and France, when nationalism first emerged as an organising principle of political power in Western Europe. The same process, with important variations, has been repeated in the demise of multi-ethnic empires in Eastern Europe and colonial empires in Asia and Africa.<sup>13</sup> Zolberg explicitly cites the partition of India as the 'classic case' that illustrates how the birth of new nation-states transformed minorities into refugees fleeing from violence.<sup>14</sup> Giorgio Agamben builds upon Arendt's insights to argue that the figure of the refugee is not just representative of minorities who cannot belong, but an embodiment of the unresolved crisis of the contemporary political order of nation-states that reduces anyone who is not a national to 'bare life' – a human being devoid of political rights.<sup>15</sup> Within this particular trajectory of thought, the refugee emerges as the radical outsider. They are the essential opposite of citizens and nationals. Becoming a refugee, in this context, is usually read as an experience of loss – of homes, of political rights and of citizenship. However, becoming a refugee in post-partition India did not only connote loss. While displacement was a formative experience for all partition refugees, it was not coterminous with the process of *becoming* refugees. Millions of minorities who were forcibly displaced from their homes in the wake of a violent partition became refugees, both by their own accounting and in official records, only *after* they crossed the new national borders. To become a refugee in post-partition India was not only to be displaced. To become a refugee was to claim the right to relief and rehabilitation from the state. In other words, in post-partition India, the displaced became refugees in order to stake a claim to their putative

<sup>12</sup> Arendt, *The Decline of the Nation-State and the End of the Rights of Man* (1986).

<sup>13</sup> Aristide R. Zolberg, 'The Formation of New States as a Refugee-Generating Process', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 467(1983), 24–38.

<sup>14</sup> Aristide R. Zolberg, Astri Suhrke and Sergio Aguayo, *Escape from Violence: Conflict and the Refugee Crisis in the Developing World* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

<sup>15</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen, 1st edition (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998).

homeland. The constraints and possibilities of refugee life in South Asia have always exceeded Eurocentric formulations of refugees as stateless outsiders and abject victims.

The partition refugees' claim to be citizens of their host states gained traction due to contingent circumstances. The need to grant citizenship to the minorities evacuated from divided Punjab was one of many ingredients that went into the making of the citizen-refugee. Partition refugees evoked shared communitarian ties with the host society and a historical loyalty to Indian or Pakistani nationalism as a basis of belonging. Though the partitioning of British India into Muslim-majority Pakistan and Hindu-majority India was sold as a 'solution' to the problem of providing adequate rights to the Muslim minority, in effect, it offered no real solution for minority belonging. Once the dust settled over the borders, millions of Muslims were 'left behind' in India while several million Hindus found themselves in Pakistan. Partition deepened the vulnerability of minorities by recasting them as people out of place. Yet, the founding fathers of India and Pakistan neither anticipated nor encouraged the movement of minorities. While Sardar Patel was content to lament their pain and loss,<sup>16</sup> Muhammad Ali Jinnah waxed eloquent on the 'sacrifices' made by those 'left behind'.<sup>17</sup> By migrating, minorities refused to be sacrificed. Instead, they claimed affective belonging to their putative homelands, demanded compensation for their displacement and loss of homes, and expected to become citizens in the host societies. The new nation-states disapproved of such migration and exhorted minorities to stay put, but they were powerless to stop migration across still largely notional borders. The categorical denial of citizenship to migrants was technically impossible, given that the laws and statutes conferring Indian and Pakistani citizenship were yet to be formulated. More importantly, this was a political impossibility. In both India and Pakistan, the partition refugees' claim to moral citizenship enjoyed considerable support, not just among their co-religionists, but also amongst bureaucrats and politicians. The exchange of minority populations in Punjab was enabled by this atmosphere. Once accomplished, it provided validation for the moral citizenship of displaced minorities that spilled beyond the frontiers of Punjab. It became a popular demand that resonated across the partitioned landscape of India and Pakistan. This is not to suggest that all minorities chose to, or even wanted to migrate. For many, migration

<sup>16</sup> Sardar Patel's speech delivered on 15 August 1947, as cited in *Andandabazar Patrika*, 28 January 1964.

<sup>17</sup> Jinnah's speech 'Those Who Gave Great Sacrifices' delivered on 9 June 1947, cited in Tahir Hasnain Naqvi, 'The Politics of Commensuration: The Violence of Partition and the Making of the Pakistani State', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 20:1 &2 (2007), p. 56.

offered no remedy for a profound loss ushered in by the new borders that divided families, disrupted livelihoods, and dismantled shared cultural worlds. Yet, becoming a refugee, in post-partition India and Pakistan, was also a step towards national belonging. This study begins in the immediate aftermath of displacement, mapping the complexity of the intertwined processes of becoming a refugee and becoming a citizen in independent India.

