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Relief, Labour, and Resettlement: The Political Economy and Social Hierarchies among Refugees in West Bengal, 1947–1960

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Abstract:
The Partition of India in 1947 triggered a prolonged movement of refugees from East Pakistan into West Bengal, placing immense pressure on the limited resources of the newly formed state. This article examines the policies and institutional mechanisms through which the West Bengal government attempted to manage this influx during the late 1940s and 1950s. It argues that refugee rehabilitation operated through a stratified administrative framework that linked access to relief and settlement to official assessments of economic productivity and "rehabilitability." Through the creation of transit camps, worksite camps, and Permanent Liability camps, the state differentiated between self-reliant refugees, potentially productive labouring populations, and those deemed permanently dependent on state support. The article further demonstrates that class and caste significantly shaped the trajectories of refugee settlement. While many middle-class *bhadralok* refugees were able to rehabilitate themselves through urban employment and the formation of squatters' colonies, poorer agrarian and lower-caste migrants were more dependent on camps and state-sponsored resettlement schemes, often located in marginal or frontier regions. Despite the persistence of caste hierarchies in settlement patterns and administrative practice, refugee mobilisation in West Bengal was largely articulated through the language of class and economic deprivation. By situating rehabilitation policy within the broader political economy of the postcolonial state, the article highlights how refugee governance simultaneously managed displacement and reproduced social inequalities.

Keywords: Partition of India, Refugee Rehabilitation, Labour, Caste and Class, Refugee Camps, Postcolonial State.

The Partition of India in 1947 generated one of the most extensive and protracted movements of population in the twentieth century. In eastern India, the displacement of Hindus from East Pakistan to West Bengal unfolded not as a singular moment of rupture but as a long-drawn process that continued through the late 1940s and 1950s. Unlike Punjab, where the exchange of populations occurred rapidly, migration across the Bengal border occurred in successive waves triggered by periodic violence, political uncertainty, and economic marginalisation in East Pakistan. The cumulative impact of this sustained influx placed extraordinary pressure on the limited resources of the newly formed state of West Bengal. Land scarcity, urban overcrowding, and financial constraints forced the state government to devise a range of relief and rehabilitation measures whose effectiveness remained uneven and contested.

This article argues that refugee rehabilitation in post-Partition West Bengal was shaped by a deeply stratified logic that linked state assistance to assumptions about economic productivity, social respectability, and "rehabilitability." Rather than constituting a uniform humanitarian programme, rehabilitation policy operated through a graded administrative framework that differentiated between self-reliant middle-class refugees, potentially productive labouring populations, and those classified as "permanent liabilities." These distinctions structured the creation of transit camps, worksite camps, and Permanent Liability (PL) camps, each reflecting a particular vision of how displaced populations should be governed, disciplined, and incorporated into the postcolonial developmental state.

At the same time, the article highlights how class and caste significantly shaped the trajectories of refugee settlement. Earlier waves of largely middle-class bhadralok migrants were often able to rehabilitate themselves through professional employment, entrepreneurship, and the creation of urban squatters' colonies, particularly in and around Calcutta and other industrial districts. In contrast, later arrivals—many of whom belonged to lower-caste agrarian and artisanal communities—possessed fewer resources and became far more dependent on state-sponsored rehabilitation schemes. The state's response to these populations frequently involved dispersal to camps, rural resettlement projects, or relocation outside West Bengal under centrally coordinated schemes. In practice, therefore, refugee rehabilitation policies both reflected and reproduced existing social hierarchies.

The article further examines the paradoxical marginality of caste in the formal political discourse surrounding refugee mobilisation in West Bengal. While caste identities continued to influence administrative practices, settlement patterns, and access to resources, the dominant language of protest and organisation within camps was framed largely in terms of class exploitation and economic deprivation. The influence of left-oriented political parties and refugee organisations contributed to this framing, subsuming caste distinctions within a broader idiom of proletarian struggle. Yet the differential experiences of middle-class, artisan, and lower-caste refugees reveal how caste remained embedded in the social and institutional structures of rehabilitation.

