In the shadow of displaceability: refugee and migrants in suburban Calcutta

Mukherjee, A.

In the Shadow of Displaceability: Refugees and Migrants in Suburban Calcutta

Aditi Mukherjee

In the Shadow of Displaceability: Refugees and Migrants in Suburban Calcutta

Proefschrift

ter verkrijging van

de graad van doctor aan de Universiteit Leiden,

op gezag van rector magnificus prof.dr.ir. H. Bijl,

volgens besluit van het college voor promoties

te verdedigen op 24 November 2021

klokke 10:00 uur

door

Aditi Mukherjee geboren te Kolkata, India

in 1986

Promotor

Prof. dr. N. K. Wickramasinghe

Copromotor

Dr. Sanjukta Sunderason (University of Amsterdam)

Promotiecommissie

Dr. Crystal Ennis

Prof. dr. Leo Lucassen

Prof. dr. Samita Sen (University of Cambridge)

Prof. dr. Willem van Schendel (University of Amsterdam)

Contents

Tables

Figures*

*[All images used in this dissertation are taken by the author unless other sources are specified.]

Maps

Abbreviations

AAGSP	All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad
AASU	All Assam Students' Union
ABD	Asian Development Bank
ABVP	Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad
ACCORD	Association for Community Cooperation & Rural Development
AITC	All India Trinamool Congress
ARP	Air Raid Precaution services
ARP	Association of Rag Pickers
BJP	Bhartiya Janata Party
BKBS	Bahirdoba Kendriya Bastuhara Samity
BKUS	Bahirdoba Kendriya Udbastu Samity
BMC	Bombay Municipal Corporation
BMS	Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh
BPL	Below Poverty Line
BSP	Bahujan Samaj Party
CAA	Citizenship Amendment Act
CDC	Cash Dole Card
CESC	Calcutta Electric Supply Corporation
CIT	Calcutta Improvement Trust
CMC	Calcutta Municipal Corporation
CMDA	Calcutta Metropolitan Development Authority
CMPO	Calcutta Metropolitan Planning Organisation
CPI	Communist Party of India
CPI(M)	Communist Party of India (Marxist)
DFID	Department of International Development, Government of the United Kingdom
GAP	Ganga Action Plan
GS Colonies	Government Sponsored Colonies
HSC	Hawker Sangram Committee
ICDS	Integrated Child Development Services

ICS	Indian Civil Service
IMDT	Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunals) Act
INA	Indian National Army
INC	Indian National Congress
IPTA	Indian People's Theatre Association
ISI	Indian Statistical Institute
JNNURM	Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission
JPC	Joint Parliamentary Committee
KEIIP	Kolkata Environmental Improvement Investment Program
KNJM	Kolkata Naba Jagaran Mancha
KPP	Krishak Praja Party
LTV	Long Term Visa
MM	Matua Mahasangha
MMIC	Member, Mayor-In-Council
MP	Member of Parliament
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NIBBUSS	Nikhil Bharat Bangali Udbastu Samanway Samity
NPR	National Population Register
NRC	National Register of Citizens
NRIC	National Register of Indian Citizens
NSSO	National Sample Survey Organisation
PDS	Public Distribution Scheme
PIL	Public Interest Litigation
PL Camp	Permanent Liability Camp
PRI	Panchayati Raj Institution
PSP	Praja Socialist Party
RIN	Royal Indian Navy
RSS	Rastriya Swayamsevak Sangh
RTE	Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education
RTI	Right to Information
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme

SASPFUW	Asangathito Sramik Der Jonno Rajya Sarkar er Sahajya Prapta Bhabishya Nidhi Prakalpa
SB, CP	Special Branch, Calcutta Police
SBBS	Sara Bangla Bastuhara Sammelan
SC	Scheduled Caste
SEWA	Self Employed Women's Association
SWC	Solid Waste Compactors
TCS	The Calcutta Samaritan
UCRC	United Central Refugee Council
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
VHP	Vishva Hindu Parishad

Glossary

Abasthan	A location.
Anashan	Hunger strike.
Andolan	Agitation or movement.
Annasatra	Food kitchens opened during the Bengal famine.
Anuprabesh	Infiltration.
Anuprabeshkari	Infiltrator.
Babu	Address of respect for Bengali men. The term came into use during colonial period primarily to refer to men of Hindu middle class.
Bargadar	A Bargadar is a person who cultivates the land of the owner in a system of Barga on the condition of delivering a share of the produce of such land to that person.
Bastuhara	The term literally translates into those who have lost their homes or refugee.
Bhadralok	Courteous, polite, gentleman.
Bhasa	Language.
Bhite	Home.
Bigha	Bigha is a unit measurement of land in South Asia. The size of a bigha varies from place to place. In West Bengal, a bigha is usually one third of an acre.
Bustee	Slum.
Chandal	In ancient India the term Chandal was used for persons from the lowest caste who dealt with disposal of corpses. Traditionally they were considered to be untouchables. In Bengal it was used as a pejorative caste name to imply a host of different lower caste people.
Charpai	A traditional woven bed stretched on a wooden frame on four legs, common in India.
Chotolok	Chotolok is one of a pair of opposed terms, used in opposition to *bhadralok*. It literally means lowly or vulgar people, and in its common usage implies people belonging to lower class and caste.
Danga	Riot.
Desh	Country or homeland.
Dharmashala	A guest housing devoted to religious or charitable purposes, especially a rest house for travellers.
Dibas	Day.
Edeshi	People originating in West Bengal as opposed to East Bengal.

Foot Foot is an abbreviation of footpath or pavement.

Ghat Flight of steps leading into the water of a river or pond.

Ghuspetiya A Hindi term meaning infiltrator.

Ghyat Gruel.

Halla The term *halla* literally means chaos. It is used by the urban 'homeless' in Calcutta to refer to Calcutta Municipal Corporation's vehicles that come to demolish their shanties, loot their belongings and disperse them.

Hartal Strike.

Hindutva The term Hindutva was popularised by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar from the 1920s. Hinduism only meant a religion. The idea of Hindutva differed from Hinduism in this. Hindutva encompassed a historical, ethnic, linguistic, and political community of Hindus residing within the territory of Hindusthan, thus constituting a nation. It looked upon Muslims as a foreign nation of predatory invaders. This idea has come to be used in Hindu right wing political propaganda.

Jabardakhal Squat.

Jogar A term which can mean an innovative fix, making existing things work, or to create new things with meagre resources by bending rules. It also means a wide array of informal work as and when available.

Jotedar A strata of wealthy peasants who owned extensive tracts of land in rural Bengal.

Katha Katha is a unit measurement of land and a sub unit of bigha. 20 katha is equal to one bigha.

Khalasi Traditionally khalasi are a group of people employed at ports and dockyards to load/unload cargo from ships. It can also mean people who unload cargo from lorries.

Khalpar Banks of canals.

Khas mahal land Government estates.

Langarkhana Kitchens where free food is prepared and given to the poor.

Macha A platform built with bamboo strips and similar material over marshes, submerged lands and water bodies, on which houses can be built.

Moholla Neighbourhood.

Mondo Gruel.

Mukti joddhas Literally means freedom fighter. It refers to combatants during the Bangladesh war of independence, who fought against the Pakistani forces.

Mussafirkhana A rest house for travellers.

Mutiya	Headload carriers.
Namasudra	A dalit caste who were originally cultivators East Bengal in the nineteenth century. After the partition of India in 1947, many of them have migrated to West Bengal. Now their profession has diversified.
Opar Bangla	Literally translates into the other side of divided Bengal, meaning present day Bangladesh.
Para	Neighbourhood.
Patta	A type of land deed issued by the government.
Pitrabhumi	Fatherland.
Pucca	Pucca housing refers to dwellings that are designed to be solid and permanent, built of substantial material such as stone, brick, cement or concrete.
Puja	Worship.
Punyabhumi	The sacred land of the Hindus.
Qawm	Qawm is an Arabic term for nation.
Sajjan	Good or decent people.
Sangram	Struggle.
Shahid	Martyr.
Shanghadhipati	The head of the Sangh which means an association or organisation. The head of the Matua Mahasangha is known as Sanghadhipati.
Sharan	Shelter or refuge.
Sharanarthi	Sharanarthi literally translates into the one who seeks shelter or *sharan*. In the present day idiom of the politics of citizenship in India, sharanarthi has come to be synonymous with Hindu refugees.
Time kal	Roadside taps installed by the Calcutta Municipal Corporation, where water comes at specific times of the day, usually two to three times during morning, afternoon and evening.
Udbastu	Refugee.
Ulu dhwani	Sound of ululation.
Umma	Umma is an Arabic term meaning nation. It refers to the whole Muslim community of believers.

Acknowledgements

I have incurred numerous debts during the seven years of this dissertation project. My warmest and most grateful acknowledgement goes to my two PhD supervisors, Dr Sanjukta Sunderason and Professor Nira Wickramasinghe who have been a huge source of support and inspiration. My academic career and personal life bear marks of their presence in more ways than I can mention. My friends and colleagues in Leiden, Sarthak Bagchi, Deepshikha Boro, Idrees Kanth, Archisman Chowdhory and Eftychia Mylona made me feel at home in Leiden. With them I share some of the best memories of graduate school. A warm thanks goes to Dr Eric De Maaker, Dr Crystal Ennis, Professor Pralay Kanungo, Dr Ward Barenshot and Dr Carolien Stolte for support. My interaction with them have been enriching. I would like to thank the Erasmus Mundus IBIES fellowship programme which financially supported this research.

Thanks to the generous and helpful librarians and archivists at the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, the National Library, Calcutta, the Calcutta Police Museum, Calcutta, the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, the British Library, London, the libraries of the Calcutta Metropolitan Development Authority and the Calcutta Improvement Trust where I have spent long hours looking at newspapers and documents. I am thankful to Kallol Sarkar of the Calcutta Municipal Corporation, Murad Hossain of the Hawker Sangram Committee, Calcutta and the staff of the Calcutta Samaritans for their invaluable help in accomplishing my research. Thanks to Dr Carola Lorea, Anwesha Chowdhory, Dr Anwesha Sengupta, Anunay Kanjilal and Ayan Kundu for their help with field research. I am grateful to Dr Anasua Basu Ray Chaudhury, Professor Paula Banerjee, Dr. Subhasri Ghosh, Dr Binod Mishra, Dr Gargi Chakrabarty and Professor Subimal Sen for their advice and help in locating sources pertinent to this research. A very grateful thanks to Dr Ritojyoti Bandyopadhyay who immensely facilitated my field work and Professor Manas Ray whose advice have enriched this thesis in many ways. A special mention goes to Calynn Dowler and Mathew Webb for their friendship and stimulating discussions over the years.

A very grateful acknowledgement goes to all my professors at the Presidency University, Calcutta and the University of Calcutta. Special thanks to Professor Subhash Ranjan Chakrabarty and Professor Prasanta Ray who have advised me for many years both as an undergraduate and graduate student. It is in the classes of the history departments of the Presidency College and the University of Calcutta that I developed early ideas on the topic of this dissertation. The years spent there have helped me grow as an individual and an academic. I owe a debt of gratitude to Professor

Shantanu Chakrabarty, Professor Kingshuk Chatterjee and my friends at the Institute of Foreign Policy Studies, University of Calcutta. Thanks to my friends and colleagues at the Calcutta Research Group, Samareshda, Subhashree, Ratanbabu and Shatabdi with whom I worked during the last two years of this research. I was fortunate to share with them my excitements and frustrations. I am indebted to Professor Bhaskar Chakrabarty, Professor Ranabir Samaddar and Professor Samir Kumar Das for kindness, support and encouragement. Their influence extends well beyond the scope of this thesis.

Thanks goes to my unfailingly supportive friends Suhasini, Moumita and Triparna. The inspiration of this research comes from my father, *baba* who introduced me to the world of reading and encouraged to me to speak my mind. My *kaka* (uncle), my *kaki* (aunt), my brother and my mother have been pillars of love and inspiration for as long as I can remember. Their support has been invaluable in every endeavour I have pursued in life. Finally, a most grateful acknowledgement goes to my interlocutors and research participants, many of whom wish to remain un-named. I am humbled and inspired by their kindness, activism and indomitable spirit in the face of the harshest adversities of life. This thesis is dedicated to them.

Introduction

At the beginning of my field work with a group of rural migrants in Calcutta in 2017, a serendipitous street encounter took place. As I was moving along a tattered road by a sewerage canal in a December morning, hoping to talk to migrants who live by its sides, an elderly man beckoned me. When I approached, he asked me who I was. Anwar claimed to be a local leader. Even as I was trying to explain my research project, he (entirely unprompted) put his hand in his pocket and started drawing out identity cards one by one. He began telling me which card was issued to him in which year. The spectacle was drawing some attention. A young woman standing nearby interjected, uncle, please don't consume everything by yourself! Share with us too! She laughed. I came to know later that she is Anwar's niece. Some of the onlookers joined in the laughter. Anwar smiled too. Why not, he said, I certainly would. This first meeting remained etched in my mind for a long time, for what was said in jest and for all that remained implied in this mode of sociality. The importance of identification documents for a largely sans papier group of rural migrants cannot be overstated. They live through various forms of 'citizenship tests' in their everyday lives. For many of them documents and a legally recognised status of their persons and their dwellings have remained in deferral, and mediate their experience of dislocation and their claims to urban and national citizenship.

In this thesis I explore modalities of displacement, and how these fashion the experience of citizenship for migrants in informal urban contexts. According to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) figures, about 85% of the world's displaced population live in the developing countries. Nations emerging from erstwhile colonial empires in the global south are at the heart of contemporary dislocations. This study focuses on one such ex-colonial region, India. India's history of two centuries long British colonial domination and a protracted process of decolonisation from the mid twentieth century which has dovetailed into the current moment of neo-liberalisation, structurally condition experiences of dislocation in the region. India has been a locale of myriad displacements induced by partition of territories, political conflicts, development projects, climate change, poverty and recurring famines. My study focuses on the eastern Indian state of West Bengal, which was carved out of the erstwhile British colonial province of Bengal after its territorial partition in 1947.[1]

More specifically, the empirical data of this study comes from Calcutta[2] and its suburbs spanning the district of North 24 Parganas in West Bengal.[3] Calcutta, the erstwhile capital of the British Indian Empire (present capital of West Bengal) has received varied streams of migration since colonial times and through its post-colonial transition. North 24 Parganas is in the northern suburbs of Calcutta. The district shares a porous international border with Bangladesh, and it is (together with the Nadia district) home to the largest number of refugees coming from Bangladesh to West Bengal. Due to the presence of a large number of refugees and migrants, both Calcutta and North 24 Parganas are equally interesting locales for examining the nature of migrant citizenship. This study zooms in on the experience of two different migrants in Calcutta and North 24 Parganas, East Bengali dalit[4] partition refugees and a group of peripatetic impoverished rural migrants coming from the villages of East and West Bengal to the urban agglomeration around Calcutta. I take a broad time frame from 1939, with the beginning of the Second World War till the present.

Rather than displacements of *climactic* and exceptional magnitude, I am interested in the low key and everyday modalities of dislocations, techniques of its operationalisation through post-colonial governmentality and the way such dislocation shape the nature of citizenship for socially disadvantaged groups.[5] To understand such drawn out processes I have found useful Oren Yiftachel's concept of displaceability. It expands understanding of displacement from an *act* to a *systemic condition* through which power is exerted by means of policy and legal systems. In this formulation, contemporary power regimes not only allocate but also withdraw rights and capabilities. Within this allocation-erasure spectrum, a potent tool in the regime's arsenal of control is the threat of displacement which is always present (Yiftachel 2020). Such shadowy presence of displaceability particularly pervades informal urban contexts where neo-colonial relations of power are at work. In this thesis I attempt to explore the concept of displaceability by unpacking its nuances within informal urban contexts. This thesis advances one central question. How do endemic conditions of displaceability fashion the life and livelihood of socially disadvantaged migrants in the post colony? I try to answer the main query be moving three inter-related sub questions:

- How does displaceability operate as a specific tool of post-colonial governance within informal urban contexts and keep people unsettled?
- How is the endemic condition of displaceability negotiated by the displaced themselves?
- How does the experience of displaceability shape national and urban citizenship and belonging of the refugees and migrants?

I. Migration, classification and erasure: a background

The Bengal region and the metropolitan area around Calcutta have received varied streams of migration since its very inception. The forces of the dislocation of the two groups studied here, the dalit East Bengali refugees and the impoverished rural migrants can be located in the late colonial period. Migration in the region have taken place due to multifaceted and overlapping causes. The way migrants are seen and classified by the government reveal designs of governance and much less the reality on the ground. Built into these official classificatory schemes and 'relief' or 'rehabilitation' measures effected on the basis of such classificatory knowledge, are various erasures, fuzziness and informality. All of these come with the likelihood of further dislocations, the possibility of the condition of displaceability. We can trace elements of these processes in the late colonial period as migration increased to the Calcutta metropolitan area from the time of the Second World War.

As the Second World War expanded from Europe to South East and South Asia, the eastern parts of the subcontinent got directly implicated in British war efforts. This in turn set into motion various population movements. Different groups of displaced people started flocking to Calcutta and its suburbs, including 'evacuees' from the Far East like Burma, famine stricken rural poor from Bengal's countryside and those dislocated due to communal riots between Hindus and Muslims. Politics in the Bengal province during this time revolved around increasing communal polarisation between the Hindus and the Muslims. Beginning with the communal conflict between Hindus and Muslims in Dhaka in 1941, communal riots increasingly fed into polarisation of society in service of the two-nation theory.[6] There were communal riots in Calcutta in 1946, followed by the Noakhali riots later that year and all pervasive communal hostility around the partition of 1947. This continued for a long time after the partition. Communal conflicts pushed people out of their homes and refugees started moving across the international border in myriad directions. All of this marred the moment of arrival of national independence in the region in August 1947, the other side of which was the religious partitioning of the Bengal and Punjab provinces of British India.

As per official estimate, 18 million people belonging to religious minorities sought shelter across the newly created international boundaries between India and Pakistan immediately after the partition (Tan and Kudaisya 2008, 105). In the Punjab region, a population exchange was affected under the Military Evacuation Organisations (MEOs), which oversaw such exchange. Violence in this region largely proved to be a one-time affair. Compared to the west, migration became a much more protracted experience in the east. Here communal violence was relatively lower in intensity and no

population exchange was officially implemented. The initial position of the national leaders pertaining to Bengal was to encourage the dislocated Muslim and Hindu minorities to return back to their respective homes in West Bengal and East Bengal after communal tensions dissipated. One of the first instances of the official policy of encouraging the refugees to return to their left behind homes in the east was the Inter-Dominion Conference held between India and Pakistan in 1948. Such policies of encouraging religious minorities to return to their respective countries however, had very little effect on the ground. Here population flow was comparatively greater from East Bengal to eastern India, although a considerable number of people moved in the reverse direction, from different parts of eastern India to East Bengal.

A much greater number of Hindus left East Bengal in successive waves and settled in West Bengal and the neighbouring states of Assam and Tripura. A vast majority of the East Bengali Hindu refugees came to West Bengal for reasons of physical and cultural proximity. While migration started from the mid-1940s, the inflow of refugees accelerated during the Indian military intervention in the princely state of Hyderabad in September 1948.[7] By the end of 1949 it nearly petered out. Another round of migration started with communal riots, now between dalit Hindu peasants and their Muslim counterparts in areas like Khulna, Dhaka and Barishal in East Bengal from the early 1950s. This time the inflow of Hindu refugees was much greater in magnitude, and it consisted of lower class and caste dalit peasant communities coming to West Bengal. The migration continued even after the conclusion of the Nehru-Liaquat Pact of 1950, which was signed with a view to improve the communal situation in the two countries and provide securities to the religious minorities on both sides of the border. The pact temporarily checked the flow of migration, but could not stop it completely. The introduction of passports for travel from Pakistan to India on 15 October 1952 started a new exodus. Migration continued all through the 1950s. Another significant phase of migration began in the decade of the 1960s. There was widespread minority persecution in Khulna, Dhaka and other areas of East Bengal in 1964-65, over discontent due to the theft of a holy relic from a Muslim shrine, the Hazratbal shrine in Srinagar in India. This set in a chain of migration (Chakrabarti 1999, 1-5).[8] Large scale migration came with the struggle for independence of Bangladesh in 1971. Migration has continued after that in the form of periodic trickles. The assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the first Prime Minister of independent Bangladesh in 1975 and declaration of Islam as state religion of Bangladesh in 1985 were major causes of outflow of Hindu population. There were a series of violence against the Bengali Hindus and other non-Muslim minorities in Bangladesh between 1989 till about 1993 in retaliation to the demolition of Babri Masjid and violence against Muslims in different parts of India. There has been anti-Hindu pogrom in

Bangladesh in 2010, 2013-2014. All these incidents have set off migration of Hindu minorities from Bangladesh to West Bengal. Other than religious persecution, more long-term factors like economic hardship and climate change have all pushed people out from Bangladesh to West Bengal. These factors are less emphasised in discussions of migration between India and Bangladesh. The later migratory flows have remained largely undocumented due to politics of non-recognition and covert nature of the migratory flows. For a large section of these incoming population, the urban agglomeration around Calcutta have been one of the prime destinations.

In India in the immediate aftermath of the partition of 1947, 'refugee' status was not granted to any of the displaced people migrating from Pakistan in the eastern and western parts. They were provided some protection under the official category of 'displaced persons'.[9] In this thesis, I have used to the terms refugee and migrants interchangeably for the two groups studied here, as the categorical differences between refugees and migrants are difficult to sustain. In my usage neither term implies a legally defined status.

All the East Bengali refugees coming to India till 1971 were officially categorised as 'displaced persons'. There were some sub categorisation within this broad legally defined status on the basis of their times of arrival. This categorical scheme reflects agendas of migration governance and erasures. Those refugees who came to West Bengal between October 1946 and March 1958 were termed 'Old Migrants'. They were promised some state assistance. Those who migrated between April 1958 and December 1963 were not recognised by the central or the state government and left out of any form of official rehabilitation. Those who migrated between January 1964 and March 1971 were termed 'New Migrants'. It was decided, only those of the 'New Migrants' who agreed to take shelter in government camps located outside West Bengal in other parts of India would receive official rehabilitation (Chakrabarti 1999, 234-235). From the late 1950s the main plank of government policy became dispersal of the East Bengali refugees from West Bengal to other neighbouring states. In the early 1960s this was achieved through erasure of migrants from official enumeration and entitlements. Afterwards, a new classificatory scheme of 'New Migrants' was devised which aimed to push the incoming refugees out of West Bengal. All those who have migrated to India after 1971 have again been erased from government records and faced exclusion from state assistance. An agreement was signed between India and Bangladesh after the Bangladesh liberation war of 1971, known as the Indira Mujib Pact. As per this pact all refugees who entered into India before March 25, 1971 were allowed to stay in India. Those migrating from Bangladesh to India after that date, do not have a legally recognised status. With an amendment to the Indian

Citizenship Act of 1955 brought about in 2003, the most recent migrants coming from Bangladesh were labelled as 'illegal migrants.'[10]

The other stream of migration studied here are of impoverished rural migrants coming to the Calcutta metropolitan agglomeration in the face of scarcity and lack of livelihood options in the rural areas of Bengal from the late 1930s. There are a good number of official records of migration of East Bengali displaced persons coming to West Bengal, at least till 1971 (after which migration has become legally ambiguous). There are also surveys and reports on labour migration to Calcutta's industrial suburbs. But there is hardly any comparable documentation of these other streams of rural-urban migration, often known as 'distress' migration. Long term structural factors like dislocation due to the Second World War, draught or famine like condition, dislocation in the coastal areas due to climate change and salinisation of soil from rising sea level have pushed people towards the urban areas. It is often people at the lowest rung of the rural landholding system who are dislocated and flock to urban margins to substitute their income. They are not officially recognised as refugees or migrants and have largely remained outside surveys and documentation. These are people of uncertain nomenclature. None of the labels used in the few existing official surveys on them, like 'sick destitutes', 'vagrants', 'encroachers' or a relatively less incriminating census category of 'homeless' adequately captures their condition. They have come under repeated eviction drives all through the post-independence era. The politics of (non)enumeration of these migrants is traced in greater detail in chapter three.

II. Anti-colonial nationalism and origins of ethnic and civic citizenship

The other concern of this thesis is how frequent dislocations mediate the nature of citizenship. Regulation of migration is one of the primary mechanisms for the production of the state, for defining membership in political communities and for consolidating the notion of state border. During the early phase of the evolution of the citizenship regime in colonial India, movement indentured labour and of non-indentured Indians to white settler colonies (like South Africa, Australia and Canada) were sites through which the colonial empire-state took a particular formation (Mongia 2018). In the British empire one important axis of controlling population movement remained race. The process of decolonisation would see supplanting race with ethnicity as a major determining factor for controlling migration and membership in the political community. We may briefly take note of how the two important conceptions of citizenship, universal civic citizenship and group differentiated forms of citizenship evolved in relation to British colonial rule, in

order to understand the increasing entanglement between ethnic citizenship and migration in post-colonial times.

Internal dynamics of the British colonial state, especially anti-colonial nationalism also shaped different ideas about the nature of political community and belonging. The growth of anti-colonial nationalism and citizenship as a form of membership to the nation took place in two related but distinct spheres, the material and the spiritual.[11] In the material domain, nationalist imagination followed western notions of 'modernity' and progress, and fought to erase the rule of colonial difference in areas of law, administration, economy and statecraft. Basic institutional arrangements created under British rule were retained and expanded by the post-colonial state in subsequent years. In the inner spiritual sphere, the indigenous elite attempted to carve out their own sovereign domain, with its own marks of distinct national culture, premised on an articulation of *difference* with colonial rule (P. Chatterjee 1993a; 1993b).[12]

In these two distinct spheres of the spiritual and the material, anti-colonial nationalism and associated ideas of citizenship found two different expressions. The first form of nationalism was closely tied to spiritual revivalist movements, split between its Hindu and Muslim counterparts. The revivalist trend will eventually lead to the two-nation theory and associated notions of group differentiated citizenship. The second avowedly 'modern' nationalism, propagated by the mainstream leadership of the Indian National Congress (INC) followed the western rational line of thinking. It prioritised a sense of western civic community of equal citizens. The *jus soli* criteria of citizenship followed from it. It may be noted here that these two traditions were never clearly separate and often overlapped.

Religious nationalism had its origin in Hindu and Muslim revivalist movements of the late nineteenth century, which grew in a competitive relation with each other. The revivalist movements were premised upon a recreation of their own distinct versions of history, drawing on romantic notions of Hindu or Muslim periods of golden rule in the past. In these romanticised histories, the Golden Age for the Muslim nation coincided with a time which would be considered the end of the Golden Age in Hindu collective memory. The way these were conceived in effect implied a clash of Hindu and Muslim cultures and civilisations.

Muslim revivalist tradition started with the Aligarh movement of social and cultural reform in north India, spearheaded by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan in the second half of the nineteenth century.[13]

Eventually taking the cue from this revivalist movement, Muslim separatist politics would draw its basic ideas of separate electorate and the demand of their own sovereign nation state, Pakistan. Initial beginnings of a Hindu nationalist reconstruction of their past could be found in the activities of the Hindu revivalist organisations like the Arya Samaj launched by Dayananda Saraswati in 1875,[14] the cow protection movement and revivalist movement initiated by Marathi leaders like Bal Gangadhar Tilak into the Indian National Congress (INC).

In the twentieth century Hindu religious nationalism became more overtly political under the ideology of Hindutva, as developed by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar. Savarkar was a brahmin revolutionary nationalist leader of the Hindu Mahasabha. Savarkar in a tract, *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?* among other writings made a distinction between Hindutva and Hinduism. In his formulation, Hinduism as a faith or religion was only a part of Hindutva. Hindutva more broadly encompassed a love for the land of the Hindus. Hindus, according to Savarkar, are those who consider India to be the land of their ancestors or *pitrabhumi*, as well as the land of their religion or *punyabhumi*. Only they can be its natural and national inhabitants.

Savarkar's writings in the *Hindutva* are full of poetic evocation of a land of the Hindus. This evocation of geography was meant to call attention to the land itself and to use tropes of cartography to assert the fundamental unity of Hindusthan. In *Hindutva*, Savarkar depicted the Muslims as foreign invaders. He portrayed the Indo Islamic millennium as one of invasion, which clashed with the Hindu nation and civilisation. Non-Hindus were consequently consigned to a second order of citizenship (Bakhle 2010, 177-178). Hindu and Muslim religious nationalism entered the arena of competitive politics from the early twentieth century. The All India Muslim League founded in 1906 and later the Hindu Mahasabha and the Rastriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) all drew on revivalist nationalist ideas and pursued communally charged politics.[15] The ideology of Hindutva has significantly contributed to an ethno-religious conception of citizenship.

Religious nationalism and ethnic group identities were also fostered by colonial ethnographic knowledge practices. It grew around the decennial census operations from the late nineteenth century. As part of census operations, studies on Indian religion and caste were carried out by members of the Indian Civil Service. Both religion and caste came to be understood through surveys, classification and codification. What resulted was a reified 'census-based view' of caste and religion. By counting, classifying and describing castes and religious communities as separate, reified, 'substantialised' or 'ethnicised' groups, the censuses and colonial anthropology significantly

encouraged the growth of politicised caste and religious communalism during the colonial period (Dirks 2001; Fuller 2016; Cohn 1987).

Mainstream nationalist leadership represented by the INC assumed a more western approach to nationalism and citizenship. They resorted to a more syncretic view of India's past. In this reconstruction, both ancient Hindu period as well as certain periods of Muslim domination, were viewed as periods of social and cultural efflorescence. But this brand of nationalism held that Indian society has decayed over the centuries through a divisive caste system and required reforms. They also presented a scathing economic critique of colonialism and pointed to the adverse economic impact of colonial rule. This economic critique became a significant component of Nehruvian nationalism. The economic goals and social objectives of this nationalism could not be fulfilled under colonial rule, as the economic interests of the colonial state prevented national reconstruction. Nationalist leaders like Nehru assumed that a solution to issues like the 'communal' problem required the elimination of the colonial state. The only problems which would then be real were economic problems.[16] The assumption was that nationalism based on sectarian identity is an anomaly caused by colonial policy of divide and rule and should disappear with the end of colonial rule. But this expectation of India's 'modernist' nationalist leaders was belied and different sectarian identities remained.

These contradictory elements in anti-colonial nationalism shaped the evolution of a subject-citizen regime in the colonial period and its transition to full national citizenship in India after independence.[17] During British colonial rule, the legal status of Indians was that of subjects in the empire. The colonial government experimented with providing limited franchise to a large subject population. The principle of partial representation was introduced, first in the municipal councils in 1882 and then in the provincial legislative councils at the turn of the century. Limited franchise was granted to a select section of the propertied classes and educated professionals such as civil servants and lawyers. By the Government of India Act of 1935, franchise was extended to about a fifth of the adult population in India (Jayal 2013, 44). While piecemeal concessions were granted, it was not the purpose of the colonial state to create conditions for the full growth of citizenship.

During this initial expansion of franchise, both the *jus sanguini* and the *jus soli* criteria of citizenship remained important. The *jus sanguini* principle prioritise primordial group attachments. Two such group identities, religion and caste became important and was fostered by the colonial state. Religious identities consolidated through the revivalist movements noted above. Caste based

movements for the social upliftment of the untouchable castes also grew from the late nineteenth century and became an important factor in staking citizenship claims. To give expression to such group differentiated demands of citizenship, the principle of separate representation in the legislatures and other elected bodies was introduced. The Morley-Minto reforms established separate Muslim electorates in 1909. Separate representation for the Muslim was extended in 1921 by the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms and again by the Government of India Act in 1935. This would culminate in their demand for a sovereign nation state, Pakistan in the 1940s. Parallelly, demands for providing protection to specific castes was raised and recognised in the Poona Pact of 1932, whereby the 'Depressed Classes' implying the dalit subjects secured special rights. Pressure from mainstream nationalist leaders forced them to abandon their claim for a separate electorate. By the Poona Pact, they secured reserved seats in a joint electorate. In addition, the Poona Pact assured a fair representation of the 'Depressed Classes' in the public services and earmarked a portion of educational grants for them.[18] In the Government of India Act, 1935 reserved seats were extended for the 'Depressed Classes', now re-named as the Scheduled Castes (SC). This brief recounting shows that group differentiated and ethnic forms of citizenship was woven into the citizenship regime of the colonial state.

The *jus soli* criteria of citizenship, the idea that national membership should be based on birth within the territory of the nation flowed from the western approach to nationalism. Rather than specific group attachments, they advocated a civic community of all equal citizens. For the moderate nationalists of the INC, there was little disagreement on the basic principle of *jus soli*, not least because of its precedence in British law as well as a range of proto-constitutional documents drafted by the nationalist leadership during the early twentieth century. Discussions on the question of citizenship for India's indentured labour migrants reveal this line of thinking. Indentured labour were taken from India to different parts of the British empire by the colonial authorities to work in plantations. The issue of their citizenship remained open. Nationalist leaders like Nehru encouraged overseas Indians to identify with the countries of their adoption. In 1947 there were four million Indians in the British Commonwealth countries. In the newly independent republic of India, dual citizenship was not offered. India embraced the *jus soli* criteria of citizenship (Jayal 2013, 54-57). But the jus soli criterion was already considerably mediated by ethno-religious ideas of citizenship in colonial times. This will become increasingly important in the context of post partition migration. Ceaseless migration after the partition will feed into ethno-religious identity politics and associated group differentiated ideas of citizenship.

III. Displaceability, bodily politics and citizenship: a conceptual itinerary

This dissertation contributes to three inter-related sets of literature, on the partition of India, on contemporary displacements and citizenship. I attempt to bring the partition studies literature in dialogue with other experiences of dislocation in Bengal. Research on migration in West Bengal has been pursued in two main arenas. There is a significant and rich corpus of study on the partition of Bengal in 1947, the politics around it, the inflow of refugees that ensued in its aftermath and its various ramifications (Chakrabarti 1999; Chatterji 1994; 2007a; N. Chatterjee 1992; Sen 2018). A considerable part of the existing literature on the partition focuses on the experiences of the middle-class refugees migrating from East Bengal to West Bengal. The migration of lower caste and class groups has remained relatively unexplored. Some new beginnings have been made in this area with accounts of fractures in dalit identity politics in Bengal after the partition (S. Bandyopadhyay and Basu Ray Chaudhury 2014), the experiences of the dalit camp refugees (Sen 2011) and the experience of the East Bengali dalit Matua religionists (Lorea 2020) among others. My study builds on this literature. It focuses on one dalit group, the *namasudras* in a camp area in a peri-urban locale over a long time frame. It traces their negotiation of mechanisms of dislocations, by foregrounding the role their caste and associated social and cultural capital in the process.

Apart from partition studies, the other important point of interest in migration research in West Bengal has been facets of labour migration, specially migration of labour to the industrial suburbs of the Calcutta metropolitan region from Bengal's rural hinterland and neighbouring states and the question of formation of an industrial proletariat (Haan 1994; Dasgupta 1976; Chaudhuri 1992; Chakrabarty 2000b). The life experience of the partition refugees and the labour migrants are treated separately under 'refugee' and 'migration' studies. There is a scholarly agreement, that unlike other parts of India, Bengal has not seen much of what is studied under the category of 'internal displacement' (Banerjee et al. 2005, 134). The present thesis attempts to destabilise the presumed categorical separation between the 'refugee' and the 'migrant' by the aforementioned two sets of literature. On the one hand it draws on the experience of dalit partition refugees and attempts to de-exceptionalise the partition of 1947 by highlighting its protracted nature. On the other hand, it attempts to bring the experience of the 'partition refugees', often treated as a class unto themselves in dialogue with other experiences of migration. It highlights how for lower class and caste groups everyday forms of displacements unfold within the domain of the informal, where the boundaries between 'refugees' and 'migrants' blur. Rather than reifying the governmental categories of 'refugee', 'migrant', 'distress migrant' or 'homeless' and the assumptions of agency

and victimhood underlying these categories, I am interested in the ways in which such categories come to be constructed and the purposes they serve. The emphasis on *how* suggests a study of processes rather than of origins and end results, of multiple and overlapping causes. The interest shifts to how governmental categories work to acknowledge the claims to entitlement of certain groups, erasing the rights-claims of several others.

The past decade has seen a number of insightful studies on different modalities of displacements in South Asia. A prime concern of these works is the initiation of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in the region from the 1990s and associated dislocations in urban areas. Several book length works and articles have come up in this vein that draw on Henri Lefebvre's notion of how space is not simply a geometrical location, but *produced* in service of the dominant power relations (Lefebvre 1992), and on David Harvey's idea of accumulation by dispossession (Harvey 2009). In this formulation, lately a form of primitive accumulation (which according to Marxist theory is an originary moment, somewhat prior to and outside of capitalism), which Harvey calls accumulation by dispossession, is operative in third world contexts through mechanisms of the SAPs. Through the SAPs, western surplus capital is invested in the global south by dispossession of already existing spaces of livelihood. Taking the cue from Lefebvre and Harvey's notion of space and dispossession, new studies point out that extraction of surplus value is a socio-spatial process. Hereby labouring and lived landscapes are usurped and reproduced into landscapes of accumulation. Focusing on a spate of recent eviction of squatters' settlements and slums in big metro cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Ahmedabad from the late 1990s, these studies highlight a shift in India's planning goals that traditionally prioritised rural development. Now a new importance is placed on the development of the country's big urban centres as 'world-class' cities (Batra and Mehra 2008; Bhan 2009; Ramanathan 2006; Baviskar 2003; Dupont 2008; Padhi 2007; Ghertner 2011; Fernandes 2004; I. Chatterjee 2014). The subcontinent's major metro cities, the argument goes, are being remoulded in the image of 'global' or 'world-class' cities to attract the flow of global finance capital in order to progress on a path of a projected economic growth. The middle-classes are the prime beneficiary and driving factor of this neoliberal globalisation. They are increasingly recast in the image of ideal citizens in their capacity of *consumption*. This literature points out that the growing visibility of the middle-class *consumer* citizens comes with a concomitant political discursive process of forgetting of the poor. Increasing claims on public spaces by the middle-classes together with the state, judiciary and sections of the media have led to a corresponding movement to clean such spaces of the poor. These studies point out that dislocation of the poor are often justified through the discourses

of trespassing on public land, which renders the poor as 'encroacher', and as the prime source of pollution of urban land and resources.

Much of the aforementioned literature focuses on big metro cities, but Calcutta and the Bengal region more broadly do not significantly figure in these studies. I have attempted to contribute to this literature in two ways. First, I try to broaden the understanding of displacement by including within analysis actual displacements and potential threats of it, which constitutes a particular mode of governance. Taking the cue from Yiftachel (2020) I term this condition displaceability. I take displaceability to be a coercive expression of the informal as discussed shortly. Within displaceability people are sometimes displaced. More often, they are held in a relation of inclusive exclusion and participate in grossly unequal political exchanges. Their political subjectivity is eroded to varying degrees. Second, I highlight that in the condition of displaceability, when participation in conventional politics is constrained, it is useful to locate political agency at the level of the fleshly body. I try to show that in informal and displaceable contexts where the human body is exposed to extreme depravity, bodies in collective enact a form of bodily politics.

I find the analytical lens of the informal useful to understand modes of insidious displacements. Traditionally the informal has been understood as a sector of the economy, deficient in legal standards operational in the formal sector of the economy. But over time, the sense of the informal has been broadened from informal economy to include informal politics, and various other modes of life activity which go on in quasi legal ways. In policy circles and academia, attitude towards the informal vary. One line of thought which is critical of the unjust fallout of the neo-liberal economic policies, shared by researches focused on third world urbanism views the informal as sites (for example, informal slums) of future doom due to unjust neoliberal policies (Davis 2004). Alternately scholars have also located in the informal entrepreneurship and forms of initiative that contribute to the upliftment of these life-worlds in spite of the inequalities inherent in such arrangements. In a seminal work in this vein, Partha Chatterjee has espoused the idea of political society which falls outside western conception of civil society (Chatterjee 2004). The domain of political society is marked by illegality, but nevertheless contributes to a form of democratisation of politics. In these formulations, a dichotomy between the formal and informal is presupposed. Rather than looking at the informal simply as a sector of the economy or in a dichotomous relation to the formal, this study adopts a broader approach to the informal as a *mode*. This understanding indicates a wider organising logic that governs the process of urban transformation itself (Roy and AlSayyad 2004). In the domain of the informal, the logic of exception is at work.

Giorgio Agamben has highlighted the functioning of the state of exception as a general condition of politics of the modern bio political paradigm. In the state of exception human beings are held in a relation of abandonment with the sovereign power, in a zone of indistinction where politico juridical rules apply in withholding itself (Agamben 1998). In Agamben's original formulation, sovereign exception marks out the excludable subjects who are denied protection and reduced to 'bare life'. In post-colonial contexts exception does not manifest as a political singularity. Rather than taking an absolute view of sovereign exception, this thesis looks at exception more broadly which mutates and takes different formations as a graded and differentiated regime (Ong 2006; Roy 2009). Within the informal, the logic of exception is at work. In this view of informality as exception, informality is not an object of state regulation, but *produced* by it. These are politically liminal situations which nonetheless retain room for negotiation and different levels of resistance manifest.

Displaceability operates within informal contexts. Theorists of informal politics often highlight how conditions of the informal lead to the empowerment of socially disadvantaged groups. This happens when marginal groups are able to forge larger political alliances with different stakeholders including government and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), even if such alliances hinge on a fine balance, in order to successfully claim rights. Socially disadvantaged groups are also empowered when they emerge as a consolidated vote bank (Agarwala 2013) and claim rights through exchanges in vote bank politics. NGO activism, forging larger alliances and vote bank politics strengthen marginal social groups in their negotiation of informality and leads to a 'deepening of democracy' (Chatterjee 2004; Appadurai 2001; Benjamin 2008; Agarwala 2013). In this study I have emphasised the violence and ruptures within the informal, on times when informal negotiations with myriad stakeholders do not lead to significant empowerment. Displaceability is a coercive expression of the informal. The lack of right to shelter and a perpetual threat of impending demolition of their dwellings erode their political subjectivity and coerce them to participate in unequal political exchanges. Within such conditions, a more basic level of alliance, that of the fleshly body in collective takes precedence. This thesis highlights that an understanding of negotiations in the informal domain should take seriously the role of the *enfleshed* and mobile body.

Discussions on politics have conventionally privileged a knowing and speaking subject as the legitimate actor in the political field. The powerful role of speech attributed in conventional political imaginary comes out from this observation made by Hannah Arendt in *The Human Condition*- 'speech is what makes man a political being... whatever men do or know or experience can make

sense only to the extent that it can be spoken about… speechless action would no longer be action because there would no longer be an actor, and the actor, the doer of deeds, is possible only if he is at the same time the speaker of words' (Arendt 1958, 3-4, 178). This reflects a long standing conception of politics where a disembodied knowing and speaking subject is considered to be the bearer of rights and the prime actor in politics. The body is taken to be a mere facticity, awaiting signification by a disembodied consciousness. While the metaphor of the body has been present in juridico-political discourse for a long time, it is often invoked in an abstract sense to indicate an overarching political body. More recent discussions of bio power and bio politics take into account the wellbeing of the body as an important concern of politics (Foucault 1998; Agamben 1998). In this view, technologies of disciplining of the body and managing populations mark contemporary conditions of bio politics. These studies based on the experience of Europe, sees in power a positive function of preserving life. But in neo-colonial contexts, the positive functions of power in preserving life are often constrained. Dwellers of peripheral informal spaces live in harsh conditions. In situations where the human body is exposed to extreme depravity, politics through and for the body is faced with more oppressive power. Contemporary discussions of subaltern urbanism in the third world have variously discussed agency and entrepreneurship in different contexts of informal life-worlds. But these studies have largely ignored politics at the level of the body. I try to highlight how in informal contexts the fleshly body becomes a site for politics. Operationalisation of power in the domain of the informal render vulnerable groups as disposable bodies. I attempt to show that such reduced bodily existence in turn induces a form of politics whereby migrants use mobile and bodily strategies to negotiate dislocation.