### **Becoming Refugee, Becoming Citizen: The Status of Displaced Hindus in India**

This book focuses on the Hindu minorities who left East Bengal, or the eastern wing of Pakistan, between 1947 and 1970, and sought refuge in West Bengal. Though migration continued and even reached crisis levels after 1970, the refugees who fled civil war in Pakistan cannot be regarded as partition refugees. They were the result of yet another process of national determination in South Asia, and marked the violent birth of Bangladesh in 1971. Between 1947 and 1970, migration across the Bengal frontier continued in fits and starts. There was no comprehensive process of enumeration, and official estimates of East Bengali migrants who sought refuge in India between 1946 and 1970 vary between 5.8 million<sup>18</sup> and 4.1 million.<sup>19</sup> West Bengal alone took in over 3.9 million refugees.<sup>20</sup> Though the patterns of displacement and official response varied significantly across these twenty-three years, this period nevertheless enjoys a certain coherence due to the ability of Bengali refugees to make claims upon the local and national government as de facto citizens. For all Hindu migrants the path to citizenship passed through official acknowledgement of refugeehood. However, the government of India was particularly reluctant to accept the refugee status of Hindu migrants from East Bengal. As a result, the Bengali refugee's long-term struggle to wrest relief and rehabilitation from a recalcitrant state emerges as a key site for the articulation of the limits and possibilities of Hindu belonging in post-colonial India.

If we go by official declarations and constitutional guarantees alone, then the inclusion of Hindu and Sikh refugees within the body of Indian

<sup>18</sup> Pran Nath Luthra, *Rehabilitation* (New Delhi: Publications Division, 1972).

<sup>19</sup> Committee for Review of Rehabilitation Work in West Bengal, *Report of the Working Group on the Residual Problem of Rehabilitation in West Bengal* (Calcutta, 1976).

<sup>20</sup> This is the official figure, as mentioned in Pran Nath Luthra, *Rehabilitation*, 1972; and cited in Chatterji, *Spoils of Partition* (2007), p. 112. This number possibly reflected the number of registered refugees, and the actual number of minorities who claimed refuge in West Bengal is likely to be much higher.



citizenry appears to be a deceptively straightforward process. Discussions within the Constituent Assembly rapidly led to a broad-based consensus that Hindu and Sikh minorities fleeing violence in Pakistan belonged in India.<sup>21</sup> In 1950, their right to belong to India was enshrined in the constitution. Article 5 allowed citizenship by registration to all those who had migrated to India from Pakistan, provided they had arrived in India before the commencement of the constitution.<sup>22</sup> But the influx of refugees continued well beyond 1950 and informed subsequent discussions on citizenship. The question of refugee belonging re-emerged as a dominant concern in 1955, moulding the tenor and texture of the debate around the Citizenship Bill. Pandit Pant, the Home Minister, was eager for a swift passage of the bill in order to ensure that the ‘tens of thousands of displaced persons’ who ‘have come over and are still coming to India from Pakistan’ could be given their full rights as citizens, including the right to vote in the forthcoming elections.<sup>23</sup> However, representatives from West Bengal, such as B. K. Das, criticised the bill for demanding the cumbrous and bureaucratic process of registration from destitute refugees, who might not have possessed the necessary papers. Instead of registration, Das wanted the bill to provide a definition for displaced persons that would declare all displaced persons to be citizens of India. Pant refused, insisting that registration was necessary to avoid confusion. However, he was also quick to clarify that the bill did not propose to endow partition refugees with a new right, or monitor their eligibility for citizenship. The right of citizenship, according to him, was ‘already there’.<sup>24</sup> In other words, India’s Citizenship Bill formally acknowledged the contradictory category of the citizen-refugee. For displaced Hindus from Pakistan, being seen as refugees or displaced persons by the Indian state opened up a pathway to citizenship through registration.

Pandit Pant’s reassurance that all refugees already had the right to citizenship left a vital question unanswered. Who counted as a bona fide refugee in post-partition India? There was no simple answer to this question. This was partly because the government of India was forced

<sup>21</sup> For an analysis of how the presence of partition refugees impacted the formulation of legal citizenship in India, see Joya Chatterji, ‘South Asian Histories of Citizenship, 1946–1970,’ *The Historical Journal* 55:4 (2012), 1049–71.

<sup>22</sup> Refugees of Indian descent who arrived before 19 July 1948 were exempted from the process of registration. The full draft of the Constitution of India is available at <http://india.gov.in/my-government/constitution-india>.

<sup>23</sup> Statement by Pandit Pant in the Lok Sabha, as reported in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 12 August 1955. For details of how partition refugees were included in India’s electoral roll, see Ornit Shani, *How India became Democratic: Citizenship and the Making of the Universal Franchise*, Cambridge, (New York, Melbourne, New Delhi, Singapore: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*



to deal with the refugee crisis on an emergency basis and policies for relief and rehabilitation preceded any clear definition of a partition refugee. The official term used to describe partition refugees was 'displaced persons', which was in keeping with the terminology used by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration to refer to refugees born of the Second World War. By 1951, the Geneva Convention had put in place a Eurocentric definition of refugees that included European displaced persons but excluded those displaced by partition in India.<sup>25</sup> Within India, 'displaced persons' and 'refugees' continued to be used interchangeably in various official documents and declarations. While displaced persons or DPs was the preferred and more accurate term for official purposes, in everyday parlance and in the contemporary press, the displaced minorities were more frequently called refugees. Various vernacular iterations of refugee identity, such as *ashrayprarthi*, *sharanarathi* and *udvastu*, proliferated in the public sphere.<sup>26</sup> Displaced Hindus overwhelmingly described themselves using one of these terms, or as a refugee – a word that passed untranslated into vernacular speech. Self-identified refugees often constituted a far broader category than officially recognised DPs. Given that this study pays equal attention to the top-down iteration of policy and the process through which displaced minorities sought to belong, I use the broader category of refugees instead of the bureaucratically sanctioned 'displaced persons' to refer to displaced Hindus from eastern Pakistan.