By analysing administrative records, contemporary accounts, and secondary scholarship, this article situates refugee rehabilitation within the broader political economy of postcolonial governance in West Bengal. It shows that rehabilitation policies were not merely responses to a humanitarian crisis but mechanisms through which the state attempted to regulate displaced populations, mobilise their labour for developmental projects, and manage the pressures of demographic transformation. In doing so, these policies produced new forms of social differentiation that shaped the long-term integration of refugee communities in eastern India.

REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN WEST BENGAL

In June 1949, Bidhan Chandra Roy assumed charge of the Ministry of Rehabilitation in West Bengal and appointed Hiranmoy Bandyopadhyay, then District Magistrate of 24-Parganas, as Commissioner of the Relief and Rehabilitation Department. Bandyopadhyay later provided an important administrative account of the government's refugee policy in his book *Udvastu* (1970). According to his account, around 7,500 women and children were accommodated in Permanent Liability (PL) camps in West Bengal.[1] He classified refugees into three broad categories:

1. Self-reliant refugees who did not seek government assistance and relied entirely on their own resources.

2. Economically distressed but self-confident refugees who lacked sufficient funds but believed they could rebuild their livelihoods independently.
3. Destitute refugees who were extremely poor and had no realistic chance of survival without sustained government support.[2]

This categorization reflected the state's administrative approach to rehabilitation, where eligibility for assistance and long-term settlement often depended on assessments of economic capacity and "rehabilitability," shaping the social stratification within the refugee population in post-Partition West Bengal.

The continuing influx of refugees into West Bengal after Partition led to a steady expansion of camps designed to provide shelter and regulate relief. Broadly, three types of camps were established, each serving a distinct administrative and rehabilitative function.

1. **Transit Camps:** Transit camps functioned as the first point of reception for incoming refugees. They were meant to be temporary holding spaces where new arrivals were registered, medically examined, and provided with basic rations and shelter. Refugees in these camps were largely dependent on government doles. However, the state encouraged able-bodied inmates to seek employment under special schemes so that they would not remain indefinitely reliant on relief.:
2. **Worksite Camps:** Worksite camps were established with the explicit objective of promoting self-support through labour. Refugees residing here were employed in building prospective refugee colonies and in developmental projects such as, road construction, reclaiming marshy or wasteland, infrastructure development. These camps embodied the state's broader rehabilitation philosophy—transforming refugees from relief-dependent subjects into productive citizens through wage-based work.
3. **Permanent Liability (PL) Camps**

Permanent Liability (PL) camps were designed for those deemed incapable of economic self-rehabilitation—including widows, abandoned women, orphaned children, the elderly, and the physically disabled. These individuals were considered "permanent liabilities" on the state because they lacked family support and earning capacity. Unlike transit or worksite camps, PL camps were not oriented toward economic productivity but toward custodial care and long-term subsistence support.[3]

Together, these three categories of camps reflected the graded nature of the rehabilitation policy in post-Partition West Bengal. Relief was not uniform; it was structured around assumptions about productivity, gender, family status, and economic potential—creating hierarchies within the refugee population itself. Old people, destitute women, and children formed the principal inmates of the Permanent Liability (PL) camps. These residents were entirely dependent on government assistance for food, shelter, clothing, and medical care, as they lacked both family support and earning capacity. In administrative terms, they were classified as "non-rehabilitable," and the camps functioned more as custodial institutions than as sites of economic recovery. However, the mere establishment and categorisation of camps proved far from adequate as a relief measure—let alone as a meaningful rehabilitation policy. The state struggled to anticipate or accurately assess the magnitude and continuity of the refugee influx from East Pakistan. As arrivals continued in waves, administrative planning remained reactive rather than systematic. Resources were overstretched, infrastructure was inadequate, and long-term integration strategies were uncertain. Thus, while the classification of transit, worksite, and PL camps reflected an attempt at bureaucratic order, it exposed the limits of the government's capacity. Relief often became a matter of managing crisis conditions rather than enabling sustainable rehabilitation, particularly for the most vulnerable sections—

elderly persons, widowed or abandoned women, and orphaned children—who remained permanently dependent on state support.

