

Participation of Refugees Rehabilitation in India: Post Independent India (1947)

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ABSTRACT

Partition was a highly controversial system and is still a source of much tension in the subcontinent. Since independence in 1947, India received about 8 million political refugees from four neighboring countries, West Pakistan (now Pakistan), East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), Tibet and Sri Lanka, between 1970-71, namely Punjabis (4.7 million), Bengalis (2.5 million), Tibetans (80 thousand) and Ceylonese Tamils (0.5 million) respectively. It was one of the largest and fastest migrations in human history, with an estimated 14.5 million people leaving the country in 4 years (Bhardwaj, Khawaja and Mian, 2008). It is estimated that 16.7 million people were forced to leave the country in the four years following Partition. The arrival of 14.5 million people during the same period, suggests that 2.2 million people were "missing" or missing at the time of partition. The timing and conditions of entry of these groups, the size of the migration waves, and the strategies adopted for their adjustment varied. Three regions of India: Punjab, the Himalayas, and West Bengal can be considered as reservoirs for the refugees and the subsequent release of their flows. But resettlement became more complex because the environmental conditions of the places of origin and destination were very different. The strategies and locations of resettlement, the consequences, the extent of success or failure, and the aspects of associated regional development varied for different groups and different regions.

Keyword: India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, West Bengal, Bhardwaj, Khawaja, Mian, Himalaya, Migration.

INTRODUCTION

India is not a party to the 1951 Refugee Convention or the 1967 Protocol. The status of refugees in India is largely governed by political and administrative decisions, rather than any codified model of behavior. The government's temporary approach has led to different treatment of different refugee groups. Some groups are provided with full benefits, including legal residence and the ability to legally work, while others are criminalized and denied access to basic social resources.

This paper will be primarily concerned with Tibetans and Bangladeshis who contrast most sharply in terms of the degree of success achieved in cultural-ecological adaptation and rehabilitation. Culture here refers to the 'journey of nature' which is an interactive set of value systems, strategic technologies and material and non-material characteristics. The ecological interaction of culture refers to the process of adaptation of culture to its environment and ecosystem. The four distinct cultural groups of Punjabis, Bengalis, Sri Lankan Tamils and Tibetans who entered India as political refugees settled in two distributional patterns. a) diffuse, spread across a large number of diverse ecosystems b) concentrated, Consistent with the environmental context. The trinity of refugee resettlement and development operates on the basis of mutual cause and effect relationships between distribution, ecology and culture (economy and technology). For the analysis, most of the data is mainly compiled from the post-partition census reports of 1951, 1961 and 1971.

THE PUNJABI REFUGEES

The Punjabi refugees have been the most successful in rebuilding their lives and achieving a level of prosperity compared to other groups. They are the most widespread and well-distributed in all economic activities and have fully integrated with the regional population and environmental lineage. The Punjabi refugees consist of two religious groups, Sikhs and Hindus. The Sikhs are represented by four castes, Jats, Artisans, servants and scheduled castes, where Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Baniyas formed the main Hindu castes.

By 1951, a relatively short period of time had seen a massive influx of people, with about 4.7 million Punjabi refugees, three-quarters of whom were in north-west India (including 60% in Punjab). The Punjabi diaspora spread widely to areas as far away as Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan and the Chambal Valley and Malwa regions of Madhya Pradesh.

About 60% of the refugees settled in rural areas and the rest in cities. Their proportions in agriculture, higher education and commerce were 40, 25 and 16% respectively. Fortunately for the refugees, the eviction properties left behind by the Muslims were plentiful and could be allotted to Punjabi refugees in both urban and rural areas. Many of the refugee farmers had migrated to the canal colonies of West Punjab and received land in their ancestral villages. Their resettlement in Punjab and Delhi, a mammoth task, was undertaken by the government. In other cases, however, resettlement was carried out through their own initiative, pragmatism and opportunism.

The characteristics of urban and rural resettlement differed, though the degree of success in both cases was much higher than expected. Urban Punjabis often moved repeatedly in search of employment opportunities and dispossessed property. Some of them went as far as Assam, Kerala, Madras and Bombay.