Finally, this thesis is concerned with how such informal migrants experience citizenship. A recent focus of citizenship studies has been how forces of globalisation have mediated citizenship and belonging. Tied to these deliberations is a notion that with increasing globalisation and movement of goods, capital and labour, forms of ethnic nationalism and ethnic citizenship are losing relevance. Rather, emphasis is put on processes and mechanisms of de-nationalisation and associated transformations in citizenship, where membership presumably broaden in scope. Scholars have variously stressed post national forms of membership specially in the case of Europe (Soysal 1994; Bauböck 1994) or denationalised forms drawing on the experience of the United States (Sassen 2002). In both these formulations rights associated with citizenship derive from international human rights organisations and accrue to universal persons (Benhabib 2007) rather than to citizens bestowed by territorially bound nation states. A strand of this literature relocates emancipatory forms of citizenship at the level of the city, in place of the nation (Sassen 2002; Kron and Lebuhn

2018; Rabben 2011; Rotter 2010). These studies emphasise how citizenship transcends national loyalties in favour of larger global formations. They tend to suggest that one effect of this is de-ethnicisation of citizenship. It is suggested that migration works as an important catalyst in the process of de-ethnicisation of citizenship (Joppke 1999). In this recent burgeoning scholarly field, ethnic imagination of the nation state and ethnic forms of belonging are relegated to a past which is contradictory to the spread and functioning of global capital. However, the experience of migration and citizenship in many parts of the global south, including the Indian subcontinent is contrary to this formulation. In post-colonial contexts, globalisation often works in paradoxical ways. Here forces of globalisation have created new incentives of cultural purification and produced new forms of ethnos (Das 2019; Appadurai 2006). This is manifesting in renewed drives of ethnicisation of citizenship, where migration acts as a catalyst of re-asserting primordial group associations.

In India recent trends show attempts to ethnically homogenise, what was earlier a fluid and multicultural regime of citizenship. The existing literature on citizenship in the subcontinent variously explores the tensions in the citizenship regime in the immediate aftermath of the partition and ensuing migration (Zamindar 2007) and shifts in its *de jure* structure over the years (Roy 2010; Jayal 2013). I revisit these grounds in the light of the new situation arising out of two successive amendments brought to India's Citizenship Act, first in 2003, and then in 2019, and prospects of updating a nationwide National Register of Citizens (NRC), all of which move towards a prioritisation of descent over domicile. Furthermore, while these researches take migration to be central to the formation of Indian citizenship, they do not address the lived experiences of migrants themselves and their responses to these transformations. I have attempted to bring out the diverse responses such transformations generate by drawing on the lived experiences of migrants and their changing politics. A refreshing addition to this literature is Sinharay's study of dalit migrant citizenship in West Bengal (Sinharay 2019). My study is a comparison of two different groups of migrants with differing legal status and social and cultural capital. The attempt is to bring out the specificities of peripheral migrant experiences and facets of their negotiations with the state with regard to their legal status as well as social rights. In doing this, this thesis highlights the fractures of citizenship, its exclusions and the contestations it generates.

A word is needed about the ways in which post-colonial relations of power function. This thesis takes post-colonies to mean societies recently emerging from the experience of colonialism and colonial relations of violence, and itself constituting a distinctive regime of violence (Mbembe 1992). Focus on neo/post-colonial relations of exploitation are absent from a large part of critical urban

theory which often take the basic condition of formally equal citizenship and political membership as a point of departure for their analysis. But post-colonial contexts are often marked by prevalence of neo-colonial type of relations, where the very notions of membership and citizenship are deeply ruptured (Yiftachel 2009). Gramsci's concept of hegemony, with its fundamental assumption regarding the willingness and ability of the social elite to incorporate the peripheries, has notable limitations when dealing with post-colonial settings. Instead of consensual domination, here the working of power is premised on more coercive relations. The positive aspects of power as implied in the notion of hegemony, or in the Foucauldian notions of governmentality and bio politics concerned with preservation of life are often limited in a vast array of post-colonial countries, which are ruled by ethnocratic states. Here, subaltern groups are placed at the limits of societal hegemonic projects. Dominant powers often tend to impose coercive and violent forms of colonial control, rather than legitimising types of power.

IV. Rationale of case studies

Due to reasons of familiarity, my field site has remained the area around my home town, Calcutta and North 24 Parganas. A large part of the population movement in Bengal has occurred in relation to forces of structural inequality operating within the region, centred around an unequal city-country exchange. The city of Calcutta has been at the heart of colonial trade and commerce. In many ways, the vast countryside was made subservient to the commercial needs of the city. Direction of population flow in Bengal often reflects as well as reproduces this. Calcutta and its industrial suburbs have received migrants since its very inception, suffered severe disruptions during the process of decolonisation, and in its aftermath, became home to the largest number of refugees among all South Asian cities.[19] Calcutta's past experiences with migration and its deep entanglement in 'partition induced displacement,' makes it ideally suited to provide an understanding of the differential experience of displaced populations within the urban spaces of South Asia. North 24 Parganas is a border district and is home to ceaseless inflow of people from Bangladesh. It is an equally interesting locale for examining questions of dislocation. The experiences of migrants at the urban margins of Calcutta and North 24 Parganas also provide interesting insights on the recent transformations in citizenship.

More than the city itself, the present study is concerned with spaces of migrant livelihood in the suburbs and at the urban margins. The expanding conurbations, where the city fades into the countryside are liminal spaces and locales of ever changing modes of dislocation and dispossession.

These are zones of informality and locales where connection between people and places are frequently challenged and fierce contests over land are fought out. The two migrant groups and their dwelling and livelihood spaces discussed in this thesis are marginal in location and in their relation to the overall functional logic of the Calcutta metropolitan area.[20] These are the zones of exception where rules of metropolitan planning apply by withholding itself. While they are an inseparable part of Calcutta metropolitan area, here the symbolic meaning of middle-class *bhadralok*[21] Calcutta breaks down. They somehow constitute an outside if every present reality. Here a migrational or metaphorical city slips into the clear text of the planned and readable city.

The first case study is of dalit partition refugees from East Bengal migrating to North 24 Parganas. Dalit East Bengali refugees have the highest concentration in two districts of West Bengal, Nadia and 24 Parganas. My field site is located in North 24 Parganas. My initial attempts were at interaction at two settlements close to the India-Bangladesh border where recent migrants from Bangladesh live. But I repeatedly encountered reluctance to discuss issues of recent migration due to their dubious legality. The nature of these informal settlements renders them precarious. Finally, I begun interaction at an area which is less precarious in legal terms, an officially recognised East Bengali dalit refugee camp site set up in early 1954, which eventually became a squatters' settlement. This camp area is officially known as the Bahirdoba group of 'ex-camp sites'.

The Bahirdoba ex-camp area provides an interesting site of research because of its peripheral but potentially important location within the Calcutta metropolitan agglomeration. The western most part of North 24 Parganas is bordered by the river Ganga. Most of the old settlements in the district line the river. As one moves away from the river towards the east, large areas have now become intermixed with middle-class East Bengali refugee squatters' colonies. The eastern most part of the district shares border with Bangladesh and is a locale of continuous trickle of low scale migration from across the border. Areas closer to North 24 Pargana's eastern border are home to relatively recent migrants from Bangladesh, an overwhelming majority of whom are dalits. The Bahirdoba camps are located in the middle of the district and are integrally connected to the eastern parts. The area resembles a desakota region, where urban and rural forms of land use and settlement coexist in uneasy entanglement and various disputes over land are fought. It is located north east of Calcutta and is only a few kilometres away from the city. The Bahirdoba camps have a majority of 'displaced persons' migrating around the early 1950s. But the area is also home to a considerable number of new incoming people from Bangladesh, usually relatives and friends of the old camp settlers. The camp locale was rural and part of local village *panchayats*[22] till the 1980s. In the 1990s parts of it came under a municipality, indicating a process of rapid and problematic urbanisation. The closeness

of this ex-camp site to Calcutta and rapid urbanisation has eventually made this area of interest to builders and a ground for fierce contestations over land.

The refugee inhabitants in the ex-camp site belong almost exclusively to the *namasudra* cultivating caste. The *namasudras* were a lower caste Bengali peasant community settled in the low lying swamp regions of East Bengal. They found themselves amidst Hindu Muslim communal violence in the early 1950s and started migrating to West Bengal. Many of them took shelter in government camps. A group of such government camp refugees were brought to the Bahirdoba camps to work in a canal renovation project, and became forceful squatters at the camp sites after high handed closure of the camps by the government in the late 1950s. I have drawn on semi structured interviews and repeated discussions with a total of 25 respondents including refugee households at the ex-camp sites and adjoining areas. The interviewees range from leaders of the settlement and day labourers who form the majority of the campers. I have held informal discussions with relatively new inhabitants from Bangladesh in the camps and adjoining area who migrated after 1971 and lack a recognised legal status as 'displaced persons'. I have also interacted with leaders of two dalit refugee organisations active in Bahirdoba: the Nikhil Bharat Bangali Udbastu Samannyay Samity (NIBBUSS) and the Matua Mahasangha (MM), in and outside of the camp areas. These organisations have played a role in the social and cultural life of the refugees and more recently consolidated their agitation around citizenship. I have participated in a few public meetings on citizenship held by these organisations. Public speeches made by the leaders at these meetings have been used.

The second case study consists of impoverished rural landless people migrating from the countryside of West and East Bengal[23] and as also from rural areas of the neighbouring state of Bihar to the urban margins of Calcutta. Poverty stricken rural migrants who flock to urban areas often live in shanties at marginal urban spaces along suburban railway tracks and canal banks, on the sidewalks and pavements of public thoroughfares and under foot bridges and flyovers etc. They are a curiously status-less group and are variously labelled as 'vagrants', 'homeless', 'pavement dwellers,' or 'encroachers'. I have drawn on field research conducted at specific pockets of such migrant dwellings along two of Calcutta's sewerage canals, the Round Canal and the Pali Nala and five pavement dwelling areas. The two canals run through some of the central parts of the city. For locational advantage and reasons of availability of work, the canal banks have been densely populated by rural migrants from the southern districts of West Bengal and other areas, have come under repeated eviction drives and been re-occupied by the same or new groups of migrants.[24] More specifically, my field data comes from two pockets of dwellings by the Round Canal at the

Ramhata area in central Calcutta and Ragbazar area in north Calcutta. My other field site is a stretch of dwellings by the Pali Nala near Haria in south Calcutta. The dwellers of informal squats usually don't *stay put* at one particular site willingly or otherwise. My following of peripatetic groups at the two canal sides led to the spread my field visits between several interconnected spaces at the promptings of my interlocutors. I eventually visited five pavement dwellings close to the two canals. They include three groups of dwellings near the Round Canal in central Calcutta i) families on a main north south artery, the Krafulla Chandra road, ii) a group of families living on a street in central Calcutta, Ambala street iii) a group of families close to Ambala street, living on a pavement next to a park called Manas Mitra Park. Apart from this, I have interacted with two groups of dwellings near the Pali Nala in south Calcutta iv) a few families living under a flyover near Kheyalipur, close to a Muslim religious shrine in south west and v) another cluster of families on a main road near Nadirpur also in south west Calcutta. My field visits also include an official rehabilitation site for a very small number of people displaced during the metro railway extension project at Pali Nala, at the south eastern suburb of Calcutta. This rehabilitation scheme has been an exception in the larger scenario of displacements without resettlement.

The canal side dwellings are known as *khalpar* in the local parlance which translates as canal bank. The pavement dwellings are known by the brief term *foot*, an abbreviation for footpath. All the spaces visited, function as dwelling spaces from time to time for rural migrants, face 'cleansing' by different sources of authorities and morph into other spaces depending on contextual power equations. My interactions at the field sites have been in the nature of semi structured interviews or informal discussions conducted with 25 households spread between the two *khalpar* and five *foot* sites. Apart from interaction with the dwellers, I have conducted 10 interviews of practitioners including councillors, political party workers, activists and NGO workers involved in anti-eviction struggle in these areas. Real place names and names of people for all interviews and discussions used in this thesis have been changed to protect the identity of the research participants.

V. Historical anthropology and the question of method

This research is epistemologically located at the intersection of history and anthropology. I have drawn on the method of historical anthropology. This method foregrounds a diachronic perspective. The spatial imaginary of naturally isolable and well bound areas/regions is problematised and both space and time are taken as produced (Cohn 1987; Axel 2002). My attempt has been to look at time as non-linear and heterogenous. The past is not treated simply as a historical background that precedes the present, but as continuously being folded within a heterogenous present, attuned

towards a future. The relation between the archive and ethnography is taken as mutually constitutive. The attempt is to treat the colonial archive as a product of colonial ethnography and view field notes as a mode of archiving, written over by the myriad power dynamics of class, caste and gender between myself and the research participants within the field.

Practices of archiving in colonial contexts have always been instruments of maintaining domination. The introductory chapter explores migration governance in relation to mechanisms of colonial archiving during an intense moment of decolonisation from 1939-1947 and the multiple erasures and silences of the archive. I have utilised colonial police files in Calcutta which provides glimpse into modes of categorising and containing a diverse array of migratory subjects. The Special Branch (SB) of the Calcutta Police (which after independence has come under the government of West Bengal) is a branch solely responsible for policing of the city of Calcutta. And the files of the SB, Political Miscellaneous Series contain day to day police records of activities of different groups of migrants, 'evacuees', and 'destitutes' on the streets of Calcutta, public meetings held by charitable organisations and politics parties catering to these groups. It contains records of contemporary unrests, strikes and communal conflicts in the 1940s. These were uncertain times and the police files reflect the uncertainty of the moment and bear traces of archival displacements. The practices of producing knowledge about migration during this period and traces of archival dislocations provide clue to the post-colonial mechanisms of migration governance.

Apart from the police files, I have utilised various published reports and surveys by different government departments. The Annual Administrative Reports of the Calcutta Municipal Corporation (CMC) and the Annual Reports of the Calcutta Improvement Trust (CIT) have been helpful in tracing planning priorities in the initial years before and after independence in relation to migration. Other than this, a few reports of the department of Refugee, Relief and Rehabilitation, Government of West Bengal set up after independence to deal with the influx of East Bengali 'displaced persons' have been useful. Most of the above mentioned sources provide information relating to the East Bengali refugees and issues of migration governance in general. The only government sources pertaining to the itinerant 'homeless' people in Calcutta have been three reports on Calcutta's pavement dwellers by the Calcutta Metropolitan Development Authority (CMDA) published between 1970s and the 1980s. The Calcutta censuses of different years have also been utilised.

A large part of the rest of the study brings ethnography to bear on the archive. I have tried to constantly turn back on my own position within this research project, permeated as it is by a

persisting insider/outsider dilemma. My interest in migration stems from being part of an East Bengali Hindu refugee family based in Calcutta for three generations. As a third generation member of a family of refugees, I have grown up listening to stories of Bengal's territorial partition in 1947 and my family's dislocation from East Bengal. From early childhood, stories of my family's dislocation and their subsequent struggle for resettlement in Calcutta have become part of my everyday sensibility. After migrating to Calcutta in the 1940s, my grandparents built our extended family home in the southern suburbs of Calcutta, close to a middle-class East Bengali refugee colony area. The entire locality is inhabited by middle-class East Bengali refugees, now by their third generation descendants. This part of the city has acquired a symbolic value as a bastion of a valorous *udbastu sangram* (refugee struggle). Numerous memoirs produced by the refugees themselves, and popular histories emanating from the region recount the valorous struggle of the middle-class East Bengali refugees and their integration within the suburbs of Calcutta.[25] The success story of the middle-class refugees pervade the public sphere of West Bengal. What is intriguing about these stories are their silences and erasures. In this thesis I have attempted to address concerns beyond my own class and caste position and broaden the understanding of displacement, by drawing on the experiences of lower class and caste refugees. This thesis is permeated by the paradox of my own positionality of being part of a resourceful middle-class group of refugees in West Bengal, albeit with a past history of dislocation, and my attempts to be an 'insider' to other experiences of dislocations and weave a research agenda around it. Research is never innocent of politics. The fact that I come from a relatively privileged middle-class background and was located as such by my research participants is inscribed in this research in multiple ways.

The field areas studied here are transitional spaces located at the intersection of the rural and urban. Rather than trying to identify well defined places, the field sites have been treated as fluid with no specific boundaries, as part of a web of interconnected spaces. In conducting discussions, the attempt was never to push conversations into issues which the research participants were not comfortable reflecting on. I have tried to pay close attention to what my interlocutors thought crucial in their lifeworld. This led the field guide my enquiry and areas visited in an interactive manner. In the Bahirdoba camps and adjoining areas the interactions have been through repeated visits. Here I begun interaction through the contact of a well known middle-class left refugee leader in the area, Kartik. He spoke about camp culture in derogatory terms discussed later in chapter two. My familiarity with some of the middle-class refugee colonies in North 24 Parganas and subsequent interactions at the Bahirdoba area inhabited by dalit refugees, made me aware of a huge social disconnect between the middle-class refugees, their left political patrons and their dalit

counterparts still present in the state of West Bengal. Since then, the interactions have continued with repeated visits and participation in the social life of the Bahirboba area.

The interview questions were initially aimed at understanding their experience of the partition and the dislocation around it. Due to the growing importance of their struggle for citizenship, eventually my interest was channelled to citizenship. The nature of the interactions involved interviews, participation in their social functions, like religious ceremonies held in the camp areas and a series of recent political rallies and meetings on citizenship. During these interactions I was repeatedly asked about my last name, which is an indicator of caste position in the Hindu caste structure, in order to be located by the research participants in the caste hierarchy. Apart from personal and group interactions, a memoir collected during fieldwork, newsletters, pamphlets and publications of two refugee organisations active in the camp area, the NIBBUS and the MM have been utilised. Both these organisations are active on social media and their social media handles have provided a wealth of information about their recent demands regarding citizenship.

At the Round Canal and Pali Nala, my initial attempt was to understand the massive eviction drive that was carried out in 2002 in connection, first with the metro railway extension at Pali Nala and afterwards for canal renovation at the Round Canal. My repeated visits to the Calcutta Municipal Corporation (CMC)[26] in an attempt to secure an appointment with the engineer responsible for the metro railway extension project and reach project affected people failed. Nor were other officials at the CMC interested in providing contacts at these areas. There is no separate CMC department that deals with the urban 'homeless' and I approached the slum development department. There I was encouraged to visit slums that have been regularised by the Corporation over the years, as these areas are a relative success story of regularisation carried out by the municipal government. It was not possible to find contacts at either of the two *khalpar* through my middle-class circles. Finally, I started walking by the Round Canal, hoping to approach people and strike a conversation. During my third such attempt at interactions, I met Anwar, an inhabitant of the area and a local leader who eventually became my main interlocutor. When Anwar wanted to know who I was and what did I do professionally, I told him that I was doing a PhD and that I wanted to write about the lives of people by the canal side. In Anwar's world, doctoral research is not a familiar professional or life activity. I explained that after the completion of the research, the findings will be printed in the form of a book. I became known as the *survey didi*, the sister who conducts surveys, and thus came to be associated with that powerful apparatus for generating knowledge. My questions were guided by a broad concern to understand how the migrant families have come to occupy these precarious

dwellings, how they cope with evictions, and have staked repeated returns. The discussions usually took place over hospitality over a cup of tea and never simply abided by a set questionnaire. Here I have encountered people willing to share their experience. But I have also met many others who have been reluctant to engage. They have expressed a strong disdain about the utility of such interactions. I have encountered sharp questions about how, if at all, discussions with me, or my 'survey' will contribute to the betterment of their lives.

I have also interacted with Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) who have been active at different stretches of the *khalpar* and *foot* at different times. These include three Calcutta based NGOs, the Hawker Sangram Committee (HSC), the Nagarik Mancha and The Calcutta Samaritan (TCS). Two of the NGOs, the Hawker Sangram Committee and the Nagarik Mancha were active here only around the time of the evictions in 2001-2002. They were part of an anti-eviction struggle that continued for a few years from 2001. A survey conducted by the HSC in 2004 in the aftermath of the evictions at Round canal have been useful. The TCS has worked with these groups for the longest period of time. A survey and a number of reports published by them on Calcutta's 'homeless' provide a wealth of information on relevant issues concerning these groups.

My study also extensively draws on contemporary newspapers. I have utilised news report from the English dailies, especially the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, Times of India and the Statesman. Among the vernacular dailies I have utilised *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, *Jugantar* and *Swadhinata*. The affairs of the refugees and their rehabilitation within the state was a much discussed issue of the day. The newspapers contain news reports about the East Bengali refugees almost on a daily basis for about two decades during and after the partition of the subcontinent. My thesis also makes use of memoirs and autobiographies collected during field research with the dalit refugees.

VI. Organisation of the dissertation

This thesis has four chapters with an introduction and a conclusion. In this introductory discussion, I provide the context of the study, its theoretical framework in relation to the case studies and the key questions and methods I follow.

All four chapters of the thesis address different aspects of the central notion of displaceability. Chapter one focuses on the period beginning with the Second World War in 1939 till the moment of national independence in the subcontinent in 1947. Here I look at the general experience of

migration to Calcutta in the 1940s. By drawing on the colonial archive, especially the files of the Special Branch (SB) of the Calcutta Police, my attempt is to address how politics of colonial archiving and accompanying archival dislocations and erasures have been an integral part of colonial migration governance and can significantly fashion the condition of displaceability. The chapter is not intended as a background, but mobilises a central question regarding politics of archiving and enumeration, further developed in chapters two and three. In this chapter I have traced three streams of population movement directed towards or passing through Calcutta i) people displaced from the Far East and coming to Calcutta from the early 1942, ii) famished rural poor from Bengal's countryside who arrived all through the 1940s and iii) people fleeing communal violence between the Hindus and Muslims from the mid-1940s. The chapter identifies a few interconnected population categories brought to bear in wartime Calcutta, like the 'priority classes' who were provided some protection as people servicing the war, and its various migrant 'others', variously categorised as 'evacuees' and 'sick destitutes' whose rights ranged from those of quasi to non-citizen-subjects. This refugee protection regime provided controlled relief for a few and sought to confine and disperse several others.

Chapter two looks at the experience of dalit East Bengali refugees who were displaced due to communal violence in East Bengal and migrated to 24 Parganas in the early 1950s. These refugees were initially recognised as 'displaced persons' by the West Bengal government with some rights and entitlements. This chapter explores the mechanisms of displaceability by tracing a process of deliberate state initiated informalisation which has eroded the dalit refugees' legally recognised status. I analyse how over the years their lives have become entwined with new 'migrants' coming from Bangladesh. Their lives are informalised and a small but significant number of them live under the condition of displaceability. Here I foreground the role of caste in order to understand how socially disadvantaged groups experience and also *negotiate* dislocations differentially. This chapter further shows that the identities of dwellers of such peripheral grey zones retain certain ambiguities, where dissonance surface.

Chapter three addresses the experience of a status less and much more socially invisible group of rural migrants. They are an impoverished peripatetic rural people, dislocated due to multiple factors related to long term structural violence of poverty. They come to the urban margins of Calcutta from the villages of West Bengal, East Bengal and Bihar. I trace how displaceability operates for them through processes of archival erasure and how dislocation has become more frequent after the initiation of neo-liberal reforms in India from the 1990s. Their lived lives are conflated with the

images of 'encroacher', 'pollutant' 'criminal' and 'infiltrator', which negates their positive contribution to the city and renders them vulnerable to dislocations. I look at how in the shadowy presence of displaceability, they participate in unequal political exchanges. Such politics try to nullify their political subjectivity and reduce them to a mere bodily existence. This chapter shows that they in turn negotiate forces of dislocation through a mobile and bodily politics.

Chapter four is concerned with how the migrants experience citizenship. It looks at two aspects of their experience of citizenship, pertaining to legal status and social rights. I trace a gradual transformation in the legal instruments of citizenship in India from *jus soli* to *jus sanguinis* principles in relation to migration. I peruse how this brand of ethnic citizenship has in turn mediated the legal status of the dalit partition refugees and the peripatetic rural migrants. Finally, I look into how the displaced groups have claimed social rights associated with citizenship, all of which are tied to their right to inhabit the city. The chapter shows that the dalit refugees, through their long-drawn movement for rehabilitation, and struggle for protective discrimination, have managed to tap some social rights as Indian citizens. The statusless and peripatetic rural migrants however, carry on an everyday struggle for the most basic necessities of life like food, shelter and livelihood.

In the conclusion I ponder upon the broader implication of such peripheral migrant experiences in post-colonial urban contexts, through the conceptual lens of displaceability and its relation to citizenship.

Notes

---

[1] The British colonial province of Bengal was territorially partitioned in two halves at the time of India's independence in 1947. The eastern half of the province became known as East Bengal and joined Pakistan. East Bengal was officially renamed as East Pakistan and was known by that name between 1955 and 1971. After a war of independence in that region in 1971, East Pakistan emerged as a new nation, Bangladesh. The western half of the erstwhile province of Bengal became known as the state of West Bengal within India. In this thesis I have used the nomenclature East Bengal for the territory of Bangladesh (before 1971) as this is used by most of my interlocutors, or by its Bengali translation, Purba Bangla.

[2] The city of Calcutta was renamed as Kolkata in 2001. In this thesis I have retained the old usage, as the old name was prevalent for a large part of the study period.

[3] 24 Parganas was one single district in southern West Bengal bordering Calcutta in both the north and the south. It was split in two districts in 1986. The northern part of the district became known as North 24 Parganas and the southern part came to be called South 24 Parganas. My study area is located in North 24 Parganas.

[4] The term dalit literary means the oppressed or the downtrodden. The term was used by B.R. Ambedkar, the most important proponent of lower caste movement in India in the early twentieth century, to identify and consolidate the struggle of the lower caste and class groups in India.

[5] This thesis presents a critique of the *climactic* approach to dislocations and by extension its implication for the rights of the displaced people. This emphasis on the *climactic* approach overlaps with a few biases in migration studies. For example, international migration has more visibility in migration studies and migration taking place within the nation states, or internal migration evoke relatively less academic interest. Temporary or seasonal migration is not of equal interest as long term migration (Lucassen, and Lucassen 2014). I draw on Ranabir Samaddar's critique of the distinction between climactic and endemic violence, which leads to the fashioning of the categories of 'refugee' and 'migrant' (Samaddar 1999, 64-69). The former implies exceptional conditions of violence and dislocation, stressing circumstances which are spectacular and much beyond the control of the displaced groups, thus entitling them to certain measures of protection under the category of 'refugee'. Other displaced groups labelled as 'migrants' go through similar oppressive circumstance in the face of long term structural violence which are drawn out, non-spectacular and equally beyond their control. But 'migrants' are not entitled to legal protection. In the lived experience of displaced groups, the distinction between climactic and endemic violence often blurs and 'refugees' and 'migrants' go through similar violence.

[6] The two-nation theory assumes that the Muslims and the Hindus are two separate nations. According to it the Hindus and the Muslims have their own custom, religion and way of life. Since the Hindus and the Muslims constitute two different nations, they should be able to have their own separate homelands.

[7] Hyderabad had been a princely state, one of 500 such princely states in British colonial India which enjoyed relative autonomy. After national independence, the Nizam (ruler) of Hyderabad refused to accede to the Indian Union. The Indian militia intervened to defeat the Nizam's forces and complete the territorial integration of India. This was followed by communal riots against the Muslims in Hyderabad, which sparked communal massacre of the Hindus in East Bengal.

[8] On 27 December 1963, a holy relic (said to be the hair of prophet Muhammad) went missing from the Hazratbal Shrine in Srinagar in India. There were mass protests in Jammu and Kashmir over the disappearance of the relic. In East Pakistan, communal riots against the Hindus occurred at places like Khulna, Dhaka, Narayanganj and Rajshahi and there was an exodus of population.

[9] According to 1951 UN Convention, 'a refugee is a person owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.' The Indian government not only refused to sign this convention, but also avoided using the term 'refugee' in designating displaced East Bengalis in order to avoid legal and administrative implications.

[10] The latest amendment to the Citizenship Act has come in 2019, which exempts Hindus along with some other religious minorities coming from India's neighbouring countries (including Bangladesh) from being treated as 'illegal migrants'. The amendment renders them eligible to apply for Indian citizenship. But the amendment comes with some caveats as discussed in chapter four.

[11] The question of nationalism and assertion of national identity in large parts of the non-European world has been fused with colonialism. According to a well known universal framework for understanding nationalism, large parts of the colonial world in Africa and Asia have derived their forms of nationalism from the historical experience of nationalism in the West. Western Europe, the Americas and Russia have supplied a set of modular forms which could be emulated by all subsequent nationalisms (Anderson 2006). Such an assumption of universal modular nationalism perhaps miss out on crucial creative and imaginative facets of anti-colonial nationalism.

[12] Anti-colonial nationalism, split between a material and spiritual domain of course retained unresolved contradictions. These contradictions are a part of a deeper set of conflicts implicit in bourgeoise rationalist conception of knowledge, established within the post enlightenment European intellectual tradition. The conception of enlightenment reason has in its universalist urge been parasitic upon the productive expansion of capital via colonial expansion. While western nationalism extolls reason, the relation between reason and colonial history of capitalism is an undiscussed underside of western rationalism and national consciousness flowing from this rationalism. Anti-colonial nationalism, which often emulates western reason at least in the material sphere, does not challenge this relation between universalist reason and capitalist exploitation (P. Chatterjee 1993a).

[13] During the initial stage of the Aligarh movement, Sir Syed spread the message of communal harmony, stressing that the Hindus and the Muslims were part of the same *qawm* or nation irrespective of their different religious beliefs. But competitive politics influenced by several factors eventually led to a hard-line Muslim position. By the late nineteenth century, Sir Syed had started voicing the opinion that religion constituted a basic ingredient of nationality. This idea drew from a de-territorial notion of *umma* or community of all Muslims (inside of the Indian subcontinent as well as outside) as preached by Prophet Muhammad. Sir Syed voiced the opinion that the Muslims in their education, economic backwardness and numerical inferiority, could not compete with the Hindus in elections and needed separate electorate to truly represent their interests (Mujahid 1999).

[14] The Arya Samaj movement started in Punjab and spread to other parts of the country. Its leader was Dayananda Swaraswati. He perceived the conversion of Hindus, including the Untouchables to

Christianity as a challenge to Hinduism. He introduced a ritual of *suddhi* as part of the Arya Samaj movement, a reconversion technique, by which Hindus who had been defiled could reintegrate with their caste.

[15] The All India Muslim League, a political party to champion the cause of the Muslims was established in 1906. As a response to this move, one of the first Hindu political organisations, the Hindu Mahasabha was formed. A similar organisation espousing the Hindu cause, the Rastriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), was founded in 1925 by Keshav B Hedgewar with the explicit aim of uniting the Hindus for independence. A large number of the initial RSS cadre came from high caste and middle-class Hindus in urban areas of the Hindi and Marathi speaking regions in north and central India. The RSS was overtly non-political for a long time. Amidst communal tensions in the immediate years after national independence, M K Gandhi, the architect of the Congress led nationalist movement, was assassinated by Nathuram Godse, a man who had ties with the RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha. This assassination greatly diminished the popularity of these organisations. The RSS was banned for a short time in 1948 and prominent leaders of both the RSS and the Mahasabha were jailed. While the RSS had been overtly non-political, for a long time, the hope of RSS leaders had been to influence politics through leaders sympathetic to the Hindu cause within the Congress party. But the Congress ban on RSS members joining the party in the aftermath of Gandhi's assassination forced the RSS to look for other channels of support (Andersen 1972; Copland 2002, 214). After the ban was lifted, the RSS attempted to extend their influence by creating and supporting allied institutions like the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) and the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS). From the 1970s, the RSS will eventually influence strands of Hindu nationalism and associated notions of ethno-religious citizenship through its collaboration with first the Jana Sangha and then with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

[16] This observation by Jawaharlal Nehru, independent India's first Prime Minister, in his book *Discovery of India*, is representative of this strand of liberal nationalist thinking: "Having assured the protection of religion and culture, etc, the major problems that were bound to come up were economic ones which had nothing to do with a person's religion. Class conflicts there might be, but not religious conflicts, except in so far as religion itself represented some vested interests." (Quoted from P. Chatterjee 1993a, 141).

[17] The transition from empire to nation states and from subjecthood to citizenship have followed different trajectories across the world. For example, in French West Africa, in the years immediately after the Second World War, a considerable number of activists and leaders did not claim a sovereign nation state. What they demanded was a form of federation with an imperial citizenship. Such a conception of citizenship both assumed the history of colonisation and transcended it. They saw the heritage of their French colonial rulers as valuable, specially the tradition of rights of man and of the citizen. Territories of French West Africa were too small and poor to survive as independent states and hence imagined themselves as part of an interdependent world. French West African leaders sought to

transform a colonial empire into another sort of assemblage of diverse territory and people: a federation of African states with each other and with France. The idea of a sovereign nation state and associated citizenship claims is a post 1960 idea in the context of the French West African states. In both its federal vision and in the later ideas of national citizenship, a central problematic was how to reconcile claims of equal citizenship while preserving local differences (Cooper 2014).

[18] The British government brought the Communal Award in August 1932, with a view to grant representation to minority interest in the state and central legislatures. The Award aimed to grant separate electorates for the Forward Caste, Lower Caste, Muslims, Buddhists, Sikhs, Indian Christians, Anglo-Indians, Europeans and Untouchables. Gandhi, who was opposed to the Communal Award, saw it as a British attempt to split Hindus, and began a fast unto death to have it repealed. A compromise was reached between mainstream national interest represented by Gandhi and the dalit interests represented by Ambedkar, in the Poona Pact of 1932. The Pact abandoned separate electorates for the depressed classes, and through it seats were to be reserved for them within a joint electorate. The provisions of the pact were later incorporated into the Government of India Act of 1935. (Bandyopadhyay 2004, 355).

[19] See (Kudaisya 2008).

[20] The Calcutta metropolitan area is an administrative area comprising the city of Calcutta and 37 other municipalities located in the north and the south of the city spanning the districts of North 24 Parganas, South 24 parganas, Nadia, Howrah and Hooghly. Here the term is used in a loose sense to imply the broader metropolitan area spanning Calcutta and its industrial suburbs.

[21] The Bengali term *bhadralok* literally means a well-mannered person or a gentleman. The term refers to a Bengali cultural elite who benefitted from western education and rose to prominence during British colonial rule in Bengal. After independence they have continued to hold a predominant position in West Bengal's political, social and cultural life.

[22] A gram panchayat is part of local government in India, consisting of a three tier system of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI) spanning village, block and district levels. A gram panchayat consists of a village or several villages.

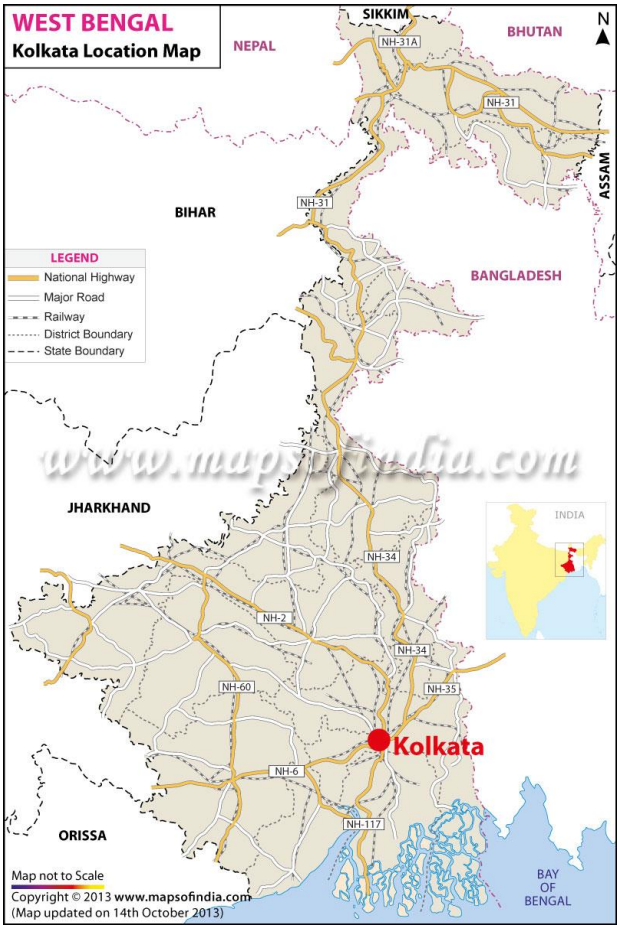
[23] Many people continue to migrate from East Bengal to the Sundarban areas of West Bengal where the international border is porous. They settle down there for some time. Some of them eventually make their way to the Calcutta metropolitan area.

[24] From the beginning of the new millennium the state government has conceived a fresh scheme for displacement and resettlement of the dwellers along five canal side locations in the south east and south western suburbs of Calcutta. These include Manikhali, Charial Khal, Begor Khal, Keorapukur Khal and Taligunge-Panchannagram khal (*Unnata Hocche Shaharer Man Bodle Jacche Jiboner Gaan*, KEIP, Calcutta Corporation).

[25] A few memoirs written by the middle-class refugee inhabitant of the Bijaygarh area in South Calcutta are: *Colonysmriti* by Indu Baran Ganguly, (Ganguly 1997); *Bijaygarh Ekti Udbastu Upanibesh* by Debabrata

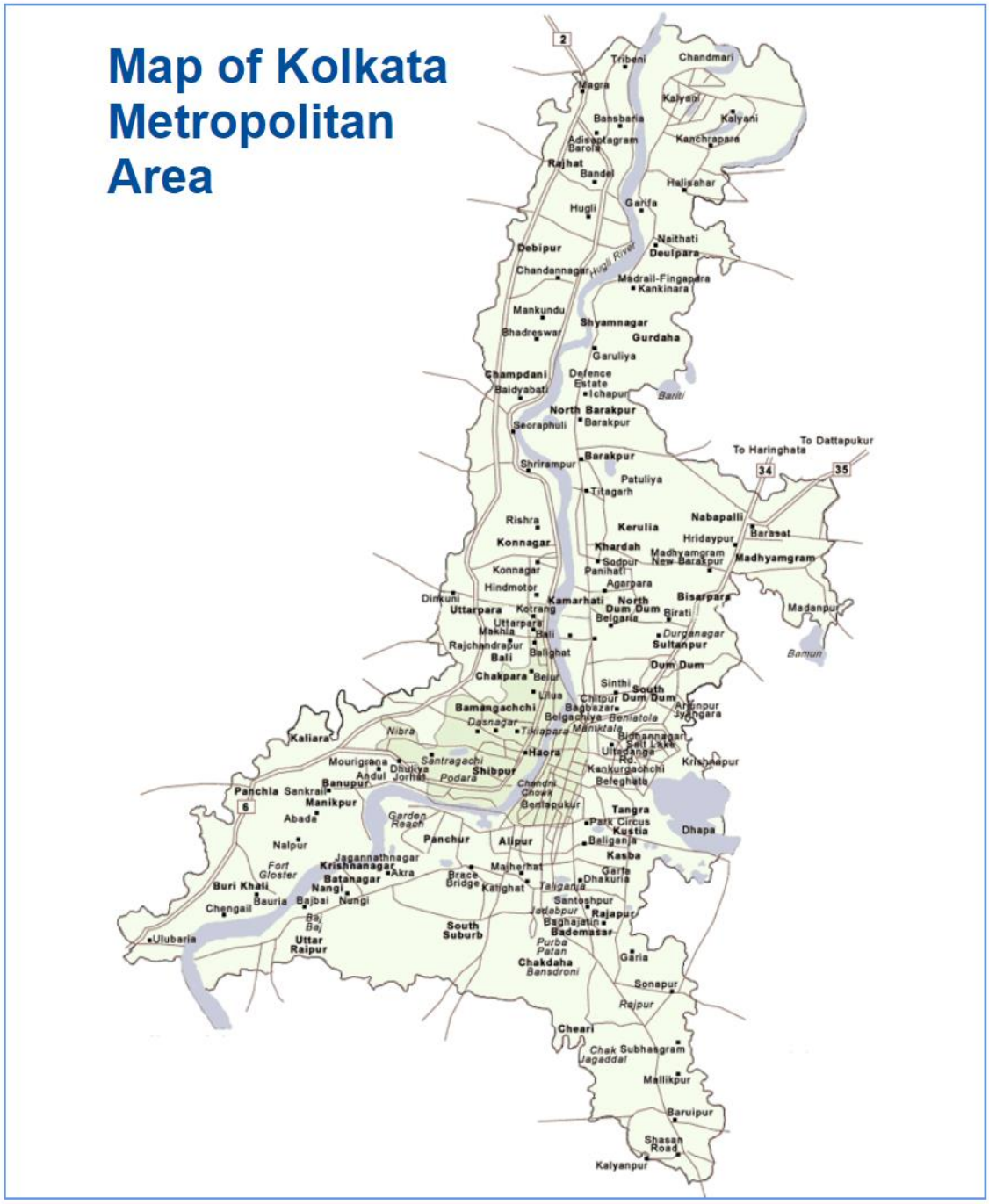
Dutta; (D. Dutta 2001); *Udbastu Andolaner Smritichitra* by Tejendralal Dutta (T. Dutta 2011), *Maranjayi Sangrame Bastuhara* by Tushar Singha (T. Sinha 1999); *Chittaranjan Colony-r Itihash* by Tamal Kanti Dey (T. K. Dey 1999). There are a host of other literature of this sort. For a detailed discussion of such *bhadralok* refugee narratives see, (Sen 2014).

[26] Now the Corporation is known as the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC).



Map 1.1: Location Map of West Bengal (top left) (Source: Maps of India, Location Map West Bengal, https://www.mapsofindia.com/maps/westbengal/westbengallocation.htm) and Location Map of

Calcutta (bottom right) (Source: Maps of India, Kolkata Location Map, https://www.mapsofindia.com/india/where-is-kolkata.html)



Map 1.2: Calcutta Metropolitan Area (Source: Kolkata Municipal Corporation, Map of Kolkata Metropolitan Area, https://www.kmcgov.in/KMCPortal/jsp/KMCMap.jsp)

Chapter One

Migration, governance and evolving regime of protection in late colonial Bengal and Calcutta

In this chapter I explore different streams of migration centred around Calcutta during the period of decolonisation from 1939 till 1947. Decolonisation in Bengal entailed massive dislocations. Calcutta, the second city of the British colonial empire and the industrial centre of a large impoverished hinterland, was at the very heart of wartime dislocations and relocations. I trace mechanisms of migration governance during this transitional period by drawing on the files of the Special Branch of the Calcutta police, contemporary surveys and municipal reports. I look at how colonial archival knowledge was mobilised to codify fluid migratory subjects and how this simplified and abstract information aimed to fashion a differential regime of protection for refugees and migrants. I suggest that colonial knowledge categories actually *produced* the realities it recorded through archival displacements, creating a grid of legibility suitable for migration governance. Its administrative machinery including the police and the army was disposed to ensure that this reality prevailed. I specifically focus on three streams of migration to wartime Calcutta: people displaced from the Far East (Burma, Malaya), the rural poor migrating from the famine stricken countryside of Bengal and eventually those fleeing communal violence between the Hindus and the Muslims. I look at how through particular labels like 'evacuees' and 'sick destitutes', the migrants' access to space and resources was sought to be controlled. The attempt was to create a *graded* regime of protection for the displaced, acknowledging limited rights for a few and dispersing others. The chapter also briefly locates strategies of resistance to colonial governance by looking at migrant dissident subjectivities oscillating between tactically owning the officially imposed labels or overturning them through acts of protest and symbolically claiming their right to the city.

While there are a host of scholarly works on migration around Bengal's partition in 1947, they usually take a cursory look at the preceding decade as a background. A few recent researches centrally address this fluid period, focusing on important themes like communal politics in this transitional time (Chatterji 1994; Chatterjee 1986; Bose 1986; Mukherjee 2011; Nakazato 2015; Das 1993) the Bengal famine (Mukherjee 2011), industrial labour unrest during the war (Sailer 2015) and wartime repression and militant resistance (Majumdar 2015). But the patterns of migration during this time have remained relatively unexplored. This is all the more remarkable, since this was a period of an unsettled sort, marked by multifarious movements, which in turn set off new dynamics in migration governance. I bring in focus the different streams of migration in the transitional decade

of the 1940s, and look at migration governance through the creation of population categories by way of selective enumeration of migrants and associated archival dislocations which aimed to fashion a differential regime of refugee protection.