Refugees who arrived immediately before and after Partition were, in many cases, able to rehabilitate themselves without extensive state assistance. A significant proportion of them belonged to the middle-class, white-collar *bhadralok* Hindu community. Possessing education, administrative experience, and professional skills, they were comparatively better positioned to rebuild their lives through their own initiative. Many such refugees established squatters' colonies, occupying vacant land on the fringes of urban centres and gradually transforming them into organized neighbourhoods through collective effort. These colonies often developed basic infrastructure—roads, schools, markets—through community mobilization rather than direct government intervention. While some refugees dispersed to different districts of West Bengal in search of employment, the majority of middle-class *bhadralok* refugees preferred to settle in or around Calcutta. The city, as the administrative and commercial hub of eastern India, offered better prospects for white-collar employment. Others chose the industrial belts of: 24-Parganas, Burdwan, Hooghly. These districts were attractive because of their proximity to urban employment and industrial establishments. In Calcutta, many refugees sought positions in government administrative departments, academic institutions, corporations, and private companies. Their educational background facilitated entry into clerical and professional roles. Some also turned to entrepreneurship, establishing small businesses, shops, and service enterprises. This early wave of middle-class refugees thus contrasts sharply with later arrivals who were often poorer and more dependent on state support. Their relative economic capital and social networks enabled a form of self-rehabilitation, reinforcing internal stratifications within the broader refugee population of post-Partition West Bengal.

Artisans who migrated from East Bengal also preferred to settle in towns or on their outskirts, since urban centres offered markets and networks necessary for sustaining their traditional occupations. Unlike the rural poor who were often pushed into camps, artisan refugees attempted to integrate into existing industrial and commercial economies. For instance, many refugee artisans settled in Titagarh, a prominent jute-industry town near Calcutta, where they engaged in the craft of making bangles from conch shells (*shankha*). Similarly, numerous tailors and weaving communities regrouped in urban clusters. Thousands of Nath weavers, for example, settled in Nabadwip, rebuilding their occupational base through collective networks.[4]

These migrants from East Bengal were commonly labelled "Bangaals" by the "Ghotis," the established Bengalis of western Bengal—a distinction that reflected regional-cultural tensions within a shared linguistic community. Despite this social marking, earlier settlers often provided temporary shelter and assistance to relatives and acquaintances who arrived in successive waves after Partition. Kinship and community ties thus played a crucial role in facilitating initial settlement. In much the same way, and for similar economic reasons, the larger towns of West Bengal became powerful magnets for middle-class and artisan refugees. Urban centres—though already overcrowded—offered employment opportunities, markets, and social networks unavailable in rural areas. As a result, middle-class professionals and skilled artisans congregated in and around these towns in substantial numbers. Recognising both the pressures on existing cities and the relative self-reliance of this segment, the government established two major planned "township" colonies in Taherpur and Gayeshpur, both in Nadia district. These colonies were designed primarily for middle-class refugees and reportedly accommodated approximately 15,000 and 10,000 refugees respectively.[5] The creation of such townships illustrates the differentiated logic of rehabilitation: while the destitute were confined to Permanent Liability camps, the middle classes and skilled artisans

were encouraged to resettle in semi-urban planned colonies, reinforcing the stratified character of refugee rehabilitation in post-Partition West Bengal.

At Sealdah railway station, one of the principal entry points for refugees from East Pakistan, new arrivals were interrogated about their identity and issued registration cards that entitled them to space in government camps. Although officials publicly denied discrimination, caste identity often played a decisive—if unofficial—role in determining the nature and location of rehabilitation.[6] After 1950, thousands of lower-caste refugees were directed to camps across West Bengal. In the immediate post-Partition years, both the state and central governments opened numerous relief and transit camps to manage the influx before more permanent arrangements could be made. Some important relief camps included: Cooper's Camp, Dhubulia in Nadia, Bagda and Tangra village in Bongaon subdivision were relief cams. Transit camps were set up in rented jute godowns at: Ultadanga, Kashipur, Ghusuri, Babughat. These warehouses, originally industrial storage spaces, were hastily converted into temporary shelters. The elderly and infirm were transferred to Permanent Liability (PL) camps such as: Chandmari, Rupasree Palli. Special women's camps were established at: Titagarh, Bansberia. These camps housed single women and their children, reflecting the gendered vulnerabilities produced by Partition. Rehabilitation and vocational training centres were also created for destitute boys and girls at Titagarh and Andul, where orphans and adolescents received technical training aimed at economic self-sufficiency.[7]

As noted by Pranati Chaudhuri, by the end of October 1958 there were 126 Rehabilitation and Transit Camps and 26 Permanent Liability Camps sheltering 52,296 refugees, while approximately 240,600 persons were still living in camps, homes, and infirmaries. These figures demonstrate that even more than a decade after Partition, both the central and state governments had failed to arrive at a durable and comprehensive solution to refugee rehabilitation.[8] The persistence of large camp populations well into the late 1950s underscores the structural limitations of the rehabilitation policy. Administrative categorisation, while extensive, could not resolve the deeper economic, social, and caste-based inequalities that shaped the refugee experience in post-Partition West Bengal.