In the aftermath of partition, there was no attempt to create a pan-Indian definition of a displaced person, or a refugee. This was not just the result of bureaucratic oversight. There was also a marked reluctance, on the part of the government, to come up with a clear definition of partition refugees. The lack of clarity allowed the government of India to maintain an inclusive official stance, where in theory citizenship was within the reach of all displaced persons or DPs. Yet, in order to officially count as a DP, those displaced by partition had to meet a host of discriminatory criteria, which the local authorities could change at will by periodically issuing new circulars that imposed new requirements and preconditions. As a result, questions around migration, minority belonging and citizenship continued to animate politics and policies in post-colonial India. Did minorities displaced from all parts of Pakistan count as de facto citizens of India? What would happen to those who migrated after 1950, or after

<sup>25</sup> For details of this process of exclusions see Pia Oberoi, *Exile and Belonging: Refugees and State Policy in South Asia* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 11–43.

<sup>26</sup> *Ashrayprarthi* and *saranarathi* both translate as those who seek refuge/shelter. The former was used largely in Bengali, while *saranarathi* was used in Bengali and Hindi. *Udvastu* is a Bengali term, meaning those removed from homelands, or the uprooted.

1956, when the new Citizenship Act came into force? Was proof of facing persecution or violence in Pakistan an adequate or necessary criterion for becoming a refugee? Could Muslim migrants from Pakistan count as refugees in India? The official refusal to articulate clearly who could and could not be a partition refugee had the benefit of displacing these unresolved questions into the sphere of everyday governance. Contestation was rife over issues of *who* could count as a partition refugee, *how* official recognition was conferred, and *what* such recognition entailed in terms of relief and rehabilitation.

Neither India nor Pakistan had any intention of accommodating all minorities 'left behind' on the other side. Pakistan, while upholding its foundational ideal of a homeland for South Asian Muslims in theory, refused it in practice by arguing that it was only prepared to provide for Muslim refugees from Punjab and North West Frontier Provinces.<sup>27</sup> This selective acceptance of some but not all Muslim refugees was explicitly justified by Pakistan on grounds of national economic interests.<sup>28</sup> The situation in avowedly secular India was more complicated. In post-partition India, the national leadership found itself walking a tightrope between various contradictory notions of national belonging. In the immediate aftermath of Partition, India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, took an uncompromising stand against those who called for a 'Hindu Raj' and the evacuation of all Muslims from India by describing such beliefs as 'sectarian' and 'fascist' in numerous public speeches and declarations.<sup>29</sup> However, his principled commitment to a secular polity was undone by his response to partition refugees. In May 1948, Sardar Patel, the Home Minister of India, sounded the alarm bell regarding the arrival of Muslims from Pakistan. He warned Nehru of 'considerable discontent both among the public, in general, and refugees in particular, in regard to our failure to prevent the inflow'.<sup>30</sup> Nehru's

<sup>27</sup> At the inter-dominion conference held at Lahore on 5 October 1948, Liaquat Ali Khan, the prime minister of Pakistan, sought to restrict the accountability of the Pakistan government to the Muslim refugees from Punjab and North West Frontier Province only. Cited in Zamindar, *The Long Partition* (2007), pp. 41–4. For further details on the strategies adopted by Pakistan to restrict migration of Muslims from India see pp. 79–119 and 161–226. Also see Omar Khalidi, 'From Torrent to Trickle: Indian Muslim Migration to Pakistan, 1947–97', *Bulletin of the Henry Martin Institute of Islamic Studies*, 16:1 & 2 (1997), 32–45; and Ansari, *Life after Partition* (2005).

<sup>28</sup> Zamindar, *The Long Partition* (2007).

<sup>29</sup> For examples see Nehru's address to Congress workers in Delhi on 3 October 1947, as reported in *The Hindu* and his speech at a public meeting in Delhi on 6 October 1947, as reported in *The Hindustan Times*. Both have been reproduced in S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series, Vol. 4* (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1984), pp. 118–19 and 124–6.