The chapter begins with a brief recapitulation of the evolution of the city and traces urban governance in Calcutta from the onset of the Second World War and through the years of decolonisation. I outline how specific groups of population were rendered 'essential' for the war and were guaranteed wartime provisions and how specific war related infrastructure were 'prioritised'. The two subsequent sections look at a few streams of migration to the city and migration governance in relation to the mechanisms of war. Section two is concerned with the inflow of impoverished rural migrants to Calcutta from the famished Bengal countryside. Here I trace archival processes which construed them as pathologised subjects, leading to their dispersal by para military forces. In the third section, I turn to the experiences of the migration of two groups, war refugees from the Far East and those dislocated due to Hindu-Muslim communal violence. I look at the way these groups displaced due to diverse factors were rendered legible under a simplified official category of 'evacuee' with limited entitlements. Through both the sections I try to show that dislocated people were disciplined into specific population categories in keeping to their positioning vis-à-vis the imperial war. 'Relief' (or lack thereof) was channelled through this graded categorial regime. The final section traces challenges to this regime of refugee protection posed by the migrants through acts of protest which momentarily reversed exclusion. I conclude with an assessment of the centrality of archival displacements and the erasure they entail in migration governance.

1.1 Prioritising war: policies of wartime governance

Calcutta grew from its early association with British trade and commerce from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. From the late seventeenth century, a constellation of British and Indian trading marts started growing on the right bank of the river Ganga[1] in Bengal's lower delta region. Trade grew specifically around the hamlets of Sutanuti, Kalikata and Govindapur, which were cotton growing areas. The British town establishment started developing around this small nucleus of commercial centres. For a long period of time almost till the end of the nineteenth century, the expansion of Calcutta was in the nature of responses to the push and pull of economic forces, rather than a result of top-down planning. The city was loosely patterned in a native 'black town' in the north, a European 'white town' in the south, and an intermediate cosmopolitan bazar town in the

middle, with permeable boundaries (Sinha 1978). Within this loose morphological pattern, the growth of the town remained largely unplanned, and included a variety of mixed land use.

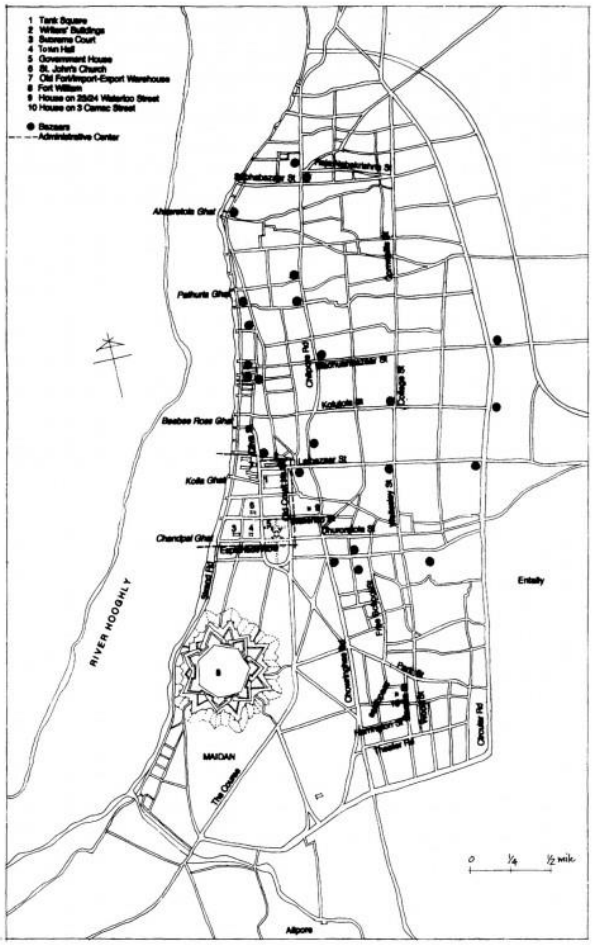
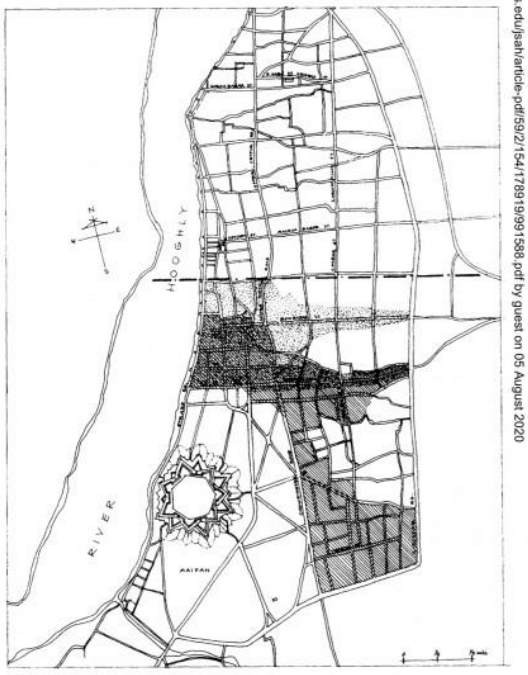


Figure 1 Map of nineteenth-century Calcutta



Boundaries as indicated by William Baillie, 1792.
Boundaries as indicated by Leopold von Orlich and Edward Thornton
Boundaries as indicated by Lieutenant R. G. Wallace

Map 1.3: Map of nineteenth century Calcutta (top left) (Source: Chattopadhyay 2000);

Map 1.4: Map of Calcutta showing boundaries of the White Town (bottom right) (Source: Chattopadhyay 2000)

By the mid-nineteenth century, the idea of a representative municipal government started gaining ground. Representation as understood in the nineteenth century was confined to a small number of urban property owners, who paid taxes and were known as 'rate payers'. After the end of the First World War, the Calcutta Municipal Corporation Act of 1923 brought in a new phase in city governance. Hereby more powers were concentrated in the elected members of the Calcutta Municipal Corporation (CMC). This phase was marked by the politicisation of the municipality and the growing anti-colonial nationalist spirit of the times. The CMC became a hotbed of nationalist politics. The difference between native elected members and the nominated members representing the colonial state and British trading interests became sharper. Another dimension of the Corporation's internal conflict was growing communal tensions between the Hindus and the Muslims. The dynamics of communal tension in urban governance starting from this period will have a direct bearing on 'relief' measures meted out to varied displaced population during the war years.

The first phase of large scale institutionalised planning in Calcutta started with the creation of the Calcutta Improvement Trust (CIT) in 1911. The Trusts were autonomous bodies with independent funding which could bypass elected municipalities. The planning vision espoused by them reflected ideals of modern western town planning. The nature of the Trust's improvement in Calcutta, as elsewhere in the subcontinent, was Haussmannian (Chattopadhyay 2009; Datta 2012). The larger goals of this sort of planning had an economic rationale favouring private business. The 'improvement' thus carried out was to result in the creation of a market for land which in turn could stimulate building projects and raise land value.

Indigenous responses to the state sponsored vision of the city varied. The propertied Indian elite were broadly in agreement with the goal of the colonial agendas of development, sanitation and their sense of modern urban aesthetics. They were variously represented in the Corporation and the Bengal Legislative Assembly from the early twentieth century, welcomed 'improvement' and benefitted from it. The group that was most adversely affected by such development projects, were easily the city's poor, settled in various types of informal housing quarters located both in central areas as also in the peripheries. These informal settlements would eventually become known as *bustee*s.[2] Over time *bustees* housed casual labour and from the second half of the nineteenth century, Calcutta's industrial labour force who came to work in the growing suburban mills and

factories. It was the city's poor, who primarily bore the brunt of state 'improvement' projects. Areas improved by the CMC or the CIT often meant displacement of these labour migrants. Later the improved areas were repopulated by well to do groups under better living conditions.

New power dynamics were initiated in Calcutta's urban sphere with the coming of an elected provincial ministry in Bengal in 1937 since the introduction of provincial autonomy and then with the initiation of the Second World War in 1939. Provincial autonomy was introduced by the Government of India Act of 1935. It brought elected ministries in the British Indian provinces for the first time in 1937. This was closely followed by the onset of the Second World War. Governance during the period was concerned more and more with the war. Administration came to be marked by tensions that pulled the imperial authority, the newly elected provincial government in Bengal and municipal bodies like the CMC in opposing directions. Often there were clashes regarding policies and jurisdiction. In Bengal, Fazlul Haq, the leader of the Krishak Praja Party (KPP), formed a coalition ministry with the Bengal Provincial Muslim League. But this was an uneasy alliance. The KPP had gained support of a large majority of Muslim and a section of the Hindu cultivators in rural Bengal through espousing a variety of peasants' rights. Its alliance with the Muslim League with their narrow urban elite communal concerns did not sit well. Eventually the ministry was purged through manoeuvrings of the Bengal Governor. It was formed anew under the Muslim League in April 1943, superseding the previous KPP led coalition government. The Bengal Congress became the principal and only opposition in the provincial legislature. There was a gradual purging of the Bengal Congress of its left supporters over the next few years, culminating with the expulsion of Sarat Bose[3] and many of his followers. At the same time the Congress party forged close links with the Hindu Mahasabha, with political agendas toeing the communal line (Chatterji 1994; Das 1993). In 1942, the majority of the Congress leaders were jailed after their declared opposition to the imperial war efforts and eventually the launching of the Quit India movement all over India in August 1942. The Hindu Mahasabha, under the leadership of Shyama Prasad Mukherjee emerged as the main opposition to Bengal's provincial ministry. By this time, government and opposition in the province became clearly divided along communal lines. The period was also fraught with tension between the elected provincial ministry and the British Governor of Bengal. Wartime policies often led to bypassing the elected provincial ministry and authoritarian rule by the Governor. The imminent spectre of the imposition of the Section 93 of the Defence of India rule loomed large. Under Section 93 representative governments could be suspended and provinces brought directly under the Governor's control. That Section 93 was imposed twice in the 1940s in Bengal and ministries fell with the active intervention of the Governor is itself telling.

The changes in imperial and provincial politics had significant bearing on the urban governance of Calcutta. The Corporation which had been largely under the control of Hindu *bhadralok* interests, underwent significant changes in power and composition. In 1939, a Calcutta Municipal Amendment Act was initiated by the Fazlul Haq government to put an end to Hindu supremacy in this traditional bastion of *bhadralok* power.[4] More generally, the powers of the CMC were severely attenuated under war time regulations. New ad hoc organisations came up which encroached on the Corporation's jurisdiction. Certain 'civil defence' forces were created to whom large powers were delegated. This included the Air Raid Precaution services (ARP) and the Civic Guard for the cities and the Home Guard for the countryside of Bengal. These bodies were made of locally recruited young men who functioned as loyalist native police forces. The majority of the recruits were Hindus. The ARP and the civic guard became important in Calcutta's urban context. The prime concern of the ARP was policing Calcutta and its suburbs and protection against enemy attacks. Both the ARP and the Civic Guard were answerable not to the Corporation, but to the Commissioner of Police, Calcutta. The creation of this body put the colonial authorities in dispute with the CMC over the jurisdiction of the ARP. The Corporation condemned the scheme as 'unscientific and puerile' (Mukherjee 2011, 39). Initially recruitment to these bodies proved difficult due to social stigma attached to collaboration with the British at the height of the anti-colonial Quit India movement. But recruitment picked up with the introduction of a scheme of allowance. These defence forces came to be manned by locals who were more often neighbourhood roughs and goondas, feared and scorned by respected householders. They were among the most unpopular wartime innovations.[5] As the course of the war revealed, they were primarily concerned with the protection of the 'public utilities' which included the war industries, the transport network and the docks, government establishments and services like gas, electricity etc. required for the smooth running of the war and much less the general 'public' as such. Their position and function vis-à-vis the people were less protection and more policing. They were used in various ways to patrol, police and control the city, and their jurisdiction far outstripped the initial declared purpose of 'civil defence'.

Following the 'civic guards' came the military. Huge internationally constituted army contingents consisting of the British, Americans, Chinese, West Africans were brought to Calcutta in large numbers. Military equipment of mechanised warfare arrived in their thousands. Endless convoys of huge lorries and giant tanks rolled through the streets of Calcutta night and day.[6] This heavy militarisation worked to create a fearful geography. The military camps, army contingents, baffle walls, slit trenches rendered Calcutta the appearance of a city under seize. With the lighting

restrictions on, the city saw many long and dark nights, dark perhaps in more than one sense with criminals having a free reign. The general population was advised to keep out of the way of the 'non-family' areas. The Calcutta gazette brought out a special supplement called 'Safety first' in 1945, with a view to giving the citizens a correct lead on safety measures on the road, at home, at school, in industrial undertakings, particularly 'at a time when accidents prevailed in the city' ("Administrative Report for the Year 1945-46," *Corporation of Calcutta,* 1946, 103).

The presence of these forces of war resulted in myriad forms of displacement. Presence of troops necessitated the creation of army encampments, and 'requisition' of civilian properties. A large number of properties were requisitioned under the Defence of India rule all over the city and countryside. Requisition, needless to say, were forceful and were conducted with the prospect of heavy penalty under the Defence of India rule. This implied largescale population displacement. The Famine Inquiry Commission which published its report in 1945, noted that more than 30,000 persons had to evacuate their homes and lands due to military requisition. Many of these families became famine victims in 1943 ("Famine Inquiry Commission: Report on Bengal," *Government of India*, 1945, 27). These were conservative estimates and the actual dislocations were much larger. Apart from actual displacements, Calcutta and surrounding areas were rife with rumours of possible threats of displacements. For example, a rumour was doing the rounds in a south Calcutta neighbourhood called Ballygunge, that a wholesale evacuation was in the offing for the entire ward number 27 of the CMC. The government had to issue frequent declarations and press notes denying such rumours of largescale impending civil evacuation.[7]

A central concern of wartime governance became the smooth functioning of the 'essential services' of war and the protection of the 'public utilities'. The second important concern was providing for 'priority citizens'. A number of policies were devised to secure these objectives. Special measures were taken to police and protect the 'public utilities' essential for the war. It included the transport network and other essential public infrastructure. By mid-1942 'improvements' orchestrated by the CIT and the CMC came to a halt. The machinery of the Corporation and the Trust were geared to create and sustain a 'war infrastructure.' War infrastructure in effect meant despoiling the existing infrastructure to accommodate war necessities. The CIT and the CMC together with the ARP undertook works of digging silt trenches in Calcutta's newly emerging and carefully designed parks.[8] Baffle walls were erected all over the city around important official buildings. Air raid shelters came up in different parts of Calcutta. From May 1941, the government put in place lighting restrictions in the city ("Administrative Report for the Year 1942-43," *Corporation of Calcutta,* 1943, 50). This

continued till mid-1945. The war infrastructure aimed to protect the imperial concerns and safeguard Calcutta's important 'public utilities' to facilitate the war. In this new function, it was the ARP and the civic guard who had greater authority than either the CMC or the CIT.

The war industries were dubbed as 'essential public service' from February 1941 onwards. The essential war industries included cotton and jute mills, armament factories, engineering firms, paper mills, and printing facilities, tobacco factories and gin press. People working as stone masons, food service workers, and employees of the municipal, provincial or central governments and labourers in the suburban industries became essential service providers. Labourers in these industries were put under restrictions. An Essential Services Maintenance Ordinance was promulgated in 1941. It sought to control the freedom of labour employed in the aforementioned war industries. The Ordinance made it a criminal offence for any worker engaged in 'essential' war related industries from abandoning their station of employment without 'reasonable excuse', under a penalty of imprisonment of up to one year. The possibility of 'physical danger' to their persons was not deemed to be a 'reasonable excuse' (Bhattacharya and Zachariah 1999, 82-83). The Act intended to keep the population required for the running of the war industry *stay put* in Calcutta. But despite provisions of special benefits and threat of penalty under the new Ordinance, labour outflow from Calcutta could not be prevented.

A very small number of the total population of the city including the colonial bureaucracy, the labour force working in the aforementioned vital war industries, the army, corporation workers, sections of the transport workers while being put under various restrictions, were also categorised as 'priority citizens.' They ran the 'essential war services' and were concentrated in Calcutta and surrounding region. A variety of procurement policies were undertaken by the government to guarantee a continued supply of resources for conducting the war. Food security became a central concern and it aimed to provide subsidised food for the 'priority citizens'. Provisioning for the 'priority citizens' was achieved at the cost of starving the countryside and the non-priority groups in the city. An integral part of wartime food security was a policy of 'denial'. The war between the Allied powers (including Great Britain, France, the Soviet Union and the United States) and Japan broke out in December 1941. British debacle in the Far East, first with the fall of Singapore in February 1942, followed by the fall of Burma in March 1942, made the threat of war in the Indian subcontinent imminent. In this context, a two-pronged policy of denial was undertaken. It included food denial and boat denial. Food denial meant procuring rice from the fertile coastal districts of Bengal like Khulna, Barishal, Midnapur among other areas and bringing rice to the interior. This was aimed at depriving the

enemy of resources and food in the case of a Japanese naval invasion through the coastline of Bengal. But eventually the scope of the policy of food denial was expanded from the coastal areas to the interior and a considerable part of the denial rice was moved to Calcutta. The other part of the same policy was boat denial. In the riverine areas of lower and coastal Bengal, boats were often the sole means of transport and travel. Country boats were extensively used for various trading activities and by a large community of fishermen in Bengal. Boat denial aimed at removing boats from the coastal areas, so as to deprive the enemy of means of transport in the case a possible advance through these areas ("Famine Inquiry Commission: Report on Bengal," 1945, 29). Both the policies had devastating effect on the rural economy. It led to starvation in large parts of the countryside and contributed to famine like conditions.

This was however only the beginning of policies of procurement of resources for Calcutta and the war machinery woven around it. Procurement of rice had begun from December 1941. In January 1943, another round of procurement was undertaken. It involved officially purchasing 'surplus' rice and other food grain from the districts of Bengal aimed at supplying Calcutta. A few months later, in June 1943 another province wide Food Drive was launched, this time on the pretext of preventing rural hoarding by cultivators and various rural middle level traders and re-distribute such hoards ("Famine Inquiry Commission: Report on Bengal" 1945, 37-55). All the procurement policies were ultimately directed at supplying the Calcutta industrial region and its 'priority citizens'. These policies were adopted by the Governor, often bypassing the elected ministry in the province.

No comprehensive plan for securing the welfare of the larger public was in place. The government of India had no separate food department till that time. A food department was established at the centre in December 1942. From the early 1940s, control shops were opened in the city to provide the 'priority classes' essential commodities at controlled prices. Control shops procured their stocks partly from the government and partly from purchasers in the open market. A large number of the control shops were private, often run by Hindus and set up within the premises of industrial units. They exclusively catered to their employees. With the advance of a province wide famine, increasing restrictions were placed in access to controlled shops, often based on claims of rightful residence to the city. Rationing was introduced in Calcutta by 1944 and extended to Greater Calcutta by May 1944 ("Famine Inquiry Commission: Report on Bengal" 1945, 45, 65, 94). The countryside still remained unrationed. The eligibility for inclusion in the rationing schemes in Calcutta was based on claims of being rightful residents of the city. The rationing system effectively excluded a large number of people from its scope. And it was the 'civil defence' forces like the ARP who ultimately

had the tasks of controlling rationing of food and providing 'relief' in different capacities. Even as these measures were being put in place there were relentless strikes, petitions and protest rallies staged by different labour unions and a variety of non-partisan groups demanding the provision of subsidised food for a large majority of the socially disadvantaged groups.

A few important points may be recapitulated here. Wartime governance meant policing the city and protecting 'public utilities' and the 'essential services', in short, the infrastructure required for running the war. The population were classified in keeping with their function vis-a-vis the war. People essential to the war were grouped as 'priority classes' with access to provisions. The only welfare schemes instituted in wartime Calcutta were the 'priority schemes' which included special provisions for the supply of food and other daily necessities meant for these groups. Multiple rounds of procurements and denial aimed at providing for Calcutta and starved the countryside. The forces of the war including these policies led to dislocations in the countryside and would result in large scale migration. The situation of the different non-priority 'migrants' with tenuous claims to entitlements have to be understood in relation to the 'priority classes' and the resources made available to them.

1.2 'Sick destitutes' and 'vagrants': classifying diseased migrants

The advance of the war and the gradual unfolding of the Bengal famine in 1943 meant massive dislocations. The direction of the ensuing population flows were manifold. A part of this migratory flow was directed towards Calcutta and came to be schematised under two interchanging official labels, 'sick destitutes' and 'vagrants'. This classificatory schema was mobilised to foster a pathologised perception of the migrants. The official vision sought to erase the structural connection between the imperial war, policies of procurement and denial, famine like conditions in the countryside and massive rural dislocations.

From its very inception, migration to Calcutta has been integrally connected to an unequal relation between the city and its hinterland.[9] Under the influence of colonialism, rural surplus was extracted from a very large area surrounding the city and siphoned off to facilitate foreign trade. The metropolitan area came to acquire a disproportionate share of industrial output and factory employment and other economic activities. From early colonial days, the city experienced migration of business entrepreneurs, service groups and industrial labour in connection with trade and commerce. With the setting up of the jute and cotton industries in the suburbs of Calcutta, labour

migration mainly consisting of non-Bengali migrants from Bihar, Orissa and the United Province (known as 'upcountry' labour) gained momentum from the latter half of the nineteenth century (R. Dasgupta 1976; Haan 1994).[10] As already noted, this section of the migrants faced various restrictions to their mobility under the wartime labour laws.[11]

Somewhat separated from these were another stream of migration labelled as 'distress' migration. They made occasional appearance in policy literature of the region in times of famine. This type of migration is often construed as 'uneconomic' implying a disconnection with the economic development of the wider region within which the migration takes place. Colonial surveys and reports often emphasise that distress migration was a rare occurrence in Bengal, taking place only under conditions of famine. One commonly held opinion, traditionally encouraged by the colonial administration was that the rural peasantry in Bengal were relatively prosperous all through the colonial period. The predominance of the 'upcountry' labour in Calcutta's industries and the relatively small Bengali presence in the industrial labour force was invoked to highlight that the peasantry in Bengal did not need to supplement their rural income by seeking wage employment at the factories in the urban areas. The region did not see distress migration unless in rather *exceptional* circumstances.

Recent studies on rural poverty have debunked much of this colonial propaganda of assumed prosperity of the peasantry in Bengal (Bose 1986; van Schendel and Faraizi 1984; Bates 2000).[12] These studies point out that the proportion of rural population dependent on wage labour, which is an important indicator of rural poverty remained high and this was specifically true for middle and western districts of Bengal (van Schendel and Faraizi 1984; Bose 1986, 30-31). There existed a floating population between the villages and cities of Bengal often on the verge of destitution. Sections of the poorer groups of course met their financial hardships partly by seasonal rural to rural migration at the time of harvest (Rogaly 1994). But it would not be incorrect to assume that a steady trickle kept coming to the urban fringes as well, specially to the unorganised and informal sectors, and remained largely outside enumeration. The following table provides some idea of the migration to and from the city of Calcutta in the first half of the twentieth century.

Table 1.1. Migration to and from Calcutta, 1891-1951 (Source: Census of Calcutta, 1951, xviii).

Year	1951	1941	1931	1921	1911	1901	1891
Actual	2,548,67	2,108,80	1,140,86	1,031,69	998,012	920,93	741,88

population	7	1	2	7		3	0
Immigration	1,389,023	690,550	378,776	371,575	397,274	324,914	249,891
Emigration	44,536	26,591	22,301	46,000	34,000	3,344	5,500
Natural population	1,204,190	1,444,932	784,387	706,122	634,738	599,363	497,498
Percentage variation	-16.7	+84.2	+11.1	+11.2	+5.9	+20.5	

These figures are of course an aggregate of total migration to the city, and separate figures for increasing number of poverty stricken villagers who came to the city all through the 1940s are not available. What can still be highlighted from Table 1.1 is that there was a drastic rise in migration to Calcutta during the twenty years from 1931 to 1951. This is understandable in the light of economic shifts brought about by the onset of the war making an already unequal city-country relation even more drastically unequal. All through the 1930s, rural economy of the province was under severe strain. The prices of important agrarian products like rice and jute went down, and the cultivators were reeling under pressure from unpaid credit balances. The rural credit system was on the verge of collapse. From the time of the slump of 1930s, especially in the western and central part of Bengal, the combined effects of diminishing size of holdings (a fact emphasised by most studies of this period), lack of productivity and indebtedness had started pushing people out (with or without land alienation) to different directions including the urban centres around Calcutta. With the onset of the Second World War, repeated government drives of procurements, together with 'denial' worked to further cripple the countryside. Calcutta became the most important war supply fronts, accounting for as much as 80% of the armament, textile and heavy machinery production used in the Asian theatre (Mukherjee 2015). This process transformed the geo-political importance of Calcutta in the whole eastern region. For a large multitude of population unsettled due to war and scarcity, establishing a legitimate foothold in Calcutta came to seen as essential for survival. Large migration ensued.

With the beginning of the war in 1939 and with the unfolding of the famine in the countryside, thousands of impoverished peasants left home from rural areas. They wandered across the countryside in the direction of towns where they hoped to obtain food. The greatest flow was towards Calcutta. Such migration reached a certain visibility in Calcutta from early 1943.[13] In response to the situation in 1943-1944, two sample surveys were conducted with government

assistance to assess the impact of the famine. The first survey focused on Calcutta and Howrah. The second survey drew its samples from the villages in Bengal spread across different districts.[14] Their findings were presented to a Famine Inquiry Commission, appointed in 1944 to assess the ravages of the famine in Bengal. The Commission published its report in 1945. The two surveys and the Commission's report impacted policies of 'relief' for the displaced people to a great extent.

The sample survey of famine 'destitutes' in Calcutta and Howrah's streets was conducted by Professor Tarakchandra Das and his colleagues of the Department of Anthropology, University of Calcutta in August-September 1943.[15] It was a survey of 820 units or a total of 2537 persons randomly selected from among the 'destitutes' on the city streets. The surveyors consciously used the term 'unit' rather than 'family' or 'house'. The people taking shelter on city streets lacked a home and according to the surveyors these groups did not resemble a family either. They found that the 'destitutes' started appearing in Calcutta from July 1943. It was the landless agricultural labourer in the countryside of Bengal who suffered the most. The landholding classes escaped with least damage. Majority of the 'destitutes' in Calcutta were lower caste and class Hindus, or Muslims, coming from Midnapur and 24 Pargana district ("Bengal Famine: As Revealed in a Survey of the Destitutes in Calcutta," 1949, 31, 51-52). Many travelled by train without tickets. Stations on railway lines south of Calcutta were thronged by starving crowds waiting for transport. They reached the city in different states of poverty and took shelter in the air raid shelters, by the baffle walls, under the trees or simply on the streets and pavements of the city. Some 'destitutes' living in villages near Calcutta came daily by train to the city to obtain food at the relief kitchens and returned home by night. It was reckoned that in the middle of October 1943, the number of 'destitutes' in Calcutta had reached 100000 ("Famine Inquiry Commission: Report on Bengal," 1945, 68, 70).

The two aforementioned surveys, the CMC reports of the time, and the report of the Famine Inquiry Commission started using the term 'destitute' to identify the incoming famished rural population. The official documents for most part took the meaning of 'destitute' to be self-evident. The notions associated with destitution can be gauged from the following explanation provided in a footnote of the report of Famine Inquiry Commission

> The word "destitute" was generally used in Bengal as a noun to describe famine victims. However objectionable as English, the word is convenient and its use has not been avoided in this report. ("Famine Inquiry Commission: Report on Bengal," 1945, 2)

Destitution came to be equated with a type of abjection. The same report noted

> Families were broken up and all moral sense lost. In their distress they often sank to sub-human levels… ("Famine Inquiry Commission: Report on Bengal," 1945, 2)

In a similar vein, the Survey of 'Destitutes' in Calcutta, 1943 observed

> The destitutes lived a life which was in many respects less than human. So far as personal cleanliness was concerned, they presented a scene of utter carelessness…. The dirt and dust of the streets of Calcutta went on accumulating on them. The approach of a destitute could be easily detected by the terrible odour which he emitted constantly. Even this noxious smell came to be associated with the places where they lived for sometime such as the railway sheds, air raid shelters, projecting verandahs etc… ("Bengal Famine: As Revealed in a Survey of the Destitutes in Calcutta," 1949, 5)

According to the Survey of the Destitutes in Calcutta, about 73.29 percent of the people surveyed were connected to rural land in some way. They were either owner cultivators, farm labourers or those who combined farm labour with other forms of day labour. The remaining 26.7 percent had been involved in petty trade and other activities in the villages ("Bengal Famine: As Revealed in a Survey of the Destitutes in Calcutta," 1949, 68-69). Rather than using other identifier such as their profession, place of origin, state of deprivation etc., the blanket term of 'destitute' was preferred. In this portrayal there was an attempt to mark these groups as hapless victims who had resigned to their fate, degenerated to sub human levels and were bereft of any agency to fight the conditions of poverty. The reports started prefixing 'sick' to it and it became crystallised into a new category of 'sick destitute'.

> …the mass migration of starving and *sick destitute* people was one of the most distressing features of the famine. Thousands flocked into towns and cities… The wandering famine victims readily fell a prey to disease and spread disease in their wanderings. ("Famine Inquiry Commission: Report on Bengal," 1945, 2, emphasis added)

A certain pathologisation of poverty was underway. Even as the famished peasants were being labelled as 'sick destitutes', a new official stance towards vagrancy was being fashioned during the height of the famine in Bengal. Much was made of 'nuisance in public thoroughfares' as people started living on the pavements. The Annual Report of the Health Department of CMC for 1942-43 noted

> The magnitude of nuisance in the city caused by beggars is enormous. Apart from physical nuisance caused by presentation of ugly sores or deformed limbs to attract passers-by for alms giving, they as reservoirs of infection play an important role in the spread of disease. Acuteness of the problem drew

> the attention of the public and the Corporation for a long time. With the outbreak of hostilities in the Far East, this problem assumed a new importance… it was decided to establish a Vagrant Home outside Calcutta ("Administrative Report for the Year 1942-43, Annual Report, Health Department," *Corporation of Calcutta*, 1943)

The report did not directly equate famine victims with beggars, but there was no possible way of telling the two groups apart. Its policies implicated the very same population. The public presence of deformed bodies, and the conscious use of such deformities in the city's public spaces to claim visibility, attract sympathies and alms from the passers-by was not to be tolerated. The Bengal Vagrancy Ordinance was promulgated in 1942. It became codified into the Bengal Vagrancy Act, 1943 and came into force from October 1943 in parts of Calcutta, Howrah, Tollygunge, Behala and 24 Parganas. For the first time in Calcutta's urban history, beggary was conceived as a punishable 'offence' requiring municipal intervention. The problem of vagrancy was included in the Medical Report section of the CMC Annual Administrative Report indicating its pathologisation. Through the formation of categories like 'sick destitutes' and 'vagrants' whose presence on the streets worked as 'reservoir of infections', the poor came to be seen as pestilential. As a contemporary news report declared, the presence of 'sick destitutes' was degenerating the 'health of Calcutta' ("Kolkatar Sastha Hani," *Jugantar*, August 1943, 1). The 'sick destitute' and 'vagrants' were turned into diseased bodies. Colonial knowledge practices actually *produced* a group of pathologised subjects by narrowing its vision upon disease and by erasing the violence of war, scarcity and hunger. This justified their governance primarily through confinement and dispersal.

By the mid-1943, the famished rural poor had started drawing attention through press reports. In the height of the famine, *The Statesman* published pictures and news of the famine bringing international attention to it. This created official discomfort. Certain relief measures pertaining to food and shelter for the incoming population were gradually being instituted. The 'destitutes' were distributed food known as *ghyat* or *mondo* (gruel) at various government run and private *langarkhanas* and *annasatras* (food kitchen/rice kitchen). Private charitable organisations were encouraged by the government to set up food kitchens, centres of milk supply for children etc. with certain regulations. By mid 1943, about 220 free kitchens were being run in the city by private organisations, supported by the government (Bengal Famine: As Revealed in a Survey of the Destitutes, 1949, 31). Organisations like the Marwari Relief Society, Mahila Atmaraksha Samity, Bengal Relief Committee of the Hindu Mahasabha among others played an important role in 'relief'. A government press release was issued in July 1943 stating that *langarkhanas* and *annasatras*, were not meant for the 'priority classes' who were being served by the 'control shops'. Separate

entitlements for different wartime population categories were to be maintained. Only people who were not entitled to receive subsidised ration from control shops were eligible to receive food in the free kitchens ("Kolkatar Pothe Ghyat Bitoroner Siddhanta," *Jugantar* July, 1943, 1). Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy, the minister of Civil Supply in Bengal stressed the need to eat a 'measured meal' amidst scarcity. There were attempts to stop the same 'destitutes' from getting food from two to three kitchens on the same day ("Mondo Bitorone Somosya," *Jugantar,* May 1943, 4). Meals were given at the same time of the day in all kitchens to prevent 'destitutes' from getting more than one meal. In effect they were being supplied starvation ration. Within two to three months of opening the *langarkhanas*, a new policy was adopted. It aimed at relocating the kitchens from the city to the suburbs, in order to prevent the arrival of famished poor to the city in search of food. The government incentivised institutions that agreed to open food kitchens in the suburbs through the supply of subsidised food grains ("Sraddhananda Parke Sosta Bhojanalay," *Jugantar* May 1943, 3; "Kolkatar Sastha Hani," *Jugantar*, August 1943, 1). While there were no declared communal separation in the relief measures, private organisations like the Hindu Mahasabha and organisations like the Muslim Byabosayi Samity in effect catered to the Hindus and the Muslims separately ("Muslim Byabosayi Samitir Seba," *Jugantar,* March 1943). This trend will be accentuated within the next few years with deteriorating communal relations.

A policy on shelter was also improvised. Different 'homes' were set up for the 'sick destitutes'. The prospective inhabitants were collected through forceful 'round ups'. Throughout the peak months of the famine, 'sick destitutes' were collected from the streets in ambulances operated by the ARP and the police and discharged in hospitals. Apart from this, from August 1943, the beggars were routinely rounded up, placed in front of a Special Magistrate and after being declared 'vagrants' by the magistrate, sent to collection homes ("Aro Noy Jon Bhabaghure Greftar," *Jugantar,* August 1943, 3). A large number of children were also rounded up from the streets and taken to 'shelters'. Finally, a large number of the dead were regularly picked up from the streets for last rights and disposal. And it were the government's civilian police forces, that is, the ARP and the civic guard who performed the main task of round ups.

The process of 'rounding up' 'sick destitutes' and 'vagrants' was a rather forceful one. The 'destitutes' tended to gather in the neighbourhood of food kitchens, sitting or lying on the pavements throughout most of the day and night. They were often picked up from the food kitchen centres. The report of the Famine Inquiry Commission noted that the 'destitutes' had acquired a wandering habit and resented confinement in camps. Many absconded if the opportunity occurred.

The arrival of a police lorry in a street crowded with 'destitutes' would be a signal for their rapid and noisy dispersal. They evaded the ARP or the police vehicles to the best of their ability. It was estimated that by the end of 1943, over 55000 people were received in destitute homes and camps ("Famine Inquiry Commission: Report on Bengal," 1945, 71-72). A very considerable section of the 'destitutes' did not leave the city via the government dispersal processes. They eluded the authorities and simply remained. Throughout the next couple of years, a steady trickle of impoverished people continued to come to Calcutta from the countryside.

While a considerable section of the living were sent off to confined spaces created for them outside the city, a large number of the dead on the streets of Calcutta also posed a problem. Two organisations, the Hindu Satkar Samity and the Anjuman Mofidul Islam took care of the dead bodies of the Hindus and the Muslims respectively ("Kolkatar Pothe Mritodeho," *Jugantar,* July 1943, 2). Corporation officials lamented the difficulty of ascertaining the exact reason of such death, or keeping count of their numbers. Corporation's Annual Administrative Reports started recording the bodies that were left unclaimed, to be cremated at the expense of the Corporation. A new category of 'pauper' was introduced in the CMC annual reports to account for these unfortunate lot whose dead bodies lay unclaimed on Calcutta's streets. Their enumeration started from mid-1943. The entry of 'paupers' on Calcutta's streets and sidewalks and in the CMC annual reports proved to be a rather long-term affair. After the initial years, street deaths that started under the famine had become somewhat regular and *normalised*. Table 1.2 provides an estimate of the number of deaths of 'paupers' for the next decade or so.

Table 1.2. Percentage of death of 'paupers' in relation to total annual death in Calcutta from 1944 to 1960 (Figures compiled from CMC Annual Administrative Reports from 1944-1960).

Year	Total Number of Deaths in Calcutta	Death of 'Paupers'	Percentage of Death of Paupers in Relation to Total Death
1944-45	51,992	8826 (average 167 per week)	One sixth
1945-46	37,656	5649 (average 109 per week)	One seventh
1946-47	36,859	4872 (average 94 per week)	Less than one seventh
1947-48	45,310	5863 (average 113 per	One-eighth

		week)	
1948-49	44,307	4708 (average 91 per week)	Less than one ninth
1949-50	43,804	4756 (average 91 per week)	One ninth
1950-51	55,422	6587 (average 127 per week)	One eighth
1951-52	40,927	3971 (average 76 per week)	One tenth
1952-53	38,501	4365 (average of 84 per week)	One ninth
1953-54	36,578	4467 (average of 86 per week)	One eighth
1954-55	32,197	4282 (average of 82 per week)	One eighth
1955-56	32,223	4993 (an average of 96 per week)	One sixth
1957-58	32,197	5315 (an average of 82 per week)	One eighth
1958-59	33,269	4833 (an average of 94 per week)	One seventh
1959-60	34,383	5102 (an average of 98 per week)	One seventh

In short, the famine migrants were seen in terms of disease, codified as ‘sick destitutes’ and ‘vagrants’ and their governance was effected through confinement and dispersal. Apart from such measures responding to a ‘crisis’, a policy of a broader and more permanent sort was being constructed through a new law for vagrancy, whereby begging was criminalised, to be dealt with confinement. The legal definition of begging remained sufficiently broad for it to be invoked in a variety of different contexts. The official closure of the Bengal famine was marked with the Famine Enquiry Commission’s report published on May 1945. But a huge and consistent number of unclaimed dead bodies continued to be picked up from the streets of Calcutta for long after. Starvation, destitution and death raged throughout the next decade. The living perhaps eluded official enumeration and confinement, or were rounded up to different ‘homes’. The dead registered a consolidated presence.

1.3 Schematising the inflow of 'evacuees'

Around the same time that famine migrants were coming to Calcutta, the city was receiving other fleeing people, whose displacement was more directly related to the war and associated violence. An ambiguous category was devised for these groups as found in contemporary police files, 'evacuees'. It implied a population that *evacuated* in the face of *direct* or *climactic* threat of violence. The term of course precluded any straightforward acknowledgement that these groups could have claims to 'refuge'. The category of 'refugee' whose meanings were being defined in Europe and worldwide in the context of the Second World War and included certain rights and entitlements was avoided in India all through the colonial period and later. The first major group of 'evacuees' to come to Calcutta were those from the Far East, Burma from early 1942. When Japan began bombing Rangoon from December 1941, this generated a great exodus of population. The British military establishment secured their own flight to safety, leaving the locals to fend for themselves. The Indian population in Burma undertook a long and perilous journey, crossing the hill tracks from Rangoon to the Bay of Bengal where they could board coastal ships bound for Calcutta and Chittagong on the eastern coast of Bengal.[16] The Burmese Indians who made it to Calcutta arrived in different stages of destitution. They arrived by train or by steamer. Calcutta worked as a transit point in their journey. They were given provisional accommodation and food, and helped in their onward journey to farther east to different parts of Assam. Certain entitlements of sorts were devised for the 'evacuees' through official as well as private relief measures. The official attitude towards these first groups of 'evacuees' from Burma is important as it reveals a pattern of governance of 'relief' towards refugee for years to come.

An Evacuee Reception Committee was instituted by the government with representatives from all religious communities to facilitate the transit of 'evacuees' coming to Calcutta (KPM No SB/01569/05, File no PM/ 757/A/42, Kolkata Police Museum Archive, 1942). This official strategy of including representatives from 'all religious communities' was a marked feature of the many different government committees and boards set up at the time for famine relief, riot relief or evacuee relief. This was devised as a way of solving acrimonious relations between the Hindus and the Muslims in office at the provincial and municipal elected bodies. The government committee and its services were however grossly inadequate. As noted in case of famine 'relief', the main work of reception was done by different private organisations affiliated to political parties. The private organisations catered to the Hindus and the Muslims separately. Thus, while the machinery of the Bengal Congress together with the Marwari Relief Society, and other smaller Hindu volunteer organisations like the Bajrang Parishad, the Nababidhan Samaj was geared to provide for the

incoming 'evacuees' from Burma, it was deemed inadequate for communitarian needs. Mr Humayun Kabir,[17] a member of the Bengal Legislative Council issued a press statement to the effect

> a serious problem has been created by the influx into Calcutta of refugees from Burma… the refugees require help at the *ghats* and the station… the Marwari Relief Society has done a splendid work in this respect…. (but) it is not possible for the Marwari Relief Society to arrange different kinds of food for different communities, nor in these abnormal circumstances give Muslim women the degree of seclusion to which they are ordinarily accustomed. For this reason, the Muslim Relief Committee constituted by members representing different political opinion and under the patronage of the Muslim Chamber of Commerce… have made arrangements for Muslim evacuees at Salagi Mussafirkhana and their food at Gahar building in Lower Chitpore road…" (Ibid).

Separate arrangements were put in place for receiving incoming Muslims and Hindus respectively in *mussafirkhanas* and *dharmashalas,* (both the terms literally meaning shelter for guests) organised differently by the representatives of the respective communities. They were received from the rail station or the *ghats* (river banks) by the volunteers of these organisations, brought to the specific shelters created for each community. The *mussafirkhanas* served only the Muslims. The *dharmashala*s were meant for the Hindus and all the other religious communities like Buddhists etc. They were provided food and helped in their onward journey. It is interesting to note that certain services and 'public utilities' were made available to the 'evacuees'. They could take a free ride of Calcutta's tramways to reach the rail stations and were given free rail tickets to proceed in their journey (Ibid). Their movements were closely monitored. These displaced by extraordinary circumstances could access the city's 'public utilities' and public spaces which were otherwise under military dominance. Two broad future trends were set amidst wartime dislocations and rising communal hostility in Calcutta. Relief from this time became increasingly communal.[18] And there was a partial and selective opening up of the city's public space and 'public utilities' under close surveillance. These were more readily made available to groups displaced by *climactic* circumstances and perhaps much less so to people displaced by more long term and insidious structural violence of poverty.

By this time another group of people had also started trickling in, albeit fewer in number, those dislocated due communal violence between the Hindus and the Muslims. A brief review of riot 'relief' in Calcutta shows continuities in governing 'relief'. The blanket category of 'evacuee' continued to be used. Communal relations between the Hindus and the Muslims had been deteriorating due to acrimonious communal politics in Bengal from the 1930s. Displacement due to

communal violence started roughly with the Hindu Muslim communal riots in Dhaka and adjoining areas in 1941.[19] It assumed significant proportion from the time of the Calcutta riots in August 1946. The Calcutta riots of 1946 marked a distinct turning point, and in a chain reaction of communal violence, ultimately led to the carnage around 1947.[20] We may note some features of relief for riot 'evacuees' here, which were similar in nature to the provisions made available to the 'evacuees' from the Far East.

The Calcutta riots of 1946 officially continued from 16 August to 20 August, though in effect communal violence continued for much longer. The riot manifested in several ways, including taking out processions through notable public spaces of Calcutta, looting of property of the rival community, arson and widespread killings out of sheer communal hatred. A specific feature of the Calcutta riots was that neighbourhoods or *paras* and *mohollas* in the city became an important locus of protection or violation (Nakazato 2015). Attempts were directed at purging neighbourhoods of the minority community. Neighbourhoods around this time saw considerable militarisation by local communities. Apart from the middle-class *paras* the other prime scene of violence and destruction were the lower class *bustees* or slums. Many *bustees* all over Calcutta were burnt down and their inhabitants killed or displaced (Das 1993, 172).