Refugee mobility did not always follow official channels. Those already housed in camps often wrote to relatives urging them to come to the same camp, creating informal chains of migration that intensified overcrowding. At the same time, the Government of West Bengal announced that able-bodied adult male refugees would receive government "doles" for only seven days after arrival. Thereafter, they were expected to arrange their own livelihood—an expectation that proved unrealistic given the scarcity of employment and housing.[9] Camp conditions were widely criticised. Sanitation was poor, toilets were inadequate, living quarters were congested, and food rations and medical facilities were insufficient. Relief frequently arrived late or was reduced. These harsh conditions provoked protests from opposition political parties and refugee organisations. At times, refugees undertook hunger strikes and "fasts unto death" to demand better treatment and more durable rehabilitation measures. The dehumanising environment of camp life blurred internal social distinctions. Hindu refugees—upper-caste and Dalit alike—were compelled to struggle collectively for basic survival. The immediacy of hunger, disease, and displacement produced a shared experience of marginalisation framed primarily through the category of "refugee" rather than caste. In such circumstances, articulating a distinct caste-based politics became exceedingly difficult. Moreover, many of the political parties and organisations that mobilised in support of refugees were predominantly left-leaning and led largely by caste-Hindu leadership. Their ideological emphasis rested on class struggle and economic exploitation, interpreting refugee distress as part of a broader proletarian condition. The possibility of foregrounding caste as a primary axis of political mobilisation remained

marginal to their political imagination. As a result, while caste hierarchies continued to operate socially and administratively, the dominant vocabulary of protest and organisation within the camps was framed in terms of class and material deprivation rather than caste identity.

This dynamic contributed to a longer-term paradox in West Bengal's political culture: the persistence of caste in social life alongside its relative marginality in formal political articulation during the early decades after Partition. From Sealdah railway station, refugees were systematically dispersed to different districts to ease the pressure on Calcutta. Large numbers were sent to: Udaipally in Burdwan, Liluah, Bali, Belur in Howrah. Nearly 50,000 refugees were reportedly resettled across these sites. Additionally, around 500 refugees were transferred to relief camps at Guskara and Panagarh in Burdewan district. In October 1950, approximately 4,000 refugees found shelter in Mahalandi village in Murshidabad district.[10] Agriculturist refugee families, in particular, sought accommodation in relief camps in Burdwan, hoping to regain access to cultivable land and resume agrarian livelihoods. A notable and innovative rehabilitation initiative in Burdwan was undertaken by the District Magistrate Basanta Kumar Bandyopadhyay. Recognising the agricultural background of many refugees, he encouraged them to settle on unsettled fallow lands along the banks of the Bhagirathi River, especially in the Kalna and Katwa subdivisions of the district. Under this scheme: Refugees were allotted fallow or reclaimed land for cultivation. The government extended loans to help them purchase agricultural land formally. Financial assistance was provided for housing construction, purchase of oxen, seeds, and basic farming implements.[11]

This approach marked a shift from mere custodial relief toward productive rehabilitation. By aligning settlement policy with the occupational skills of agriculturist refugees, the administration enabled them to achieve a measure of economic self-sufficiency. Contemporary accounts suggest that this agrarian resettlement plan proved relatively successful compared to overcrowded camp-based rehabilitation, offering a more sustainable model of integration into rural West Bengal's economy.