<sup>30</sup> Vallabhbhai Patel to Jawaharlal Nehru, 4 May 1948, Durga Das (ed.), *Sardar Patel's Correspondence, Vol. 6* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1972), pp. 319–20.

response made it clear that Muslim migrants from Pakistan could not join the ranks of refugees in India. He declared that '[r]egarding the influx of Muslims from Pakistan, our policy is clear enough. The difficulty comes in implementing it, especially on the Sind-Rajputana border. We are asking the Military to take some steps in that border to prevent large numbers coming through.'<sup>31</sup> When public policy is read in conjunction with private correspondence, it becomes clear that the refusal to clearly define the contours of the partition refugee allowed the government of India to resort to various bureaucratic means to prevent Muslim migrants from entering the ranks of refugees. Apparently non-sectarian categories of governance, such as displaced persons and refugees, were in practice tied to ethnic markers.<sup>32</sup> This allowed a pragmatic validation of the primacy of Hindu belonging in India to flourish beneath public assertions of a secular polity that did not discriminate between Hindu and Muslim citizens. Given that all bona fide refugees were also citizens in post-partition India, the refusal to grant refugee status to Muslim migrants indirectly achieved their exclusion from Indian citizenship. Thus, despite broad public statements promising citizenship to all displaced persons from Pakistan, Hindu migrants alone counted as citizen-refugees in post-partition India.

The early exclusion of Muslim migrants from Pakistan from the ranks of genuine refugees prepared the ground for a more systematic disenfranchisement of India's Muslim residents. Recent scholarship has demonstrated how in post-partition India, it became a virtual impossibility for Muslim minorities to fully belong.<sup>33</sup> They were unilaterally categorised as 'evacuees' or 'intending evacuees' for Pakistan and the draconian Evacuee Property legislation allowed the authorities to appropriate Muslim property for 'public purposes', that included rehabilitation of Hindu refugees, without recourse to legal appeal.<sup>34</sup> In sum, when compared to displaced Muslims, Hindu minorities from Pakistan appear to be privileged insiders. As Gyan Pandey has argued, by virtue of being Hindu, they constituted the imagined core of the Indian nation.<sup>35</sup> Vazira Zamindar draws a sharp

<sup>31</sup> See letter from Jawaharlal Nehru to Vallabhbhai Patel, 12 May 1948, *Ibid.*, pp. 367–8.

<sup>32</sup> The ethnically marked category of the refugee in post-partition India is also a key point of departure in Zamindar, *The Long Partition* (2007).

<sup>33</sup> See, for example, Claire Alexander, Joya Chatterji, and Annu Jalais, *The Bengal Diaspora: Rethinking Muslim Migration* (Routledge, 2015); Taylor C. Sherman, *Muslim Belonging in Secular India: Negotiating Citizenship in Postcolonial Hyderabad* (Cambridge University Press, 2015); and Gyanendra Pandey, 'Can a Muslim Be an Indian?', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 41:4 (1999), 608–29.

<sup>34</sup> For details see Zamindar, *The Long Partition* (2007) and Chatterji, 'South Asian Histories of Citizenship, 1946–1970,' (2012), 1049–71.

<sup>35</sup> Pandey, 'Can a Muslim Be an Indian?' (1999).

contrast between the deeply ambiguous position of Muslim refugees and the relatively straightforward path to Indian citizenship enjoyed by displaced Hindus and Sikhs: 'They could migrate to the territory of India and become Indian citizens'.<sup>36</sup> There is no doubt that in the aftermath of partition, there was an increasing tendency to equate being Indian with being Hindu. However, the actual process of becoming citizens was far from straightforward for Hindu refugees. Not all displaced Hindus who migrated to India were welcomed into the body of citizens.

The political obligation to acknowledge the Hindu refugees' right to citizenship had to be balanced against pragmatic considerations of the financial burden placed upon the nascent nation-state by millions of refugees. Official declarations that validated the Hindu refugees' right to belong were often undermined by a range of bureaucratic interventions designed to limit the actual number of refugees. This was particularly true of displaced Hindus from eastern Pakistan who found themselves negotiating a veritable obstacle course of preconditions, such as date of entry, necessary documentation and arbitrary last dates of registration, in order to be acknowledged as refugees. Though Hindu migrants could and did lay claim to being citizens of India, their ability to wrest substantive belonging depended upon their ability to gain recognition as genuine refugees. This recognition came relatively easily to refugees from western Punjab. In the immediate aftermath of partition, the entire infrastructure of providing relief to refugees, including the creation of a central Ministry of Rehabilitation and a range of policies, such as the exchange of minority populations and compensation for lost property, evolved in response to the crisis in Punjab.<sup>37</sup> The policies of inclusion designed for refugees from Punjab were later extended to Hindu refugees from Sind and Baluchistan. Thus, for Hindu refugees from western Pakistan, the path to citizenship was indeed relatively straightforward. This was by no means true for Hindu refugees from eastern Pakistan. The Punjab model of rehabilitation was dependent on the expulsion of Muslim minorities as 'evacuees', and was not replicated in divided Bengal or Assam. The result was that refugees from eastern Pakistan were greeted by an apathetic state and a hostile society. Viewed from the east, a wide gap emerges between the Hindu refugees' status as *de facto* citizens and their lived reality of displacement.

The East Bengali Hindus' quest to become citizens of India had divergent outcomes in different parts of India. A long history of anti-Bengali

<sup>36</sup> Zamindar, *The Long Partition* (2010), p. 53.