Roughly about ten percent of the city's population were dislocated due to the riots. The ensuing displacement and relocation transformed and redefined the social geography of Calcutta. Minority communities were moved from 'areas under threat' by government authorities and voluntary organisations to rescue camps set up in the *Maidan*[21] and many other places all over the city. Often vacant famine camps were used as relief camps (Mukherjee 2015, 220). As in the case of the Burma 'evacuees', more than government relief it were the private organisations that came in to cater to the people affected by the violence. Relief societies were formed at the level of *paras*, *mohallas* and *bustees* all over the city either through the initiative of political parties, or through non-political leadership from the localities themselves. In a sharp disjuncture with earlier practices, a part and parcel of the new relief societies were 'defence committees' set up to provide protection against possible attacks. The proceedings of a meeting of the members of two *bustees* near Ultadanga in north Calcutta points to the arrangements typical all over the city in the aftermath of the riots

> at a meeting… on 09.09.46… a relief committee was formed named Settbagan Relief Committee to give relief to Muslims destitutes in the said *bustee*, arrange for shelter of those Muslims who were evacuated from other parts of the city during the recent disturbances and to arrange to feed the families of those Muslims who cannot go to work in Hindu areas…. It was further decided that a

> defence committee would organize volunteers for protecting the locality from attack by Hindus… They would also arrange to maintain a night watch in the locality and prevent the public from raising any slogans without their direction and from going out during the curfew hours (KPM No SB/01817/05, File No PM/938/46/I, Kolkata Police Museum Archive, 1946)

While the riot was officially declared to have ended on 22 August 1946, sporadic communal violence continued throughout the period. The Calcutta riots were followed by communal violence in the Noakhali district in East Bengal mainly against the Hindus in October 1946. Riots in Bihar followed in October-November, 1946 where Muslims were targeted. These communal disturbances sent new groups of 'evacuees' to Calcutta. Similar arrangements were put in place for the displaced people. Several Evacuee Relief Centres were opened by the Marwari Relief Society for Noakhali riot victims in Calcutta. When Muslim 'evacuees' started coming in the wake of the Bihar riots, it was the Anjuman Mofidul Islam that came forward to help. Relief arrangements by this time had become overtly communal and mutually hostile (KPM No SB/01814/05, File no PM 937/46, Kolkata Police Museum Archive, 1946). Amidst such mutual hostility the balance was gradually turning against the Muslims. While Muslim riot victims from Bihar did come to Calcutta for shelter, the period saw considerable out-migration of Bihari Muslims from Calcutta.[22] Space for Muslims in Calcutta had already begun to shrink. While the usage of the term 'evacuees' was more frequent, the term refugee and displaced persons were also occasionally used (in the police files) in attempts to label a large and diverse array of people. The process of codification of the different groups of migrants was far from complete and remained opaque.

Continued migration from across the border as well from its own countryside to Calcutta marked the coming of national independence and partitioning of the province of Bengal in 1947. The foreign troops left and their place were taken by native troops. Policing of the city remained but changed in character. In the immediate aftermath of the partition, the rival religious community often became a special target of policing.[23] Derequisitioning of property taken over by the military during the war proved to be rather long drawn. Sometimes such property was simply not returned, and taken over for government use ("Jami Pherot Paoyar Proshno," *Anandabazar Patrika,* April 1951). Food and shelter remained at the forefront of the demands of the disadvantaged and disenfranchised groups who had swelled the ranks of the city for the past decade or so. Death and disease raged at periodic intervals. This excerpt from the CMC's Annual Health Report in 1951 draws attention to the connection between the decade long migration, scarcity of shelter, ill health and death, which have continued to rage in Calcutta from the days of the Bengal famine

> The health condition of the city during this year were unsatisfactory. Next to the year, 43-44 when the death numbered 59,739 this is the year of highest number of deaths… this is possibly mainly due to the influx of displaced persons from East Pakistan and to the displacements of persons from within and without the city and their housing in compact blocks (for reasons of security) mainly in *bustee* areas of unhealthy conditions. Mostly unacclimatized to the city environment these people contributed their quota to the huge death rate ("Administrative Report for the Year 1950-51, Annual Report, Health Department" *Corporation of Calcutta*, 1951, 1).

Migration of victims of communal riots, specially of the East Bengali Hindus, which had started since the Noakhali riots assumed alarming proportions after 1947. In the daily notes of the Special Branch of the Calcutta police for the years 1947 and 1948, the label of 'evacuee' continued to be used to classify the incoming population, together with 'refugee' and 'displaced persons'. These were uncertain times, and there were suspicions regarding the role of the new 'evacuees' from East Bengal in Calcutta. Thus, one Radhanath Chandra, an erstwhile trainer of the Civic Guards, was apparently spreading the news that

> an attack on West Bengal is impending and that there is no knowing whether East Bengal refugees will join the Pakistan forces or the West Bengal government forces… Radhanath Chandra is reported to be organizing a band of armed men apparently for this purpose.[24]

In the face of the massive scale of migration of Hindus from East Bengal, the responsibility of providing relief to the new 'evacuees' had to be assigned to the jurisdiction of a separate government department in the newly carved out state of West Bengal in independent India. Relief measures extended by this new department, the Refugee Relief and Rehabilitation Department, Government of West Bengal were in tune with the pattern set in the preceding decades. The stress was primarily on relief. There was no immediate acknowledgement of the need for rehabilitation of the displaced groups. Every attempt was made to persuade immigrant Hindu East Bengalis to return to their places of origin. The relief efforts again were communal in nature. In some time, the authorities would bracket the East Bengali Hindu 'evacuees' under a new category of 'displaced persons' with the reluctant recognition that these groups had been *displaced* due to violence of a climactic nature. The category of 'refugee', with a more direct acknowledgment of 'right to refuge' was not to be officially acknowledged in West Bengal and India.[25]

The East Bengali 'evacuees' would succeed in changing their uncertain status decisively in their favour within a few years. The Hindu East Bengalis would variously take up the task of actively and ardently proving their allegiance to the nation. While the state labelled them as 'displaced persons'

which continued to be used in government reports, the Bengali term *udbastu*, which translates into refugee, came to be widely used in West Bengal's press and non-government circles. Due to sheer number, the resourcefulness of middle-class East Bengalis, and active support by left political parties in the state, the more resourceful sections of the East Bengali refugees would claim their 'right to shelter' from a reluctant state. The Hindu East Bengalis however, were an internally variegated group. They were of different class and caste backgrounds and belonged to different occupation groups. Their resourcefulness greatly varied. Their access to shelter and other entitlements also differed accordingly.

A large number of many different types of refugee settlements cropped up in the Calcutta metropolitan area and in the entire state of West Bengal after 1947. Among all kinds of refugee dwellings, it was the middle-class squatters' colonies which dominated the landscape and eventually became a symbol of refugee resourcefulness. There was a heavy concentration of squatters' colonies within the Calcutta Metropolitan Area, especially in the low-lying suburbs along Calcutta's north, south and east. In these areas the refugees capitalised on the existence of low-lying marsh and waste lands to build their temporary huts. These settlements had a predominantly a middle-class East Bengali Hindu population. Through what is now eulogised as the *jabardakhal* (squatting) movement (Chakrabarti 1999; Chatterji 2007; Sen 2014; Sanyal; Chaudhuri 1983), a homogenised and unified figure of the *udbastu* (uprooted) was projected to claim for them the status of a new proletariat in West Bengal. They at the same time claimed to be its rightful citizens who have contributed to the formation of the new nation and the rightful recipients of rehabilitation.

An overwhelming majority of the lower class and caste East Bengali Hindus started migrating in large numbers a little later than their middle-class counterparts, from the 1950s. They found shelter in government camps. Political and social separation remained between the middle and lower class and caste refugee colonies and camps. The camps were segregated from the social fabric of the larger neighbourhoods within which they were situated. This segregation was actively maintained by the camp officials. There were very few government camps inside Calcutta. Government camps were set up in rural areas or at the urban peripheries in different parts of the state. From the late 1950s, there was a change in government rehabilitation policy for East Bengali 'displaced persons'. All new government rehabilitation schemes were set up outside West Bengal. Their resettlement followed a very different path than their middle-class counterparts. More is discussed about lower class and caste dalit East Bengali refugees in chapter two.

All through the years of the partition and afterwards, impoverished rural migrants continued to trickle in to the Calcutta metropolitan area in search of food, work and livelihood. But they were rendered invisible in the official records. By the end of the 1940s, poverty stricken rural 'destitutes' have receded from the front page of the newspapers as well. They occasionally made small entries in the last pages of Bengali left newspapers like *Swadhinata* and *Janajuddha*. A news report in the daily *Swadhinata* noted

> New destitutes are coming to Calcutta again. Groups of distressed peasants from many adjoining villages are on the lookout for 'work'. All they want is 'help' or one meal a day. Dhiren Das, a peasant of the village Laugachi under the Bhangar police station, was seen at the Hedua crossing with a group of 12-14 men and women seeking 'assistance and work' from passers-by. On enquiry by our reporter, he revealed that hundreds of destitute peasants from his village and the adjoining villages are coming to Calcutta to find 'work' (KPM No SB/01655/05, File No PM 845/46, Kolkata Police Museum Archive, 1946).

By this time, the famine was declared to have officially ended and the famished migrants receded from official vision. Public attention was shifting to the East Bengali Hindu 'displaced persons'. The front pages of contemporary newspapers were often full of news of waves of migration from East Bengal. The famished rural migrants continued to trickle in. They found place in small pockets of informal squats and increasingly by the city's canal banks, railway lines and pavements. The experiences of the impoverished rural migrants in Calcutta are explored in greater detail in chapter three, who were known as 'sick destitutes' in the 1940s, but would later come under a more incriminating label as 'encroachers'.

As emphasised in the discussion so far, this period was crucial for fashioning a regime of protection for refugees and migrants. A graded structure of entitlement was being created in which a newly consolidated 'priority classes' were granted some rights as people servicing the war. This was done in opposition to its migrant 'others'. The colonial state adopted a synoptic vision towards largely opaque migratory flows and brought about a discriminatory regime of migration governance. In this schematisation, the famished peasants were construed as pestilential, to be pushed outside the city limits by the ARP and the police forces. A wide array of other migratory flows, including people displaced from Burma by the Japanese army, religious minorities displaced due to communal riots and finally refugees coming from across the international border in East Bengal were initially all classified as 'evacuees'. Such categorisation retained considerable ambivalence and other terms of identification like refugee and displaced persons also appear in contemporary records. In the construal of the category of 'evacuee', there was a tacit acknowledgment of displacement through

climactic violence, even though 'relief' still meant provisional assistance. Groups displaced from *climactic* factors were offered controlled hospitality. People displaced due to more *endemic* long-term violence of poverty were rendered invisible, pathologised and dispersed. Migrants fought such discriminatory policies to the best of their ability. The following section briefly looks into facets of resistance, whereby Calcutta's footloose migrant populations swelled the ranks of protesters at the slightest provocation.

1.4. Protests and dissident identities

The decade of the 1940s was one of all pervasive discontent. The period saw low key unrests as well as violent outbursts. The protests of the mid 1940s came in response to scarcity of food, shelter and basic necessities of life. The sporadic and the excesses of these protests, opened up spaces for the most deprived of Calcutta's population, its migrants to express anger, momentarily reverse exclusion and shed derogatory categories of identification. While there were manifold expressions of low key and highly charged up discontent, I will briefly draw attention to two related aspects of such dissonance, shifting everyday forms of resistance and a few of the organised protests of the times. The streets of Calcutta were a key site where everyday contestations played out. The roads of the city came under the sway of the military establishment. But the city's lanes and alleys were also the places where its migrants dwelled, roamed and staked a stubborn presence despite attempts at 'round ups' and dispersal. The following extract from an intercepted personal letter by Mr Ranbir Juneja, a resident of Gariahat road, in south Calcutta brings out the nature of everyday entanglements

> Now I will tell you something I saw with my own eyes. A boy of about 8 was walking across Chowringhee on the 24th when a military lorry *went out of its way to run him over*. There were about 15 military policemen present when the boy was killed, but they did nothing at all, not even ring up for an ambulance to come and remove the body (KPM No /SB/01646/05, File No PM 841/45, Kolkata Police Museum Archive, 1945, emphasis added).

Sikh drivers plying their taxis in Calcutta became a specific target of attack by soldiers. Daily notes of the Calcutta police record a host of incidents, where Sikh drivers, who were the most important taxi driving community in colonial Calcutta, were cheated of money or physically abused by soldiers who rode their taxis as passengers, sometimes in a state of drunkenness. Such military excesses were met with everyday forms of counter-conduct. The latter part of the same intercepted letter quoted above narrates an incident that is revealing

> The following incident took place on Russa road. An army lorry was running at full speed when suddenly a man wearing a Gandhi cap stepped into the middle of the street and raising his hands stood fearlessly. The driver tried to swerve past him when suddenly a second man tried to step out. He was killed immediately. All American cars now bear three or four flags each in order to distinguish them from the British so that they would not be attacked - a direct kick to the British (KPM No /SB/01646/05, File No PM 841/45, Kolkata Police Museum Archive, 1945).

From the mid-1940s, military vehicles running over people, animals or private vehicles were increasingly chased, and eventually the vehicles set on fire. A crowd would assemble at the site of an accident, often pursue the vehicle, and set it on fire. Sometimes the vehicle causing the accident escaped. On such occasions, the military vehicles coming immediately afterwards would become the target of attack (KPM No SB/01647/05, File No PM 841/46/1, Kolkata Police Museum Archive, 1946; KPM No SB/01648/05, File No PM 841/46 II, Kolkata Police Museum Archive, 1947). Sometimes, military men (or people perceived as being related to the military) could come under attack for no apparent reason at all. Thus, a special branch file of the year 1946 notes an incident, when an Italian prisoner of war was waiting at a tram station in south Calcutta. A few men suddenly appeared, surrounded him and started shouting slogans of 'Jai Hind'. Stones were thrown at him. One of the assailants took away the belongings from his pockets. The report stopps short of identifying the assailants or their motivations for the attack (KPM No SB/01648/05, File No PM 841/46 II, Kolkata Police Museum Archive, 1947).

It can be conjectured that the anonymous men wearing the Gandhi cap, or those shouting 'Jai Hind' who appeared out of nowhere around soldiers or their vehicles at opportune moments to throw stones, or to set fire to their vehicles were metaphorically and really the men and women of Calcutta's streets, that is, the figure of the migrant. These quasi citizens with dubious claims of residence to the city labelled as 'sick-destitutes', 'vagrants' and 'evacuees' drew from the mainstream nationalist repertoire of protest of the day to position themselves against the omnipresent colonial police and military establishment. They momentarily enacted nationalist subjectivities to channelise their protests and dissipated back into the multitude. They exacted their small revenges at the slightest of opportunities.

Apart from such everyday resistance, the period also witnessed some violent mass protests. The entire period saw increasing strikes among the industrial labour migrants, in Calcutta's jute mills, among the tramway workers and workers in the Calcutta Corporation, and among the dock labourers. Some of the militant protests of the time included two anti-Indian National Army (INA)

trial agitations of 1945-46 and a strike organised by the communists in Calcutta in support of a naval mutiny by the Royal Indian Navy (RIN) in Bombay and Karachi in February 1946. These protests have engaged scholarly attention for their militancy and anti-colonial nature.[26] Here I wish to draw attention to some common features of these protests in and through which Calcutta's migrants momentarily shed their official categories of human misery. These protests were initially called on by political parties, often led by students and industrial labourers and later developed their own momentum. They took the form of *hartal* (strike), meetings and parades led by the student wings of the political parties including the Indian National Congress, the Muslim League and the left parties. The agitators belonged to different religious communities including the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs and had the support of different shades of political opinion. These protests often spiralled out of control of the leaders and turned violent. The sporadic and the excesses of these protests were claimed by the dwellers of the streets and the migrants. Symbols of colonial authority and privileges of the 'priority classes' like civil supply ware houses and control shops became targets of attack. Clashes with the police broke out when protesters formed into processions and forcefully entered prohibited areas like the administrative heart of Calcutta placed under section 144. Another special feature of the agitations was a concerted attack on all forms of public transport which included burning of vehicles, road blocks and squatting on railway tracks. Sir Francis Tucker, then General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Command observed about the November 1945 anti-INA trial protest: "In November there had been riots, the worst that Calcutta had as yet experienced; they had been mainly anti British in complexion but their violence, though short-lived, had shocked all decent people."[27] The Calcutta police confirmed that the ultimate objective of the protesters was to cause *civil disorder*.[28] In view of such widespread anti-colonial militancy, the government initiated an Emergency Action Scheme to deal with future disturbances against the state. The Emergency Action Scheme aimed to protect the government and corporate interests and the 'public utilities' from attacks in case of future disturbances in Calcutta.

Public spaces of the city like the streets, official buildings and other monuments of public concerns were symbolic of the exclusive 'public' of imperial Calcutta. Special protection of a small number of 'priority classes' and policing of the 'public utilities' (like the transport system) had come to cause grievances all through the war years. The huge mass of Calcutta's informal labour, different migrant populations who were the shadowy 'other' of the 'priority citizens' with dubious claims of residence to the city were left with few protections. The wartime violent protests and their excesses have to be understood in this context. It were the migrants who swelled the ranks of protesters at the slightest provocation. An invasion of privileged public spaces through huge rallies and a concerted

attack on the 'public utilities' during the agitations of mid-1940s were symbolic ways of claiming back exclusive spaces and provisions. The public spaces and public utilities were appropriated through everyday counter conduct and violent protests with shifting strategies of migrant resistance. These protests were also moments when the migrants symbolically overturned their dominant categories of identification officially associated with sickness and destitution.

1.5 Conclusion

This chapter brings out the integral connection between archival displacements and migration governance. Categorising moving people in specific ways and generating knowledge and public perception about them through official propaganda is central to administering refugee relief. In this process many realities are erased and a synoptic grid most suitable for the agendas of governance is created. In the 1940s in Calcutta three official categories were devised for simplifying mobile population flows, 'sick destitutes,' 'vagrants' and 'evacuees' which aimed to create a differential regime of refugee protection. The famished rural peasants came to be seen through illness and destitution, which justified their governance through forceful dispersal. A less value laden and more ambiguous category of 'evacuee' was created to classify a wide array of immigrants. It reflected the ambivalence of the time. The 'evacuees' were not granted the status of refugees, but they were provided controlled relief. In the coming years, the category of 'evacuees' will be more streamlined, and be re-deployed as 'displaced persons' to classify people coming from across the international border in East Pakistan. The famished rural migrants would recede from official vision, fight erasure and their right to the city for a long time. The chapter also shows that official classifications are never absolute, and state imposed categories of identification are contested by the migrants through violent outbursts and more everyday forms of counter conduct.

Notes

[1] The lower stretch of the river Ganga marks the western boundary of present day Calcutta and flows south, finally out-falling into the Bay of Bengal. This stretch of the river is locally known as river Hooghly.

[2] The term *bustee* originated from the Bengali word *basati* which simply means habitation. Under colonial usage it increasingly implied congested housing quarters for the poor that required planning intervention. The term *bustee* eventually became synonymous with slums.

[3] Sarat Bose was a Congress leader of great political significance in Bengal. After India's independence, he left the Congress party and assumed leadership of the Forward Bloc, a left wing political party formed by his brother and Bengal's revolutionary leader, Subhash Chandra Bose.

[4] A new seat sharing arrangement was introduced in the CMC that ensured a significant Muslim presence among other constituencies. Off the total 98 seats of the Corporation, 47 were to be reserved for the Hindus, of which 4 seats were to go to the Scheduled Castes, giving the Hindus 3 seats less than an absolute majority. The remaining 51 seats were to be divided between elected aldermen (5), Mohammedans (22), Special Constituencies, including the Bengal Chamber of Commerce, Port Commissioners etc. (Chatterji 1994, 107). The powers of the Hindu leaders were reduced.

[5] For a detailed discussion of the powers and functions of the ARP, the Civic Guard and the Home guard, see (Mukherjee 2015, 30-39).

[6] It is interesting to note that bringing foreign troops from outside caused grievances in different quarters, and appeals were made to the government for training and using Indian troops for the protection of their own territories. Thus, at a conference of the Bharat Sebasram Sangha (a volunteer organisation attached to the Hindu Mahasabha) organised in South Calcutta, its president NC Chatterji voiced apprehension that so long as the safety of the Britishers were at stake, Indians could expect no help from them or their civic guards in the case of a Japanese attack. He urged the people not to depend on the British, and arrange for their own defence. The Bharat Sebasram Sangha, following a general trend of the time, was actively organising defence bodies like the Milan Mandir, or the Rakshi Dal (KPM No SB/02658/05, File No PM 510/42, Kolkata Police Museum Archive, 1942). Such volunteer organisations attached to political parties had existed all over Bengal since the early 1920s. But wartime dislocations and anxiety led to a rapid proliferation in their numbers in Bengal and Calcutta. They took upon themselves the responsibility of parallel and usually communal 'defence'. From the time of the Second World War, society in Calcutta also saw a proliferation of arms. Arms could be purchased for small amounts from the British and the American soldiers. Later the ex-Indian National Army (INA) soldiers also brought in arms with them. Amidst a general atmosphere of uncertainty, arms were being piled up by the 'volunteer' organisations, as well as by people outside such organisations and came into frequent use in flashpoints of tension from 1945 in the labour and communal unrests.

[7] Records of the Special Branch (SB), Calcutta Police note many other instances of rumours of impending evacuation (KPM No SB/01569/05, File No PM/757/A/42, Kolkata Police Museum Archive, 1942).

[8] During the war about 1,22,000 feet of slit trenches were dug in Calcutta's parks and open areas ("Administrative Report for the Year 1945-46," *Corporation of Calcutta*, 1946, 1).

[9] It may be noted here that Bengal has also seen rural to rural migration, not directed towards Calcutta. This increased with the introduction of agrarian reforms initiated by the Left Front government from 1977. Agrarian reforms have led to increase in productivity and generated greater demand of rural labour.

Current research shows that seasonal rural to rural migrants to the rice producing areas of West Bengal work under gruelling conditions (Rogaly et al. 2003).

[10] A part of this labour migration was circular. Migrants worked at the industrial areas in cities and went back to their rural villages at periodic interval. Even when the migrants settled in the cities with their families, they maintained their rural ties. This trend of maintaining ties to their villages of origin by migrants was prevalent in large parts of Asia, China and Africa (Lucassen 2013).

[11] 'Upcountry' labour, were now deemed 'essential' to the smooth running of the war. They came under new regimentation which combined protection and restriction. The migrant labourers suffered from war violence, especially during the air raids by Japan on Calcutta (Sailer 2015). Industrial labour remained unsettled and recalcitrant all through the 1940s often under communist leadership and added to the militancy of the times.

[12] The permanent settlement (introduced in 1793) between the landlord and the colonial state with high revenue demands, multiple layers of landed intermediaries and fragmentation of rural landholding worked to keep the rural peasantry impoverished. The earliest survey of the conditions of poverty in rural Bengal is presented in the Dufferin Report of 1888. The report indicates that throughout Bengal, about 26% of the households solely depended on wage labour for sustenance. The percentage of wage labour was considerably higher in the western districts like Bankura, Murshidabad and Midnapur. But the findings of this report were kept confidential for a long time by the colonial administration (van Schendel and Faraizi 1984, 37-38).

[13] In October 1942, a massive cyclone hit Midnapore. The Midnapore Cyclone produced severe distress to the affected areas. Some 14,500 people and 190,000 cattle were killed and dwellings, food stores and crops destroyed over a wide area ("Famine Inquiry Commission: Report on Bengal" 1945, 66). These areas were also the hardest hit by scarcity and famine and generated large number of 'destitutes' who migrated to Calcutta.

[14] A sample survey of the effects of the famine was carried out in late 1944 by the Indian Statistical Institute (ISI) commissioned by the department of Relief of the Bengal government under the direction of Professor Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis. They surveyed a total of 15,769 households in 386 villages spread around Bengal's different districts and looked at the causes and extent of destitution. By destitution the ISI researchers meant the condition of becoming entirely dependent upon others' charity for subsistence. In their sample, of the famine 'destitutes', about 199000 were agricultural labourer, 90000 were agriculturists, 56000 were craft workers, and nearly 50000 were small cultivators who also worked as agricultural labourer. It were the agricultural labourer who suffered the most (Greenough 1980, 216-217).

[15] Professor Tarakchandra Das was himself involved in organising a free food kitchen for the 'destitutes' at Ballygunge Place ("Bengal Famine: As Revealed in a Survey of the Destitutes in Calcutta," 1949, 12). They initiated the survey with their colleagues from the department of Anthropology, University of

Calcutta. Their aim was to help the government with future schemes of rehabilitation. A part of the survey was presented to the Famine Inquiry Commission as a memorandum in 1944. Afterwards, a survey of the countryside during the famine was directly commissioned by the government.

[16] Around 600,000 Indian refugees fled Burma, with at least 400,000 forced to travel the 600 miles of perilous tracks across high mountain passes and jungles. There were few provisions along the way and as many as 80,000 died on the trail (Mukherjee 2011, 70).

[17] Humayan Kabir was an elected member of the Bengal legislature from 1937 to 1947 as a Krishak Praja Party candidate. He was a strong advocate of peasant and workers' rights, and as such played much less into communal politics than many of his contemporaries either on the Hindu or the Muslim side.

[18] An important exception to this was the relief efforts organised by the communists often through their labour unions.

[19] In the Dhaka riots March of 1941, about 100 people lost their lives in Dhaka and surrounding areas and there was widespread looting and arson (Das 1993, 143).

[20] Bengal's Muslim League ministry is squarely blamed for orchestrating the riots to achieve its political goal of a separate Islamic nation. Recent scholarship has shown, however, that communal mobilisation all through the 1940s was not a one sided Muslim affair and the Hindus had an equal share in the process. Moreover, official control of the riots remained only till the initial stages, and the number of Muslim deaths in the riots exceeded that of the Hindus. Even by conservative official estimates, about 4000 people were killed, 10,000 injured and 30,000 displaced (Nakazato 2015, 268). Due to this huge number of casualty and unprecedented intensity of violence it stood out from preceding communal riots in significant ways (S. Das 1993).

[21] Maidan literally means play ground. In Calcutta, an open green space in the administrative centre of the city is known as the Maidan.

[22] It was noted in a Calcutta police entry for early November 1946, that about 10,000 Bihari Muslims residing in different parts of Calcutta have left for their respective homes in Bihar at places which are still relatively unaffected by the riots, by the end of October on the receipt of news of alleged preparation by the Hindus for a massacring of the Muslims on the Bakr Eid day (KPM No SB/01814/05, File No PM 937/46, Kolkata Police Museum Archive, 1946).

[23] Thus, Indian military sepoys in plain clothes could be seen on an ordinary September evening in Calcutta in 1948 creating a scene at a local pan shop belonging to Farook Mia on the Diamond Harbour road. Farook Mia was unceremoniously ordered to remove the portrait of Muhammad Ali Jinnah which hung from the wall of his shop. Farook Mia refused. After a while the sepoys were chased away by the local police. They reappeared at his pan shop the next evening. Only, this time in greater numbers. They managed to inflict some damaged before being chased away by the police again (KPM No SB/01648/05, File No PM 841/46II, Kolkata Police Museum Archive, 1946-48).

[24] This is an excerpt from a letter by an East Bengali refugee addressed to the Home Minister of West Bengal, Calcutta Police, Special Branch (KPM No SB/01794/05, File No PM 918/46-48, Kolkata Police Museum Archive, 1946- 1948).

[25] India is not a signatory to the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, 1951. Its policy pertaining to 'refugees' have been ad hoc and on a case-to-case basis.

[26] The first anti INA prisoner trial agitation took place between 21 to 24 November 1945. This was part of a widespread discontent against the trial of the INA officials Shah Nawaz Khan, Prem Kumar Sehgal and Gurbaksh Singh Dhillion by the colonial authorities to be held in Delhi. In Calcutta students led the anti-trial agitation between 21st and 24th November, 1945. Over 30 people were killed and several hundred injured. This was followed by a similar protest in February 1946, this time against the trial of the INA Captain Abdul Rashid Ali who had declared his loyalty to the Muslim League. While the propaganda for the release of Captain Rashid often had anti Congress and communal overtone, the agitation that resulted in the streets of Calcutta united the Hindus and the Muslims. It continued from 11th to 19th February 1946. The army was called in to quell the protests and more than 3000 people died in the fight (Majumdar, 2015, 239-251).

[27] Ibid, 245.

[28] Ibid, 262.

Chapter Two

Negotiating informal spaces and grey selves: protracted displacement of *namasudra* partition refugees

In this chapter I discuss the experience of a group of dalit East Bengali refugees migrating from East Bengal to West Bengal in the early 1950s. I take an endemic approach to the partition of India as a process that has continued in its various ramifications till today. The partition has been particularly prolonged for dalit migrants. The displaced dalits studied here migrated from East Bengal to West Bengal in the early 1950s and were initially recognised as 'displaced persons' by the West Bengal government with certain entitlements. I trace how forces of displacement have been operationalised vis-à-vis the dalits through a process of deliberate state initiated informalisation. The *informal state* seeks to slowly erode the dalit groups' legally recognised status as 'displaced persons' and render them unsettled. A section of the refugees has fought such mechanisms and acquired rehabilitation. At the same time, a considerable number of them have not fared well and live through serial displacement. While this study identifies the dalit refugees to be active agents negotiating myriad forms of dispossession, a point of emphasis remains that they are unequally placed vis-à-vis the insidious mechanisms of post-colonial governmentality. The continually displaced inhabitants of spaces of 'permanent-temporariness' carry on struggles that are discreet, low-key and non-heroic in nature. I further highlight that the sense of belonging of such dwellers of peripheral grey-spaces often strikes a discordant note.

This chapter highlights the role of class and caste of the refugees and associated social and cultural capital in their negotiations of the mechanisms of dislocations. A large number of middle-class East Bengali refugees in West Bengal with considerable social and cultural capital have managed to benefit from the officially recognised status of 'displaced persons', utilised their familiarity with the bureaucratic state apparatus and acquired resettlement (Ray 2002; Sen 2014). They have resisted mechanisms of deliberate informalisation through which displacement is prolonged. I try to highlight that displacement is prolonged with lower class and caste groups who lack the resources required to manoeuvre the state bureaucracy and the political machinery. In doing so my chapter advances the important role of caste in mediating mechanisms of dislocation and relocation. I further attempt to show that, unlike their middle-class brethren, the sense of belonging of such dalit groups often strikes a discordant note.

While insights from my case study identify the *namasudra* refugees to be active agents, improvising ever changing tactics to negotiate or circumvent dispossession, this is not a celebratory account of

'insurgency from below'. Sanyal's analysis of middle-class refugee colonies in the suburbs of Calcutta (2008) has situated the experience of these groups within the framework of Holstonian 'insurgency from below' (Holston 2008), whereby peripheries are *settled* by refugee 'insurgent citizens'. This study of dalit refugees does not affirm notions of pioneering citizenship coming from the peripheries. My analysis builds on two relevant researches of middle-class East Bengali refugees in Calcutta (Ray 2002; Sen 2014) that debunk notions of insurgency and highlight the importance of the social and cultural capital of these groups. The accounts of Sen (2014) and Ray (2002) nonetheless suggest a linear process of integration of the middle-class refugee inhabited suburbs. I delineate the flip side of the process, whereby peripheral spaces inhabited by lower class and caste refugees do not go through linear progression from segregation to integration, but remain *perpetually unsettled* in shifting configurations of expansion and contraction.

The chapter begins with a brief background of the *namasudras* in colonial Bengal. I look at how they were affected by the partition, migrated to West Bengal and found shelter in government camps. The next section focuses on a specific government camp area in North 24 Parganas inhabited by a group of *namasudra* refugees. Here I examine their camp space, the patterns of reminiscences about their displacement around 1947 and how that have mediated their subsequent experiences. The next two sections explore how the refugees deal with persistent attempts of dislocation and segregation unleashed by post-colonial governance, by focusing on their negotiation with the state machinery in its double depiction: first as a formal entity with specific sets of 'plans' for refugee rehabilitation and second, almost in parallel, as an informal entity in collusion with the market forces of property which work to unsettle and erase the plans and engender further displacement. In the final section I assess how stigmatised grey-spaces like the camps retain an element of heterogeneity and ambiguity where dissonance can surface and alternate sense of belongings are generated.

2.1 *Namasudras* in colonial Bengal and after: a brief background

The *namasudras* were the second largest Hindu caste in colonial Bengal and the largest among the Hindu agriculturists in eastern Bengal. They were concentrated in the low-lying swamp areas in certain districts of eastern Bengal, like Bakarganj, Faridpur, Dacca, Mymensingh, Jessore and Khulna. In the later part of the nineteenth century, they participated in land reclamation process which was underway in these eastern marshy tracts and emerged as a settled peasant community. But land ownership in the region remained concentrated in the hands of the high caste Hindus and Sayyid Muslim gentry, who provided the capital input for the reclamation and therefore appropriated the

major share of the surplus. The *namasudras* thus emerged as a somewhat settled but marginal peasant community. But due to the objective physical condition of the region, they were not living in abject poverty. The process of reclamation eased pressure on land and these became fertile rice fields. From the 1930s they were severely affected by indebtedness caused by the depression, and there were cases of land alienation. But their condition was still better compared to their counterparts in western Bengal (Bose 1986).

Earlier the *namasudras* were referred to as *chandalas*. The word *chandala* was used as a derogatory generic term to refer to all lower caste people in Bengal. While strict untouchability was not practiced towards them, they were under various social restrictions. Water touched by them was unacceptable to the higher caste Hindus. They were deprived of the services of the village barbers and washermen. They could not enter Hindu temples and various other social disability attached to them. Gradually from the late nineteenth century, with the expansion of settled cultivation in these areas, the upwardly mobile sections of these groups began to mobilise and take exception to various caste discriminations. Sections of them opposed the name *chandala* and started using the term *namasudra*, which attached a new sense of self respect for the community. The expression was for the first time included in the census of India, 1891 indicating a wider popular acceptance of the new name and its official legitimation.

While the *namasudras* faced intense social stigma, they found appeal in strands of the Bhakti movement, Vaishnavism and various deviant sects that repudiated the Hindu caste system. Eventually a sect known as the Matua emerged among the *namasudras* of Faridpur district in the 1870s. The sect was started by a man called Harichand Thakur, born in a *chandala* family in a village in Faridpur. The sect grew in popularity and became the rallying point for the untouchable and the lower caste people in the region, the *namasudras* constituting a majority of them. The initial mobilisation of the *namasudras* took place around this sect (S. Bandyopadhyay 2011, 5-29, 54). More is discussed about the renewed importance of the Matua movement in the political mobilisation of the dalit refugees in post independence West Bengal in chapter four.

The *namasudras* benefitted from the philanthropic activities of different government agencies and Christian missionaries who supported the spread of education among lower castes in Bengal. Generous patronage was extended to them in the areas of primary and higher education by the colonial administration. Some of the major demands of the *namasudras* were continued patronage in education, reservation in government jobs and reservation of seats in the colonial administrative and legislative bodies. A few measures of success for the *namasudra* movement may be noted here.

They were included in the list of Scheduled Castes (SC) in the Government of India Act 1935, the new official term for the depressed classes. Fifteen per cent of all the vacancies in the district of Dacca, Bakarganj, Faridpur, Jessore, Khulna, Birbhum, Burdwan, Murshidabad and the 24 Parganas were to be filled in with the members of the depressed classes as declared in a memorandum in 1936. The Poona Pact of 1932 accepted the principle of reservation of seats for the depressed classes out of the general electorate seats in the provincial legislatures in India. In Bengal, provisions were made to reserve 30 seats for the depressed classes.

The *namasudras* remained aloof from the mainstream nationalist movement conducted by the Indian National Congress (INC), which they viewed as an instrument for serving the interests of the Hindu upper castes. In this they often allied with their Muslim counterparts. The relation between the *namasudras* and Muslims were multifaced. On the one hand for a very long time there was communal tension between these two communities, which often flared into communal riots like the ones that occurred in 1911, 1923-25, 1098, 1943-44 (Das 1993, 62). On the other hand, there were numerous instances of cooperation and alliances between the two communities. Often the *bargadar*[1] of the *namasudras* and the *bargadar* of Muslim communities combined against the Hindu landholding gentry. From the 1940s however there was increasing communalisation of the rural peasantry in Bengal. The *namasudras* slowly steered towards the Congress and the more overtly communal Hindu Mahasabha. In the provincial elections of 1946 in colonial India, these groups overwhelmingly voted in support of the Congress in Bengal. But a straightforward story of their communalisation belies evidence. One only has to note the participation of the *namasudra* peasants in the Tebhaga movement led by the Kishan Sabha in 1946, where class identity superseded that of caste and religion.[2] At the time of transfer of power, a large section of the *namasudras* lent their support to the movement for the partition of the province of Bengal. This support was premised upon the demand that Bengal's eastern districts of Bakarganj, Faridpur, Jessore and Khulna where they were largely concentrated should be included within the state of West Bengal to be carved out for the Hindus inside independent India. Only a minority of the *namasudra* leaders like Jogendranath Mandal opposed the partition. But as events proved, these districts became part of East Bengal, the eastern wing of Pakistan.

Communal tensions between the Hindus and the Muslims was on the rise all through the decade of the 1940s. But a large majority of the *namasudras* cultivators remained in East Bengal in the initial years after the partition of 1947. They lacked the resources to migrate and start fresh in a new environment. The migration that took place immediately around the partition of 1947 in Bengal was of the elite and middle-class East Bengali Hindus. As noted previously, this initial phase of migration

started around the Noakhali riots and continued till 1948. Communal riots started in Khulna in December 1949, and spread to Dhaka, Barishal and other areas. This time the riot was mainly between the *namasudras* and the Muslims. It affected the *namasudras* severely. The *namasudras* started migrating to the border districts of West Bengal in large numbers. From this time onwards, their migration continued in different waves between both sides of divided Bengal whenever bilateral relations between India and Pakistan deteriorated and communal tensions flared up.

As this brief recapitulation of the history of the *namasudras* in Bengal traced, they had formed an organised group and mobilised for the removal of caste discrimination in colonial Bengal. But their movement was disrupted due to the dislocations created by the Second World War, the famine and the violence around the partition of Bengal in 1947. From this time onwards, their struggle moved along different channels. A large majority of those who migrated to West Bengal, could not directly address the issue of caste in their struggle for rehabilitation. Sekhar Bandyopadhyay's research has shown that there was a displacement of caste politics among the *namasurdras* and this happened because the refugee movement came under the leadership of left political parties in West Bengal via their refugee organ, the United Central Refugee Council (UCRC). Under left leadership, their demands were couched in the language of class. Appeal through the idiom of caste was actively discouraged. This fractured dalit identity politics in West Bengal (S. Bandyopadhyay 2009; S. Bandyopadhyay and Basu Ray Chaudhury 2014). In West Bengal their struggle continued along different trajectories. The organisation of the *namasudra* Matuas, known as the Matua Mahasangha grew from strength to strength in West Bengal. But for a long time, the main concern of the Matua leaders remained the socio-religious upliftment of dalit East Bengali refugees, rather than a political struggle for the dalit refugees. A new idiom of caste has re-entered the politics of dalit migrants in West Bengal from the turn of the millennium around the issue of citizenship, examined in more detail in chapter four. Although the language of caste was removed from organised politics, it still remained a pertinent force in organising the social life of these groups. As the subsequent discussion shows, caste and associated social and cultural capital of the refugees significantly mediated their access to rehabilitation.

If we turn to the condition of the dalit refugees who came to West Bengal, in the initial years, in stark contrast to the refugee rehabilitation policy in Punjab, there was no official policy of resettlement in the eastern region more broadly. The policy of the West Bengal and the central governments was to encourage the refugees to return to East Bengal after communal tensions dissipated on the ground. Over the years there was a slow and gradual acknowledgement that there

was scant possibility of the refugees' return and piecemeal resettlement policies were devised. The officialdom came up with certain exclusive categories and devised graded entitlements according to them. Relief and rehabilitation were initially limited to those coming to West Bengal between October 1946 and March 1958, labelled as 'Old Migrants'. Those coming to West Bengal between January 1964 and March 1971 were officially categorised as 'New Migrants'. Only those 'New Migrants' who agreed to move to government camps located outside West Bengal were entitled to receive rehabilitation assistance. All those who migrated between April 1958 and December 1963 were not recognised as displaced persons and not provided any official assistance at all (Chakrabarti 1999, 234-235). The refugees migrating to West Bengal after 1963 and choosing to stay on in West Bengal were also denied official support.

Many different types of East Bengali refugee settlements cropped up all over West Bengal.[3] They can be primarily divided in two categories: government run settlements and private ones. The government (both the West Bengal and central governments) created different types of shelter for the refugees. Initially two categories of government camps were set up: a) relief camps meant for providing initial relief to the refugees and b) transit camps for providing temporary shelter to the refugees after immediate arrival till they were sent to relief camps. Eventually when it was officially acknowledged that a large majority of the East Bengali migrants indeed will not go back to East Bengal, two other categories of government camps came up: c) work site camps for employing able bodied male refugees in government run projects in lieu of payment, usually with a promise of eventually settling the refugees at the project site, and d) permanent liability camps meant for those sections of the refugees who were considered 'non-rehabilitable' and a 'permanent liability' to the government. The private settlements were of two broad classes: a) the colonies set up on legally purchased land, and b) the colonies created by forcefully squatting on government and private property. Table 3 provides some idea of the different types of settlements created by the displaced persons in the state ("Refugee Rehabilitation Committee's Report," *Government of West Bengal*, 1981, 70).

Table 2.1. Different types of government and private refugee settlements in West Bengal (Source: "Refugee Rehabilitation Committee's Report," *Government of West Bengal*, 1981, 70).

	GS[4]	Squatters colonies	Ex-camp	Muslim House	Barracks	Private land	Home	Rented House	Private colony	Misc.	Total no of families

No of families	50,600 9.61 %	1,03252 19.66 %	4,667 0.88 %	4,765 0.90 %	249 0.04%	86,723 16.51%	4,067 0.77 %	53,649 10.21%	1,75,836 33.49 %	42,214 7.84 %	5,25,022

Of all the above mentioned categories, the government run camps were the most inferior in terms of location, facilities and congestion. The most disadvantaged groups of refugees, of the lowest class and caste, who had nowhere else to go, took shelter in the government camps as a last resort. The government rehabilitation policy primarily concerned those who had taken shelter in government camps. It may be noted here that in allocation of space in the government camps, caste and identity did play an important part, despite persistent official denial. At the Sealdah Station, the main railway station in Calcutta, the refugees were asked about their identity, given a registration card and sent by train to a refugee camp. It was at these registration desks that their identity as *namasudra* cultivator was permanently inscribed on their cards. Refugee camps developed their own community demographies. In certain camps like the Cooper's Camp or the Dhubulia camp in Nadia district, the *namasudras* constituted more than 70% of the residents (S. Bandyopadhyay and Basu Ray Chaudhury 2014, 7).

We may briefly turn to the official rehabilitation policy for the refugees in government camps in order to understand the struggle of the camp-refugees. The rehabilitation schemes put in place by the West Bengal government for the camp refugees were fraught with problems. In the initial years after the partition, rehabilitation of the camp refugees was facilitated mostly using government *khas mahal* (government owned) lands and lands that had been requisitioned for military needs during the Second World War. But when migration from East Bengal picked up from the early 1950s, such land under government possession had mostly been exhausted (Bandyopadhyay 1970, 82-83).[5] Subsequent schemes suffered from this problem of scarcity of land.

The camp refugees were categorised as rural agriculturist, rural non-agriculturist, and urban displaced persons. The schemes for rural agriculturists included the Type scheme, the Union Board scheme, the Barujibi scheme and the Horticulture scheme. The rural plans for non-agriculturists included more or less the same schemes. The government schemes for urban refugees mostly consisted of different types of grants and loans. Apart from this, there were also the government sponsored colonies or township created for settling the refugees. Most of the schemes where the government procured land for the refugees in rural or urban schemes were largely unsuccessful. There were large scale desertions from sites of rehabilitation due to unsuitable nature and distant

location of the rehabilitation sites. Alternately where the refugees settled through private initiative at their own preferred locations, with financial assistance for rehabilitation, their resettlement proved successful.[6] Rehabilitation efforts slogged down by the mid-1950s and the state government assumed the position that there was no more land available in West Bengal for rehabilitation and the refugees had to be sent outside to other neighbouring states for the purpose. This government position was of course problematic and was repeatedly challenged by various groups including the refugees themselves.[7]

By 1957 the central government came up with the Dandakaranya scheme located in parts of Orissa and Madhya Pradesh for the rehabilitation of all remaining camp refugees in West Bengal. It was the biggest rehabilitation scheme taken on hand by the authorities so far and involved a financial outlay of Rs 1000 million (Chakrabarti 1999, 177). The Dandakaranya project was located at an arid low lying plateau carved out of Koraput and Kalahandi districts of Bihar and Orissa and Bastar district of Madhya Pradesh. It covered a huge swathe of territory of about 30000 square miles. The area had local tribal inhabitants, mostly Gond forest people. It aimed to rehabilitate the remaining government camp refugees, both agriculturists and non-agriculturists still remaining in West Bengal (Chatterji 2007, 136-137). The Dandakaranya scheme evoked the suspicion of the camp refugees from the beginning. They denounced the scheme and demanded rehabilitation inside West Bengal. The camp refugees consisting of the lower caste groups all over West Bengal organised a satyagraha in 1958 against government plans of forceful rehabilitation outside West Bengal. The leading refugee organisations like the UCRC and the Sara Bangla Bastuhara Sammelan (SBBS) took up their demands. A month long state wide civil disobedience movement of the camp refugees was launched in March-April 1958. *Namasudra* refugee leaders like Jogendranath Mandal, Hemanta Biswas and Apurbalal Majumdar assumed leadership positions. Their demands included: 1) no unwilling refugee must be sent to Dandakaranya and deprived of doles on account of his/her unwillingness to go outside West Bengal; 2) as 70% of the camp refugees were peasants, they must be settled in West Bengal on reclaimable waste land (Chakrabarti 1999, 181-191).