The Punjabi refugee farmers, like their urban counterparts, were resettled in a variety of ecological and spatial environments, including the Bir (savannah lands, formerly hunting grounds for feudal rulers), the sandy plains of Hisar, the annually flooded Dhak forests of Karnal, the Bet (recent flood-plains), the Terai (hill marshes), the mineral areas of Bihar, the plantation areas of Assam and the ravines of Gwalior. Many of them left agriculture and settled in Bombay, Madras, Durgapur, Bihar and Rourkela as commercial entrepreneurs and engineering and transport workers. They worked in a surprisingly wide range of fields.

Initially, the Punjabis were confident pioneer settlers. Almost immediately, they developed a strong and clear interest group, established contacts with the Agenzia Fides government and insisted on having their grievances heard and their demands met. The Punjabi refugees not only survived but also offered their place in the alien environment. Everywhere they overcame regional and local barriers to prosper.

THE TIBETANS

Recently in 1914, Britain, China and Tibet signed a peace treaty that formally recognized Tibet as an independent country. Representatives of the major monasteries ruled the country under the leadership of the Dalai Lama. The Tibetan people have a deep faith in religion and Buddhism reigned in every aspect of their lives. In 1949, China invaded Tibet. Two years later, Chinese troops forcibly occupied Tibet, killing, detaining and arresting thousands of Tibetan citizens. At the time of the 1951 census, the number of Tibetan political refugees in India was about 3,000. By the 1961 census, this number had reached about 43,000 (a 1,500% increase) and soon after 1971 it had reached 50,000-80,000. Today, there are about 150,000 Tibetan refugees in India.

The main reason for choosing India as their destination was the country's willingness to accept them as political refugees. However, the perception of the compatibility of Tibetan and Indian cultures was also a major factor. According to the 1951 census, 70% of Tibetan refugees were concentrated in West Bengal, 20% in the Himalayan region of Uttar Pradesh. Arrivals and temporary resettlement were limited to the Himalayan states, which resembled southern Tibet in terms of climate and topography. But by the late fifties, when the migration to other states began, the most serious obstacle to resettlement was the environmental incompatibility of the resettlement areas with the indigenous Tibetan culture.

Although the Indian government continues to allow Tibetans to enter the country, it has not granted them the same legal status as the first wave. However, some Tibetans who arrived in the second wave were able to obtain registration certificates by claiming their birthplace in India. Tibetans in India live in 37 different settlements and 70 scattered communities.

Himachal Pradesh, Ladakh, Arunachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, South Sikkim, West Bengal, Maharashtra and Odisha. Of the settlements, less than half are based on agriculture, while one-third are agro-industrial and one-fifth are handicraft-based. The scattered communities consist of small groups. Tibetans outside the official settlements who were unwilling or unable to settle in the settlements due to limited resources. Initially, the Himalayan settlements played a significant role in the resettlement process. The Himalayas were considered a 'bridge' culture (Saklani 1978:42). Upon reaching the Himalayas, Tibetan refugees were left destitute and faced various problems of integration. In India, Tibetans live in 37 different settlements and 70 scattered communities in Himachal Pradesh, Ladakh, Arunachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, South Sikkim, West Bengal, Maharashtra and Orissa. Of the settlements, less than half are based on agriculture, while one-third are agro-industrial and one-fifth are handicraft-based. The scattered communities consist of small Tibetan groups who were unwilling to live outside the official settlements, or were unable to settle due to limited resources. Depending on the amount of land available for distribution, refugees received 1 to 2 acres of land per person. Since the Himalayas are lacking in arable land, the population of the settlements is kept to a minimum of 1500. Each settlement has at least two camps, one at low altitude and the other at high altitude. This enables them to grow a wide range of crops and to use wherever arable land is available. But the combination of heavy rainfall and rapid

deforestation accelerates the erosion of the loose topsoil after two years of good harvests. Animal husbandry has been an important component of the agricultural economy in Tibet. But in India, for Tibetan refugees, land for grazing is limited and the adjacent forests are protected and preserved. Therefore, the domesticated diet of Tibetans is not entirely satisfied by local methods. Dairy and vegetable farming and handicraft industries develop in settlements near the cities whose products are readily sold in urban markets. Throughout the Himalayan settlements, a portion of the population settles in permanent settlements, while others move to peninsular settlements. Road settlements are essentially labor camps, consisting of 40 to 50 tents, and are temporary in nature.