In 1951, the Government of West Bengal conducted a survey that revealed the scale and distribution of refugee settlement across the state. By that time, approximately 2,301,514 refugees had arrived in West Bengal. Their district-wise distribution was as follows:

- 24-Parganas – 569,064
- Calcutta – 422,343
- Nadia – 499,087
- West Dinajpur – 124,756
- Cooch Behar – 95,468
- Jalpaiguri – 101,521
- Burdwan – 108,210

The remaining refugees were dispersed across districts such as Howrah, Malda, Murshidabad, Hooghly, Midnapore, Darjeeling, Bankura, and Birbhum.[12] A striking feature of this demographic profile was that peasants constituted only about 40 per cent of the total refugee population, even though they had formed nearly three-quarters of East Bengal's Hindu population. Many of these agriculturist refugees fled under extreme duress, often without possessions, kinship networks, or occupational contacts in West Bengal. Unlike middle-class refugees—who could depend on education, skills, and urban employment opportunities—the peasant refugees had neither land nor immediate prospects for livelihood.[13] They tended to settle in districts such as Nadia, 24-Parganas, West Dinajpur, Cooch Behar, and Murshidabad. However, much of the land available in these regions was either less fertile or poorly irrigated, limiting agricultural productivity. Consequently, rural rehabilitation proved far more challenging than anticipated.

Faced with inadequate agricultural prospects, many peasant refugees gradually gravitated toward semi-urban and urban spaces in search of wage labour. Over time, they settled in suburban belts, often constructing makeshift colonies along railway lines and on vacant public or private land. These peripheral settlements became defining features of the post-Partition urban expansion of Calcutta and its surrounding districts, reflecting both the resilience of the refugees and the structural inadequacies of rural rehabilitation policies. The contrast between the relative ease of middle-class self-rehabilitation and the prolonged struggle of peasant refugees underscores the deeply uneven nature of refugee integration in post-Partition West Bengal.

After 1950, significant sections of Scheduled Caste (SC) fisherfolk migrated from East Pakistan to West Bengal. They settled primarily in Midnapore, the Sundarbans, Howrah, and Hooghly—areas that offered proximity to rivers, estuaries, and urban markets. Unlike many other refugee groups, these fisherfolk communities organised themselves collectively for social, economic, and political uplift. They formed the Paschim Banga Matsyajibi Samity, a unified platform aimed at community development and securing state support. Leaders such as Apurba Lal Majumdar and Purna Chandra Shastri played a crucial role in mobilising the displaced fisherfolk under this umbrella organisation.[14] Majherchar Settlement a government colony was established at Majherchar, on the banks of the Bhagirathi River, to rehabilitate about 500 fisherfolk families. Similarly, around 200 refugee weaver families were resettled in Chouhatta, near Rajpur Sonarpur, providing access to the markets of Howrah and Calcutta.[15]

However, both settlements suffered from serious infrastructural deficiencies. There were inadequate storage facilities, weak transport connectivity, and irregular supply of raw materials. Without these essential supports, concentrated occupational settlements struggled to achieve economic self-sufficiency. A 1972 review revealed that several fishermen at Majherchar had abandoned fishing altogether, shifting instead to wage labour as factory workers, petty traders, vendors, or casual day labourers—illustrating the fragility of occupational rehabilitation.[16]

Herobhanga Scheme at the Sundarbans address large-scale displacement, the state government launched the Herobhanga Scheme in the Sundarbans region of the 24-Parganas. Between July 1958 and March 1960, approximately 10,086 refugee families were rehabilitated under this scheme.[17] The initiative focused on settling refugees in reclaimed deltaic lands, encouraging agriculture and allied occupations. Yet, like many rehabilitation efforts in ecologically fragile zones, the scheme confronted challenges—saline soil, poor embankments, frequent flooding, and limited infrastructure. While it provided land and a measure of stability, long-term sustainability remained uncertain. These experiences highlight a crucial dimension of post-Partition rehabilitation in West Bengal: occupationally clustered settlements—whether of fisherfolk or weavers—required more than land allocation. Without integrated planning, infrastructure, and market linkages, such schemes often led to occupational shifts and proletarianization, particularly among lower-caste refugee communities.