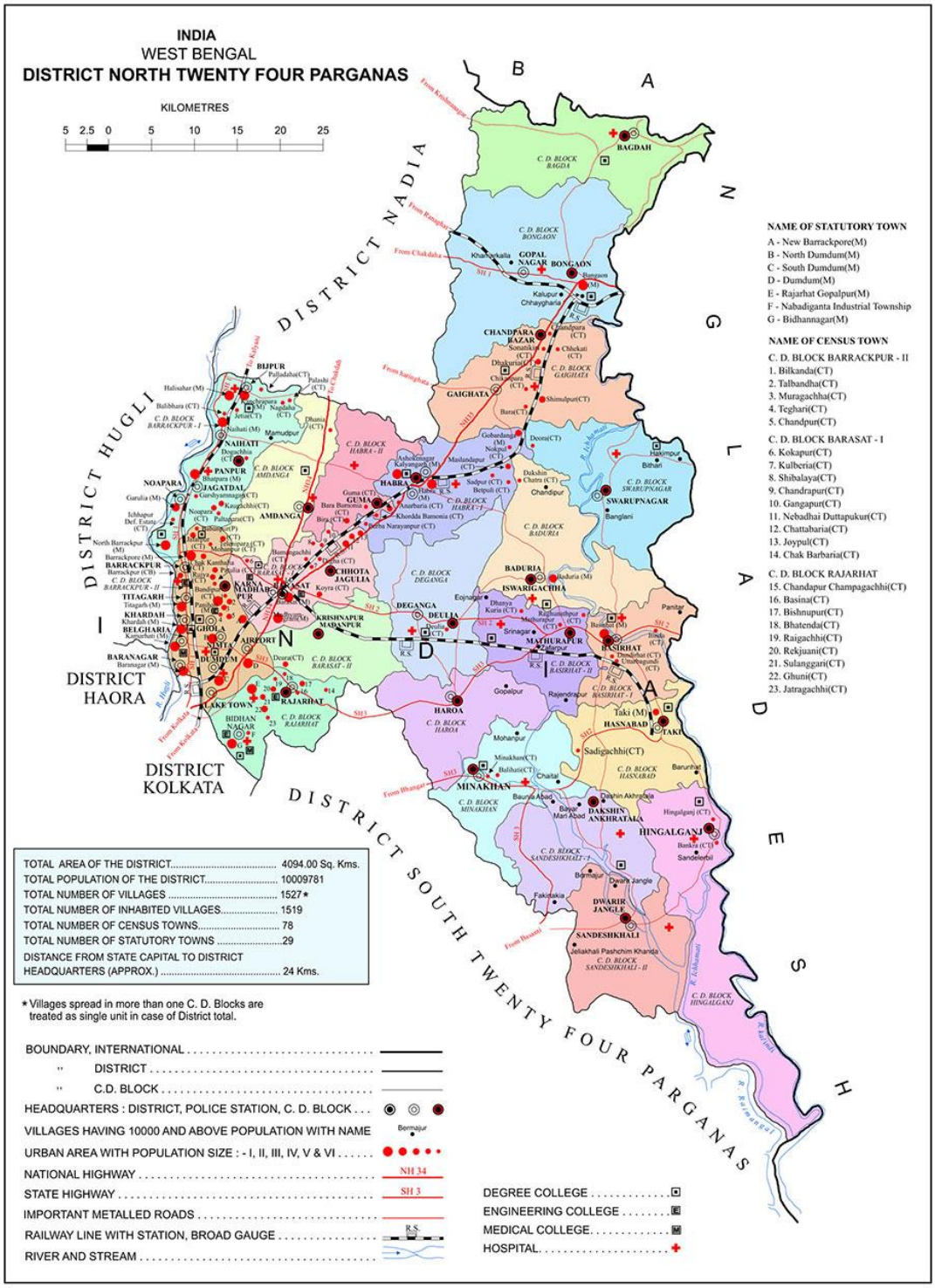
It may be noted that the middle-class East Bengali refugees remained completely aloof from this movement of the dalit camp refugees. While refugee organisations like the UCRC and the SBBS tried to enlist their support, they failed to evoke any enthusiasm from the middle-class squatters. The struggle for rehabilitation of the two class and caste group of refugees remained separate all along. The state government conceded very little. In 1961 the West Bengal government gave the agriculturist families in the camps two months' notice to either move to Dandakaranya or quit the

camps with a grant equal to six months' cash dole. Out of the 35,000 camp families, 10,000 refused to move to Dandakaranya or quit the camps. These families subsequently came to be known as ex-camp site refugees. There were about 74 ex-camp sites with a total population of about 45,000 displaced persons spread over nine districts of West Bengal ("Report on Rehabilitation of Displaced Persons from East Pakistan at Ex-Camp Sites in West Bengal," *Government of India,* 1969). 24 Parganas have the largest number of ex-camps (see Table 2.2). In this chapter I draw on the experiences of one such ex-camp settlement located in 24 Parganas, the Bahirdoba ex-camp sites.

Table 2.2. District wise break up of different government ex-camp-sites in West Bengal (Source: "Report on Rehabilitation of Displaced Persons from East Pakistan at Ex-Camp Sites in West Bengal," *Government of India*, 1969, 24).

Name of district	No. of ex-camp sites	No of PL families	No of rehabilitable families	Total
Bankura	4	4	164	168
Birbhum	9	25	573	598
Burdwan	22	33	2488	2521
Hooghly	5	26	596	622
Howrah	2	26	274	300
Midnapur	5	-	408	408
Murshidabad	5	14	684	698
Nadia	1	-	1068	1068
24 Parganas	21	30	2312	2342
Total	74	158	8567	8725

Map 2.1. Location Map of North 24 Parganas (Source: ResearchGate, https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Location-of-North-24-Parganas-district-within-West-Bengal-state-India_fig1_225618863)



Map 2.2. North 24 Parganas District (Source: North 24 Parganas District, Office of the District Magistrate, http://www.north24parganas.gov.in/sites/default/files/external_image/north_24_pgs_map_0.jpg)

Bahirdoba has been a low-lying and water logged area, located in the district of North 24 Parganas along the north-eastern suburbs of Calcutta. In the early 1950s the area comprised of some villages interspersed by paddy fields and fell under the jurisdiction of two local village panchayats.[8] The area had no transport system and was virtually cut off from the surroundings. But it was physically very close to the city of Calcutta which lay to its immediate south, roughly one to two kilometers away. This advantageous location of the settlement would eventually become crucial and make it a site of diverging claims and contestations. In 1953-54 a group of *namasudra* refugees (1065 refugee families as per government report published in 1971) were brought to the Bahirdoba area. They were housed in eleven work-site camps and laboured in a government canal excavation project. The project aimed to elevate submerged lands from a huge area on the banks of the canal. The recovered land could then be brought under cultivation, and also used for resettling the agriculturist refugees. The refugees were promised rehabilitation at the project site after the canal excavation was completed, with allotment of plots the size of 9.5 *bighas* (8094 square metres)[9] per family ("On Rehabilitation of Displaced Persons from East Pakistan Living at Ex-Camp Sites in West Bengal, 6th Report," *Government of India*, 1971).

At the time of the initiation of the canal project the pattern of local landholding in the area was mixed. The area did not have big landowners. There were a good number of middle sized landowners, locally known as *gatidars*. The *gatidars* lived in the area, tilled part of the land themselves and also employed sharecroppers for cultivation. There were also a considerable number of peasants who were part owners and part *bargadars* (sharecroppers).[10] The canal project was conceived in a manner, that it passed through land under cultivation, sometimes lands that produced two, or even three crops per year. Some of the work-site camps were also located on paddy land. This sudden encroachment of a large number of refugees generated the hostility of the local people. A news report in *Anandabazar Patrika* reported the discontent among the local inhabitants of Rajarhat over government acquisition notice for taking over a wide area under the Rajarhat police station ("Discontent Over Land Acquisition Notice in Rajarhat," *Anandabazar Patrika,* May 1955). Contemporary news reports noted the fear of the local *bargadars* and anxiety over loosing paddy lands under cultivation, which was often the sole means of their subsistence ("Usurpation of Peasants Paddy Land," *Jugantar,* January 1954). In a letter to the editor of the *Anandabazar Patrika*, Nishikanta Bagui of the neighbourhood, located just next to the camp area, voiced local peasant grievances against the project in clear terms

> Recently acquisition notice has been issued to the peasants of… nearby villages of the Rajarhat police station, for securing land... If this paddy land which is the main base of subsistence for the peasants of

> the area are requisitioned forcefully, these families will be left without anything… this will turn the peasants into *new refugees*... ("Land as Compensation for Acquired Land," *Anandabazar Patrika,* January 1954, emphasis added)

Another dimension was added to the brewing conflict by the activities of the local wing of the Communist Party of India (CPI). Around this time, the CPI was building its peasant wing known as the Kishan Sabha in the Rajarhat area. It was precisely around the issue of forceful land acquisition by the government for the canal project that the local peasant movement was sought to be consolidated. During a long interview, Kartik, a man in his 70s who is a local leader of the CPI, a member of the party's Rajarhat peasant wing, and also a member of its cultural wing, the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA), reflected on the nature of peasant movement in the area and the grounds for conflict between the refugees and the local peasants

> we saw people from East Bengal were coming here… the government was arranging tents for them… when the refugees started coming, we helped them the best we could… when they moved here, the government had not yet disclosed the plan that the refugees will be employed in the work of canal digging…the land by the canal belonged to… local cultivators… I have seen them at work… I used to sit nearby in winter days, as they went about reaping paddy in the fields…
>
> I: so the government took land from the cultivators for the canal project?
>
> Kartik: yes, mainly cultivators… they owned small lands… the cultivators were in a difficult condition… Pijush, he is an acquaintance of mine… he owned small lands that he himself cultivated… it would not be more than 2-3 *katha*… he cultivated the rest as a share cropper… they could not survive solely from the income of the lands they owned…
>
> …the peasant movement gradually crystallised here around the issue of the canal project… a leaflet was issued… it stated that the work of canal digging must be stopped, because it would take away the lands of the peasants and these were fertile lands…but the government did not pay heed… this created a strong movement… the relation between the refugees and the locals deteriorated… the refugees squatted on their land, and the local people could not remedy the situation, hence there was a bitter relation between the two groups from the beginning… we tried to heal the conflict… but not to much avail… (Kartik, Personal Interview, December 2015).

The work of canal excavation by the agriculturist refugees was complete in 1958. Afterwards the government went back on its promise and denied the refugees the land reclaimed by them. The electoral success of the Indian National Congress (INC) government in West Bengal depended upon support from big landowners. They were in favour of keeping the reclaimed land with private

owners, rather than distributing them to the refugees. The refugees were to be *dispersed* further away to peripheries. Following state wide policies of dispersal, the remaining camp refugees were offered rehabilitation outside West Bengal in places like Dandakaranya. This was strongly opposed. The Bahirboda refugees briefly joined forces with other camp refugees all over West Bengal, in the camp satyagraha of 1958-59. As already noted, this camp satyagraha did not secure them any concrete benefit. The camps were forcefully closed.

Figure 2.1. A glimpse of the Bahirdoba canal.

Figure 2.2. A footbridge over the Bahirdoba canal.

After the official closure of the camps, usurpation of local land for survival embroiled the refugees in a conflict with local peasants. A group of camp refugee families squatted in a village next to the camps by the name Shulumari. They created a squatters' colony there, which is now known as the Shulumari colony. Bolstered by the success of the initial squatting, they planned to wrest control of paddy lands from the local villagers. The refugees wanted to continue their traditional occupation of cultivation in land thus acquired.

Figure 2.3. A glimpse of the Shulumari colony. This area is less urbanised and still within a village panchayat.

The local villagers, on their part, had prior intimation of the plan of the refugees. They stood to lose their sole means of subsistence if their lands were taken away. They organised to oppose the move. The peasant resistance was shaped under the local CPI leaders together with the *jotedars*[11] and *gatidars*, who faced the prospect of losing land. It is interesting to note that the local leader of the Krishak Sabha who provided leadership to this peasant resistance was himself a landowner. He preferred to organise with local peasants and landowners in opposition to the refugees. Both sides prepared for a final showdown. On 26 June, 1960 there was a direct conflict between the refugees and the local peasants for control over land. Gun shots were fired and three refugees died.[12] The police arrived after the exchange of fire, and arrested a large number of people from both conflicting sides. Jogen of Shulumari who also fought on the day of conflict, thus described the incident

> …so there was the *danga* (riot)… the zamindar took the help of the local people and fought with us… they wanted to evict us… but we were already informed…. there were attempts to contact the *namasudras* in places like Madhyamgram, Barrackpore… broadly people from East Bengal… arms were collected from them and brought here at night… people living in Shulumari prepared themselves as best they could with *dhal, sarki* etc… around 10 in the morning we saw a large number of people of

> the villages advancing towards us from all sides… three of our people died… it was after the *danga* was over that a large number of police arrived… (Jogen, Personal Interview, February 2016).

In this refugee remembering, the figure of the local sharecropper is carefully erased. The figure of the *jotedar* (relatively sizeable landowners) and the police are made into the avowed opponent. Ganesh, a local peasant, who was a share cropper in this land, and lost his sole means of subsistence in the conflict, provided a different version of the conflict. He had gone to the area on the day of the conflict. And he was later arrested with many others.

> …not only did the canal pass over cultivable land, they actually settled the refugees on our paddy lands… that is why we protested… about 15 of 16 of us used to cultivate that land… I don't remember all the names… the police were present, but did not take any action… (Ganesh, Personal Interview, December 2015)

This conflict had a disruptive effect. It disrupted the local CPI peasant movement in the area. Many local peasants lost land, and were given a very nominal compensation years later. It changed their subsistence base. Now many of their descendants have turned into day labourers. Cultivation in the land of conflict stopped, and paved the way for its future urbanisation, which was fraught with its own problems. The conflict foreclosed possibilities of horizontal solidarity between the refugees and the local landless.

2.2 De-paradigming the 'first' displacement

As the background so far indicates, the *namasudra* refugees struggled to survive in the face of myriad policies of divide and rule and conflict over scarce resources at the peripheries. Memories of their displacement from East Bengal to India, or their left behind homes do not have a predominant place in the recollection of these refugees except for when it is invoked to stake a new claim in a new environment. This is in stark contrast to middle-class East Bengali refugee remembrances of the event, where the partition is recalled as a monstrously irrational aberration. The tragedy is recollected as one that cruelly and suddenly cut the refugees adrift from their native villages in East Bengal, where their ancestors have lived for generations. In the middle-class memories, the ancestral home is remembered as foundational of their personhood and their present status of refugeehood sets them outside of their foundation.[13]

In dalit recollections, the partition does not figure as a first paradigmatic instance of dislocation. Their remembrances in a way de-paradigm the partition and locate it within continuing forces of violence. One shortcoming of my study is that most of my interlocutors were young schoolchildren at the time of their migration after the partition. Recollection of their days in East Bengal before the partition remains sketchy. As a corrective, I have drawn from two dalit refugee memoirs, written by erstwhile inhabitants of refugee camps in the suburbs of Calcutta. These are the memoirs by Sadanandal Pal, *Eka Kumbha: Ek Udbastu Kumbhakarer Maatimakha Atmakatha* (Pal 2009) and an autobiography by Manoranjan Byapari, *Itibritte Chandal Jiban* (Byapari 2012). Their writings show that as the most disadvantaged caste and class, their homes in East Bengal were often not as secure. Unlike some of the canonical middle-class East Bengali refugee memories, the partition of 1947 does not appear as a singular and exceptional event.[14] Rather than one single cataclysmic horror, the emphasis is on repeated movements, from East Bengal to West Bengal, back again to their homes in East Bengal and prolonged experiences of dislocation, discrimination and alienation.

During my interaction with the camp dwellers at Bahirdoba, I have found that a strong sense of deception and betrayal at the hands of the post-colonial state pervades their recollection. Many of the Bahirdoba refugees have been moving from place to place in different government camps before they were brought to Bahirdoba.[15] Sunil of camp B reflected

> …they (the West Bengal government) used to give us false hope of rehabilitation… took us to the mountains in Shalbani… after a while they said here there is no place for rehabilitation, you will be taken to Panshkura (a town in Medinipur district of West Bengal)… camps were set up (at Panshkura)... they asked us to dig a canal, they said 'how will you get rehabilitation unless you dig the canal and build roads?'… the work of canal excavation started… after it was completed they said there will be no place here, you will be moved to Bahirdoba… (Sunil, Personal Interview, February 2016)

In Sunil's memory, the deception continued long after they were brought to the Bahirdoba camps. During their stay in different camps, they were mostly engaged in the work of soil excavation. They often lacked exact knowledge about the government project they were part of. All they can remember is that they were employed for digging mud as part of government projects in lieu of a payment, and later shifted from the site to a different locale. Their treatment by the state authorities resembled that of a captive labour force. In most cases, they had hardly any interaction with the locals of the surrounding areas.[16]

The government created an infrastructure of sorts in the Bahirdoba camp area, employing contractors for the purpose. They were under the supervision of the government camp officials. Often there were corruption and indifference among the officials. The refugee families were housed in tents. Tents were also used for the camp office and the camp schools. While some tent-dwellings lined the canal banks, most others were created in the interior, on low paddy lands. The tents were small in size, usually the dimension of 7 ½ * 7 ½ * 6 feet, where about four to five people put up. The bigger families were given two tents. The tent houses tended to get unbearably hot during the summer months. The situation was even worse during the rains. The government installed water taps and latrines were far less in number than what was required. Latrines were often located some distance away from the camps. The refugees had to wade through submerged paddy fields to get to the latrines ("Poor Example of Refugee Rehabilitation in Bagjola," *Anandabazar Patrika,* April 1956). Each camp had an office (usually marked by a white tent) and the camp officials included a camp superintendent, a doctor, an overseer and some peons. Each camp also had a primary school housed in tents, with a salaried government teacher. The work of canal digging was carried out under armed police protection. A small number of police also stayed in the camps. For example, a small number of police were stationed at camp no B, and later a police camp was created near the Shulumari colony (which has now been turned into a club) (Sobhanath, Personal Interview, February 2016). Sobhanath of camp B thus responded to my query regarding arrangement for toilets

> … I feel ashamed to say this now… toilets were open, nobody bothered… the tents were placed with some gaps in between, people would sometimes surround small areas in such gaps… women defecated here… when we were kids, we used to defecate by the canal… some people would go to the fields nearby… later the government created some latrines here… This would be probably in 1957-58… (Sobhanath, Personal Interview, February 2016)

Their inhuman living conditions created a sense of shame. The refugees were given cash dole cards by the camp authorities, which entitled them to a cash dole, given at specific intervals. The dole included a small amount of money and some food items like rice, wheat etc. The cash dole card (henceforth CDC) became their most important identity card. The refugees were given clothes two times a year, once during the Independence day celebration on 15 August, and on India's Republic day on 26 January.[17] While there were numerous complaints from the refugees regarding camp amenities, this did not lead to direct confrontation ("Poor Example of Refugee Rehabilitation in Bagjola," *Anandabazar Patrika,* April 1956). The grievances of the camp dwellers were expressed through meetings and memoranda on issues like maladministration at the camps, insufficient amount of dole, lack of amenities etc. Sobhanath reflected on their relation with the camp officials

we used to call them *babus*… most of us were illiterate… we are from East Bengal, some had been day labourers, some had been cultivators… those who were educated did not come to the camps… (Sobhanath, Personal Interview, February 2016)

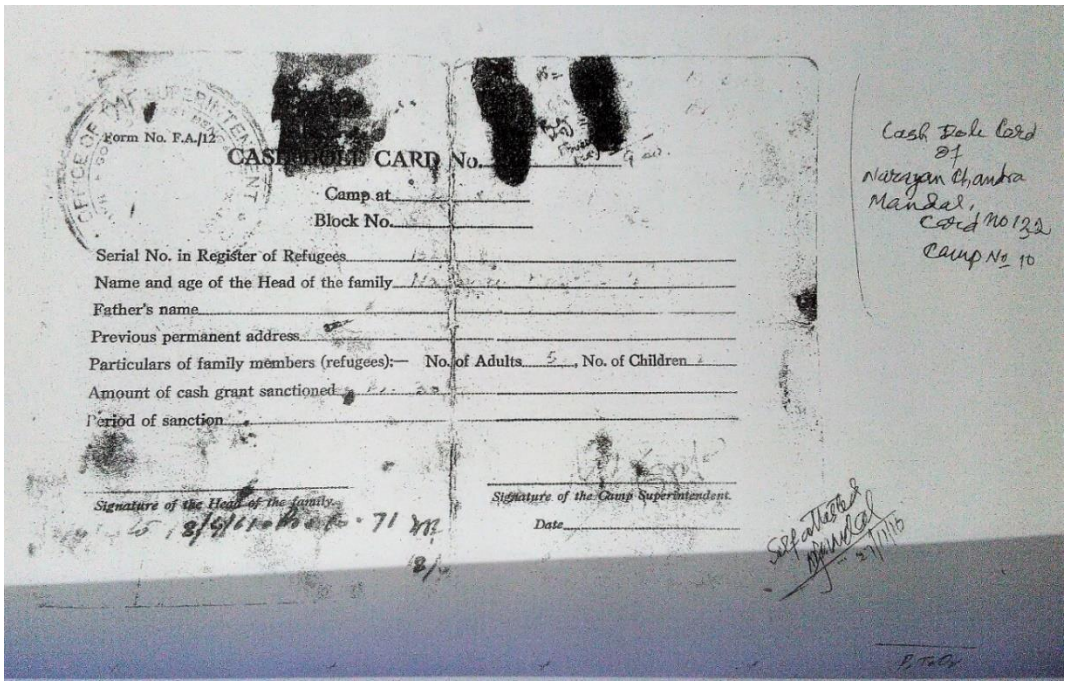


Figure 2.4. A Cash Dole Card.

The camps were built on low paddy land. Water did not easily drain out during the monsoon. In recognition of this difficulty, there was a government provision for providing the refugees wooden planks for placing the tents on an elevated platform known as *macha* during the monsoon. But the materials for building *macha* rarely reached the refugee families, if at all ("Poor Example of Refugee Rehabilitation in Bagjola," *Anandabazar Patrika,* April 1956). A small amount of rain could result in heavy flooding in the area. During heavy rain conditions quickly deteriorated. A news report described the plight of the refugees during one such flood in 1956

Most of the tents are submerged in water. Some have been simply washed away. The refugees with their children and elderly lot have taken shelter in the elevated areas… an appeal has been sent to the government officials for food and other assistance on Wednesday, but no help has arrived till Friday… on Friday afternoon a boat was seen to be conducting rescue operation near the submerged tents, recovering the refugees' meagre household possessions… ("Pitiable Plight of the Refugees in Bahirdoba," *Anandabazar Patrika*, September 1956).

The ex-camp sites began life as government settlements. The practices of camp planning, while included minimal amenities, lacked the basic ingredients of a planned settlement, like regularity in plot size, layout, or provision for communal spaces. After the refugees became squatters, their efforts of building a community of settlers was mediated by this past. Over the years, the identity of a camp refugee became their most important means of claiming rights and entitlements from a reluctant state. The refugee identity is retained and mobilised for staking claims, but their remembrances of this 'first' displacement is scattered and is not mobilised to tell a unified story of trauma and loss. It has become part of the many displacements and forms of everyday violence that were entwined with their lives before 1947 and continued long after.[18] From the 1990s their connection with their erstwhile homes in East Bengal would be re-articulated in a new language.

2.3 Negotiating the 'formal' state: **plans and erasures**

After the forceful closure of the camps in the early 1960s, the efforts of the refugees were directed towards negotiating continued attempts at displacements and segregation unleashed by the state. The refugees carried on protests through *anashan* (hunger strike) for a while with demands for restoration of camp facilities. Two such *anashans* were organised in the camps in February 1960 and June 1961. The *anashan* of 26 June 1961 however, was met with unusual police brutality where four refugees were killed in gunfire. This stopped the protests. The decade of the 1950s saw a spate of development activities in the suburbs of Calcutta. A few middle-class townships were conceived in the immediate neighbourhood of the Bahirdoba camps. It is telling that the plan for creation of the townships and the administrative decision to deny the refugees local lands at Bahirdoba coincided.[19] The authorities failed to completely *disperse* the refugees, but effectively *erased* them from their area development plans. This period of closure and erasure was marked by destitution and death at the camps. My interlocutors have talked about deaths in the face of slow starvation and hardship. Below are some excerpts

> Sobhanath: …the usual happens when people don't get food… they became beggars… (Sobhanath, Personal Interview, February 2016)
>
> Sunil: …many people died of starvation… my brother could sing, he used to sing and beg, and bring home some rice… (Sunil, Personal Interview, February 2016)
>
> Guruchand: …the dole stopped in 1961… my father was worried about how to maintain the family… my father died of worry and anxiety… (Guruchand, Personal Interview, February 2016)

They were brought within the purview of resettlement plans in the 1970s. As the subsequent discussion shows the plans came with elements of erasure embedded in them, the purpose of which was not necessarily the final *settlement* of refugees at all. A number of recent studies on the East Bengali refugees explain repeated 'dispersal' of the refugees from different official rehabilitation sites or camps or serial displacement as failure of government rehabilitation schemes (Chatterji 2007; Sen 2011; Jalais 2005; Sengupta 2017). In an important work in this vein, Joya Chatterji (2007), has analysed the dispersal of East Bengali refugees from government camps in West Bengal to unsuitable locales in terms of misguided policies of the refugee rehabilitation departments which nonetheless aimed to *settle* the refugees. The experience of the Bahirdoba camp refugees presents a different understanding of protracted displacements. It shows that resettlement plans are often devised with elements of erasure embedded in them. Such schemes do not aim at the final *settlement* of refugees. They are flexible schemes which serve as a pretext for the functioning of the informal state, better understood through the concept of informalisation (Roy 2004, 2009).

A Committee of Review of Rehabilitation Work in West Bengal set up in the early 1970s, recommended settling the 'ex-camp site refugees'. Interestingly the Review Committee came up with two alternate recommendations for consideration for the Bahirdoba ex-camp refugees. The first alternative, that the refugees should be rehabilitated in their present site of squatting with some rearrangement and assistance provided for building of houses was eventually accepted. But the Review Committee which examined and reported on the future course of action to be taken for the Bahirdoba ex-camp site provided an alternate plan for the rehabilitation of the refugees at a nearby site. The alternate plan was envisaged and proposed by the Commissioner of Town and Country Planning, Development and Planning Department of the government of West Bengal, in consultation with the Calcutta Metropolitan Planning Organisation (CMPO). This plan was strongly recommended by the review committee to the refugee rehabilitation department of the government of West Bengal. The plan deserves close scrutiny, as it reveals planning priorities and the place of the displaced groups, just like any disadvantaged social group in the overall scheme of the development of the metropolitan area. The report by the committee emphasised that the location of the Bahirdoba camp sites was prime due to its vicinity to the planned townships nearby like Salt Lake City and Lake Town. These are two middle-class government planned townships, located on the eastern and western sides of Bahirdoba camps respectively. Bahirdoba, according to this planning vision was to be developed as an integrated suburb of Calcutta with functional links to the nearby middle-class townships. The planning authorities of the state found the present camp area particularly well msuited for the building of a commercial complex. The commercial complex,

the committee noted, would be a useful adjunct to the Salt Lake township and Lake Town.[20] The committee expressed anxiety that the camp sites, if not properly developed, may grow into just another of Calcutta's many water-logged slums and create an unhygienic atmosphere in the vicinity of this growing urban conglomeration. The alternate plan, hence envisaged the shifting of the camp families to a nearby area, in some plots developed as part of Salt Lake. The alternate plan was attractive to the authorities because of two reasons. This relocation would prevent the possibility of the growth of a slum like settlement in the middle of West Bengal government's two prime township projects. Moreover, it could be developed at a lesser cost to the government, than the cost that would be incurred if the camp families were to be rehabilitated in their present occupation sites on prime land by the VIP road, a north-south road connecting Calcutta to its international airport.

It was noted in the report that the Salt Lake municipal authorities have actually developed a portion of the township's area further to the east, which could be utilised for the rehabilitation of the Bahirdoba camp squatters. Here the refugees could be rehabilitated with small homestead plots of two *katha* per family. The settlement would include basic minimum provisions for roads, drains and other sanitary requirements. The new refugee colony was to be developed as a service colony which could help in the ongoing building of Salt Lake town in various ways by supplying labour during its construction period and by providing service workers for its day to day functioning, after it was fully developed. The plan noted that the workers residing in this refugee colony can find employment not only in Salt Lake but also in the Tangra-Topsia area. They could have employment opportunities in the fisheries and agricultural fields in the east. The report however, made it clear that the refugee colony would be spatially separated from the Salt Lake township with a railway line working as the main divider ("On Rehabilitation of Displaced Persons from East Pakistan Living at Ex-Camp Sites in West Bengal, 6th Report," *Government of India*, 1971, 17-21).

The second plan, in fact was the preferred plan of the Review Committee. It was strongly backed by the Commissioner of the Town and Country planning department. Implied in this planning vision is a severing of connection of the Bahirdoba camps from the broader locality growing around the middle class residential areas. Rather the report hinted at a social and economic linkage of the Bahirdoba camp dwellers with the Tangra Topsia area. Tangra has been the traditional hub of tanneries. It is one of the most underdeveloped areas in east Calcutta and home to the city's many slums. This functional linking of the refugee township with the Tangra Topsia area, and emphasis on their role of a service community to Salt Lake reveal why it was important to remove these groups from a prime and visible location by the VIP road. Their relocation eastward, and a contraction of space for the

entire settlement (the refugees possessed a greater amount of land per plot at their present camp sites) was more in line with planning policies which aimed to push disadvantaged groups towards the marshy eastern parts, traditionally occupied by slum like labouring settlements, to be displaced again in future, as the city expands in that direction, in a cyclical process.[21] Due to the strength of refugee movement in West Bengal, the second plan could not be taken. These refugees could not be summarily shifted to another location against their wishes. The refugees managed to stay on in their present site of squatting. The category of 'camp refugee', for them provided a protective cover in context of the particular history of religious partitioning of the subcontinent. The process of rehabilitating them at their sites of squatting begun.

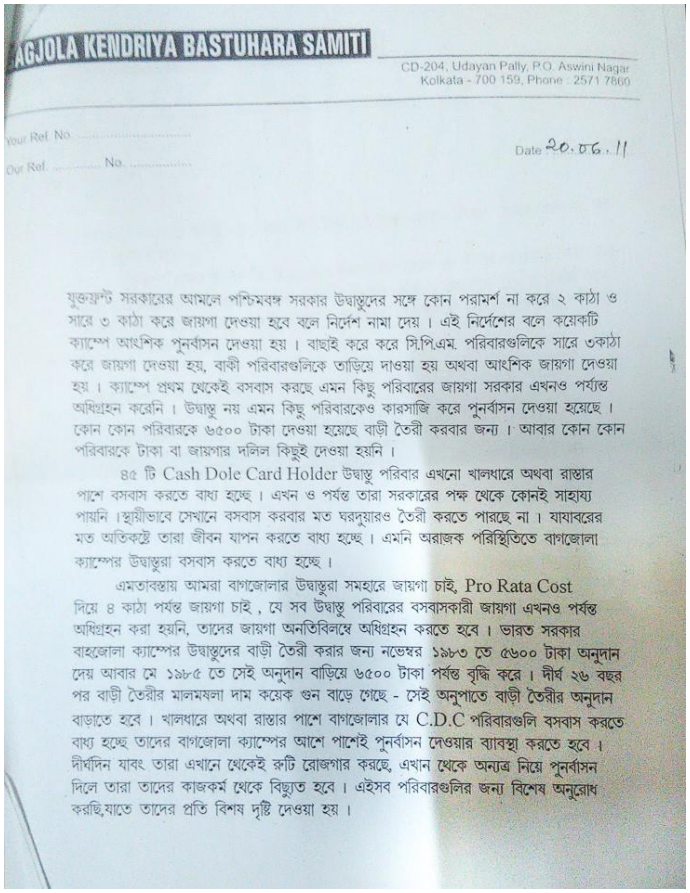
As per the first plan, the committee recommended rehabilitation at their present site of squatting. Regularisation at Bahirdoba involved giving homestead plots of the size of 845 square metres (2.5 *katha*) per refugee household ("On Rehabilitation of Displaced Persons from East Pakistan Living at Ex-Camp Sites in West Bengal, 6th Report," *Government of India*, 1971). Plots were to be sanctioned only to 'original' CDC holder families. The government policy of regularisation in effect implied two things: i) exclusion and eviction of a large number of families who lacked documents, in exchange for the regularisation of a small number of people and ii) 'freeing up' of a large amount of land (as most of the families occupied plots of a size larger than 845 square metres) which could be used to settle new people *loyal* to the government.

Through the years of official absence, a large number of people had migrated to the camp areas and settled down. The camp families often informally sold land in their occupation to their relatives in East Bengal (later Bangladesh) who continued to trickle in and settle in the area. When regularisation started in the 1980s, many of these families were served eviction notice (Pramatha, Personal Interview, February 2016). The refugees alleged that the authorities were settling their own supporters on the lands made available by evictions. This was seen by the campers as an attempt at land colonisation by the government and hence created a strong reaction. Pramatha reflected during a discussion

> we were a people who had been promised 9.5 *bigha* land... now they came up with arrangements of one *katha*, two *katha* etc... this is very painful for us… people who did not even have *abasthan* (occupation) in this land, but were the favourites of the government... unauthorised persons were brought from outside… and settled on the lands freed by them…
>
> I: were they *edeshis* (local people of West Bengal)?
>
> Pramatha: …they were from East Bengal, but had not lived in the camps… they did not have *abasthan*

> here... we were anxious... we decided that people should not be removed from their present occupation... they have not been able to provide us the promised 9.5 *bigha* land... this is what we have saved with our life and blood, we will not give this up... (Pramatha, Personal Interview, February 2016)

After the government presence from the camps were withdrawn in 1961, all the camps created their own committees. But the committees were often nominated with individual discretion, were faction ridden and lacked any meaningful control over the inhabitants. The committees lacked the resources, and its members the political connections to bring about development in the camp areas. At the time of regularisation, the camp dwellers felt the need to unite and fight against its arbitrariness. Two local committees were created by the refugees, the Bahirdoba Kendriya Bastuhara Samity (BKBS) and the Bahirdoba Kendriya Udbastu Samity (BKUS). A court case was fought in 1986 under the leadership of the two committees against the process of government regularisation. The verdict of the Calcutta High Court went in favour of the refugees. It was recognised that regularisation could not be forcefully carried out by the officialdom without the consent of the camp inhabitants. Apart from the CDC families, the right of *abasthan* (occupation) of a group of people living close to them was recognised. The refugees successfully challenged the twofold government categorisation of the CDC holders and the non-CDC holder families. They came up with a third category, which they called ‘without’; that is, people who lacked documents. They bargained for the rights of this group on the basis of their *abasthan* and relatedness to the camp families. Evicting them, it was held, would disrupt long nurtured social relations. The court verdict guaranteed that the so called ‘without’ families would not be evicted. This was a moment of victory for the camp refugees against top-down metropolitan planning and this arrangement stopped the prospect of immediate evictions.



AGJOLA KENDRIYA BASTUHARA SAMITI

CD-204, Udayan Pally, P.O. Aswini Nagar
Kolkata - 700 159, Phone : 2571 7660

Your Ref. No. .....
Our Ref. ..... No. .....

Date 20.06.11

যুক্তফ্রন্ট সরকারের আমলে পশ্চিমবঙ্গ সরকার উদ্বাস্তুদের সঙ্গে কোন পরামর্শ না করে ২ কাঠা ও সারে ৩ কাঠা করে জায়গা দেওয়া হবে বলে নির্দেশ নামা দেয় । এই নির্দেশের বলে কয়েকটি ক্যাম্পে আংশিক পুনর্বাসন দেওয়া হয় । বাছাই করে করে সি.পি.এম. পরিবারগুলিকে সারে ৩কাঠা করে জায়গা দেওয়া হয়, বাকী পরিবারগুলিকে তাড়িয়ে দাওয়া হয় অথবা আংশিক জায়গা দেওয়া হয় । ক্যাম্পে প্রথম থেকেই বসবাস করছে এমন কিছু পরিবারের জায়গা সরকার এখনও পর্য্যন্ত অধিগ্রহন করেনি । উদ্বাস্তু নয় এমন কিছু পরিবারকেও কারসাজি করে পুনর্বাসন দেওয়া হয়েছে । কোন কোন পরিবারকে ৬৫০০ টাকা দেওয়া হয়েছে বাড়ী তৈরী করবার জন্য । আবার কোন কোন পরিবারকে টাকা বা জায়গার দলিল কিছুই দেওয়া হয়নি ।

৪৫ টি Cash Dole Card Holder উদ্বাস্তু পরিবার এখনো খালধারে অথবা রাস্তার পাশে বসবাস করতে বাধ্য হচ্ছে । এখন ও পর্যন্ত তারা সরকারের পক্ষ থেকে কোনই সাহায্য পায়নি ।স্থায়ীভাবে সেখানে বসবাস করবার মত ঘরদুয়ারও তৈরী করতে পারছে না । যাযাবরের মত অতিকষ্টে তারা জীবন যাপন করতে বাধ্য হচ্ছে । এমনি অরাজক পরিস্থিতিতে বাগজোলা ক্যাম্পের উদ্বাস্তুরা বসবাস করতে বাধ্য হচ্ছে ।

এমতাবস্থায় আমরা বাগজোলার উদ্বাস্তুরা সমহারে জায়গা চাই, Pro Rata Cost দিয়ে ৪ কাঠা পর্যন্ত জায়গা চাই , যে সব উদ্বাস্তু পরিবারের বসবাসকারী জায়গা এখনও পর্যন্ত অধিগ্রহন করা হয়নি, তাদের জায়গা অনতিবিলম্বে অধিগ্রহন করতে হবে । ভারত সরকার বাহজোলা ক্যাম্পের উদ্বাস্তুদের বাড়ী তৈরী করার জন্য নভেম্বর ১৯৮৩ তে ৫৬০০ টাকা অনুদান দেয় আবার মে ১৯৮৫ তে সেই অনুদান বাড়িয়ে ৬৫০০ টাকা পর্যন্ত বৃদ্ধি করে । দীর্ঘ ২৬ বছর পর বাড়ী তৈরীর মালমযলা দাম কয়েক গুন বাড়ে গেছে - সেই অনুপাতে বাড়ী তৈরীর অনুদান বাড়াতে হবে । খালধারে অথবা রাস্তার পাশে বাগজোলার যে C.D.C পরিবারগুলি বসবাস করতে বাধ্য হচ্ছে তাদের বাগজোলা ক্যাম্পের আশে পাশেই পুনর্বাসন দেওয়ার ব্যাবস্থা করতে হবে । দীর্ঘদিন যাবৎ তারা এখানে থেকেই রুটি রোজগার করছে, এখান থেকে অন্যত্র নিয়ে পুনর্বাসন দিলে তারা তাদের কাজকর্ম থেকে বিচ্যুত হবে । এইসব পরিবারগুলির জন্য বিশেষ অনুরোধ করছি,যাতে তাদের প্রতি বিশষ দৃষ্টি দেওয়া হয় ।

Figure 2.5. A letter of the Bahirdoba Kendriya Bastuhara Samity.

But the process of granting legal titles to their plots is still far from complete. There is a certain ambiguity regarding the exact amount of land individual camp families are officially entitled to keep. This has created frequent grounds for disputes. The Review Committee's report (1971) was challenged and stalled through the court case mentioned above. At present there are no public documents available on the formula to be adopted for plot allocation at the Bahirdoba camps. I tried to gather the new rules through my interaction with the camp families. Below is a chart of the different formulas for plot allotment communicated to me.

Table 2.3. Different formula for plot allocation at the Bahirdoba camps.

Source	Categories acknowledged	Amount of land allocated per plot holder	Remarks
Committee of Review of Rehabilitation Work in West Bengal, 1971	CDC holders	845 square metres	This was challenged and stalled through a verdict of the Calcutta High Court.

Pramatha (camp no J) and Sobhanath (camp no B) (Also repeated in a letter of the BKBS, dated 20.6.2011)	a) CDC holders b) 'Without'	a) 676 square metres/ or 1183 square metres (for bigger families) b) 338 square metres or less	Both of them confirmed that this formula was applied only in some instances and had to be abandoned at other camps due to difficulties in ground level implementation.
Guruchand (camp no 9)	a) CDC holders b) Without	As per present occupation of individual plot holders	

The rules mentioned in Table 2.3 are for the eleven camps. For the Shulumari squatters' colony next to the camps, the amount of land earmarked for individual plot holders is slightly higher, since the Shulumari colony is still within a village panchayat while the camps have now come under municipal jurisdiction. But the exact rules are again unclear. What can be safely presumed is that there is a lot of *ambiguity* and *flexibility* regarding the rules. This legal ambiguity has created loopholes through which informal governance works.

Figure 2.6. Inside camp I.

Figure 2.7. A new construction is taking place in camp I.

The Matua Mahasangha, which is active in the camp area, has been helping the incoming migrants with places of settlement, identity cards, and supporting them in their fight for plot regularisation. A large majority of the people by the canal bank are followers of the Matua *dharma* (religion). Naren who is a member of the Matua Mahasangha Bahirdoba Block committee, reflected during a discussion

> …the people of the 11 camps have more or less settled, and are not directly interested in any struggle any more… but the larger fight of refugees from East Bengal, who are not only in Bengal but scattered all over India has not stopped… refugees still continue to come and their fight is against the Citizenship Act of 2003… (Naren, Personal Interview, February 2016)

More than half of the camp population lack titles to their plots and sit on disputed land.[22] They lack the social and cultural capital needed to negotiate the state bureaucratic apparatus and tilt the ambiguities in their favour. They have not been officially evicted, but they negotiate endemic conditions of displaceability.

2.4 Negotiating 'informal' governance: displacement within a continuum

We may briefly pause to reiterate the process of state initiated informalisation for the dalit East Bengali refugees who were initially recognised as 'displaced persons' with some entitlements. Having been brought at the Bahirdoba area with a promise of rehabilitation, they were denied resettlement after the completion of the canal renovation project. They became illegal squatters at the camp site. Afterwards for a decade the camp refugees faced erasure from metropolitan planning. When the state revisited them in the 1970s with a new plan for regularisation, a somewhat similar process of *deliberate* violation of the same plans are at work to render these groups informal. Legal entitlements to their small homestead plots, or their right to shelter is the heart of such violation. It fosters the condition of displaceability.

The informal state actively fosters internal differentiations among the groups in order to manage the purposeful ambiguities of its plans on the ground. A small section of the camp refugees has acquired education, tapped the benefits of caste based reservation through continued struggle and become established in life. This section also provides continued leadership to the ongoing struggle of the camp refugees for regularisation of their plots, for securing identification documents and for their demand of citizenship. A section of the well to do *namasudra* refugees has emerged as a rentier class. They have benefitted from the unequal distribution of political patronage by the informal state. The rentier-refugees co-write the processes of the informal. While these are long term mechanisms, inequalities and dispossession have accelerated from the 1990s with the initiation of neoliberalisation. The area has seen a flurry of building activities and a concomitant rise in land value. From the 1990s, another ubiquitous agent of the private state in third world urban contexts, the 'land sharks', have acquired a significant presence. It would be a mistake to see these groups as separate from the state machinery. The machinery of governance operates as a privatised and informal entity through the cooperation of its local representatives.