From the beginning, Tibetan resettlement projects were embedded in larger government-sponsored and organized agricultural colonization programs (Krishak 1974:50). This gave the efforts a certain direction, immediacy, and sustainability.

Tibetan refugees have largely succeeded in culturally ecologically, in rebuilding their economies, and in partially integrating with larger, regional, non-Tibetan groups, but they have not yet become an integral element of mainstream Indian national life. There is significant interaction between them and the locals, mainly economic, but there is little mutual assimilation of cultural characteristics. To achieve this, they will have to accept Indian nationality, which the Indian government is willing to grant, spread them out into more and more settlements throughout the country, and fully adopt the Indian way of life. Tibetans refuse to accept these measures, which, in their assessment, will thwart efforts to preserve their cultural identity and reduce the chances of their one-day return to Tibet.

From the perspective of the Indian authorities, Tibetan refugees are a nuisance, both economically and politically. Their settlement has put enormous pressure on scarce land resources and has seriously hampered regional development.

SRI LANKAN TAMILS REFUGEES

The Sri Lankan Tamils who came to India as refugees in the 1960s as a result of an agreement between Shastri and Bandaranaike are descendants of Tamils who had been sent to Ceylon as cheap agricultural labourers in the 1840s and who later migrated. In Sri Lanka, Tamils settled mainly in the Jaffna peninsula and the interior hilly areas (Ginsburg 1958:666; Silva 1977:117). Initially, where they first settled, Tamils were skilled rice farmers who were skilled in dry-farming techniques, although on small farms, later they were more recent immigrants, employed mainly as plantation and zamindari labourers.

The level of development depends on the extent and method of use of the environmental relations encountered at the distribution point. The level of development decreases with increasing distance from the reservoir and the first distribution point. The reservoir is the place where the maximum effort is invested, which is reduced by the allocation and directive role of the government, resulting in high regional specialization.

Applying this model to the Indian experience, we find that in the case of Punjabis, resettlement and subsequent settlement have been in more developed areas where the refugees can benefit and contribute to development. Their highest concentration is in the states of Punjab and Haryana where their impact on development is greatest. It is widely believed that the miraculous development of Punjab in the post-independence period is largely due to Punjabi refugees. This model is undoubtedly best evidenced in the case of Punjabi refugee movements and resettlement. This model describes and explains the movement, size, resettlement and development relationship of various refugee groups in India. This helps us to try to make a comparative assessment of the efforts of the four groups and other agencies for resettlement.

In the final analysis it can be said that the Punjabi refugees have emerged as the most well-coordinated group, followed by the Tibetans. Although the Sri Lankan Tamils have not been able to fully settle and some still move around in urban areas or between rural and urban areas, most have been successfully resettled. Undoubtedly, the least well-coordinated are the Bengali refugees who have faced cultural environmental failures and have been subjected to government discrimination.

BENGALI REFUGEES

Bengali refugees consist of Bengali Hindus, Bengali Muslims and tribal groups from East Pakistan and Bangladesh between 1947 and 1971. India was partitioned in 1947.

In 1947, two sovereign states, India and Pakistan, were created. Pakistan's Hindu population, numbering about three million, is concentrated mainly in the southern province of Sindh. Following this stream of migrants, Bengali Muslims and tribal groups entered India mainly after 1971. Since the Indo-Pakistani wars of 1965 and 1971, tense inter-communal relations between the Hindu and Muslim communities in Pakistan have become more evident. Growing insecurity among Hindus, especially the rise of right-wing Islamist groups in the country, has forced more Hindus to migrate to India. The

Islamization of the country under the dictatorship of Zia ul-Haq made life difficult for religious minorities in Pakistan in the late 1970s and 1980s. After the demolition of the Babri Masjid

After the construction of the mosque in Ayodhya in 1992, a backlash against the Hindu community forced many more to flee to India.

The resettlement of Bengali Hindus is clearly a complex issue and the government has had trouble identifying and assessing it. Before the migrants can be identified, they either blend in with the vast majority of humanity living in rural Bengal or head straight to the dying metropolis of Kolkata. On the other hand, Muslim migrants have not yet been given any opportunity.