To promote economic self-sufficiency among displaced persons, the government established a network of vocational training and production centres across West Bengal. Training Centres for Men were opened at: Titagarh, Habra, Gayeshpur, Taherpur, Chakdah, Rupasree Palli and for Women, Habra, Mierber, Uday Villa, Titagarh (Camp No. 2). A wide range of occupations and small-scale industries were introduced, including weaving, tailoring, transport services, brick manufacturing, dairy and poultry farming, conch-shell craft, cycle-rickshaw operations, woodcraft, leather processing, fishery, housing construction, and other small industrial enterprises. These initiatives sought to convert relief-dependent refugees into productive workers integrated into local economies.[18]

The government also introduced a system whereby able-bodied men were engaged in "useful work" in areas earmarked for final rehabilitation. Their labour contributed directly to the development of settlement sites. For example, in the Bagjola worksite camp—where 1,065 displaced families were settled—refugees participated in excavating irrigation canals to drain excess water and make the land habitable. Where permanent rehabilitation sites were not immediately available, refugees were deployed in larger state and central government projects, including the Damodar Valley Corporation and the Mor Canal project. Additionally, refugees were employed in tent-making, basket-making, and brick production. Muslim refugees who migrated to various districts of West Bengal were likewise absorbed into labour-intensive sectors such as building construction, tea gardens, cultivation, and industrial work.[19]

Overall, these policies reveal a transition from purely relief-oriented measures toward labour-based rehabilitation. However, the emphasis on productive engagement also reflected the state's desire to limit prolonged dole dependence. Rehabilitation was thus framed not only as social welfare but as disciplined incorporation into developmental and infrastructural projects—blurring the line between relief and labour mobilisation in post-Partition West Bengal. Though initially hesitant about assuming the full burden of refugee rehabilitation, the Government of West Bengal—under the leadership of Bidhan Chandra Roy—eventually undertook substantial efforts to organise relief and resettlement. Camps were expanded, township colonies were established, and training centres were opened to facilitate economic integration. Yet the scale and continuity of the influx from East Pakistan overwhelmed administrative planning. The flow of displaced persons did not cease after the initial upheaval of 1947; instead, it continued in waves through the late 1940s and 1950s. State resources were persistently strained. There were always more people arriving than housing constructed, more mouths than rations allocated, and more bodies than land available for settlement. Rehabilitation thus remained perpetually reactive and inadequate.

By the early 1950s, with successive waves of largely impoverished Dalit refugees arriving—many of whom lacked urban skills, capital, or social networks—the state's capacity reached a critical limit. Unlike the earlier middle-class refugees who had often self-rehabilitated in and around Calcutta, these later arrivals were more dependent on state support. Facing mounting financial and infrastructural pressure, the government increasingly adopted a policy of dispersal. As a result, many Dalit refugees were relocated outside West Bengal under centrally coordinated schemes. They were sent to less densely populated and underdeveloped regions in other parts of India, where land reclamation and colonisation projects were underway. This strategy reflected both economic constraints and social hierarchies: while earlier, relatively privileged refugees consolidated themselves within West Bengal, later and poorer arrivals were redirected to frontier zones beyond the state. The decision marked a decisive shift in refugee policy—from reluctant accommodation within West Bengal to enforced dispersal beyond it—revealing how class, caste, and timing of arrival significantly shaped the trajectory of refugee rehabilitation in post-Partition eastern India.

Conclusion:

The history of refugee rehabilitation in post-Partition West Bengal reveals that the process was neither uniform nor purely humanitarian in character. Rather, it was structured through a graded administrative logic that differentiated between categories of refugees according to perceived economic utility, social respectability, and rehabilitative potential. Through the establishment of transit camps, worksite camps, and Permanent Liability camps, the state attempted to transform a massive humanitarian crisis into a manageable administrative problem, regulating displaced populations while simultaneously mobilising their labour for developmental projects. In practice, however, these policies reproduced existing social

hierarchies within the refugee population. Earlier waves of middle-class bhadralok refugees, equipped with education, professional skills, and urban networks, were often able to secure employment or establish self-organised colonies in and around Calcutta. In contrast, later arrivals—particularly lower-caste agrarian and artisanal communities—were far more dependent on state-directed rehabilitation schemes and were frequently subject to dispersal, camp confinement, or relocation beyond the state.

At the same time, the politics of refugee mobilisation in West Bengal displayed a striking paradox. While caste identities shaped administrative practices, occupational trajectories, and patterns of settlement, the dominant language of protest and political organisation within camps remained largely framed in terms of class exploitation and economic deprivation. The influence of left-oriented political parties and refugee organisations encouraged the subsumption of caste distinctions within a broader idiom of proletarian struggle. As a result, caste persisted as a structuring force within everyday social and institutional life even as it remained relatively marginal in the formal political discourse of refugee mobilisation.