We may peruse the functioning of this informal modality of governance through its local agents, the rentier-refugees and land dealers. A very small number of refugees have become affluent through political patronage, bought up lands sold by poorer refugees and emerged as benefactors for less privileged groups. These refugees function as rentiers and dealers in land. They wield considerable power in the locality. Two of my interlocutors belong to this group. Rajan (camp G) was initially a member of the INC. After a new political party, the All India Trinamool Congress (AITC) came to power in West Bengal in 2011, Rajan has changed affiliation to the AITC. He lives on the top floor of a two-storey house, and gives out the ground floor on rent. Shyam, an inhabitant of the Shulumari

colony, is a long-term member of the CPI(M), and a 'big man' in the area. He owns a house and adjacent lands and rents them out to multiple lessees. These new rentiers hold more land than others, which is legally ambiguous. Both hold leading positions in the local committees of the camps, are literate, and exercise control over 'papers' through the committees. Shyam frankly discussed with me how ambiguous regulations work out on the ground

> …by this time, as per UCRC (United Central Refugee Council, the most important left led state wide refugee organisation in West Bengal) regulations nobody could possess more than 5 *katha* land in urban areas close to Calcutta… AS (initials of a well-known CPI(M) refugee leader) advised… that we should divide the 1 bigha 5 *katha* land among our children in order to reduce the amount of land per plot holder… 10 years passed… by this time the situation had changed… AS advised… since the government policy did not permit granting of titles of water bodies to the refugees…to fill up the marshes… many local ponds were filled up… (Shyam, Personal Interview, February 2016)

As new regulations are formulated, ways are simultaneously devised to get around them, with active support from state ministers. Needless to say, such distribution of favour operates selectively. It is purported to create a strata of local party loyalists who would serve as local agents to ensure electoral success for the political party in power. They exercise control over the poorer refugees. A majority of the refugee families in the area are day labourers with income levels below the poverty line. A considerable number of them have been forced to sell parts or the whole of their initially squatted lands and move away further to the peripheries. Shyam reflected

> … people started selling land in the face of poverty… these were non-judicial
>
> I: how much did they sell for?
>
> Shyam: about Rs 400 per *katha*… many sold land…
>
> I: who were buying up land here?
>
> Shyam: many people are still arriving from Bangladesh… relatives of the camp refugees from Bangladesh continue to migrate… land is sold to them… the majority of those who have purchased land came after 1971, a handful of families have also come from other states in India… from Bihar, Nadia, Murshidabad… from Canning or Sundarbans etc… they come because the area is close to Calcutta and it's easy to find work here… now land is being sold at Rs 8 lakhs per *katha*… (Shyam, Personal Interview, February 2016)

What this account omits is that transactions in land do not take place directly between the owners and the new settlers. Land is 'freed up' and bought by 'big men' in the locality and sold or rented out, and control is exercised over the new migrants.[23] From the 1990s the presence of land mafias has grown in the area. They have become a ubiquitous presence in Calcutta's erstwhile refugee colony and camp areas, and are locally known as promoters. They function with support from the political parties in power. Their roles vary in different colonies and camps depending on the class and caste background and bargaining power of the refugees. In areas like the Bahirdoba camps, they are involved in land grab and their role is violent. They operate with active cooperation from sections of the rentier-refugees. The latter share social relations with the camp inhabitants, which is important in enabling land transactions to take place through 'persuasion.' I will cite an instance of how they have acquired the power to *displace* and also *replace*. The house of one CDC holding refugee family at camp C was forcefully taken over by a builder with help from the police. Having been evicted, the family now lives in a makeshift shanty some distance away from their original plot. Their Cash Dole Cards and the sympathy of their old neighbours have not been sufficient to save them from eviction by the promoter.[24] Not only are they involved in displacement, but they are also engaged in active land colonisation. Thus at camp C, a small number of huts have been erected by a local land dealer on what was previously a playground for the camp. These families now exist in passive tension with the old camp refugees (Shibdas, Personal Interview, January 2017).

In incidents of conflict over land, the police administration ensures the unimpeded functioning of the informal state. As already noted, the poorer refugees lack the social and cultural capital to navigate the bureaucracy and the administrative machinery. They are disadvantaged in situations of conflict and often face false criminalisation. During an unrecorded and candid conversation, a female camp inhabitant narrated to me how many people in the area, including her own husband have unfair police cases against them. This has become a usual situation for many. Numerous court cases against the refugees and land disputes related to the schools, water bodies and common areas of the camps have kept the settlements and their inhabitants unsettled.

In place of horizontal solidarities which could have been forged between the refugees and the local peasants, then, mechanisms of informal governance have engendered vertical alliances on the lines of patron-client relations. The population within the camp area have become heterogenous through reverse land colonisation by the government in collusion with the market forces of property. A number of the old camp refugees have been directly and indirectly displaced. New 'migrants' who completely lack documents and are more dependent on local patrons have taken their place.

Incidents of direct and forceful displacement like the one noted above, are relatively rare. Dislocations work through more insidious means, whereby the refugees are 'persuaded' to leave 'voluntarily'. But informal spaces are also heterogenous and non-integrated grey-spaces. Power balances are far from settled here. They retain sufficient ambiguity where dissonance can surface.

2.5 Grey-spaces and heterogenous selves

Seven decades have passed since the creation of the camps, but intense social stigma continues to attach to the camp spaces. Kartik, a local CPI leader mentioned earlier, who lives just next to the Bahirdoba camps and has worked for refugee resettlement, expressed his disdain of 'camp-culture' in unambiguous terms

> …the refugees work as day labourers… the women serve as domestic helps… what do they know of culture? … I visit these areas sometimes… the way they live is unimaginable… curtains hang from their rooms…
>
> I: would you not call this a failure of government rehabilitation?
>
> Kartik: it was beyond the means of the government to take care of such large numbers… added to that was the corruption of government officials… the main problem is poverty… now every household has a motor cycle… do you know where these motor cyclists go? … to those curtain hung rooms… (Kartik, Personal Interview, December 2015)

The reference here is to prostitution at the camps. Discourses on the camp spaces as breeding grounds for 'low' culture, immorality and criminality ceaselessly work to delegitimise the refugee dwellings. Desire to integrate with the mainstream of state and society, which is the predominant framework for understanding different conceptions of citizenship/subject position, even in new formulations of citizenship from below (Holston 2008), does not capture the whole experience of inhabitants of such 'places of the displaced'. I find Yiftachel's formulation of 'grey-space' relevant for understanding the everyday forms of bargain that unfold at such peripheral spaces. Grey-spaces are positioned 'between the lightness of legality/approval/safety and the darkness of eviction/destruction/death' (Yiftachel 2009, 250). Grey-spaces may be imposed from above, but they are heterogenous and volatile spaces, never amenable to total control.

If the initial years of the refugees' struggle had been marked by aspirations of integration, decades of life under the shadow of violence have engendered a certain lack of affect. Guruchand's observation may be repeated here

> …partitions have taken place, governments have changed, the country has developed, but people from *opar Bangla* (the other side of Bengal) are still shedding tears… (Guruchand, Personal Interview, February 2016)

Any straight forward reading of a desire for integration will be misleading here. Under conditions of prolonged violence, patterns of identification are often channelled away from the state. Grey-spaces of informality may be imposed from 'above', but their very unsettledness allows for a fluidity and ambiguity where dissonance can surface. These spaces of 'permanent temporariness' are intertwined with strategies of identity transformation premised on an autonomous disengagement from the socio-political mainstream. Articulations of grey-space are evasive and abound in contradictions. New affiliations at the ex-camp dwellings reflect some of these tendencies.

Of late two all India organisations have gained a strong presence in the camp areas, the Matua Mahasangha and an all India refugee organisation called the Nikhil Bharat Bangali Udbastu Samanway Samity (NIBBUSS), created in 2005. NIBBUSS was formed in the city of Nagpur in Maharashtra in 2005 in the context of their agitation against of the Citizenship Amendment Act of 2003. NIBBUSS has branches in 14 Indian states. Both organisations are concerned with the wellbeing of lower caste and lower class East Bengali refugees in India, and the Bengali speaking dalit communities more broadly. Their avowed organisational agendas are embedded within the mainstream nationalist paradigm of the day. The NBBUSS aims to secure national citizenship for the refugees who continue to migrate from Bangladesh to India. The Matua Mahasangha has significant stakes in electoral politics in West Bengal. The Mahasangha has become an all India organisation and has strong political support among the *namasudra* and the Matua community and dalit East Bengali refugees scattered all over India. More is discussed about their politics around citizenship for dalit East Bengali refugees in chapter four. Here I will discuss some tendencies initiated by these two organisations among dalit migrant groups that retain room for deviance from their main political demands. This trend has become somewhat dormant in the past one year or so in the face of increasingly communally charged politics around migrant citizenship.

Both organisations have cross border linkages, including physical networks of connection and discursive articulations. The Matuas have organisation and followers in India and Bangladesh. Times

of festivity (especially during the annual Matua festival known as Mahabaruni, simultaneously celebrated in Thakurnagar in India and Orakandi in Bangladesh) see small scale cross border movements.[25] The NIBBUSS draws considerable organisational support and followers from the Matuas. The two organisations work in close collaboration. The Bahirdoba branch committees of the NIBBUSS and the Mahasangha are active in the camp area.

Two important secular festivals have been initiated in the area under the joint initiative of the Mahasangha and the NIBBUSS that indicate a new form of socialisation. First is the celebration of Bahirdoba's local Martyr's Day. While days of 'national' significance like India's Independence Day are still observed, the celebration of 26 June, the day when camp refugees died in police firing during their *anashan anodolan* (hunger strike) evokes a lot more enthusiasm. In 2012 *shahid bedis* (martyrs' pillars) were posted with assistance from the NIBBUSS, in the name of the seven *shahids* (martyrs) of the camps. It marked the beginning of the annual observance of the *shahid dibas* (martyr's day) on 26 June. This ceremony has a special relevance in the social life of the camp refugees. This was repeatedly emphasised to me during discussions with my interlocutors. The *shahid bedis* were shown to me with a certain pride. My own participation in Bahirdoba *shahid dibas* on 26 June 2019 revealed its importance to me. On the day, a large group of refugees assembled at the bust of a martyr at camp no J in the morning. Camp no J is home to one of the martyrs. His bust has been posted next to a tea stall. The ceremony begun by paying respect to him, by garlanding and putting flowers. Speeches were delivered remembering the camp refugees' long struggle for rehabilitation. Afterwards the group moved to another location at camp no G where a fight between the camp refugees and the police had taken place in 1961. A martyr's pillar stands on the spot where a few camp refugees were shot to death. They garlanded the martyr's pillar and paid tribute. The small but passionate ceremony included recitations and speeches remembering their sacrifice. The place vibrated with the slogan শহিদের রক্ত, হবে নাকো ব্যর্থ! (the blood of the martyr will not go in vein).

Figure 2.8. A myrter's bust at camp J.

Another secular day now celebrated is the international mother's language day on 21 February. *Bhasa Dibas* is observed to commemorate East Pakistan's Bengali language movement of 1952. There is an attempt to discursively connect the Bengali refugees' struggle scattered all over India with the *Bhasha Andolan* of Bangladesh.[26] In course of the ceremony, the camp refugees remember the *shahids* of the *Bhasha Andolan*, and their own martyrs in their struggle against the state (Mandal 2015). The new ceremonies started at the camp areas, almost half a century after the dwellings were

created, clearly involve a new way of remembering their own past and in the process the articulation of a new collective.

A local leader of the Bahirdoba camps (who is also a member of the NIBBUSS), Mr Mandal, has elicited this collective imagination in his writings. He is a poet and an activist. In his memoir, *Khandito Desher Sangrami Bangali* (Rebellious Bengalis of a Divided Land)[27] he has recounted important episodes of their struggle for rehabilitation. The memoir also speaks of a wider struggle of the Bengalis. Mandal has used the trope of *sangram* (battle) and construed an image of *sangrami bangali* who continue to fight the malefactions of a prolonged partition. In creating a historical lineage for the *sangrami bangali* Mandal has invoked the Bengal renaissance of the nineteenth century and Bengal's contribution to the anti-colonial nationalist movement on the one hand, and the *Bhasa Andolan* of 1952 and the Bangladesh war of independence of 1971 on the other (Mandal 2015, 7). The Bengalis he is writing for are not confined to religious or national boundaries. All through Mandal's recollection there is an insistence that their struggle has not stopped with decolonisation and national independence, but continues to this day. For him the protracted fight of the Bengalis spans national boundaries. One of his poems on the *Bhasa Dibas* vividly portrays the collective imagination

একুশে মানে রক্তে রাঙানো ঢাকা,
ন বছর পরে শিলচরে ছবি আঁকা

সেথায় ক্ষুব্ধ এগারোটি তাজা প্রাণ

বাংলা ভাষা রক্ষায় দিল নিঃশেষে বলিদান (2015, 47)

[21 February means blood tinged Dhaka
Nine years pass, the stage shifts to Shilchar

Eleven young lives are sacrificed

To safeguard the Bengali language] (translation mine)

Two cities which lie across national borders, Dhaka in Bangladesh and Silchar in India, are discursively connected through the collective fight of a beleaguered Bengali people against the unjust post-colonial nation states of the region. This collective vision draws upon a shared Bengali language and a shared experience of marginalisation of the lower class and caste people. The initiation of new commemorative practices by the two organisations at the camp-sites, and the

imagination of a new collective, provide a new identity script for the refugees, based upon a pan Indian and cross border Bengaliness. The vision of this new subjectivity comes as a challenge to the mainstream normative Hindu Indian national-citizen-subject. It is not to suggest that this imagination has taken deep root among all camp inhabitants and is mobilised in a direct fight against the Indian state. Articulations of grey-spaces are never as clear cut. Indeed, certain counter trends are also present (as discussed in chapter four). Nevertheless, that such imaginations have generated interest and participation is itself significant and implies a move away from state-centric subjectivities.

2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have looked into the experience of prolonged dislocation of a group of dalit refugees. The attempt has been to deconstruct the categorical binaries of refugees and migrants and take into account multiple dislocations marginal people experience within a single lifetime. The dalit refugees studied here were displaced amidst communal violence in East Bengal in the early 1950s and initially recognised as 'displaced persons.' A small section of the dalit refugees have benefitted from the status of 'displaced persons', achieved upward mobility through a hard and long drawn struggle. But a significant number of them have gone through a deliberate process of informalisation, which has eroded their legal status as 'displaced persons' and 'ex-camp refugees' through the insidious workings of informal governance. They have become mixed with 'migrants' who continue to pour in and live unsettled lives. I have traced how protracted displacement operates through processes of informalisation and grey-spacing engendered by post-colonial governmentality. In place of direct violence, lower caste groups are unsettled through insidious mechanisms of criminalisation, pauperisation, social segregation, and often 'persuasion' to leave. Such 'places of the displaced' exist at the peripheries, not in different stages of linear progression from segregation to integration, but in a state of perpetual negotiation and overlapping webs of expansion and contraction. Displaced groups live and wage non-heroic battles against ever shifting everyday forms of violence. The chapter emphasises that grey-spaces are actively fostered by the dominant power regime, but they are never amenable to full control. Such fluid spaces generate alternate aspirations and sense of belonging among inhabitants. In these heterogenous and fluid grey-spaces, identity projects shift away from the state. Such aspirations are not clearly articulated, and cannot be understood within frameworks of legal citizenship, or even newer notions of 'citizenship from below', which nonetheless are underscored by a desire to integrate. Grey-spaces generate alternate subjectivities and alternate aspirations of belonging which find ways to look away

from the state and slowly nibble away at the top down vision of mainstream normative national-citizen-subject.

Notes

[1] A *bargadar* is a sharecropper who cultivates the land of the owner on the condition of delivering a share of the produce of such land to the owner.

[2] The Tebhaga movement was a peasant agitation initiated in Bengal by the Kisan Sabha, the peasant wing of the Community Party of India in 1946. All through the colonial period the share-croppers in Bengal used to pay half of their harvest to their landlords. The Tebhaga movement placed the demand that the landlord's share of the produce in share cropping arrangement will be reduced to one third.

[3] For a detailed discussion of different government categorisation of the Hindu East Bengali refugees and statistics of migration, see (Chakrabarti 1999, 234-238).

[4] Government Sponsored colonies.

[5] The government had to resort to the West Bengal Land Development and Planning Act, 1948 in order to requisition land for refugee rehabilitation. While the Act faced challenges in the court of law, it also had to cope with extra-legal opposition which often came via indirect means from powerful landed interests. They often had connection at the level of ministers and MLAs of the state, or even at the centre. The power of a section of the Congress ministry were brought to bear against land acquisition at controlled rates and the rehabilitation department had to abandon acquisition schemes on many occasions. The contemporary commissioner and secretary of the Refugee Relief and Rehabilitation department of the government of West Bengal, Hiranmoy Bandyopadhyay, observed in his memoir how land acquisition faced challenges from different quarters. He recounted his experience of acquiring fallow lands in Laskarpur village under the Sonarpur police station in 24 Parganas, where he faced opposition as many as six times, after which he finally had to yield to the landowner (Bandyopadhyay 1970, 187).

[6] For a detailed discussion of the different types of government schemes see (Chakrabarti 1999, 240-250).

[7] The United Central Refugee Council (UCRC) presented an Alternate Plan for Rehabilitation inside West Bengal on August 1958. This was a comprehensive plan for the rehabilitation of refugees through the economic regeneration of the whole of West Bengal. The surplus land made available through the scheme were to be used for the settlement not only of the refugees, but also a large section of the landless in the state. The plan was not seriously considered by the government (Chakrabarti 1999, 193).

[8] In the 1950s, the broad area of the camp site contained villages interspersed by paddy fields, water bodies and sewage farms. A large part of the area has urbanised over the years and come under the jurisdiction of a local municipality in 1994, while one part, the Shulumari colony still remains under a village panchayat. From the 1990s the area has seen rapid filling up of water bodies (often illegally) and semi-legal building activities.

[9] 20 *katha* is roughly equal to 1 *bigha* and 2.5 *bigha*s are equal to 1 acre or 4047 square metres.

[10] This rough idea of the local landholding pattern of the area is gained thought a discussion with Kartik, a local leader of the CPI who was also a formative member of the local peasant wing of the CPI in the area from the 1950s (Kartik, Personal Interview, December 2015).

[11] Jotedars owned relatively sizeable portions of land and their land tenure status stood in contrast to those of under-ryots and *bargadars* who were landless or land-poors.

[12] This incident was recalled to me by most of my interlocutors at Bahirdoba.

[13] Dipesh Chakrabarty has traced such middle-class refugee remembrance of the partition, from a group of autobiographical Bengali essays authored by middle-class East Bengali refugees written in the spirit of mourning. His study shows how these recollections are permeated by a strong nostalgia for their left behind villages in East Bengal (Chakrabarty 2000a).

[14] Sen's essay on *namasudra* refugee settlers in Andamans also highlight how dalit memories of the partition differ from middle-class memories of the event (Sen 2011).

[15] Most of my interviewees repeated this experience. Thus, Pramatha of camp no J, was first taken to Salanpur camp, Bardhaman with his family, and from there to Dakshin Sol, Medinipur. Sobhanath of camp no B, as also Pramatha of camp no J had stayed at Ghusuri camp for sometime, after which their families were taken to Baikanthapur of Hooghly where they stayed for about 8-9 months. They were eventually brought to Bahirdoba. Sunil of camp no B and his family were first put in a camp in Shalbani, from where they were moved to Pashkura, and eventually brought to Bahirdoba.

[16] In July 1952, the UCRC submitted a memorandum to the government criticising precisely this attitude of the government. It recommended that: i) the work site camps should be located at the site of rehabilitation, ii) the families should be rehabilitated at the site after the completion of the development work, iii) the refugees should be acquainted with the whole scheme and finally, iv) fare wage rate, and suitable work should be provided to the refugee families (Chakrabarti 1999, 218).

[17] The Republic Day honours the date on which the Constitution of India came into effect on 26 January 1950. It is a national holiday.

[18] Recollections of *namasudra* life in East Bengal which include experiences of caste oppression, social segregation and movements in the face of scarcity and want can be found in the memoir of Manoranjan Byapari (2012).

[19] Two important township projects conceived during this period were the Salt Lake township (south east of the camps) and the Lake Town project (west of the camps). Both the projects excluded the refugees.

[20] At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the area saw the setting up of a third upper and middle-class planned township built under a joint public private partnership, the Rajarhat township which entailed many displacements and proved contentious. For a detailed discussion of the discontents around the Rajarhat township project see (I. Dey, Samaddar, and Sen 2013).

[21] Calcutta's western boundary is marked by the river Ganga. For the past few decades the city has expanded primarily towards the south and the east. Such expansion often takes place by displacing people from

these semi rural areas which are then brought within suburban expansion projects. The eastern parts of Calcutta are marsh land and form part of the city's natural drainage system. It is in these areas that the displaced people move to live there for some years, until a new development project arrives to evict them again. The process repeats in cycles and such displacement often takes place without any rehabilitation for the displaced.

[22] Among the inhabitants of the eleven camps, only the refugees of camp no E have received legal titles to their plots. The process of legalisation is incomplete in the rest of the area.

[23] Similar views were shared with me during an interview with Shibdas (Shibdas, Personal Interview, January 2017).

[24] The original owner of the plot, Bishnu is now an old man. He used to work as a day labourer. His son drives an autorickshaw in the locality and his daughter-in-law, Lakshmi is a housewife. He and Lakshmi shared their experiences, of how a local builder came down on them with the police on the basis of a forged court order. They had hired the service of a lawyer to fight a court case against the eviction. But the lawyer took advantage of their lack of literacy and cheated them of money. They lack the financial means to continue the court case any longer. They live in a makeshift shanty (Lakshmi and Bishnu, Group Interview, January 2017).

[25] The majority of my interlocutors at the Bahirdoba camps go to Thakurnagar in North 24 Parganas on the occasion of the Mahabaruni. Only one of my interviewees, Rina who lives next to the camps revealed how she travels to Orakandi in Bangladesh without a passport at the time of the Mahabaruni (Rina, Personal Interview, November 2017). It indicates a small trickle of migration during times of festivity.

[26] The NIBBUSS has initiated the celebration of *Bhasa Dibas* on 21 February in the refugee settlements all over India.

[27] Mandal's memoir contains a recollection of his personal experience as a member of the NIBBUSS. While one strand of the NIBBUSS is becoming increasingly anti-Muslim, such communal sentiments are clearly absent from Mandal's recollection. Here their cross-border connections are more clearly imagined and articulated.

Chapter Three

Displaceability and mobile bodily politics: the experience of urban 'homeless'

In this chapter I am exploring the struggle for spaces of livelihood of impoverished rural migrants coming to the Calcutta metropolitan agglomeration from the countryside of Bengal and their negotiation of myriad forms of displacements. These groups have faced discursive erasure in migration histories and policy circles in West Bengal, in-spite of a growing numerical presence within the Calcutta metropolitan area from the late 1930s. As this thesis has emphasised, in Bengal a certain history of migration resulting from the partition of 1947 has been privileged over other histories of dislocations in academic literature as well as policy circles. Barring a few exceptions there is a certain lack of interest in contemporary forms of displacements in West Bengal unless it is connected to movement across the international border. This indicates an academic consensus that barring the steady movement of population from the other side of the border, largescale dislocations of population are not a significant occurrence in the region. As I have reiterated, contemporary modalities of dislocations in post-colonial contexts are better understood as *endemic* rather than exceptional or *climactic* experiences. The endemic approach puts low scale and insidiously violent nature of dislocations in the region in clearer relief and highlights their all-pervasiveness. In chapter two I have traced the *endemic* rather than the *climactic* aspects of the partition of 1947, by highlighting the protracted experiences of dislocation of dalit East Bengali refugees. In this chapter I explore how another socially disadvantaged group, the rural landless migrating to the urban agglomeration around Calcutta live through endemic displacements. I study their experience through the notion of displaceability. I trace how displaceability operates with this group, first, through a deliberate politics of (non)enumeration and invisiblisation, and from the 1990s parallelly, through a hypervisibility generated by a developmental gaze that construes them as 'encroachers' and renders them vulnerable to dislocations. I explore the functioning of displaceability and the kind of unequal political exchanges it involves for the peripatetic rural migrants. Finally, I also look into modes of migrant resistance to such processes through a form of mobile and bodily politics.

The movement of the rural landless explored here do not follow the set patterns of long term or circular migration of industrial labour which have periodic rhythms. The groups studied here are not part of Calcutta's industrial labour force. They are of an itinerant sort who feed into the city's informal economy. Their movements are sporadic, in the nature of back and forth, and lack the rhythm of an identifiable pattern. In policy circles such migrations do not figure unless when

recognised as 'distress migration' in extreme famine like conditions. These population flows are seen as 'low quality migration' leading to 'low quality urbanization' (Sekhar Mukherjee 2001). The term 'distress' reveals a tendency to depict the migrants as hapless 'victims'. There is also a tone of emergency attached to the term 'distress' which seeks to construe the nature of these movements as *exceptional* rather than normal. My study moves away from such a portrayal. I have used the frame of "peripatetic/itinerant" to understand how such small movements/displacements work as *a lifelong mode* for a large multitude of the poor rural migrants.[1] The constant shifting of these dwellers highlights the need to look at displacement from the perspective of mobile groups. These floating groups negotiate the systemic violence associated with lifelong 'distress' to the best of their ability and in their myriad everyday movements volition and force interchange meaning. They often resort to small (sometimes long) movements to offset socio-economic vulnerabilities, while harbouring aspirations of a more settled existence. At the same time, their movements are used to build a case against their right to shelter at the urban margins by the metropolitan authorities, as they go against the grains of a bourgeoise society where sedentarism is the norm of the mainstream. The interplay of volition and force, are juxtaposed in a tensed relation within my usage of the term peripatetic. Resorting to the notion of peripatetic, my chapter explores negotiations of displacement from the perspective of *mobility* rather than *settlement* and uprooting of it, where the boundaries of voluntary and forced movement blur and displaceability assumes a more everyday and insidiously violent nature. This marks an important point of departure from the existing literature on displacement. Discussions of displacement often relate to uprooting of *settled* groups, and the experience of displacement is portrayed as a rupture. Peripatetic migrants are left out of the discussions of displacement, as their right to places are ambiguous from a sedentarist perspective.[2] I attempt to emphasise that displacement assumes a more insidious, violent and everyday form for peripatetic groups precisely because they fall short of sedentary standards. Their experiences of displacement are not easily classifiable in the existing binaries within which displacement studies are framed.

The chapter begins with a discussion of the nature of a continued rural-urban movement of these migrants from the late 1930s till the present and a concomitant politics of (non)enumeration. While they have been rendered invisible in policy documents for long periods, I emphasise that these groups have been significantly present in the urban landscape of the city at least from the late 1930s till the present. While they are not counted, they are *seen* through images of illegality and crime in semi-official discourses which render them vulnerable to displacements. In the next section I explore the operationalisation of displaceability, by looking at repeated eviction drives and underscore that

it does not entail a complete exclusion, but an inclusive exclusion. In the final section I suggest that under the condition of displaceability the migrants are coerced into a political participation which reduces them to mere bodily existence. The migrants in turn negotiate dislocations through a bodily politics.

3.1 Between invisibility and hypervisibility: migration and a politics of (non)enumeration

In chapter one, I have dwelled on continued rural urban migration during the colonial period, and stressed that the movement of famished rural peasants to the city significantly increased from the late 1930s due to dislocations around the Second World War and forces of decolonisation. As already noted, they have faced discursive erasure in the colonial surveys and reports except for occasional notes taken during times construed as exceptions e.g., famines. Surveys and data on rural-urban movement linked to rural dispossession within Bengal are almost non-existent. I suggest that this non enumeration is deliberate and political. The attempt is to render the migrants invisible. Along with this, from the 1990s, a new developmental gaze has returned to them, generating for their persons and their dwellings a certain hypervisibility through an excess of circulating images as 'encroachers', 'pollutants', 'criminals' and 'infiltrators' as discussed shortly. This delegitimises their claims to the city. Conjoined, these processes foster the condition of displaceability.

Researches on rural poverty based on estimates of the size of rural landholding and presence of agricultural wage labourers (taken to be an indicator of rural poverty) provide a glimpse into the unsettled conditions in rural areas of Bengal and small movements in/out of poverty stricken areas. Existing surveys on rural poverty highlight an increase in the number of rural wage labourers as a class of rural proletariat who had no control over means of production and labour processes and were dependent on wage for survival (van Schendel and Faraizi 1984; Bose 1986) from the time of decolonisation. The last all Bengal rural survey before independence was carried out in 1944 with an aim to investigate the nature of the famine of 1943 and it's after effects. It found that 34% of all rural families had depended either partially or entirely on wage labour. After independence their numbers would rise considerably in both sides of divided Bengal. Two all India Agricultural Labour Enquiries carried out in 1950-51 and 1956-57 found the proportion of agricultural labour households in West Bengal to be 25 ad 24 percent of the total rural population respectively. The Indian National Sample Survey carried out in 1972-73 reported that farm wage labourers constitute 33% of the West Bengal's rural labour force. According to this survey, regional differences within West Bengal had become negligible. In the 1970s, over one third of all rural households in West Bengal were

dependent entirely on wage labour and the figures for the south and western districts of West Bengal was close to 40% (van Schendel and Faraizi, 1984, 40-45). These surveys, though scattered, can be used as the basis for a rough estimate of the existence of a considerable number of rural proletariat in the countryside who had no control over land and other means of production and survived on meagre wage income.

Apart from rise in the number of agricultural labourers, figures of rural landholding also show a similar trend. Zamindari landholding system was abolished all over India immediately after independence. In the partitioned state of West Bengal, the West Bengal Estates Acquisition Act promulgated in 1953 introduced zamindari abolition. But its *de facto* effects on the patterns of landholding and redistribution of land remained minimal. The dominant agrarian class of *jotdars*[3] continued to enjoy a predominant position in the Bengal countryside, successfully evading land ceiling legislations at least for the next two decades. The number of rural proletariat continued to grow.

After 1967 some measures of land redistribution were effected with the coming of the United Front rule[4] in the state, for two short terms in 1967 and 1969, and then again when a new left coalition government known as the Left Front came back to power in West Bengal in 1977 for a longer term. A land reform programme was orchestrated by the Left Front, known as the Operation Barga.[5] Whether things changed for better or for worse after the land reforms initiated by the Left Front government is not a direct concern of the present discussion. Those supporting the left regime, in academic as well as in policy circles generally agree to the beneficial effects of land redistribution conducted by the Left Front, resulting in increase in agrarian productivity and reduction of rural poverty. But those taking a contrary position point out that rural development in West Bengal has taken place largely through the exclusion of the rural poor. The primary beneficiaries of Left Front's reforms have been the middle peasants who have also come to dominate the village *panchayats*[6] and channelled development resources in their own favour. It is often pointed out that the middle peasants have benefitted at the cost of the rural landless. Generally while macro studies point to a reduction in both rural and urban poverty, village level micro studies have often shown a counter trend, and existence of persistent poverty (Bhattacharya 1993; Mallick 2008; Roy 2003). The existing surveys indicate that the size of the landholdings redistributed through the Operation Barga remained small. These were often homestead land, or small plots of cultivable land not economically viable. While rural poverty generates lively academic interest, dislocations which result from poverty are not studied in detail. They are not of interest to studies of dislocations.

Accounts of rural migrants who come to the city environment are sketchy at best. They live in various informal dwellings. The city's informal dwellings have achieved different degrees of formality, permanence and visibility in its urban landscape depending on the resource and the history of the movement of the dwellers. Some such hierarchically connected dwelling and livelihood spaces that have emerged are the registered slums, refugee squatters' colonies, informal squats, *khalpar* (dwellings by the banks of sewerage canals) and *foot* (pavement dwellings). In the early twentieth century, informal settlements in Calcutta grew in close connection to the city's suburban industries and housed industrial labour migrants. These settlements came to be known as *bustees* or slums. For a long time, the *bustees* had no legal recognition and remained informal. The only rights recognised were those of the landlords of the slums.[7] Left political mobilisation from the 1940s in the slums through their organisations and associated NGO activism[8] have achieved some success and resulted in the formalisation of a large number of *bustees* in course of the first few decades after independence.[9] Many of the *bustees* have now been registered with the Calcutta Municipal Corporation (CMC), acquired stability of tenure and protection against evictions. Other than the *bustees*, another type of informal settlement created in large numbers after the partition in 1947 were 'refugee colonies' or 'squatters' colonies'. These were created by middle-class East Bengali refugees all over West Bengal including Calcutta. After decades of struggle, sections of the resourceful middle-class East Bengali 'refugee colonies' have also been regularised.[10] Together, these two types of settlements have, metonymically encompassed the city's proletariats and benefitted from 'improvement' carried out by the metropolitan planning bodies like the CMC, the CMDA and the CIT. They divide between them a large number of labouring classes who have secured some form of housing rights and urban citizenship. Much of the existing municipal surveys and planning documents are focused on the two groups, the registered slums and refugee colonies. From the time of the Bengal famine, the very poor among Bengal's rural migrants have also continued to come to the urban area around Calcutta, started living on Calcutta's streets and swelled the ranks of its informal settlements. They have built their makeshift shanties in marginal spaces along Calcutta's suburban railway lines (locally known as *railpar*), the banks of its sewerage canals (locally known as *khalpar*), under footbridges and sidewalks. The dwellings of the poor rural migrants at *khalpar* and *foot* have remained largely informal and unmapped. There have been scant attempts of surveying these areas and their inclusion into government schemes.

If we turn to the enumeration of the footloose rural migrants in the Calcutta metropolitan area, their first documentation took place during the Bengal famine, through a survey carried out by a team of

anthropologists of the Department of Anthropology, University of Calcutta in 1943. As already noted in chapter one, they were derogatorily categorised as 'sick destitutes' in the survey. The government policy was to disperse them from the city. The survey showed, that the 'destitutes' were cultivators, farm labourers (40%) and non-agricultural day labourers. They belonged to the lower class and castes (Das 1949, 51-68). The Bengal Destitutes Persons Ordinance gave power to the state to round up 'destitutes' and confine them outside the city, to 'homes' to be re-made into useful citizens. But many eluded confinement and remained. For the next two decades in the post-independence period, no survey on the trends of migration from the poverty stricken areas of rural Bengal, or on Calcutta's 'homeless' population was undertaken. The only officially acknowledged category of floating rural migrants remained 'destitutes' and 'vagrants' (other than the census category of 'homeless'). Records of the CMC during this period show a growing concern with people living and dying on Calcutta's streets. As noted in chapter one, the entire decade of the 1950s saw a steady rise in the number of deaths of 'paupers', that is, unclaimed dead bodies lying on the streets of Calcutta, to be cremated at CMC's expense.

The decennial censuses provide some information on floating rural migrants under the official category of 'homeless'. From 2001 onwards they have been paradoxically categorised as 'houseless households'. In census operation, the enumeration of population takes place through survey of households. In the first phase of operation, that is, in the Houselisting and Housing census phase, the census houses and households are numbered and listed for enumeration. The makeshift dwellings of various types where itinerant rural migrants live, do not match the census definition of a 'house'. They are completely left out of the first phase. Actual enumeration of population takes place in the second phase. In this phase an attempt is made to include within counting the 'homeless' population. Their counting is done in a single night's enumeration by appointing special enumerators for the purpose. Its effectiveness is doubtful. By admission of the officials of the census operation themselves, policemen accompany the enumeration officials on the night of the operation. It often has the effect of scaring away dwellers on the streets and pavements to other areas, thus eluding enumeration ("Census Operations," *Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India,* 2010). Apart from this, large areas simply remain unmapped and not visited by the enumerators. The data collected on these groups are skewed. Census data on 'homeless' population in cities only contain information on the total number of households, the number of members in each household and the total number of 'homeless' population.

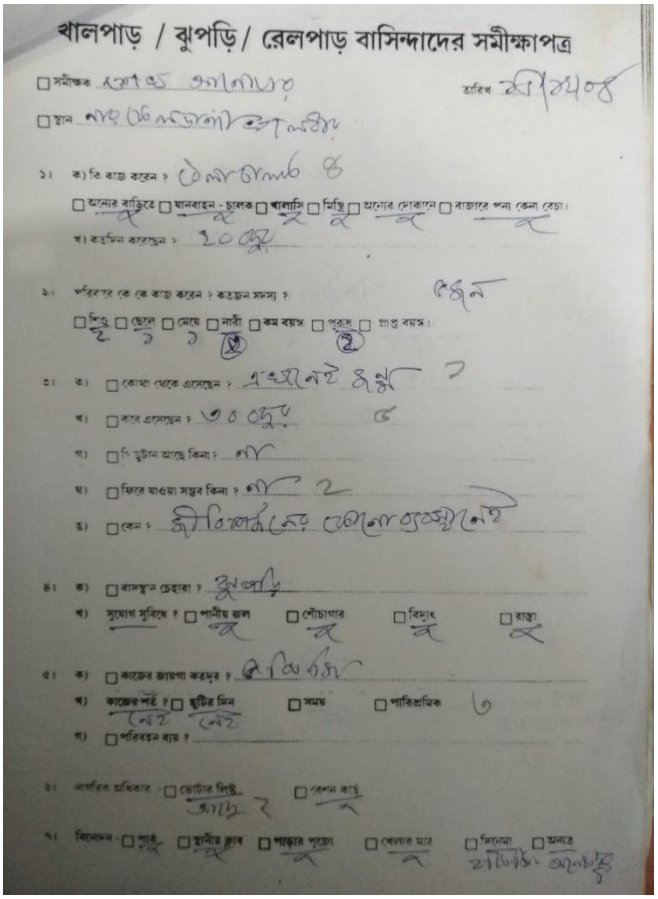
Table 3.1. Census figures for 'homeless' population and percentage to the Calcutta's total population (Source: Census of Calcutta, 1961-2011)

Year	'Homeless' population/ houseless households	Percentage to Calcutta's total population
1961	18323	0.63%
1971	48802	1.54%
1981	34316	1.14%
2001	67676	1.47%
2011	69798	1.55%

A section of Calcutta's peripatetic migrants came under official survey for the first time in the 1970s when 'pavement dwellers' were enumerated in certain parts of the city, resulting in a promise of their inclusion within government welfare schemes. Three important sample surveys on the floating rural landless in the city were undertaken by the city development authorities between 1975 and 1987. In 1973-74, the Calcutta Metropolitan Planning Organisation (CMPO) undertook a sample survey of 10,000 pavement dwellers in the city, which was published as 'Under the Shadow of the Metropolis: They are Citizens Too'. The Indian Statistical Institute (ISI), Calcutta conducted a survey of the pavement dwellers in 1976, 'Calcutta 1976: A Socio-Economic Survey of Pavement Dwellers'. Another sample survey of pavement dwellers was conducted by the CMDA in 1986-87. As in the case of the census enumeration, the CMDA surveys were also conducted at night a with set questionnaire (Jagannathan and Halder 1988b, 1175). Interestingly, the people living in the canal side shanties or *khalpar* were outside of all the CMPO and CMDA surveys. All three surveys focused on pavement dwellings. It shows how inadequate the sampling was. From the 1990s this floating population have again fallen out of government enumeration.

The only two existing surveys of the present time conducted at *khalpar* and *foot* are by two Calcutta based non-governmental organisations, the Hawker Sangram Committee (carried out in 2004) and the Calcutta Samaritan (conducted in 2011). The Hawker Sangram Committee (HSC) was formed in 1996 as a federation of hawker associations/unions in Calcutta. It came into being in context of the

Operation Sunshine (1996), a large scale official eviction drive of street hawkers in Calcutta. The HSC fights against eviction of street vendors and is concerned with various demands of the hawkers. The HSC's survey at the Round Canal is a sample survey taken in the immediate aftermath of the eviction at the *khalpar* in 2001-02. The HSC was involved in an anti-eviction movement at the Round Canal and Pali Nala in 2000-01. Their survey aimed at producing a much needed database which could strengthen their movement against evictions in these areas. A small sample of 421 household with roughly a total population of 2000 people was surveyed. It still lacked participation of the community members. At the office of the HSC, I found the papers of the survey tucked inside a plastic bag in an unarranged manner, with some pages missing. In an organisation concerned with the mobilisation of street hawkers, the documents on *khalpar* remain largely unused. The NGO's participation in the anti-eviction movement at *khalpar* has eventually petered out. The other survey with homeless population was conducted by The Calcutta Samaritans (TCS). TCS is a Calcutta based NGO that works with the urban poor on rights based issues. They have variously worked with rickshaw pullers, homeless communities, waste pickers, street vendors, commercial sex workers among others in Calcutta and addressed issues of right to shelter, health, citizenship, empowerment of women, rehabilitation of drug addicts etc. A Rapid Assessment Survey of the 'homeless' was conducted by TCS in 2011 at the behest of the government. This was not a sample survey, but a comprehensive survey of Calcutta's 'homeless' population. The process of the survey included the participation of the community members. Rapid surveys are different from detailed census. They are conducted at night over a short time and are supposed to be followed by a detailed census. The detailed census in this case was not taken. My interaction with residents of *khalpar* and *foot* indicated that the nature of participation in the survey ensured the maintenance of hierarchy of access. My main interlocutor in the area, Anwar, has served as an employee of the TCS during its work with the 'homeless'. While being illiterate himself, Anwar was involved in the surveys. During a discussion he lamented about how the TCS has betrayed them in the end by not handing over to them the 'papers' and the documents.



খালপাড় / ঝুপড়ি / রেলপাড় বাসিন্দাদের সমীক্ষাপত্র

Figure 3.1. A page from the survey on Ramhata *khalpar* conducted by the Hawker Sangram Committee in 2004.

It may be noted here that over the years the category of 'pavement dwellers' and the census category of 'homeless' have seen a steady attenuation of their ambit, excluding more and more people. The survey by the Department of Anthropology, University of Calcutta in 1943 of 'destitutes' had included all who dwelled in makeshift arrangements in the city, in air raid shelters, by the baffle walls, in vacant lands and on the pavements. This definition was narrowed down in the two CMDA surveys to what constituted the 'truly homeless' (CMDA Survey 1987). It now came to mean people living on the pavements. This excluded the dwellers by the canal banks. Inspite of the many gaps in the available census figures, barring 1991, they register a steady increase in Calcutta's 'homeless' population, especially during the last two decades. Simultaneously they have been progressively erased from government policy and documents from the 1990s.

Some reflections on the nature of these surveys are in order. Enumerating populations and producing knowledge on them are a function of power. Surveying a population comes with a promise of their inclusion within welfare schemes. Participation of community members in their own

surveys also empowers them. As Appadurai's study of informal slums in Mumbai show, squatters can organise in self-help groups with help from NGOs and partake in their own surveys. This leads to the production of vital knowledge controlled and shaped by community members, an instrument of 'governmentality from below' (Appadurai 2001). A recent study on Calcutta's street hawkers has highlighted a similar politics of archiving among the hawkers with help of the NGO, Hawker Sangram Committee. Creation of an archive which documents day to day struggle of the street vendors has empowered their struggle against evictions (Bandyopadhyay 2016). All of this produces 'governmentality from below' which has the effect of 'deepening democracy'. The experience of the migrants studied here has been contrary to such instances of empowerment. They lack conventional literacy and are disadvantaged in the politics of knowledge production. They find it difficult to partake in the practices of archiving. They have remained outside the purview of official surveys for decades. They briefly came within official counting from the late 1970s till the 1980s, to be erased again from government records from the 1990s. Only one of all the above mentioned surveys by a non-governmental organisation, TCS has involved some measure of participation by the community members. Official enumeration at least hypothetically comes with possibilities of construing them as a population category to be governed through welfare schemes. For the people at *khalpar* and *foot* no welfare schemes have been generated. The attempt is to render these groups invisible, while still receiving essential services performed by them which feed the city's informal economy and polity.