However, the Indian Constitution and the Indian Citizenship Act of 1955 make specific provisions for those born in undivided India or whose parents were born in undivided India to apply for Indian citizenship. The Citizenship Amendment Act of 2004 specifically allows Pakistanis to apply for citizenship in Gujarat and Rajasthan. The condition for citizenship is that the person must have resided in India continuously for five years, as do other foreign applicants for citizenship, for 12 years, and intend to reside in India permanently. As a result of this law, which dramatically sped up the application process, the Indian government awarded a reward of \$13,000.

Between 2005 and 2006, Hindu Pakistanis were granted Indian citizenship. Once Pakistani refugees acquired citizenship, they would have the same rights as Indian citizens. The amendment

However, the 2005 Citizenship Act has greatly increased the fee structure for citizenship applications. These fees are exorbitant for the poorest Pakistanis, who are permanently disenfranchised.

Initially, the Bengali refugees were confined to the human reservoirs of West Bengal, where they tried to adapt to the environmental conditions in a very unfamiliar environment. However, the economic constraints were overwhelming and their problems would not be solved without moving. There was little help from the government, which was mainly interested in moving them out of West Bengal and resettling them somewhere as far away as Dandakaranya (inaccessible and remote from West Bengal). This is a forested area, ranging from 200 to 900 meters in altitude and having many intermittent and perennial streams. Environmental constraints include the risk of insufficient rainfall at the beginning and end of the southwest monsoon, heavy clay soil in the valley bottoms.

A total of 15,000 families are in the abandoned settlements, of which about 500 are still living. Those who have already been living in the Sundarbans for 15 to 20 years. Several thousand of them have moved to the Sundarbans delta on their own, clearing the forest and establishing settlements, without any planning, in the style of the rural landscape of Bangladesh. Considering that the settlements in the Sundarbans are rapidly stabilizing, the immediate question arises as to why the Dandakaranya project failed?

Dandakaranya is inaccessible and remote from West Bengal. Its climate, terrain and soil are not suitable for rice and jute cultivation. Due to the ecosystem arising from rivers and alluvial soils, the culture and farming of Bengali farmers have not been able to successfully adapt to the regional landscape. Bengalis have consistently refused to learn the local, tribal languages, most of which are non-Aryan, and therefore cannot communicate with the local tribal groups. Conflicting claims over forests, rivers, ponds, trade, transport, social amenities and economic opportunities further impeded integration with the local population. At times, the simmering anger erupted into open clashes.

The resettlement of Bengali refugees was a cultural-ecological failure: the local Bengali culture, historically and functionally rooted in the Bengali ecosystem, and the lack of resilience and capacity to adopt and innovate proved incompatible with a foreign ecological environment. This failure was exacerbated by the fact that the refugees' technological capacity to adapt to their culture was severely weakened by political indecision and persecution.

There has been a sudden but continuous but unrelated influx of Bangladeshi tribal populations from the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh into the Indian states of Tripura, Mizoram and Assam. In the latter half of the 1980s, more than 30,000 of them, mainly from the Chakma, Tripura and Mag tribes, entered India. Their uncertain political status hindered their resettlement. In India, their traditional way of life, which is slash-and-burn farming, hunting and fishing, is not permitted. Their resettlement will be environmentally difficult due to limited forest and wildlife resources and extremely fragile ecological complexities. Also, tribal populations, accustomed only to humid, forested hilly areas, cannot be resettled in an ecological environment elsewhere in India. Therefore, they will have to be resettled in areas adjacent to their homeland in Bangladesh, even though this will result in massive environmental destruction and a lower economic livelihood potential.

CONCLUSION

The concept of refugee resettlement can be formulated using a model involving six elements: country of origin, reservoir, dispersal pattern, location of distribution, ecological relationships, and level of development. The highest concentration of refugees occurs in the host country adjacent to the place of origin; here the ecological relationships and cultural structure closely resemble those of the country of origin. This area is the reservoir and its extent and capacity are determined partly by the length of international borders and partly by the similarity of ecosystems and cultures. Streams flow from the reservoir in different directions, some of which are determined by government policies. These flows gradually lose strength as intervening opportunities take over some of the resources.

Distribution is related to environmental relations. The level of development depends on the extent and method of use of the environmental relations encountered at the distribution point. The level of development decreases with increasing distance from the reservoir and the first distribution point. The maximum effort is invested in the reservoir and the development is most intensive. This pattern is severely reduced due to the allocation and directive role of the government, which results in high regional specialization.

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