<sup>37</sup> For an official account that clearly displays this Punjab-centrism, see Bhaskar Rao, *The Story of Rehabilitation* (1967).

sentiments in Assam saw Bengali-speaking migrants branded as foreigners, notwithstanding their Hindu background.<sup>38</sup> In sharp contrast, there was little or no hostility towards the influx of Bengali refugees in Tripura throughout the 1950s.<sup>39</sup> The vast majority of East Bengali Hindus sought refuge in the state of West Bengal, where they also shared a linguistic identity with the host population. Despite such affinities, they faced a hostile and apathetic government that questioned whether they were refugees at all. What ensued was a prolonged struggle waged by displaced Hindus from East Bengal to obtain official recognition as refugees and/or substantive rehabilitation – both crucial to the process of becoming citizens. Policy declarations that allowed citizenship to all displaced Hindus from Pakistan does not capture the full complexity of this process. The Hindu refugees' quest to belong to India was a complex process riddled by contradictions that are yet to be fully explored. In order to understand this process, it is necessary to look eastwards, beyond the spectacular violence of divided Punjab and its emergency resolution through an exchange of population.

### **'Thick' Citizenship: The Rival Meanings of Rehabilitation**

The equivalence between being a partition refugee and being a citizen changed the meaning of refugee rehabilitation in post-partition India. According to Ajit Prasad Jain, the central minister in charge of rehabilitation between 1950 and 1954, rehabilitation was a process designed to achieve 'the disappearance of all distinction' between refugees and other nationals.<sup>40</sup> Given that partition refugees were already acknowledged as de facto citizens and guaranteed voting rights, the erasure of 'all distinction' between them and other citizens did not denote a juridical change in their status. Instead, it denoted a project of state intervention into the social and economic lives of partition refugees, designed to restore them to normality. Schemes and policies of refugee rehabilitation are therefore best understood as part of a massive project of normalisation. However, this raises an obvious question – what did a 'normal' Indian citizen look like? There was no pre-figured standard of 'normal' socio-economic life for citizens of

<sup>38</sup> For details see Sanjib Baruah, *India Against Itself: Assam and The Politics of Nationality* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999) and Sujit Chaudhuri, 'A God-sent Opportunity?' in Seminar No. 510, *Porous Borders, Divided Selves: a Symposium on Partitions in the East*, February, 2002, (<http://www.india-seminar.com/2002/510/510%20sujit%20chaudhuri.htm>, last accessed 5 August 2015).

<sup>39</sup> Gayatri Bhattacharyya, *Refugee Rehabilitation and Its Impact on Tripura's Economy* (New Delhi: Omsons Publications, 1988).

<sup>40</sup> Cited in Prafulla Kumar Chakrabarti, *The Marginal Men: The Refugees and the Left Political Syndrome in West Bengal* (Calcutta: Naya Udyog, 1999), p. 255.

India. Through planning for rehabilitation, the Indian state generated multiple articulations of what the everyday 'normal life' of citizens could look like. The bureaucratic and political elite involved in authoring policies used this process to indulge their paternalistic ambitions of forging ideal members of the Indian nation-state out of refugees. Seen from the perspective of the state, the regime of rehabilitation was not only a normalising project, but also a creative one that articulated top-down visions of an ideal Indian citizen. However, partition refugees were not passive recipients of state policy. They brought with them their own aspirations of belonging and expectations from the state. The regime of rehabilitation became a sphere of governance characterised by clashes between rival ideals, aspirations and expectations around belonging and citizenship in post-colonial India. I read policies and practices of rehabilitation to tease out these subjective, experiential and idealised aspects of citizenship, that can collectively be called 'thick' citizenship, as opposed to 'thin' or formal aspects of citizenship, such as the right to vote and legal status.<sup>41</sup>

Bureaucrats who set out to rehabilitate refugees expected them to embody a range of desirable qualities and behaviours. Bengali refugees who relied on the state for rehabilitation were the most vulnerable to these scripts of thick citizenship, which the post-colonial state sought to inscribe on refugee bodies. This is not to suggest that rehabilitation was a neat or unidirectional process free from contestations. It was a polyphonic and dynamic sphere of governance that involved considerable negotiation between different levels and departments of government, which often had contradictory agendas. Joya Chatterji has traced at length how refugee rehabilitation in West Bengal was severely compromised by the differences between Dr B. C. Roy's government on one hand, and Nehru and the central Ministry of Rehabilitation on the other.<sup>42</sup> Even within the same level of government, different ministries often found themselves at odds with each other. For example, the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation could often find its schemes scuttled by the economising drive of the Ministry of Finance. Moreover, the actual shape that policies took was invariably informed by the specific interpretations of the men-on-the-spot, a process that Michael Lipsky has conceptualised as 'street-level bureaucracy'.<sup>43</sup> In order to capture this dynamic and

<sup>41</sup> For a summary of the multiple ways in which the distinction between 'thick' and 'thin' citizenship is evoked within theorisations on citizenship, see Will Kymlicka and Wayne Norman, 'Return of the Citizen: A Survey of Recent Work on Citizenship Theory', *Ethics*, 104:2 (1994), 352–81.