While they have not been enumerated, over the years the rural migrants and their dwellings at the urban margins have come under a hypervisibility, a vision that sees them as they are not. It seeks to de-contextualise their lived experiences and conflate them with images of 'encroachment', 'pollution', 'crime' and 'infiltration'. As the following discussion elaborates, this process has gained momentum from the 1990s. They are still not counted through official surveys. But they are represented in semi-official and public discourses through the aforementioned incriminating images. These hollowed stereotypes have saturated policy circles and mainstream media discourse, creating a kind of hypervisibility for these groups. This hypervisibility is at the same time an erasure of the history of the creation of these settlements, their integral connection to the economy and polity of the locality and their contribution to the city. These images delegitimise their persons and livelihood spaces. Their liminal position between invisibility and this type of hypervisibility renders them amenable to be governed by displacement without rehabilitation.

There has been a concerted attempt to declare people living at *khalpar* and *foot* (and dwellers of different informal squats more broadly) as 'encroachers' who have no right of permanent shelter in

the city. Various observations by politicians, administrators and judges in the context of different eviction drives at informal shanties, carried out in the Calcutta metropolitan area from the late 1990s underscore the point. It is interesting to note that one of the CMC's donors, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) had made rehabilitation in case of eviction a mandatory condition for granting project loans and aids. The remarks by two ministers of the government of West Bengal in the context of an ADB funded suburban drainage project in 2000 which mandated the rehabilitation of evicted families reveal the official mentality

> This condition of the ADB is not at all practical… the rehabilitation of these encroachers is likely to send out a wrong signal to other illegal settlers. (Ashok Bhattacharya, Urban Development Minister, West Bengal)
>
> ...why should we rehabilitate the encroachers? They should not be living on the banks of the drainage canals in the first place. (Ganesh Mondal, Minister of State for Irrigation, West Bengal) ("State Balks at Resettlement Term for Aid," *The Telegraph, Hawker Sangram Committee Archive* 2000)

Similar sentiments were repeated to me in a personal interview with an erstwhile councillor of the CMC, Gautam. Gautam was a councillor in the Ragbazar *khalpar* area at the time when evictions took place at the Round Canal in 2001-02. I raised the question of lack of official rehabilitation plan for the evicted families. Gautam responded

> …it was seen that most people here owned land in the Sundarban area… there were a few of them who did not possess land anywhere... but the majority owned land… they left (after the evictions) (Gautam, Personal Interview, February 2018)

The judiciary have time and again come in support of the government's eviction drives. Thus, Justice Barin Ghosh of the Calcutta High Court remarked on one occasion: "Encroaching on government land is better than winning a lottery – buy a ticket for Rs 2 and win Rs 2 lakh... this is a strange situation. The government allows people to take the law into their own hands and then demand compensation, when efforts are made to evict them. Encroachment has to be eradicated from the roots." ("Government Too Soft on Encroachers," *Times of India, Hawker Sangram Committee Archive*, 2004).

The contribution of rural migrants to the city is devalued by denigrating their labour. They are viewed in terms of dirt and filth, leading to the spread of disease. This image is widely echoed among the city's urban middle-classes. A remark by CMC's Member, Mayor-In-Council (MMIC), Sewerage and Drainage, Rajiv Deb about rag pickers in the city reveals this attitude

> ...in truth they (rag pickers) don't do any work. For garbage there are vats and dumping grounds. The work is done by the Corporation. So the question of consideration of their rehabilitation does not arise. They make the city dirty in the name of picking rags. The Corporation has decided that they will not be allowed to stay in the city permanently. They will not be given permission to cook and eat on the streets. After they have collected the waste, they will have to leave the city... we have received many complaints that these people make the neighbourhoods unclean. That is the reason for this decision... the moment we see that they are creating permanent shelters for staying the night, they are being evicted… ("Kagojkurani Ucchede Abhijan," *Anandabazar Patrika, Hawker Sangram Committee Archive,* 2003)

The polluted water of the Round Canal and Pali Nala came to be seen as a source of diseases like malaria and diarrhoea and the unclean lifestyle of the inhabitants a nuisance. What was required was a cleansing and beautification of these areas by removing the dwellers. ("Juvenile Boarder Ray Sattyeo Anishchit Punarbasan," *Anandabazar Patrika, Hawker Sangram Committee Archive*, 2001; "Du Saptaha Somay Dilo Court: Pher Ucched er Pothe Lake er Railcolony," *Anandabazar Patrika, Hawker Sangram Committee Archive* 2005)

In middle-class public discourse these areas are also hubs of crime. Allegedly these areas are dens of illicit activities like brewing illicit alcohol, gambling and other petty crimes. The allegation goes, that the political parties do not take action in spite of complaints due to calculations of vote bank politics. Mayor Subrata Mukhopadhyay's observation on an occasion may be repeated here: "Teams of ragpickers often act as links between criminal gangs. This bodes ill for the security of Calcuttans." ("CMC Fears Ragpickers More Than Hawkers," *Hindusthan Times, Hawker Sangram Committee Archive,* 2000)

Finally, a relatively new delegitimising discourse that has slowly crept in is of the migrants as Bangladeshi 'infiltrators'. It is alleged that the migrants come from Bangladesh and are not legitimate citizens of the country. While this does not find widespread resonance in contemporary newspapers, this circulates among the bureaucracy and police administration. I learned in course of my interaction with the inhabitants of the Round Canal and NGO workers who have worked in these areas about attempts by government officials to construe them as 'infiltrators' from Bangladesh. The following story of a pavement dweller may be repeated here

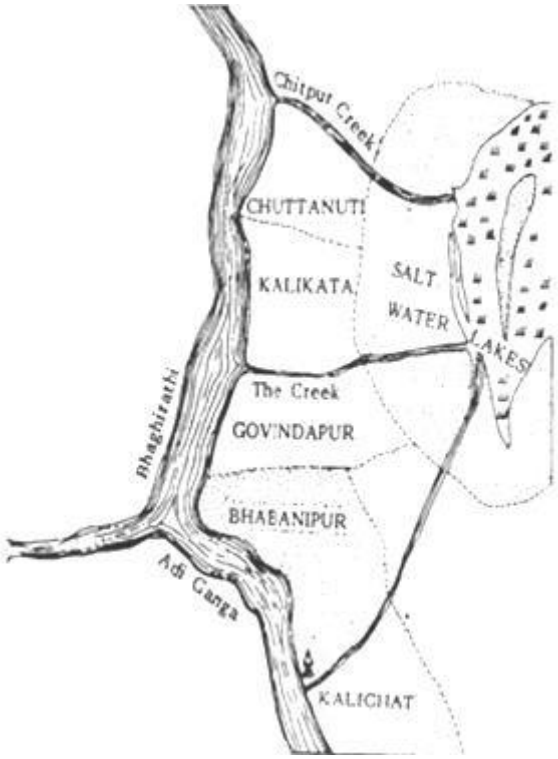
> I live with my children in Gariahat now. Every year, around the time of the Durga Puja, we face *halla* from the Police, who regularly torture us. They often threaten us by saying 'if you don't move from

> here, we will deport you to the Bangladesh border." (Rupa Chaini, a rag picker and the wife of a rickshaw puller, a shanty dweller under the Gariahat flyover) ("Living on the Edge: Women on the Streets of Calcutta," *The Calcutta Samaritan*, 2008, 25)

TCS reports note several instances where pavement dwellers are picked up in government trucks during eviction drives and dropped near the international border with Bangladesh. They painstakingly make their way back to their old shanty only to face eviction again ("Living on the Edge: Women on the Streets of Calcutta," *The Calcutta Samaritan,* 2008, 28). Several of my informants at the Round Canal mentioned how their application for Voter's Identity Card were initially rejected by the bureaucracy on the allegation that they are Bangladeshi 'infiltrators'. Some of them managed to secure identification documents after a long-drawn court case. These discourses devalue the labour of the homeless people and see them in terms of illegality, filth and crime. Together they induce the condition of displaceability.

3.2 *Khalpar* and *foot*: a profile

We may turn to the profile of the canal side dwellers and places of their habitation which reveal the integral connection between people and spaces created and nurtured for years. The Round Canal and Pali Nala where my field research was conducted are two major east-west sewerage canals of Calcutta. The Round Canal was excavated in the early part of the nineteenth century. It originates from the river Ganga in north Calcutta close to the Ragbazar area, moves south through some of the central parts of the city including Ramhata. It flows east and after crossing the Eastern Metropolitan Bypass, a north-south axis which runs along the eastern fringe of Calcutta, outfalls in another major drainage canal of the city. Initially both Round Canal and Pali Nala were used for shipping commodities of trade between Calcutta and other parts of Bengal. Much later, in the second half of the twentieth century the canals slowly lost navigability due to silting and have become part of the city's sewerage network.



Map 3.1. A conjectural map of Calcutta showing east-west canals criss-crossing the city (Source: J. Mukherjee 2016)

From the early twentieth century, small settlements or trading posts were built in different pockets of the Round Canal, in connection with trade of commodities. A novel by Jyotirindra Nandi, *Baro Ghar Ak Uthon* (Twelve Houses and One Courtyard) gives a description of scattered activities and dwellings by the Round Canal during the 1950s. Today, the long stretches of the canal present a variegated landscape. The C west road and the C east road run parallel to the Round Canal on either side starting from the Ganga in the north, till it crosses the Eastern Metropolitan Bypass along the eastern fringe of Calcutta and flows further east. For reasons of familiarity, I began my field visits at a place where the Ramhata main road intersects the Round Canal along the middle of its course. I have spent the early part of my childhood within a housing complex on the Ramhata main road close by. But the boundaries of my middle-class social circle implied unfamiliarity with these areas. These areas are associated with filth and crime in middle-class commonplace. I was unable to find a contact who could introduce me to the dwellers for interaction. I simply started walking by the C west road hoping to strike a conversation with the families who lives there. I eventually met my main interlocutor, Anwar, an inhabitant and a leader of the area, on my third visit, during attempts to talk to complete strangers. There will be occasion to come back to our many interactions later in the discussion. It will be useful to dwell on the landscape for a while longer.

Map 3.2. The sewerage canals of Calcutta (Source: Travels Finders, Kolkata Map Photo Gallery, http://travelsfinders.com/kolkata-map.html)

The water that flows through the Round Canal is of a dark hue. It emits a strong stench. The canal side roads are potholed and in tattered condition. They carry a traffic of trucks, mini trucks, occasional private cars, rickshaw vans and other vehicles. As one walks on the C west road from the Ramhata main road towards the river Ganga (which is the western most boundary of Calcutta) and

passes the Kuldanga rail bridge (a rail bridge over a railway line of the Calcutta Suburban Railway network passing over the canal) trucks and buses can be seen parked by the sides. Further down, there is a pay and use toilet which has been recently installed, an important marker of the landscape of *khalpar*. Shanties begin to appear behind piles of rags. Big packed sacks can be seen next to heaps of debris. The sacks contain material that are packed after being sorted, which will be sold at nearby shops within the next few days for recycling.

Figure 3.2. A glimpse of the Round Canal from the Ragbazar area where a dense spread of dwellings can be seen on the slope of the canal.

Figure 3.3. Piles of rags can be seen outside the dwellings at the Round Canal.

A little way ahead there is an office of the Greater Calcutta Gas Supply Corporation. There is a mosque close by. The inhabitants of this area, the Kuldanga-Raibazar stretch of the canal, are primarily Muslims. Some of them are Hindi speaking and have come from villages in Bihar. Garbage dumps of different sizes can be seen in the street corners. In some of the garbage vats, a machine called the solid waste compactor has been installed by the CMC in recent years. It is a machine for collecting solid waste from the vats. It threatens to render the local waste pickers who work at these vats jobless.

Figure 3.4. A CMC notice in a vat at the Round Canal declaring that the work of creating a solid waste compactor station is underway.

A wide variety of garages, workshops, timber processing units, saw mills, small clubs, places of worship under the shade of sacred trees, local party offices intersperse with dwellings. Wayside tea and snack stalls and a whole range of other small food outlets also line the canal banks. Further north along the Round Canal, in the Ragbazar area, a weekly market is held on Sundays where birds are sold. I have interacted with the families in this stretch of the canal in the Ragbazar area. They are Bengali speaking Hindus mostly coming from south 24 Parganas. From the first decade of the new millennium, parks have started to appear by the canal banks. At the Round Canal, I found most of the parks to be locked and shut to the dwellers. The railings of the parks are put to various uses like drying clothes or tying cattle.

Figure 3.5. A CMC park by the Pali Nala put to various use by the dwellers nearby.

The other canal where I have conducted field research is Pali Nala. Pali Nala is connected with the Ganga in south Calcutta. It was excavated out of a dead channel of the river Ganga in 1777 and flows through the southern parts of the city in an east-west direction. It flows south-east and after crossing the Eastern Metropolitan bypass moves into the district of South 24 Parganas. Unlike the Round Canal, the western most stretches of the Pali Nala close to the Ganga bear marks of older settlements. The roads on both sides of the channel are not continuous. Long stretches by the Pali Nala do not have walkable pathways. Old roads run along the southern stretches of the canal. These areas bear the imprint of Hindu religiosity in the form of a variety of *shiva* temples, *kali* temples and *ghats* (paved flights of steps leading to the river), many of which were created in the nineteenth century.[11] There are two Hindu cremation *ghats* by the canal bank. A famous *kali* temple, a site of pilgrimage for the Hindus from the eighteenth century is located at this western part of the canal. Slums have grown around the temples and are intermeshed with the landscape. As per a news report published in the wake of the evictions at Pali Nala in 2000, in the 16 kilometre stretch of the canal from its southern most part to Haria in the south east, there were about 7851 semi *pucca* homes, and 3000 brick houses, with a total of 40,000 people dwelling there. It also had many small factories, about 90 temples, 12 cowsheds, 8 clubs, 5 schools and 5 garages ("Pali Nala Sanskar Hoyni,

Othano Jayni Dakhaldarder, Kendrer 30 Koti Taka Pore," *Bartaman, Hawker Sangram Committee Archive,* 2000)

Figure 3.6. An old temple by the Pali Nala.

Figure 3.7. A temple by the Pali Nala which now functions as a tea stall.

As one moves eastward by the Pali Nala, the dwellings are relatively recent. The eastern parts of the canal present a landscape similar to that of the Round Canal noted above. Shanties intersperse with small workshops, temples, roadside markets and offices of political parties making these places hubs of vibrant activity. Some of the roads in this eastern stretch have been recently laid out. A large part of the eastern stretch of the canal has now been cleared of shanties in course of recent eviction drives and railed as discussed later in the chapter. Evictions took place in the wake of an extension of the city's subway system towards the south and south east along the canal. Newly laid out roads that run parallel to the Pali Nala bear the names of the new subway stations.

Figure 3.8. A place of worship under a tree with an idol of Manasa, a snake goddess by the Round Canal.

The dwellings by the canal banks are made of assorted material including plastic sheets, bamboo poles, pieces of wood, corrugated metals, cardboard boxes and such like. Some structures are two storey, with a ladder placed outside which gives access to the upper floor. The upper floors are usually not high enough for a person to be able to stand, and used for sleeping. The homes of the relatively better off dwellers are partially or fully cemented. The daily chores of people are usually not confined inside the small spaces of their homes. The everyday business of living spills out onto the streets. Women often cook outside their shanties, elders sit on *charpai* (a traditional bed woven

with rope) and chat, young children play, the very young defecate on the streets, people queue up to collect water from what is locally known as *time kal* (tap). *Time kal* is a name given to taps installed by the CMC where water comes at specific times of the day. Young and old alike take bath in the water flowing from the *time kal*, waste pickers sort their days' pick in front of their homes, cattle stand tied to poles and people go about their daily business. Vehicles pass slowly through.

Figure 3.9. Dwellings by the Round Canal. Ladders are placed outside the homes to provide access to the upper storey.

As already noted, the dwellings at the two canal banks have been outside official surveys. The only existing surveys of these *khalpar* were conducted by two NGOs, the HSC and the TCS. TCS's Rapid Assessment Survey is not detailed. The survey conducted by the HSC is of the dwellers by the Round Canal only. It consists of a smaller sample, but contains more detailed information. No similar survey exists for my other field locations, the pocket of dwellings by the banks of the Pali Nala and a few pavement dwellings. Three government surveys on pavement dwellers carried out by the CMDA as noted above and a series of essays by Jagannathan and Halder (Jagannathan and Halder 1988b; 1988a; 1989) published afterwards which analyse the surveys, provide valuable information regarding the occupation and economic condition of these migrants.[12] Drawing on inferences from the CMDA surveys on other pavement dwelling areas in the city, the survey by the HSC (2004) and my own field data (2018), a profile of the canal side and pavement dwellers may be attempted.

The CMDA surveys on pavement dwellers (1987) and the HSC survey (2004) point to a somewhat similar rural origin and occupational break up of these floating migrant groups. Both surveys point out that the families in these areas began to come from the late 1950s. Migration increased significantly in the late 1960s and 1970s. A steady trickle of inflow continued through the later years (Survey of the Hawker Sangram Committee 2004). A majority of the migrants came from the southern districts of West Bengal like South 24 Parganas and Midnapur (Jagannathan and Halder 1989, 315). According to the HSC survey, a considerable number of the inhabitants of the Round Canal, about one fourth, mainly from the younger generation were born at the canal sides. The average family size ranged between 5 to 6 persons per family unit (Hawker Sangram Committee 2004).

These groups engage in a variety of odd jobs in the informal and unorganised sector of the economy. Jagannathan and Halder's account drawing on the CMDA surveys divide up the professions of the pavement dwellers into two groups, i) mainstream vocations and ii) marginal vocations. The first group of occupations, which they label as mainstream occupations, include the transport sector among others. The CMDA and HSC surveys point out that the largest number employed are in the transport sector, about 30% of the mainstream vocations. It includes the rickshaw van pullers and headload carriers like the *khalasi* and the *mutiyas*. Their work involves carrying goods on their heads, or loading and unloading of cargo from trucks. Another important profession is of the van puller. The vans are used to deliver a wide array of goods. Some other professions with relatively lower payments are identified as marginal vocations. These include work as household help, rag

picking and begging. According to the CMDA survey of 1987 (Jagannathan and Halder 1988a, 2602), the marginal vocations taken together involve a significant number of workers, about 22%. Other miscellaneous professions noted in the surveys include cleaning fish in the market for selling, catching worms from the canals which are sold as baits for catching fish, shoe polish and repair, the work of helper at tea stalls, hawking of fruits, vegetable and beverages like tea, making envelops and paper bags and the ubiquitous work of *jogar* meaning odd jobs as and when available. A large majority of the households surveyed by the HSC reported their areas of work to be between 1 to 3 kilometres from their canal side homes (Hawker Sangram Committee 2004).

Table 3.2. Time of arrival of the migrants at the Round Canal, Calcutta (Source: Survey conducted by the Hawker Sangram Committee, 2004).

Year of arrival	**Total number of families**	**Percentage**
Born at the canal sides	105	25%
1950-1960	16	4%
1961-1970	87	21%
1970 onwards	207	49%

Table 3.3. Occupational profile of the dwellers of the Round Canal, Calcutta (Source: Survey conducted by the Hawker Sangram Committee, 2004).

Main occupation	**Percentage**
Household help (primarily women)	19
Khalasi/Mutiya	17
Majdur/Labour (including labour in the construction industry)	14
Van puller	12
Rag picker	10
Jogar	6
Beggar	4

The CMDA surveys do not contain information about the possession of identification documents of the pavement dwellers. But this is significant for their claims to citizenship. The HSC survey contains data regarding the possession of Voters Identity Card and Ration Cards of the inhabitants of the Round Canal. About 34% of the total number reported in the HSC survey possess the Voters Identity

Card and a very small number of people, about 3% own Ration Cards. During my field interactions on the one hand, I encountered a certain reluctance to discuss the matter of identity cards for understandable reasons. On the other hand, two of my interlocutors actually showed their cards to me without prior asking simply to prove they are legal citizens and possess the documents. More is said later about possession of documents and associated claims to citizenship.

Table 3.4. Percentage of possession of identification documents by the dwellers of the Round Canal (Source: Survey conducted by the Hawker Sangram Committee, 2004).

Identity Card	**Number of Household**	**Percentage**
Voter's ID Card	144 (one or more members of the household reported that they possess the Voter's Identity Card)	34%
Ration Card	14 (one or more members of the household reported that they possess the Ration Card)	3%

My own field visits were conducted in 2017-2018, nearly two decades after the last CMDA survey and more than a decade after the survey by the HSC. My field interaction with a total of 28 households including 18 households from the Round Canal and Pali Nala and about 10 households of the pavement dwellers reflected a somewhat similar pattern of migration and professional break up of these groups. Close to half of my respondents claimed to have been born at the canal side. Of the rest, a large majority came from the southern districts of West Bengal like South 24 Parganas. A smaller number of non-Bengali Muslim families mainly in the Kuldanga-Raibazar area of the Round Canal said they have origins in villages in Bihar. Since my field locations include pavement dwellings close to vats, the number of rag pickers have been high among my interlocutors, about 38 %. Apart from this, the two other significant professions among my informants were that of van pullers (about 15%), household help primarily consisting of women (about 19%) and construction labour (about 12%).

The rickshaw van is an important means of livelihood in *khalpar*. It is used to carry and deliver a wide variety of goods to different locations. The possession of a van is a symbol of resourcefulness. Thus one of my research participants, Monirul shared with me how his professional life begun with waste picking. With a little savings, he has managed to buy a van and now delivers goods on his van

(Monirul, Personal Interview, December 2017). But Monirul has not given up his earlier work of waste picking. Like Monirul, most of my interlocutors talked about working in different capacities according to availability of work. Loading and unloading cargo from trucks is another important profession. Rag pickers and domestic workers are predominantly women. Many of my interlocutors at the Round Canal and the nearby pavement dwellings shared their experiences of picking waste at vats in the neighbourhood. They sort their picks at their home, store the collection in sacks and after a couple of days' collection, sell them to paper merchants in the nearby stores to make a living. Most of these professions involve intense physical labour. The condition of work is precarious. As the inhabitants grow old, their physical capacities slowly wane either from age, through frequent accidents or incapacitation. In old age, begging becomes the sole means of earning a livelihood. Evictions separate them not only from their dwellings, but also their meagre source of income that the urban setting and locational advantage provides.

For many of my interlocutors their movements have often been in the nature of back and forth, a fact not comfortably captured in the statistics of the surveys. The reason for migration from rural areas to the city is often the same, lack of resources to make ends meet. It is usual for one member of the family to come to work in the city, while the rest of the family stay back, or come gradually over time. But certain tensions surface in discussions about the nature of this rural-urban connection. On the one hand I encountered a reluctance to talk about days in the village in any great detail. I was told repeatedly that they have *always* been at their present urban site of dwelling. In their narratives the rural background is construed as a somewhat distant past. On the other hand, the rural connection is a vital link of sustenance for many of the migrants. They fall back on their networks of kin at the villages in times of hardship. As two of my interlocutors at the Round Canal mentioned, the more resourceful try to purchase a piece of land in the village through their life's savings. Their urban dwellings are marked by an uncertainty of tenure. In this movement from rural to urban and back, the binaries between forced/voluntary migration blur. I will recall the story of one of my interlocutors which shows the nature of the rural urban movement. Roma, now an elderly lady of 80, belonged to a peasant family near Kakdwip, in a village in South 24 Parganas. She came to Calcutta after her marriage in the face of poverty

> Roma: after marriage they forced us out of my in-laws' house, I came to Dolapol (southern suburbs of Calcutta) with my husband … the rent was Rs 10 per month…
>
> I: why did you come to Haria?
>
> Roma: it was very difficult in Kakdwip, there was extreme poverty, I divided one sari in three parts and came to Calcutta with that… mine is a very sad life, my husband worked as a coolly…

Roma's husband worked as a coolly in Haria. He died within a few months after their arrival to Haria in an accident at his work place. After her husband's death, Roma survived by working as a household help in the neighbouring areas. Her own income was not sufficient for the upkeep of her infant daughter. She had to send her daughter back to her parent's home in the village. A middle class household where Roma worked as a domestic help, helped her find a place at the bank of Pali Nala. Here she could stay without paying any rent.

> Roma: I looked upon Dabluda's mother as my own mother. 'Can't you help me a little so that my daughter can stay with me?' I said... I asked her… can you request Dabluda… he is a party member (CPM)… can't he provide me a small plot of land at the *khalpar*?
>
> I: when was this?
>
> Roma: this was… two ages ago… at that time there were many families, our house was near Bidhanpalli… I built the house myself, they gave me bamboo poles… afterwards, two of my brothers came here from our village and build their shanties just next to mine… (Roma, Personal Interview, February 2018)

Connection to networks of kin at the villages, however tenuous, remain a means of survival during difficult times. For people who resort to movement for survival, negotiating displacement happens from a position of relative disadvantage. Roma's two brothers had come after her to the *khalpar*. They started living there with their families and made a living by pulling rickshaw in the southern suburbs of Calcutta. Both of them would eventually be displaced and pushed back to their native village after the evictions at Pali Nala in 2001. Roma managed to stay on.

3.3 Municipal neoliberalisation and the condition of displaceability

My field visits at the *khalpar* and *foot* was carried out from December 2017 to March 2018. In the Round Canal area, I was often in accompaniment with Anwar. Anwar, a man in his 60s is a long term inhabitant of the Kuldanga area of the Round Canal and a local leader. His ancestral origin lay in Bihar. But as he claims, he was born at *khalpar* and has always lived in his present home, first with his parents and then with his wife, children and now grandchildren. Anwar used to work as a *khalasi* (headload carrier) earlier. After TCS started working with the families in the area from 2003, he and his wife Tanjum, started working for them. He also works in the paper recycling business. He has survived multiple eviction drives and now serves as the broker of the political party in power. Spaces are cleared up in times of evictions, and powerful people come to occupy more land than others

when dwellings are rebuilt afterwards. Apart from his own dwelling unit, Anwar owns a few more huts. Some shanties are rented out to the dwellers for a monthly rent. In his frank admission, he was a supporter of the CPM earlier and has changed his affiliation to the AITC after they came to power in 2011. He claims to have familiarity with the field of the 'homeless' through his NGO work.

Anwar and I usually started our day at the Round Canal with a cup of tea at Niamot's. Niamot's ancestral village was in Bihar. His parents came to Calcutta in search of work. He used supply goods in a rented van earlier. But he met with an accident, injured his leg and lost the capacity to pull a van. Now with his life's savings he has started a tea stall, attached to the front his home. After our morning tea at Niamot's, Anwar would accompany me to meet his friends in the neighbourhood for interviews and discussions. Let me recall two unsettling field moments.

Moment One

On a pleasant late December morning, as Anwar and I were sitting at Niamot's, talking about the 'problems' of *khalpar*, one of Anwar's friends joined us. He was excitedly complaining about the unruly behaviour of some CMC officials and an eviction at a nearby area. There had been an eviction the previous night at a *foot* nearby, about 500 metres away. Anwar insisted that we should visit the place to see things for real. As we reached the area, I saw a group of families on the pavement of a main road, engaged in their daily chores. The day's meal was being cooked on a clay oven by an elderly lady. A couple of vans stood packed with goods on the road next to the dwellings. When we reached, they greeted Anwar as an old friend. Anwar had informed me earlier, that he had made the acquaintance of this group of families during his work with TCS for 'homeless' families in Calcutta. They told Anwar that the CMC officials had come the previous night, cut through their plastic sheets and dispersed them on the allegations of making the pavements filthy. The families have returned in the morning, but have not bothered to unpack their belongings. In case the officials visit again to chase them away, they will quickly flee to nearby areas.

Figure 3.10. A pavement dwelling on the KC Road.

A group of about 40-50 families live at this *foot* on the Krafulla Chandra road (KC) next to a vat. The vat is the source of livelihood for these waste picker families. The KC road is one of the main north south arteries of the city. The dwellings are also close to an important government school. According to the dwellers, they have been living here for more than three decades. They negotiate eviction threats on an everyday basis. They hear rumours of a future plan of creating a small park at the area by cleaning the pavement.

My discussion began with Hasina as she tended to her cooking. Hasina was born and brought up in a village in South 24 Parganas, known as Ghatakpukur. She had come here with her handicapped husband in the face of economic hardship in the village. She does not have a home in the village anymore, neither any network of kin or friends back in the village. In the city, her main source of income is rag picking and begging. Earlier she and her husband used to live in a makeshift house on the other side of the road. During the time of widening of the KC road, their house along with the

houses of some other rural migrant families were broken down. They have crossed over near to the vat and been living on the pavements since then, for about three decades.

> Hasina: this (evictions) happens almost every month… from the last two days they have really been bothering us, the police came and said you have to vacate the whole area… we have packed and put our things on the van, we will flee if we see them anywhere nearby… we have not unpacked anything… they often disturb us in sleep
> I: do you go back to *desh* (ancestral village)?
> Hasina: no, we flee to nearby areas…

Tamannabibi is also from Ghatakpukur and had migrated about the same time as Hasina. She lives next to Hasina. She joined the conversation

> *Didi* (sister) do you know what we want from the government? We don't want money, or jewellery… all we want is a roof over our head, we told them yesterday when they came to evict us, we don't want anything else, give us a roof over the head, where we can stay, work hard and earn our bread… we are exposed when it rains, when these areas catch fire, we run for our lives with our children… (Group Interview, December 2017)

As I would soon realise through several more interactions with families on living pavements accompanied by Anwar, at the *foots* displacements are frequent. Rather than official evictions with prior notice, here unofficial everyday forms of displacements are more frequent. I repeatedly encountered stories of havoc wrecked by CMC's *halla* in their daily lives. The term *halla* literally means chaos. In the local parlance it refers to occasions when trucks of the CMC come to *khalpar* and *foot*, break their dwellings, loot or destroy their belongings, disperse them and go away. The commotion created by the activities of these corporation vehicles resemble *halla* or chaos in their daily lives.

Moment two

One month into my field work, on a usual day as I was walking towards the Kuldanga area of the Round Canal, I could see a red fire engine at work. Upon reaching, I learned that a fire had broken out the previous night. I saw the ward councillor seated on a chair at the canal bank. He was overseeing the process of clearing ashes and charred goods from the burnt area of the *khalpar*. People could be seen standing in small groups, talking in low voices. Everyone seemed uncertain about how the fire broke out. Most of the inhabitants were fast asleep when the fire had started.

Had the night been windy, they were discussing, the fire could have spread much further bringing more destruction.

Anwar told me that eleven dwelling houses had been burnt down by the fire. And a few vans have been burnt among other things. I saw one government medical van standing nearby. People who had suffered burn injuries were being offered emergency medical treatment at the van. During the next couple of days, the affected families were given blankets and cooking utensils through the initiative of a local Church. Anwar mediated and channelled relief. Surprisingly the affected families did not receive the most basic materials for putting up a shade over their heads, the bamboo poles and plastic sheets. When I visited them the last time, they were still living on the open. It was winter in mid-January and these families had to sleep in the open. They had improvised a strategy of sleeping by getting inside big sacks and wrapping themselves into the sacks. Their rag picking sacks were functioning as a substitute for blankets.

Incidents of fire and dislocations are often mediated by a local *dalal* (middle man), in this case, Anwar. We might note in passing Anwar's role during the fire and the nature of his mediation. It was through Anwar that relief were channelled. He repeatedly assured his friends and me that the displaced families will be given some compensation. But he kept silent on the question of rehabilitation. After three to four days visit at the area after the incidence of the fire, and multiple queries, I was told on conditions of anonymity that there is a plan to build park at the area that has been cleared by the fire. The eleven families who were still staying there, will eventually have to move away.

The manner in which the news of the fire was reported the next day in newspapers is also revealing. The importance of incidence of fire are measured in newspapers by the number of fire engines required to douse the fire. In case of involvement of a minimum of three fire engines, it makes a small news. When more than six fire engines are involved, it makes for a big news. While the fire at the Kuldanga belt did involve seven fire engines, it was still a small news. More surprisingly, none of the news reports published the following day, provided an explanation for how the fire started and prospects of rehabilitation of the affected families. In this framing, fires in the slums of Calcutta are a *normal* occurrence. It does not require an inquiry into the causes of the fire or any discussion of the prospects of rehabilitation of the affected families.

Figure 3.11. In the aftermath of a fire at the Kuldanga area of the Round Canal on 14 January 2018. Eleven dwelling houses were burnt down. Cleaning operation is seen to be under way under the supervision of the ward councillor.

These areas have increasingly seen more everyday forms of displacements. The two pockets of dwellings at the Round Canal and the one at Pali Nala that I visited have known many instances of fires. Stories of fire are alive in the memories of the dwellers and are repeated during long discussions. In their memories, often no clear separations are made between official eviction drives and the numerous everyday forms of displacements that are intermeshed with their lives, meted out by increasing number of fires, by the *halla* of the corporation, or simply by the local boys of the party in power. Prior notifications are often not needed and evictions do not make any news at all.

We may briefly take note of the changed contexts from the 1990s, when dislocations have come with increased frequency. This period was marked by a departure from India's socialist styled planned development model and initiation of the process of neoliberalisation of the economy and polity.[13] In the face of accumulating external debt and foreign exchange crisis, a new economic policy was adopted in India in 1991, arranged by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the

World Bank. An important element of the new economic policy is the adoption of what are called the structural adjustment reforms which sought to change the nature of Indian economic system by ultimately establishing a free market. Under this the public sector has shrunk with increasing privatisation. The central government has liberalised its policy regarding trade and foreign investment. My usage of the term neoliberalism denotes the market friendly changes in economy and a mode of governance that embraces the idea of a self-regulating free market, with associated values of competition and individual self-responsibilisation as the model for efficient governance.

Following the initiation of structural adjustment program in 1991 all over India and the opening up of the economy to free market policies, the state of West Bengal also adopted a new economic policy. The state government invited capital investment from the Asia Pacific region as part of India's Look East Policy. The West Bengal Government tapped funds from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Department of International Development (DFID), Government of the United Kingdom. The ADB and DFID provided funds for suburban development and improvement of sewerage and drainage system in the urban centres of the state. Together with development, environmental upgradation and beautification drives came to the forefront of economic agenda. Following on from the new beginnings made in the 1990s, a country wide urban renewal mission, the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) was launched. Action under the JNNURM started in 2005 and continued till 2014. All the big cities in the country including Calcutta saw a frenzy of demolitions and rebuilding.

At the municipal level in the city, neoliberal policies of accumulation through development and aestheticisation had several manifestations. A plethora of new projects for metro railways, malls, multiplexes, flyovers, expressways, high end residential enclaves and elite new towns were designed to come up. The Kolkata Environmental Improvement Investment Program (KEIIP) was kicked off at the turn of the new millennium with funds from the ADB. The KEIIP is primarily concerned with improving suburban sewerage network, water supply and solid waste management. Its avowed goal is to transform Calcutta into a, "smart, resilient, green, water-sensitive, and (more) competitive urban center" ("Our Water-sensitive, Climate-resilient Dream for Kolkata," Pokhrel 2016).

Together with development projects, the city came under all round beautification drives. Beautification of major roads, parks, pavements, street lights were taken up. There was a plan to utilise ADB funds to create 1000 new parks in Calcutta. The railings of the existing parks were to be freshly painted ("Ak Hazar Notun Park Gorbe Purosabha," *Sangbad Pratidin, Hawker Sangram*

Committee Archive, 2004). There were plans to renovate lane dividers in big thoroughfares. Decorative street lights were posted by major roads and old traffic lights were painted. Trees were planted in some of the city's footpaths (Kolkata Sajbe Notunbhabe, *NEWZBangla* 2012, 5). In 2014 the Calcutta Municipal Corporation adopted a 'clean city campaign', to make Calcutta a 'garbage vat free city'. The plan involved abolishing open vats and putting in the service of solid waste compactors for the management of solid waste ("Kolkata Municipal Corporation Launches `Clean City` Campaign," 2014). Calcutta acquired new statues and structures like the Big Ben, or a theme park in the northern suburbs of Calcutta with replicas of iconic monuments of the West. All of this catered to a certain image of Calcutta as a 'world-class' city.[14] Initiatives were taken to beautify three major drainage canals in the city, Pali Nala, Round Canal and Kestopur Canal. There were plans to repair the roads along the canal banks, plant trees and operate ferry services through all three canals ("Agami Bochore Kestopur Khale Launch Chalu," *Hawker Sangram Committee Archive,* 2009). The responsibility of beautification and maintenance of the new infrastructure were to be jointly shouldered by the municipal bodies and private industrialists ("Shilpamahalke Park, Footpath 'Dattak' Purosabhar," *Anandabazar Patrika* 2007, 1). Under the conjoined influence of an anti-poor developmental, environmental and aesthetic discourse, Calcutta was to be rendered 'clean' and 'green'. The poor were violently targeted for their seemingly incorrigible unclean lifestyle.

The dislocations and dispossessions at *khalpar* and *foot* should be understood within this overall context. The two *khalpar* studied here have seen repeated eviction drives ever since these areas became densely populated from the late 1960s. For example, eviction took place at the Round Canal during the declaration of national emergency in India in 1975-76. Afterwards evictions were planned in these areas after the Left Front came to power in West Bengal in 1977. The plan was later dropped. In 2001-02 however, an eviction drive of a much larger scale was planned and executed. Much before the initiation of the ABD funded project of the Kolkata Environmental Improvement Investment Program (KEIIP) for upgrading suburban sewerage (conceived in 2000), the Round Canal and Pali Nala had come under renovation under the Ganga Action Plan (GAP). The GAP was a central government scheme launched in 1986. The GAP aimed to improve the water quality of the river Ganga by intercepting domestic sewage and industrial chemical wastes from entering the river. The state of West Bengal was one of the beneficiaries of the scheme. Under this scheme, the Round Canal and the Pali Nala, which are offshoots of the Ganga came under renovation. The project aimed at increasing the flow of water through the canals by dredging and widening the channels, diverting sewage water, placing sewerage treatment plants along the canals etc ("Gap in KMC's Bid to Check Ganga Pollution," *The Times of India,* January 2016). The implementation of the GAP was delayed

and did not start until the beginning of the new millennium. Together with this, there were schemes of beautification of the canal banks. From 2000, ADB funds were also put into use for sewerage canal renovation. The canals were to be made navigable where boats could ply. Gardens were to be grown along their banks where the middle-classes could take a morning stroll, or enjoy a boat ride in the evening. Later on, added to the beautification drive, an extension of Calcutta's metro railway line in the southern suburbs along the course of the Pali Nala was undertaken. It was declared that the shanties by the banks of the canals should be cleared for the proper implementation of the projects.

Figure 3.12. A CMC signboard stating that throwing garbage in the Pali Nala is a punishable offence under the Calcutta Municipal Act 1980.

Thus, multiple projects targeted to renovate these marginal locales along the sewerage canals by evicting the dwellers. While there have been several evictions previously, the official eviction at the two *khalpar* carried out in 2001-02 were the largest so far. Evictions started at Pali Nala from 22 September 2001. Before the evictions, names of some of the dwellers by the Pali Nala were erased from the electoral roll in order to de-ligitimise their claims of citizenship (*Shalti Research Group,* Kolkata, 2003, 38). The evictions were carried out jointly by the Irrigation Department, Government of West Bengal, the CMC together with the aid of other civic bodies like the Calcutta Electric Supply Corporation (CESC), KMDA and the Kolkata Telephones etc. The displaced families were given a 'coupon' which would entitle them to a 'shifting cost' of roughly Rs 1500 (approx. $20) at the Pali Nala. This was a minimal compensation by way of a transport cost to carry their belongings away.

Again, very few actually received the compensation money. After the first round of evictions, as per government estimate, about 4000 families were displaced from a 8 kilometre stretch at Pali Nala who received the coupons ("Pali Nullah Banks to be Cleared of Encroachers," *The Statesman, Hawker Sangram Committee Archive* 2001). Afterwards evictions were carried out on 10-11 December 2002 at different stretches of the Round Canal in the name of canal renovation ("Shanties Set Ablaze at Ramhata During Eviction Drive," *Times of India,* December 2002). A similar process was followed. A meagre amount of Rs 2000 (approx. $27) was offered by way of compensation for the shanty dwellers at the Round Canal. According to contemporary news reports 3277 evicted families from Round Canal received the coupons ("Ramhata Khaler Dhare Jhupri Ucched Shuri Kaal Theke," *Bartaman,* December 2003, 3) ("Khalpar: Taka Pacchen Ucchinnora," *Aajkaal,* April 2003, 2). But during our many conversations, the dwellers have put the number of displaced families to around 10,000 for Pali Nala. For the Round Canal again, the dwellers put the number at 20,000. The precise numbers are unclear, but it is safe to assume that a much larger number than the official estimate have been displaced. These areas saw repeated eviction drives. A second round of eviction was carried out at the Pali Nala on 12 April 2002 and at the Round Canal on 15 December 2003 ("Aaj Pali Nalar Du Dhare Ucched," *Sangbad Pratidin, Hawker Sangram Committee Archive,* April 2002; "Jhupri Ucched Shuru," *Sangbad Pratidin, Hawker Sangram Committee Archive,* December 2003). During my own field visits to these areas, I learned of evictions of smaller scales from the dwellers that are more frequent.

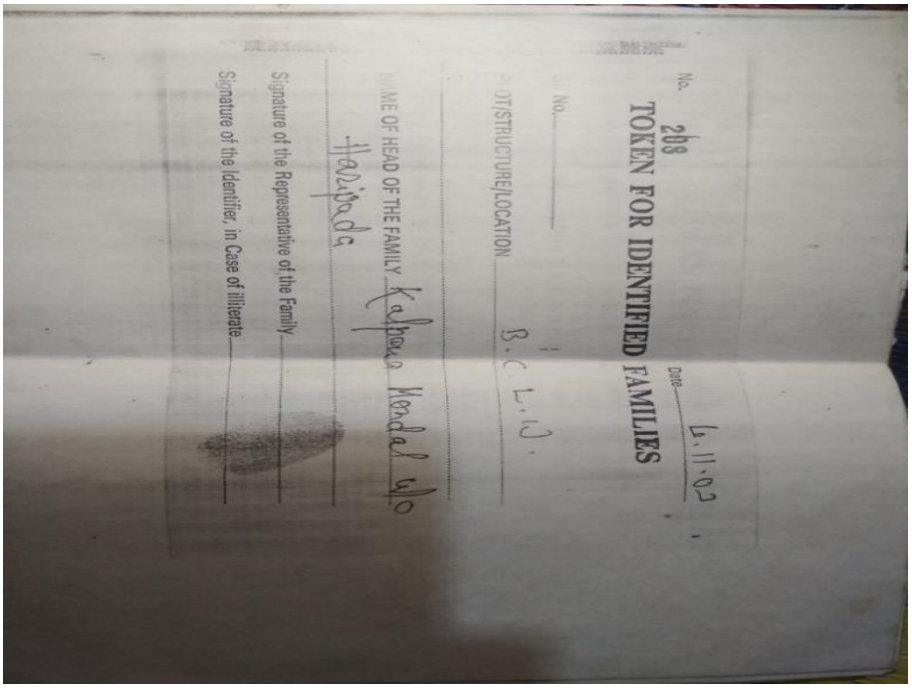


Figure 3.13. Image of a 'token' given to families before the evictions were carried out.

Figure 3.14. A photo of a food kitchen opened at the Pali Nala by volunteer organisations in the immediate aftermath of the evictions in 2001 (Source: Hawker Sangram Committee Archive)

Figure 3.15. Walls have been built by the south-eastern stretch of the Pali Nala after evictions.

Figure 3.16. A wall painting by the Pali Nala depicting an idyllic image of the canal side where boats ply and women reap paddy from fields on the banks of the canal.

It was officially declared that the 'encroachers' had no right to rehabilitation. But at the same time, the government also made vague promises of some form of rehabilitation for the evicted shanty dwellers in government housing schemes for lower income groups, like the Balmiki Ambedkar Abash Yojona.[15] But as the subsequent years proved, no rehabilitation was provided.

In spite of repeated evictions, many of the dwellers have returned to the canal banks. In my field area, two groups have repeatedly and persistently returned in the face of multiple evictions i) the people living in the Kuldanga area of the Round Canal and ii) at the Ragbazar area of the Round Canal. As against this, the dwellers by the south-eastern stretch of Pali Nala have been evicted. The banks of Pali Nala have been cemented and walls raised to foreclose possibilities of return of the dwellers.[16] Their equation with the local state, which includes their local political patrons and their aides, the officer in charge of the local police station (who often work in tandem with the political party in power) and a range of middle men play an important role in the eviction-return cycles. At the Kuldanga area, the dwellers had managed to develop a link with the erstwhile CPM councillor of the area. In the immediate aftermath of the evictions in 2002, the group of families at the Kuldanga stretch of the canal were provided political protection. They received tents from the men of the

councillor after their shanties were razed by bulldozers. They were distributed flattened rice and molasses for a few days. They were given the assurance that they could slowly, over the course of a few months, rebuild their shanties by one side of the canal, maintaining a certain distance from the canal bank (Nusrat Bibi, Personal Interview, December 2017). A considerable number of the dwellers in this area have come back through the support of their political patron. At the Ragbazar area of the canal, the dwellers lacked any bargaining relation with their ward councillor mentioned earlier, Gautam. Here repeated eviction drives have taken place from that time onwards. People had to stay away for a much longer period after the evictions. Over the years a significant number of them have slowly crept back in. At present they still don't have strong connections with the ruling political dispensation and live in relatively greater fear of future evictions.