Seen in this light, refugee rehabilitation was not simply a policy response to displacement but a crucial arena in which the postcolonial state negotiated questions of citizenship, labour, and social hierarchy. The strategies adopted to manage refugee populations—whether through camps, planned colonies, rural resettlement, or inter-state dispersal—played a significant role in shaping the long-term socio-economic landscape of West Bengal. They also contributed to the enduring paradox of the region's political culture: the coexistence of deeply embedded caste hierarchies with a public political discourse that largely privileged the language of class.

End Notes:

1. Hiranmoy Bandyopadhyay, *Udvastu,* Deep Prakashan: Calcutta, 2018, p. 70.
2. Ibid., pp. 71–73.
3. For details see, Prafulla K. Chakrabarti, *The Marginal Men: The Refugees and The Left Political Syndrome in West Bengal,* Naya Udyog: Calcutta, 1999, and Hiranmoy Bandyopadhyay, *Udvastu*
4. Joya Chatterji, *The Spoils of Partition: Bengal and India, 1947–1967*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, New York, 2007, p. 123.
5. Ibid. pp. 123-125.
6. In Sealdah station, registration office issued three types of cards, which were red-coloured cards for those refugees able to take care himself and not willing to go to the camps: white-coloured cards for those refugees take shelter in the camps: and blue-coloured cards for those refugees only needed initial assistance for their travel before their own rehabilitation on the other side of the border. *Jugantar*, 26 and 27 March 1950, cited in Shekhar Bandyopadhyay and Anasua Basu Ray Chaudhury, "Partition, Displacement, and the Scheduled Caste Movement in West Bengal," in Uday Chandra, Geir Heierstad and Kenneth Bo Nielsen, eds., *The Politics of Caste in West Bengal*, Routledge: New Delhi, 2016.
7. Rup Kumar Barman, *Partition of India and its Impact on Scheduled Castes of Bengal,* Abhijeet Publication: New Delhi, 2012, p. 149. Also see, Hiranmoy Bandopadhyay, *Udvastu,* p. 22. See also Nilanjana Chatterjee, "The East Bengal Refugees: A Lesson in Survival," in Sukanta Chaudhuri, ed. *Calcutta: The Living City*, Vol. 2. Oxford University Press: Calcutta, 1990, p. 74. Also see, Anasua Basu Roy Chaudhury, "Living Another Life: Un-Homed in the Camps," in Anasua Basu Ray Chaudhury and Ishita Dey, *Citizens, Non-Citizens, and in the Camps Lives*, Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group: Kolkata, 2009, pp. 2–25.

8. Relief and Rehabilitation of Displaced Persons in West Bengal, Statement Issued by Government of West Bengal, 15 December 1958. Quoted in Pranati Chaudhuri, "Refugees in West Bengal: A Study of the Growth and Distribution of Refugee Settlement within the CMD," Occasional Paper No, 55, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences: Calcutta, 1983, p. 15.
9. Extract from W.C.R. of the superintendent of police, Murshidabad, for the week ending 30 July 1949, IB Records, F. No. 1809/48 (Midnapore), WBSA
10. *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, 1 July 1950.
11. Hiranmoy Bandyopadhyay, *Udvastu*, p. 47.
12. *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, 11 July 1951.
13. Joya Chatterji, *The Spoils of Partition*, p. 118.
14. For details see, Rup Kumar Barman, *Fisheries and Fishermen, a Socio-Economic History of Fisheries and Fishermen of Colonial Bengal and Post-Colonial West Bengal*, Abhijeet Publication: Delhi, 2008.
15. Hiranmoy Bandyopadhyay, *Udvastu,* pp. 72–74.
16. Uditi Sen, *Citizen Refugee: Forging the Indian Nation after Partition*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2018, p. 37.
17. *Jugantar*, 20 April 1960, cited in Uditi Sen, *Citizen Refugee*, pp. 54–55.
18. Displaced Persons in West Bengal, published by the Home Political Department, on behalf of the Refugee and Rehabilitation Department, Government of West Bengal, 1956, VIII, 13–3.
19. Government of West Bengal, File No, 351/49, WBSA,