<sup>42</sup> Chatterji, *Spoils of Partition* (2007).

<sup>43</sup> Michael Lipsky, *Street-Level Bureaucracy: The Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Service* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1983).

contingent texture of the regime of rehabilitation I draw upon a wide range of sources including the records of various ministries, published reports and surveys, debates in legislative assemblies and the memoirs or testimonies of street-level bureaucrats. I argue that despite multiple contestations, a singular ideal of citizenship gradually came to be dominant within the regime of rehabilitation. Refugees were increasingly recast as hyper-masculine and productive agents of post-colonial development. By living up to this ideal, they could transform themselves into desirable members of the nation-state from the deviant figure of the citizen-refugee.

Idealised visions of citizenship were not new in South Asia. Multiple and rival ideals of belonging had co-existed in late colonial India. These notions of 'thick' citizenship included ideals of Islamic or Muslim belonging,<sup>44</sup> of Hindu homelands,<sup>45</sup> the liberal feminist vision of the universal Indian citizen unmarked by caste, class or ethnicity,<sup>46</sup> and an increasingly irrelevant colonial vision of a loyal subject-citizen.<sup>47</sup> The transfer of power from the crown to independent governments in 1947 was the watershed that marked the symbolic transition from colonial subjects to self-governing citizens. However, the specific iteration of citizenship in India, whether as legal status, identity, or as social and political rights, has been a contested and long-term process. Recent scholarship on Indian citizenship has largely focused on this dynamic aspect of citizenship by exploring how the actualisation of citizenship in India has been, and continues to be, informed by contingent histories. There is a broad consensus among historians and political scientists that

<sup>44</sup> For a range of conceptualisations of Muslim belonging see Farzana Shaikh, *Community and Consensus in Islam: Muslim Representation in Colonial India, 1860–1947* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Akbar S. Ahmed, *Jinnah, Pakistan and Islamic Identity: The Search for Saladin* (London: Routledge, 1997); Faisal Devji, *Muslim Zion: Pakistan as a Political Idea* (London: Hurst Publishers, 2013); Venkat Dhulipala, *Creating a New Medina: State Power, Islam, and the Quest for Pakistan in Late Colonial North India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

<sup>45</sup> For various iterations of Hindu nationalism in colonial India, see Tanika Sarkar, *Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation, Community, Religion, and Cultural Nationalism* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001); William Gould, *Hindu Nationalism and the Language of Politics in Late Colonial India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); and Christophe Jaffrelot, *Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics, 1925 to the 1990s* (London: Hurst Publishers, 1996). There is surprisingly little work on the impact of Hindu nationalism on the partition of India. Exceptions are Joya Chatterji's *Bengal Divided: Hindu Communalism and Partition, 1932–1947* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); and Neeti Nair's *Changing Homelands: Hindu Politics and the Partition of India* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).

<sup>46</sup> See Mrinalini Sinha, *Spectres of Mother India: The Global Restructuring of an Empire* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2006).

<sup>47</sup> For an exploration of the idea of the subject-citizen, see Niraja Gopal Jayal, *Citizenship and Its Discontents: An Indian History* (Cambridge, London: Harvard University Press, 2013), pp. 27–50.



the decade between 1946 and 1956 was a generative period for the cluster of ideas, rights and legal definitions that constitute Indian citizenship. Bookended by the convening of the Constituent Assembly and the passage of the Citizenship Act, this decade was also marked by the violence and dislocation of partition. However, different scholars have evaluated the significance of this period, and particularly, the impact of partition and its accompanying refugee crisis on histories of citizenship in divergent ways.

Joya Chatterji has traced how the political crisis of managing partition refugees gradually and definitively shifted the contours of legal citizenship in India from *jus soli*, i.e., citizenship by birth, towards *jus sanguinis*, or citizenship by heredity. The result was a peculiar form of citizenship that combined these two principles and was designed to elevate Hindu migrants to full citizens while simultaneously reducing Muslim residents to second-class or abject citizens.<sup>48</sup> Anupama Roy argues that the historical context of partition produced several liminal categories of people, who were neither fully citizens, nor entirely foreign. Within this category she includes not just displaced persons, but also minors, Pakistani wives and abducted women. Roy understands the Indian Citizenship Act as a moment of encompassment. It negotiated the conflict between the ground reality of differential access to citizenship and its universal promise by offering different ‘possibilities’ of becoming citizens to different groups – through birth, descent or registration.<sup>49</sup> Ornit Shani explores a similar idea of differential citizenship, drawing upon James Tully’s notion of diverse citizenship.<sup>50</sup> This body of work largely focuses on the impact of partition migration on the legal aspects of citizenship. Niraja Jayal’s survey of the changing citizenship regime in India does not fit this mould. Jayal not only explores the question of legal citizenship for partition refugees, but also explores what substantive citizenship looked like for different groups of migrants. She maps how the concept of citizenship, both as a cluster of rights and as an identity, changed over time.<sup>51</sup> This study builds upon Jayal’s approach of mapping diverse expressions of the idea of citizenship. However, it does so by exploring the clash between statist and popular idioms of citizenship within the regime of rehabilitation. Official reports of rehabilitation were replete with dense descriptions of the qualities that could enable a partition refugee to become a citizen of India. In this top-down vision, refugees

<sup>48</sup> Chatterji, ‘South Asian Histories of Citizenship, 1946–1970’ (2012), 1049–71.

<sup>49</sup> Anupama Roy, *Mapping Citizenship in India* (New Delhi, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

<sup>50</sup> Ornit Shani, ‘Conceptions of Citizenship in India and the ‘Muslim Question’’, *Modern Asian Studies*, 44:1, (2010), 145–73.

<sup>51</sup> Jayal, *Citizenship and Its Discontents* (2013).

were celebrated for demonstrating the civic virtues of self-reliance. However, most refugees who looked to official aid fell short of this ideal. The dominant ask within the regime of rehabilitation was not for self-rehabilitation, as Ravinder Kaur suggests.<sup>52</sup> Instead, refugees were required to demonstrate their willingness to engage in productive labour and to actively contribute to projects of national development. In fact, their access to rehabilitation depended upon their ability to perform this role of productive citizens furthering national development. Imposed selectively upon vulnerable refugee bodies, this was a far cry from any universal vision of active, participatory citizenship.

In stark contrast to this top-down ideal, refugees usually expressed their belonging to India in the language of rights or as an identity marked by both ethnicity and history. To understand refugee narratives of belonging I draw upon oral history interviews, autobiographical texts and a scattered archive of popular histories, pamphlets and memorandums which have been preserved in the personal collections of refugees. What emerges is a deeply fractured experience of rehabilitation where the ability of refugees to resist, utilise or adapt to policies varied widely depending on their class, caste and gender backgrounds. These divergent negotiations of the regime of rehabilitation challenges received wisdom on the agency of East Bengali refugees. Existing literature tends to equate the agency or resistance of refugees in West Bengal with the emergence of various refugee associations and their social role in building refugee colonies as well as their political role in fostering a refugee movement.<sup>53</sup> This narrative not only suffers from an overt focus on the capital city of Calcutta, but is also guilty of selectively feting urban, middle-class men as the authors of radical patterns of popular protest. All others tend to be portrayed as victims. Expanding the analytical lens to include the voices of rural refugees, peasants from depressed caste backgrounds and women destabilises this binary division of Bengali refugees into agents and victims. It also expands our understanding of refugee resistance and agency beyond the narrow format of oppositional politics and organised protest. Refugee reminiscences reveal a richly textured encounter between the state and its citizen-refugees where *all* refugees mobilised a range of everyday strategies to derive the best from a hostile regime of rehabilitation.<sup>54</sup> They bent

<sup>52</sup> Ravinder Kaur, 'Distinctive Citizenship: Refugees, Subjects and Post-colonial State in India's Partition,' *Cultural and Social History*, 6:4 (2009), 429–46.

<sup>53</sup> For example, see Pradip Kumar Bose (ed.), *Refugees in West Bengal: Institutional Practices and Contested Identities* (Calcutta: Calcutta Research Group, 2000) and Chakrabarti, *The Marginal Men* (1999).

<sup>54</sup> This draws upon James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985).

as well as broke rules, greased palms as often as they threw bombs, and appealed to sympathetic bureaucrats no less than they protested against apathetic ones.

This book is divided into two sections. The first part consists of two chapters and traces the official response to the crisis of rehabilitation in West Bengal. Chapter 1 explores the evolution of policies between 1947 and 1971. It counters the dominant perception of rehabilitation in the East as a collection of knee-jerk reactions and ill-planned, piecemeal schemes. Instead, it traces the emergence of a coherent governmentality that informed policy. It seeks to explain *why* East Bengali refugees were treated as an unwanted population and how this initial reluctance gave way to schemes specifically designed for their rehabilitation. These schemes were scattered across India and extended the impact of partition migration far beyond the frontiers of West Bengal. Chapter 2 focuses on one such scheme – the resettlement of Bengali refugees in the Andaman Islands. It began in 1949 as the opportunistic use of refugees to meet labour shortages in the Andaman Islands. By 1952, it was transformed into a five-year scheme of ‘Development and Colonisation’, which continued till 1961. The Andaman Islands functioned as an unlikely laboratory for crafting policy, where through trial and error, the limits and possibilities of transforming East Bengali refugees into productive citizens were mapped out. The connected histories of rehabilitation in West Bengal and development in these Islands points to the inadequacy of regionally bound analytical frameworks for understanding the Bengali refugee experience. The national government played an increasingly dominant role in authoring policies of rehabilitation. The implementation of schemes of dispersal saw the involvement of actors from multiple states, including Orissa, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Uttaranchal and even Gujarat. In sum, the wide dispersal of Bengali refugees gave partition’s aftermath a pan-Indian scope.

The second part of this book consists of three chapters and traces how East Bengali refugees negotiated the regime of rehabilitation. Displaced Hindus from eastern Pakistan were a heterogeneous group and policies impacted them differently depending on their gender, class and caste backgrounds. The compulsion to perform ideal citizenship fell disproportionately upon refugees who had the least resources and had to rely on aid from the state. By contrast, refugees from urban and middle-class backgrounds could draw upon their social and cultural capital to successfully resist state diktat. Chapters 3 and 4 explore the divergent negotiation of the regime of rehabilitation by refugees from different class and caste backgrounds. Chapter 3 is based on interviews with *Namasudra* peasants who were dispersed to the Andaman Islands and provides an insight into

how the poorest among the refugees negotiated the regime of rehabilitation. Chapter 4 analyses the reminiscences and autobiographies of the *bhadralok* refugees who built the Bijoygarh squatters' colony in the outskirts of Calcutta. These two sections of West Bengal's refugee population were socially and culturally distinct, and generated very different textures of memory and identity. Taken together, these two chapters mitigate against any singular understanding of the Bengali refugee experience.

When compared to the growing body of scholarship on regional histories of partition and its aftermath, there are very few studies that explore class and caste difference *within* particular refugee groups. Ravinder Kaur's work is a noted exception. She demonstrates how class background determined the speed and pattern of travel for Punjabi refugees and how caste hierarchies marked the organization of space and relationships within the refugee camps of Delhi.<sup>55</sup> When it comes to refugees from East Bengal, the impact of class and caste difference upon patterns of migration is well-documented.<sup>56</sup> However, the impact of caste upon patterns of rehabilitation is yet to be explored in a systematic manner. Received wisdom largely understands caste as a divisive factor that fractured the social life within urban refugee colonies and splintered refugee politics.<sup>57</sup> Annu Jalais demonstrates how the massacre of the refugees who had settled illegally in the Marichjhapi region of Sunderbans was enabled in no small measure by the upper-caste disdain for Dalit lives.<sup>58</sup> Within this literature, caste difference is mobilised episodically, in order to either explain the limits of refugee organisation or the excesses of state repression. This study breaks new ground by demonstrating how caste difference did not merely inform how refugees experienced rehabilitation, but was also a constitutive element in the formulation and implementation of policy.

Though politicians and bureaucrats skirted around issues of class and caste difference that fractured refugee communities, the role of gender difference found a prominent place within policy. The Indian state actively acknowledged the special needs of single and widowed refugee women. Chapter 5 explores the place of refugee women with the regime of rehabilitation. By exploring the experiences of East Bengali women who

<sup>55</sup> Ravinder Kaur, 'The Last Journey,' *Economic and Political Weekly*, 41: 22 (2006), 2221–8; and *Since 1947: Partition Narratives Among Punjabi Migrants of Delhi* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

<sup>56</sup> See Chatterji, *Spoils of Partition* (2007).

<sup>57</sup> Manas Ray, 'Growing Up Refugee', *History Workshop Journal*, 53:1, (2002), 149–79; and Chakrabarti, *Marginal Men* (1999).

<sup>58</sup> Annu Jalais, 'Dwelling on Morichjhanpi: When Tigers Became "Citizens", Refugees 'Tiger-Food', *Economic and Political Weekly* 40, no. 17 (2005): 1757–62.

were admitted to permanent liability or PL camps, it complements the ground-breaking scholarship by Urvashi Butalia, Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin that exposed the gendered violence suffered by refugee women, but focused almost exclusively on Punjab.<sup>59</sup> It reads state paternalism towards ‘unattached’ refugee women as bureaucratic violence that was designed to preserve the performance of full citizenship as a male prerogative in India.

Though all displaced Hindus from eastern Pakistan strove to become citizen-refugees, not all of them succeeded. This book chronicles both the successes and failures of East Bengali refugees in their struggle to rebuild lives. It maps the bureaucratic violence of state policy that reduced thousands of displaced families to marginal lives, by denying them official recognition as refugees and substantive rehabilitation. For many this entailed joining the ranks of the undocumented. For others, the denial of official aid, in the form of adequate loans or well-planned rehabilitation schemes, was the greater loss that plunged generations into poverty. For some refugees, success entailed resisting official policies, while for others, it entailed being able to sign on to a resettlement scheme of their choice. Yet others felt trapped in ill-planned schemes that either imposed point-less hardship, or doled out mere relief in lieu of substantive rehabilitation. In all these contexts, refugees presented themselves as citizens of India and claimed adequate relief and rehabilitation from the government as a political right. The Hindu refugees’ quest to belong thus generated multiple scripts of everyday citizenship that evolved in dialogue and contestation with the official, top-down vision of an ideal Indian citizen.

<sup>59</sup> Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin, ‘Abducted Women, The State and Questions of Honour’, and Urvashi Butalia, ‘Community State and Gender: On Women’s Agency During Partition’ in *Economic and Political Weekly*, ‘Review of Women’s Studies’, 24 April 1993, 2–11 and 12–21; Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin, *Borders and Boundaries: Women in India’s Partition* (New Delhi, 1998) and Urvashi Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence: Voices From the Partition of India* (New Delhi, 1998).