Two of my interlocutors, Imran at Kuldanga and Sanat at Ragbazar, noted that with their life's savings they have finally bought a piece of land in the Sundarban region (Imran, Personal Interview, December 2017; Sanat, Personal Interview, January 2018). They will eventually move there. It was repeated to me multiple times, that people who have some means of sustenance try to move elsewhere after evictions. It is the most disadvantaged sections who have nowhere else to go, that come back in large numbers.

I will ponder on two more life stories of living through such eviction-return cycles. Shalini, a woman of 33 and mother of two young girls lives at the Ragbazar area of the Round Canal. Her mother had migrated from a village in South 24 Parganas to the Round Canal in the face of economic hardship after her husband left her for another woman. Shalini was born at the *khalpar* in Ragbazar. She has been living there since her childhood and was married there. Shalini's family was displaced during the evictions at Ragbazar in 2002. Shalini recalled

> they came here with the police and informed us about the impending eviction… I had left before they came, my daughter was very young then, I broke down my house and took the material along… it was winter… I went to my in-laws' place in Sundarban. I begged them to take us in... they tortured me a lot, I could not live there even for six months, I came back to Ragbazar with my two young daughters and lived on the pavements… just at the foot nearby… under the open sky… I used to work as a domestic help at a house in the neighbourhood for all day… I ate and slept at the foot…. I kept my younger daughter with me, they did not pay me a salary, they only provided me one meal... it was only sufficient for me and not for my daughter… I used to work all day, all kinds of work…
>
> I: where was this place?

> Shalini: SB street, I don't go anywhere too far away from the Ragbazar *khalpar*… this is the only place I know…

Shalini put her elder daughter, who was only five years old at the time of the evictions, to work as a domestic help in another household. She kept the younger daughter with herself. This ad hoc arrangement continued for more than five years.

> Shalini: I have worked at their house for five years… my elder daughter used to come to me and cry, 'mother I cannot continue like this any longer'… I used to tell her, what can we do, we don't have a shelter…

Sometime in 2011, a night shelter for women was created at the Ragbazar stretch of the Round Canal. Shalini's maternal uncle, Sanat, whose home is a couple of dwellings away from Shalini's present home in the Ragbazar *khalpar*, became a committee member of the night shelter. Shalini could secure access to the shelter through him. She worked all day and came to sleep there at night with her younger daughter. She lived in this manner for another one and a half year. Sanat eventually helped her to rebuild a shanty by the canal. She has lived a shelter-less existence for almost about a decade before she could rebuild her shanty by the canal. But even now, they live under the fear of possible evictions (Shalini, Personal Interview, January 2018).

Shalini had some support from networks of kin, however meagre, in the city and in her in-laws' village, and could eventually rebuild a home, however insecure. Kanak, a rag picker aged 30, lives on a pavement by the Ambala street, a north south road in central Calcutta. She lives there along with a group of about 20-30 families near a vat. All the families living here are waste pickers. Anwar accompanied me to meet and interact with this group of family in another of our visits to pavement dwellings. Kanak's family was evicted from the Round Canal in her childhood. Unlike Shalini, she did not have any reliable network of relatives either in the city, or back in their village. Her family could not return to the *khalpar*. They did not have the option to go back to their ancestral village. Instead, she and her family took shelter at a pavement. Here is an excerpt from my conversations with her

> Kanak: I was born at the *khalpar*… they evicted us from there, after that we moved here, I was a young girl then…
>
> I: how many times have you gone through evictions?
>
> Kanak: many times, you won't be able to count, we have endured more hardships than them (points to Anwar implying people at *khalpar* in general), we were very young then, I was sleeping with my parents, this was around mid-night… the *halla* used to come at night those days, they would charge us

> with their batons through the top of our mosquito nets and tear them… they would not care if there were human beings inside… they were heavy handed with beatings… 'GO AWAY' they would shout… they have tortured us a lot…
> I: did you come here after that?
> Kanak: yes… it's the same story here, this is how our life is, it happens every now and then (Kanak, Personal Interview, January 2018)

The pavement where Kanak has ended up presently has a difficult equation with the officer in charge of the local police station. They live through more frequent evictions. Large scale official eviction drives and numerous small displacements are a part and parcel of their lives. This marks the condition of displaceability. In this condition people are unmapped, informalised and seen through incriminating discourses which de-value their life and labour. Paperless people are sometimes meted with evictions. At other times, the threat of displacement is utilised as a tool to control the loyalty of the sans-papiers and govern them in the service of their political masters. The threat of displacement becomes a means to extract a coercive political participation as discussed shortly.

While the right to rehabilitation of the peripatetic rural migrants were not acknowledged, in 2010 something more interim came up. In January 2010, following increasing media reports on the death of 'homeless' persons in the streets of Delhi due to exposure to cold wave, a Supreme Court Directive was issued, which acknowledged that people living in the open should be provided shelter (Mandar and Jacob 2010). The court directive instructed urban governments to create night shelters for 'homeless' population, where rural migrants coming to the city could temporarily stay the night. The process of building night shelters has been initiated in Calcutta as well. According to the Kolkata Municipal Corporation there are about 69000 'homeless' people in Calcutta, requiring about 700 night shelters. So far, about 15 night shelters have come up. These include a shelter for the mentally challenged functioning in South Calcutta and one for women and children in the Ragbazar area on the bank of the Round Canal. The city authorities intend to draw a comprehensive plan for night shelters by 2022 ("Lagbe 700, Ache 3 ti Noishabash," *Anandabazar Patrika,* March 2018). The Supreme Court Manual for Shelters has pointed out that shelters are temporary in nature and should be treated as a first step towards affordable housing. The Manual notes

> Shelters are not a solution to their problems. They require access to affordable housing, public services and decriminalised, safe and dignified livelihoods. But shelters are the very first step in their journey to pull themselves out of chronic hopeless poverty. ("Imagined Homes: 'homeless' People Envision Shelter," *The Calcutta Samaritan & Action Aid*, 2011, 43).

During my field interactions some problems of the night shelters were pointed out to me. The officially envisioned 'homeless' night shelters are sex segregated. There are separate shelters for the old, infirm, children, people with substance abuse and those mentally challenged. The night shelter scheme does not acknowledge that the urban 'homeless' live as families. The shelters do not serve the need of a home. It was unequivocally pointed out that it was not possible to live in sex segregated shelters, as this would break up families. They required housing where the whole family could live together. The night shelters have become symbols of perpetual deferral of their hopes of a home and permanent rehabilitation.

3.4 Mobile bodies as a site for politics

Displacements are an everyday experience for a large number of floating rural migrants. Two related means of empowerment of these groups in their struggle for urban shelter and livelihood are alliances with NGOs and their participation in politics. If we turn to NGO activism in these areas, for the longest part of their existence, NGOs have been absent. The evictions of 2001-2002 at the two *khalpar* Round Canal and Pali Nala were large scale. They drew public attention to the families living there. In its aftermath, the TCS started working with the community members at *khalpar* and *foot* in Calcutta from 2003 for a decade. The main thrust of TCS's work has been education for 'homeless' children, anti-drug campaigns, campaigns for right to shelter and creation of identification documents for the migrant families. Together with another NGO, the Action Aid, TCS conceptualised the formation of a community members' organisation formed by the 'homeless' and run by the 'homeless'. It was to be a platform for all 'homeless' people in different parts of Calcutta. With this vision the Kolkata Naba Jagaran Mancha (KNJM) was formed in 2009. The activities of the organisation were initially financed by the Action Aid, with financial contributions from the TCS as well. A few areas were identified for drawing members for the KNJM. These were divided into four zone: south, south west, north, central zones. About 100 groups were formed among the 'homeless' by TCS, each group consisting of about 20 people in average. A large majority, about 70% of the members were women ("The Urban Alliance for Addressing Rights of 'homeless' in Kolkata, Programme Strategic Plan," *The Calcutta Samaritans*, 2007-2009, 24-31).

The TCS and the Action Aid helped create local committees and educate leaders. Training was given to close to 100 individuals who were to assume leadership role. The leaders were trained to be able to communicate with external society. The organisation aimed to capacitate members with the

knowledge of their rights and entitlements and agitate for their demands. The main demands of the KNJM were

- Ensuring the right to shelter and housing for 'homeless' people
- Standing in solidarity with oppressed 'homeless' individuals and mobilising communities to oppose evictions
- Ensuring the right to education for 'homeless' children

They have spread their base among the 'homeless' population in 54 out of the total 144 wards in Calcutta. Within one year of its creation, the KNJM had close to 2000 members. From 2010 KNJM started issuing membership cards and started collecting Rs 12 (approx. $0.16) as annual membership fee which it hoped would fund its own activities. Increasing visibility for the 'homeless' groups has been an important theme of the KNJM. With help and financial support from TCS and the Action Aid, they organised activities like rallies and street corner meetings to draw attention of the government, duty bearers and the general society to the demands of the 'homeless'. The plan was to organise occasional street theatre shows to build awareness. One of my interlocutors, Monirul, fondly remembered

> Monirul: I participated in a play which was about the Rajiv Abas Jojona (a government scheme for affordable housing for the urban poor)… the story went like this… the young children should be provided mid-day meal, those who live on foot should not be evicted… we should be granted our rights as per the Rajiv Abas Jojona…
> I: where did you stage the play?
> Monirul: at many places like Hastings, Majerhat, Khidirpur, Gariahat… it was on the open streets…
> I: around what time?
> Monirul: during late afternoon, when the government offices close for the day and people start returning home from work… our plays continued for a few months…
> I: what would be your demand for rehabilitation? here or somewhere else?
> Monirul: people have a right to stay here, houses were built under the Rajib Abas scheme… homes… it was in response to our plays that the night shelters were built by the government, but only widowed men and women or single men can stay in the night shelters … where will the children go? We started our street theatre again… we demanded that nobody will stay at the night shelters, we should be given rehabilitation… be it 100 feet space or 50 feet… the government has provided homes to some people near the Ruby hospital and also at Ultadanga… homes should be given to everyone… the government does not want the poor people to live in Calcutta. (Monirul, Personal Interview, December 2017)

For some time, they conducted meetings at regular intervals among themselves to discuss issues of common interest. The KNJM also organised yearly general meetings for two consecutive years in 2012 and 2013.

Figure 3.17. An image of the first Annual General Meeting of the Kolkata Nabajagaran Mancha (Source: The Calcutta Samaritans Archive)

A decade of NGO activism in the area has increased the confidence of the community members. With the help of TCS and the Action Aid, the president of KNJM, Mr Ajad, a community member himself, drew on the Right to Information Act (RTI) on two occasions. He successfully sought information about the applications of Below Poverty Line (BPL) Cards and provision for mid-day meal in a school nearby where the inhabitants of *khalpar* and *foot* send their children. But the power relation between the NGO and the community members have remained unequal. During a long conversation, Anwar complained that their Calcutta Samaritan bosses did not hand them the papers relating to the KNJM and did not facilitate the legal registration of the body.[17] According to Anwar, the TCS has deceived them in the end.

The plan was to legally register the KNJM. But that did not take place. Since the beginning of 2014, the process of withdrawal of the NGOs and the handing over of the responsibility of the KNJM to the community members begun. Among those who have been trained as leaders, very few are

educated. Bulk of the members of the KNJM are illiterate. By their own admission, the leaders of the KNJM depended on TCS to carry out official formalities, drafting and documentation. They find it difficult to conduct negotiations with office bearers regarding different problems faced by the community members. The members do not have the confidence to undertake legal action of their own. Procedures relating to filing complaints in the police stations, following up on complaints, methods of initiating Right to Information (RTI) petitions used to extract information from official departments are difficult for them to conduct. They face threats by local goons, political parties and sometimes by the male members of their own families ("Impact Assessment Report on Intervention under Project Titled: An Alliance to Address the Issue of Urban 'homeless' and Unregistered Slums in Kolkata," *The Calcutta Samaritan & Action Aid,* n.d., 25-45). Many of my interlocutors mentioned that eventually the KNJM has stopped functioning.

Figure 3.18. An identity card of an erstwhile member of the Calcutta Naba Jagaran Mancha.

Presently, another NGO, the Tiljala Shed runs an informal school for the children of the inhabitants at the Round Canal. With the help of the Tiljala Shed, an informal association of rag pickers has also been created, called the Association of Rag Pickers (ARP). For the past two years, they have organised an annual rally with the rag pickers from different parts of the city, including people from the Round Canal. Beyond this, the NGO does not have any involvement with the lives of the community members. Without any registered organisation of their own, the capacity to tap funds, and without the resources to form larger alliances, they struggle for the very basic necessities of life.

Figure 3.19. The converging point of a rally organised by the Association of Rag Pickers (ARP) on 19 December 2017 at central Calcutta.

Figure 3.20. The rag pickers handing their memorandum to the police sergeant at the Dharmatala area on behalf of the Association of Rag Pickers (ARP) with their demands

We may turn to the nature of political participation of the floating rural migrants. Peripatetic groups who survive through small movements often lack franchise. Lack of a *permanent* address makes their access to identification documents difficult. They often depend on their political patrons for securing identification documents. One usual practice is to use their patron's home address in the application for documents, in return for political support. Again, the possession of identity cards has not proven to be a guarantee of either long term stay, or other rights/entitlements of legal citizenship. Often during fires, or during eviction drives, their possessions are burnt, broken, thrown away and the documents are lost. Below are some excerpts of conversations with my interlocutors

> Amina: I have nothing left except this sari I am wearing…
> I: have you been able to save your documents?
> Amina: nothing… I had a van, I used to earn my living with it… (breaks into tears) (Informal conversation with Amina on the day of the fire at the Kuldanga *khalpar*, January 2018)

Amina's house along with her documents and every other earthly possession was burnt down during the fire noted previously at Round Canal on 14 January 2018. Her van stood next to her, completely charred by fire. Monali is a long time inhabitant of a pavement located at the north eastern side of Manash Mitra park in central Calcutta. She possesses a category of BPL Card, known as the Antodyay Card, which entitles her family to subsidised food grain. But after some months, the supply of food grain has stopped. Monali observed

> Do you know how I feel now? There is nothing for us, I have erased all hopes from my mind… they were providing us with ration [subsidised food grain], now it has suddenly stopped… the Voter's Identity Card or the Aadhar Card that you have provided us with, some day they are going to say that the identity cards will not be valid at footpath address anymore, mark my word, this will happen… (Monali, Group Interview, January 2018)

Their statuslessness functions in a loop. The fact that they frequently need to resort to movements and lack a secure 'home' in a sedentary bourgeoise sense of the term obstructs their access to documents. Their lack of documents and dubious legal status in turn, makes them vulnerable to threats of evictions and induces further movement. The rules governing the right to shelter and those of citizenship are premised upon different measures of long term stay. People who are constantly on the move to offset economic hardship and political violence do not stay put in a sedentarist sense of the word. They are suspect to its laws. This lack of a legal status is reflected in

their political participation. The kind of informal politics involved here are not well explained in terms of the idea of political society (P. Chatterjee 2004) or occupancy urbanism (Benjamin 2008). Underlying Chatterjee's conception of political society or Benjamin's formulation of occupancy urbanism, as with a host of other discussions on informal politics, is considerations of vote bank politics. The groups studied here do not form a consolidated vote bank. Sometimes they have their names enlisted as voters in their villages. Some of them have secured the right to vote in their urban areas of residence (few in number). But due to their movement, they are simply not considered important as voters. They lack the important bargaining power that comes with franchise.

Their political participation is skewed. They often provide various coerced services for their political patrons. For example, they are coerced to participate in political rallies. They are used for conjuring up a large mass of people at rallies and meetings of the political parties. An observation by Ratan, a political worker of the Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP) is relevant here. He comes from a well-established political family, and was a popular leader at the erstwhile dwellings at the Pali Nala. During a long discussion on the evictions at Pali Nala, he explained

> …there are certain benefits of *khalpar*… politics should be kept within the middle-classes, you cannot do politics with people at canal banks, canal banks are good for *jamayet* (assembly) (Ratan, Personal Interview, February 2018)

Some of my interlocutors have noted, that they cannot refuse to participate in political rallies. In case of refusal, they are threatened with evictions. Their presence is not sought as political subjects capable of voicing well articulated political demands. They are included in politics as *massified bodies* whose value lie in creating a spectacle of popular support for these political parties addressed at other constituencies who are its legitimate political subjects. In such modes of coerced participation, they are depoliticised and treated as *mere bodies*.

They are often entrusted to do the 'dirty work' behind the scenes for the political parties. Thus, Munna's observation, an inhabitant of Kuldanga area of the Round Canal, in the immediate aftermath of the evictions there in 2002 is revealing

> …we went all out to win votes for the CPI candidate. We cast false vote, threatened voters with guns and bombs and forced them to vote in his favour and also sustained injuries in turn… but when the settlers need them most, the political leaders have deserted them. ("Eviction Deals Suicide Blow," *Times of India,* December 2002)

They provide the service of securing votes for their political patrons through various extra-legal and often violent methods. Through such task, they are consigned outside the legal domain and ensure its functioning from its margins. Their legal personhood and political subjectivity are denied. In this instance, displaceability has induced a form of bio politics, which is coercive, where they are reduced to a mere bodily existence and their bodies are exposed to physical and corporeal violence.

The people at *khalpar* and *foot* are disposable as the sovereign speaking political subject expressing their political opinion through different mechanisms of mainstream politics like forming political associations, vocalising demands through conventions, memorandums and through the exercise of universal franchise. In exposure to the violence of eviction drives, in the more low key everyday violence of street life, in living under conditions of heightened bodily exposure, in their accident prone work conditions with intense physio-corporal labour, and finally in their modes of coerced political participation, they are reduced to *mere* and dispensable bodies. If the contemporary bio political paradigm is aimed at 'making live' by means of managing populations (Foucault 2003), these groups are its disposable other, whom the political dispensation has 'let die', from lack of social security, from malnutrition, from shelterlessness, from perilous work conditions in informal labour market, and from being exposed to the violent underside of post-colonial quasi democratic functioning. They are a precarious group, abandoned to conditions which engender injury and untimely death.

Judith Butler has discussed one form of opposition to the neoliberal bio political paradigm, through the notion of plural and embodied assembly. Such assemblies are directed against ideologies of individual responsibilities advanced by neoliberalism at the face of decimating social services. Butler equates assemblies as momentary forms of popular sovereignty, which enacts an embodied demand for a livable life that makes visible the simultaneity of being precarious and acting to change it (Butler 2015). Taking the cue from Butler's notion of embodied action expressed in assemblies, I would like to emphasise that precarious populations, who are disposable for the mainstream of state and society and reduced to a mere bodily existence, turns bio-politics around. They conduct a 'bio-politics from below' or a bodily politics.

It is my contention that an emphasis on politics articulated through linguistic meaning and expressed through well formulated spoken or written demands while important in its own right, does not exhaust possibilities of political participation. In conditions of extreme deprivation, where basic bodily needs of food, shelter and health care are not met for large numbers of people, the fleshly

body as an analytical category becomes important. It provides understanding of nuances of politics left out by exclusive emphasis on politics of speech. Such political participation takes place at the margins of the politics they are pushed away from, dominated by *speech*. Meanings enacted through the body are closer to voicing these primary and bodily demands of food, shelter and health care. Here the demands of the enfleshed body are itself made into an object of political demand.

I advance the idea that this experience of the informal for the peripatetic 'homeless' people, is not a space of vote bank politics as many contemporary researches on the informal highlight. It is one of a *bodily politics*. Politics for the mobile groups happens at a more basic level, at the level of bodies in collective. It can be seen as an expression of 'bio politics from below' or a bodily politics. This politics is bodily in a dual sense. Here political statements are enacted through the body and at the same time the body itself is made an object of political demand. In this conceptualisation, the body is seen in an embodied relationality which goes beyond the mind body dualism. The body is both a biological and a social category, which is in a non binary relation with other bodies and the material environment. Such precarious bodies are capable of forging alliances with other bodies, even if momentarily, through various forms of assembly, disassembly and reassembly. Both presence and movement of bodies through space are well thought out political statements. The inhabitants make their bodies vulnerable to violence and in turn resist forces of dispossession with their bodies. The most pervasive expression of this form of bodily politics that I have found is their corporeal encounter with the forces of urban authorities and the police in their everyday lives, during evictions and in their silent and all pervasive return after evictions. Often during times of evictions, they create forms of bodily obstructions to the authorities and corporeally fight those who cast their bodily requirements into oblivion. After the destruction wrought by large or small evictions, I have repeatedly encountered stories of stealthy but an all pervasive and insistent return at these marginal locations at the risk of making their bodies vulnerable to injury and death. This is not a vocalised protest, but a bodily and political act. Through insistently rebuilding their shanties, they obdurately assert an embodied presence and embodied demands. In persistently existing, occupying space and living through repeated eviction return cycles and putting bodily resistance to such processes, even when they do not speak and do not present a set of negotiable spoken or written demands, the call for justice is enacted.

3.5 Conclusion

Frequent movement and displacement intermesh the lives of the peripatetic rural migrants. Their lives are deliberately unmapped, informalised and their rights suspended. The rural migrants' participation in conventional politics by means of universal franchise, through forging larger alliances with NGOs, bureaucracy and other socially disadvantaged groups go through multiple fractures. Their mobile ways deprive them of the legal rights and social rights of sedentary citizens. They live under the shadowy presence of displaceability. Here urban displacement has emerged as a policy instrument and in turn a framing condition of urban citizenship. Under displaceability they participate into coercive politics whereby they are bereft of political subjectivity, reduced to a bodily existence, and exposed to injury and death. Here displaceability has induced a form of bio politics. I have tried to highlight that in conditions of extreme bodily vulnerability and exposure to violence, the body itself becomes a vehicle for expressing political agency. Their political choices need to be located in their mobile bodily acts of moving back and forth between the villages and urban locales, their embodied resistance to evictions and persistent return after displacements. These are bodily and political acts that ultimately enact a call for justice.

Notes

[1] Peripatetic groups are usually understood to be people who move about due to specific professions like pastoral nomadism and non-food producing nomadism. These groups usually maintain some group cohesion through practices of endogamy (Rao 1987). I attribute to the term a slightly different connotation from this conventional meaning. I stress mobility as a conscious strategy to offset mechanisms of dispossession, but at the same time highlight the violence involved in the process.

[2] There is sedentarist bias in migration studies as well. As Rogaly has noted in his study on rural to rural migration in West Bengal, that when migration is considered, the focus tends to be on those who settle, on immigrants. The spatial embeddedness of the lives of workers who are mobile for relatively short periods of time – weeks or months – where accommodation will necessarily be makeshift and temporary, has tended to be neglected (Rogaly 2009).

[3] For an in-depth discussion of consolidation of the powers of the *jotdar* in colonial Bengal, see (Bose 1986; P. Chatterjee 1986; Rajat and Ray 1975).

[4] The United Front was a political coalition in West Bengal, formed shortly after the West Bengal Legislative Assembly Election in 1967 by defeating the INC for the first time. It was a coalition of left wing political parties. It was succeeded by the Left Front in 1977, a more permanent alliance of left wing parties in West Bengal. The founding parties of the Left Front were the Communist Party of India

(Marxist), All India Forward Bloc, the Revolutionary Socialist Party, the Marxist Forward Bloc, the Communist Party of India among other parties. The Left Front ruled the state for seven consecutive terms from 1977 to 2011.

[5] The Operation Barga was conducted by the Left Front government from 1978 till mid 1980s as a comprehensive land reform program to address the sharecropping system. It recorded the names of the sharecroppers locally known as *bargadars*. It provided the *bargadars* legal protection against eviction by the landlords, and entitled them to the due share of the produce.

[6] A gram panchayat is an elected body at the level of the village, responsible for governance of villages under its jurisdiction.

[7] Development activities carried out by the Calcutta Improvement Trust (CIT) primarily meant demolition of *bustees* (slums) and displacement without compensation to the inhabitants and driving roads through densely populated areas. For a history of CIT's development work during the colonial period and its adverse impact on Calcutta's slums see (Partho Datta 2012).

[8] Two left political organisations that were active in the slums in the 1950s and organised the struggle of the slum dwellers were the Bastee Federation of the CPI and the Bastee Sammelan of the Praja Socialist Party. A Calcutta based NGO that has also significantly contributed to the movement of the slum dwellers is Unnayan.

[9] Technically many *bustees* in Calcutta are characterised by a three-tier tenurial structure. Earlier, the land of the *bustees* belonged to prosperous families locally known as zamindars. These families leased out the land and earned substantial revenue from it. There was an intermediate category between the zamindars and the dwellers, known as 'thika tenants'. The 'thika tenants' were the intermediary developers of the land. They took the land on lease from the landowner and constructed huts for renting out. The *bharatiyas* or hut dwellers were the third category in the *bustees*. They rented rooms in a hut from the *thika* tenants. They were the dominant residents of the *bustees* though, in many cases the *thika* tenants (hut owners) were also dwellers (Unnayan 1992, 8-9). When development projects affected the *bustees*, it was customary to pay compensation to the landowner. The intermediaries and the dwellers were displaced without compensation and alternative housing provisions. In the face of persistent movement by the slum dwellers under left leadership a few changes in policy took place. The first to come was the Calcutta Thika Tenancy bill, 1949 which granted legal protection to the *thika* tenants settled in *bustees*. The Calcutta Improvement Amendment Act of 1955, for the first time recognised the rights of rehabilitation of slum dwellers in case of eviction. Finally, the Thika Tenancy Act of 1981 vested the right and title of the landlords of the *bustees* in the state. Other than changes in the tenancy rules, the government policy regarding improvement in the slums also changed. The initial government policy regarding slums were demolition of slums and rehabilitation of the dwellers at government built one room (or sometimes two) tenements. The slum dwellers fought against the Tenement Scheme. From the late 1960s this

struggle resulted in a change of policy. Rather than slum demolition, the policy became in situ development of slums through CMDA funds. This is known as the Bustee Improvement Scheme.

[10] For a history of the middle-class East Bengali refugees in West Bengal and the process of the regularisation of the middle-class refugee squatters' colonies in West Bengal, see (Chakrabarti 1999; Chatterji 2007a; Sanyal 2008; N. Chatterjee 1992).

[11] Shiva is one of the principal deities of Hinduism. Kali is also a Hindu goddess, an embodiment of female power, of time and death.

[12] These essays are informative but at the same time reveal a certain economic reductionism, whereby lived lives of the migrants are reduced to monetary calculations and numbers. The predominant tendency in these writings is to view the migrants living on public spaces as a 'problem' for policy which may be solved by more comprehensive planning. This literature fails to centrally engage with the structural violence faced by floating rural migrants. I take the position that shelterless-ness and other deprivation faced by peripatetic rural migrants at the urban margins cannot be understood in terms of inadequacy of plans or lack of development. It has to be studied in terms of a deeper analysis of informal mechanisms of exploitation of the urban poor which is spatialised through myriad forms of dislocations. A point of emphasis of my research is that such exploitation is built into planning endeavours and is not a result of lack of it.

[13] In the post-independence period, India embarked on a path of a socialist styled planned economy, which involved centralisation of industry and regulation of private sector. This model was taken as a compromise between extremes of capitalism and communism. Indian economy faced accumulating external debt and foreign exchange crisis all through the 1980s and eventually a new economic policy (NEP) was adopted in India in 1991.

[14] One of the dream projects of the Mayor of Calcutta, Subrata Mukhopadhyay (2000-2005) was a 300 feet high Calcutta gate on EM Bypass, which would have cost Rs. 200 million (approx. $26831.22). The project was stalled, as it could not obtain clearance from the Pollution Control Board ("Kolkata Gate may have to be shelved: Mayor," *Times of India*, September 2003)

[15] Housing were being constructed by the CMDA under the Balmiki Ambedkar Abash Yojona at places like Chetla, Baishnab Ghata Patuli and other parts of the city. It was said that evicted shanty dwellers from the canal banks would be given priority in allotment of flats in the low cost housings ("Khalpar er Manush ke Garden Reach e Flat Debe Rajya," *Anandabazar Patrika,* January 2003, 5; "Jhupri Ucched," *Sangbad Pratidin, Hawker Sangram Committee Archive,* December 2003). Under the Balmiki Ambedkar Abash Yojona, the houses would cost roughly about Rs 74000 (approx. $1006). Out of this the state promised to give Rs 30000 (approx. $408) as a grant. The rest of the amount had to be paid by the buyer at instalments ("Daliyo Rang Dekhe Garibder Abasan Nay: Buddha," *Sangbad Pratidin, Hawker Sangram Committee Archive,* February 2004). While the government made vague promises that the displaced families at *khalpar* would be allotted flats under this scheme, in the end the families did not receive any allotment under the Balmiki Ambedkar Abash Yojona.

[16] It may be pointed out that a very small number of the migrants at the Pali Nala, about 250 families have managed to wrest rehabilitation from a reluctant government in a scheme known as Balmiki Amdebkar Abash Yojona at one room tenements in leu of a small payment for the flats and have been rehabilitated. These families have a long history of struggle in the modes of alliance formation and negotiations in the informal domain, aided by political patrons and NGOs. Theirs is an exceptional story, not directly traced in this chapter. Here the concern is with a larger number of people who more often than not fail in such bargains due to lack of franchise and social and cultural capital and resort to certain embodied practices.

[17] In Bombay advocacy organisations are important political and policy actors. In Calcutta political parties and their labour unions are more hegemonic than NGOs.

Chapter Four

From migrants to citizens (and back)? Status, entitlement and belonging of temporary people

In this chapter I am concerned with how citizenship is experienced by migrants, more specifically, by the *namasudra* East Bengali refugees and the peripatetic rural 'homeless' at the urban margins of Calcutta. Migration has been central in fashioning conceptions of citizenship. While movement has been an integral part of human existence, the figure of the migrant has always been an anomaly in the nation state system and the forms of membership accruing to the national community through citizenship. In India, successive modifications have been brought about in the principle of national citizenship from the initiation of the republic till now, effected primarily around issues of migration. While there has been tensions between the *jus soli* and *jus sanguine* norms from the inception of the citizenship regime in India, over the years the principle of majoritarian ethnic nationalism and membership has taken precedence over other norms. From around the 1980s with the ascendance of Hindutva politics at the national level, there is an attempt to construe a large majority of the migrants, specially coming through the country's eastern borders as 'illegal infiltrator', questioning their formal membership to the Indian nation. My chapter traces how the two different migrant groups have dealt with this legal apparatus over the years. I focus on two aspects of their experience of citizenship, first as a legal status and second as a set of social rights. Here I pose the following questions: how has the transformation in Indian citizenship from *jus soli* to *jus sanguini*, implicated the legal status of marginal members of the nation like dalit refugees and status-less peripatetic migrants and how have they responded to the situation? And how have the displaced groups claimed social rights associated with citizenship?

The chapter begins by tracing the shifts in *de jure* regime of citizenship from independence till now by looking into changes at the level of regional and national politics. It draws out how a rise of ethnic nationalism associated with Hindutva politics has led to a prioritisation of descent over domicile in citizenship discourse. In the next section I explore how these transformations in *de jure* citizenship have impacted the two migrant groups and how they have responded to the situation through shifts in their identity politics. In the final section I look into the substantial rights of citizenship for the peripheral migrants. This chapter concludes by assessing how such marginal experiences of the migrants shape the contours of post-colonial citizenship.

4.1 From birth to blood: transformation in *de jure* citizenship

The contradictions of India's colonial encounter ensured that assumptions of civic forms of membership co-existed in uneasy entanglement with myriad ethnic sense of belonging within the arrangements of the post-colonial state. The 'liberal-modern' strand of nationalism as represented by the mainstream leaders of the Indian National Congress (INC) became dominant and led the process of state formation in the initial years after independence. The laws of citizenship were shaped in relation to ceaseless migration after the partition in different directions between India and Pakistan. The boundaries between citizen and alien were constantly redrawn in relation to continuing movement of people. After the commencement of the Republic, when the Constitution became effective in 1950, Part II of the Indian Constitution, entitled 'Citizenship' containing Articles 5 to 11 addressed issues of citizenship. It was only in 1955, that the Citizenship Act was passed by the Indian parliament. Together the provisions of the Constitution, the Foreigners' Act of 1946, the Passport Act of 1952, and the Citizenship Act of 1955 brought about a legal apparatus which put into effect a liberal citizenship regime in the country. The years between the initiation of the Constitution and the passage of the Citizenship Act of 1955 saw large scale migration, conflicting claims surrounding the movements and ideas of national membership. Some facets of the debates in the Constituent Assembly on the provisions of citizenship show contemporary notions on migration and ideas about who among the different migrants rightfully belonged to the nation.

If we turn to the Articles 5 to 11 of the Indian Constitution, Article 5 ushered in a *jus soli* regime by providing for citizenship by birth or domicile. Articles 6 and 7 dealt with those migrating from the territory of Pakistan to India and in the opposite direction respectively. Article 8 was concerned with rights of persons of Indian origin residing outside India. Its descent based consideration was meant to compliment the *jus soli* regime, and not undermine it ("Part II, Citizenship, Constitution of India," *Government of India*, https://www.mea.gov.in/Images/pdf1/Part2.pdf). The markers of religious difference were not explicitly displayed in the articles of the constitution. But they are easily recognisable in the debates in the Constituent Assembly on what eventually became Articles 6 and 7. These revealed the religious identity of the displaced. Article 6 was concerned with those moving from Pakistan to India. In the Constituent Assembly the term 'refugee' was used to denote them. This implicitly meant Hindu refugees deserving shelter in the territory of India.

Article 7 was about citizenship for those who had fled to Pakistan from India during communal riots around the partition, usually Muslims escaping communal violence, but who chose to return to India

when communal hostilities dissipated. They usually came back under a permit of resettlement or permanent return issued by an Indian government official in Pakistan. These people were described as 'migrants' in the debates. Article 7 was the most intensely contested article on citizenship in the Constituent Assembly.[1] In the Assembly it was often referred to as the 'obnoxious clause' by its detractors, presumably for providing for people who proved their disloyalty to India by moving to Pakistan. In this Hindu nationalistic discourse, the first act of migration from India to Pakistan was construed as an act of disloyalty to the Indian nation and hence made these groups underserving of Indian citizenship (Jayal 2013, 58).

The disagreements within the Constituent Assembly were echoed outside it not just in civil society, but also in the practices of the bureaucracy, especially in their exercise of discretionary powers. D*e-facto* discriminations based on ethno-nationalist allegiances remained in practical functioning of the laws of citizenship of the land (Anupama Roy 2010; Zamindar 2007; Jayal 2013). India's eastern border at that time had not become as contentious at the national level as the western border. Evacuee property belonging to the Muslims were not handed over to East Bengali Hindu refugees coming to West Bengal in the manner as was done in the western parts of the country. But the seeds of conflict had been carried over from colonial times and would accentuate from the 1980s.

The Citizenship Act was passed in 1955. It laid down the rules of membership to the nation through birth, descent, registration, naturalisation or through incorporation of territory and reflected principles of liberal democracies. It emphasised the criteria of *jus soli* meaning attachment to soil or land as the main criteria for belonging. Through the clause of citizenship by birth, everyone born in India after the commencement of the Constitution (on or after 26 January 1950), was to be considered a citizen of India. This civic form of membership has eroded over the years through the twofold process of contracting the possibility of citizenship by birth, and parallelly, expanding the scope of citizenship by descent for select economically powerful members of the Indian diaspora.

An ethnicisation of identity has taken place around the issue of migration. This happened first in the context of migration and regional politics in West Bengal's neighbouring state of Assam, located in the northeast of India. This has eventually entered national politics in connection with the ideology of Hindutva which made *anuprabesh* or infiltration into a politically charged issue. In order to understand the first amendment to the Citizenship Act brought in 1986, it is useful to take a brief look at the political developments in Assam. Migration from erstwhile East Bengal (present day Bangladesh) to Assam has continued from colonial times due to various reasons. Initially people

from different parts of India were brought to Assam to work as labourers in the tea plantations. From the early twentieth century, the British colonisers and their Indian counterparts engaged in practices of land colonisation. Rural Muslim peasants from East Bengal were brought to Assam, specially to large tracts of flat alluvial cultivable waste land in the Brahmaputra river valley to cultivate land there. A rapid increase of population had created pressure on land in East Bengal. Landless cultivators from districts like Mymensingh (in present day Bangladesh) were encouraged to migrate and settled in different parts of the Brahmaputra valley in Assam. They eventually spread to other parts of Assam. By the mid-twentieth century, the rapid flow of such migration mainly of Muslim Bengali peasants started generating tensions among the 'sons of the soil' in Assam. The Assam government introduced a 'Line system' in the early 1920s. The system aimed to isolate the migrants from the locals. In the districts with heavy presence of migrants, lines were drawn, beyond which migrants were not allowed to settle in order to keep them in segregated areas specified for their exclusive settlement. This system was resented by the migrants. After provincial elections were held in 1937 all over British India, the Muslim League gained influence in the provincial politics of Assam as the United Muslim Party formed government there. This government pursued a policy of patronising Muslim immigrants in Assam. From the 1940s, the provincial government encouraged fresh rounds of migration, in relation to the 'Grow More Food Campaign' as part of an imperial strategy during the Second World War. New migrants were being settled to bring more land under cultivation. Grazing and forest reserves were thrown open for cultivation, bringing Assamese and tribal people into conflict with the Bengali migrants. Other than the migration of Bengali peasants, from the late 1940s, particularly with increasing communal riots between Hindus and Muslims (starting with the riots in Noakhali district in 1946), Hindu East Bengali refugees fleeing communal violence from different parts of East Bengal also started arriving in Assam and neighbouring states. After the partition, the migration of Hindu East Bengali refugees to Assam reached new heights and has continued ever since.

Environmental factors like flood, cyclone, river bank erosion and Bangladesh's rapid land loss due rising of water level have all dislocated people who time and again found their way into Assam. All of this has generated a threat perception among the indigenous Assamese of becoming a minority in their own land. They fear losing land to 'foreigners', cut in employment opportunities and loss of Assam's distinctive language and culture. It is feared that such large presence of Bengalis is changing the demographic pattern of the state to the extent of having an impact on elections. Over the years, they have raised demands of sieving out Bengali speaking migrants irrespective of their religion from the electoral rolls of Assam. These demands came to the forefront of politics in Assam during the

anti-foreigners agitation led by the All Assam Students' Union (AASU) and the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) from 1979 to 1984. The AASU demanded that elections to the state legislature be postponed till the names of foreign nationals were removed from the electoral rolls in the state. In view of these demands, the representatives of the government of India and leaders of the Assam movement signed the Assam Accord in 1985. As per the Assam Accord, all those who had entered Assam after March 1971 were to be declared 'illegal migrants', stripped of their Indian citizenship and deported. The union parliament passed the Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunals) Act (IM-DT) in October 1983 and began its implementation in Assam, in order to identify recent migrants from Bangladesh and deport them. The Act also included provisions for securing economic development of the state and linguistic, social and cultural rights of the Assamese people.

Migration was thus bringing significant changes in the citizenship laws in Assam, and made way for a graded citizenship regime which accommodate regional differences. The situation in Assam also led to a reviewing of national citizenship in India. An amendment to the Citizenship Act followed in 1986. The amendment had article 6A exclusively addressed to the case of Assam. Under clause 6A, persons coming to Assam from Bangladesh before January 1966, were to be deemed as citizens of India. Persons of Indian origin who had entered Assam after January 1966 but before 25 March 1971 and had been ordinarily resident in Assam after their entry, could register themselves as Indian citizens. Those coming after 25 March 1971 were aliens. They were to be identified by the IMDT Act and deported. The conflict which came to foreground during the anti-foreigners agitation in Assam between 1979-84 was between the Assamese and the Bengalis (or non-Assamese people deemed as foreigners more generally). The IMDT Act which resulted from the agitation did not discriminate between 'illegal migrants' on the basis of religion.[2] Together with the new clause of 6A pertaining to Assam, other changes were also taking place by the amendment of 1986. According to the amended Act, everyone born in India could be a citizen of India only if *either of her parents was a citizen of India* at the time of birth, with minor exceptions. Thus, the principle of descent was brought in as a determining factor in what had earlier been a simple process of citizenship by birth.

Till this point, demands of citizenship in Assam were based on socio-cultural Assamese nationalism. It was anti-Bengali in nature and elements of religious nationalism were not significant. By this time certain changes were taking place in India's national politics as well. From the early 1980s, Hindutva politics was slowly gaining a presence at the national level. The Bharatiya Jana Sangha, the main Hindu nationalist political party in the post-independence period, did not have a strong political clout in the initial years after independence.[3] It found it expedient to ally with other political groups

to create the Janata Party in 1977, which came to power in the 1977 general election by defeating the incumbent Congress party. It was later dissolved and many of its leaders re-organised as the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) in 1980. The BJP has grown in strength from the 1990s on the back of the Ram Janmabhumi movement.[4] From just two seats in the Lok Sabha, the lower house of the Indian parliament, the BJP has increased its tally to 88 in 1989, 120 in 1991, 161 in 1996—at which time it became the largest party in that assembly and to 178 in 1998 (Jaffrelot 2009, 3). The BJP has taken Hindutva politics to a much wider base.

The BJP draws on the moral and cultural code of the religious epics of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata and the Hindu code of law propagated in the ancient Indian text Manusmriti. The Manusmriti is an ancient legal text of Hinduism which lays down the behaviour and moral codes to be followed by the Hindus, justifies the caste system and has influenced all aspects of Hindu thought. The Ramayana and the Mahabharata are two Sanskrit epic poems of ancient India, which contains the mythologies woven around Hindu gods and goddesses and teachings of Hindu philosophy.[5] The story of Ramayana was popularised by a hugely successful TV series, Ramayana aired in India's national television between 1987-88. The series gained a record high viewership. The icon of Rama was utilised by the BJP with considerable success. Scholars have variously explained this 'saffron wave' from the mid-1980s, in terms of a breakdown of the Congress system of patronage and collapsing political order (Ludden 2005), disaffection of the Indian middle-classes with the idiom of mass politics, reaction against threats to upper caste dominance by lower caste social movements by women, tribals, peasants, and lower castes (Sarkar 2005). In its initial stage the 'saffron wave' was mostly confined to the urban middle-classes (Hansen 1999). It has expanded to dalit bases much later while retaining some tensions as discussed later in the chapter.

From around this time, migration became one of BJP's main item of political propaganda. Their brand of politics succeeded into turning migration into an issue of political contestation, with other mainstream national political parties playing in tune with the Hindutva agenda. While in Assam, anti-migrant sentiments had local social and cultural roots, migration entered public debate in other parts of the country mainly through Hindutva narrative of *anuprabesh* or infiltration. This narrative has several components. It is emphasised that Bangladesh is a poor country with a large population pressure and also one that pursues religious fundamentalism. This tends to push people out of the country to India. One group of people, religious minorities in Bangladesh, i.e. Hindus fleeing religious persecution have no option but to migrate to India. But another group that also comes are poor Muslims in order to reap economic benefits at the cost of India's national wellbeing. Thus, the

narrative poses the two incoming migrant groups in opposition to each other. The Hindus seeking refuge from religious persecution in a fundamentalist country like Bangladesh are sympathetically termed as *sharanarthis* or those seeking shelter. In this discourse they are rendered legitimate claimants for shelter in West Bengal and India. Their claims to shelter is premised upon the exclusion of the other group, poor Muslims coming to India to create a resource drain in an already overpopulated country. They are the *anuprabeshkaris* or infiltrators. The poor Muslims are deemed as circular migrants going back and forth between India and Bangladesh. They are accused of taking unfair advantage of dual citizenship. It is declared that in their unauthorised movement and in their connection to religious fundamentalism, they also pose a challenge to India's national security. This narrative has slowly gained wider support outside competitive politics. A host of academic research has come up, that feed into the political narrative of *anuprabesh*. According to these recent studies, India is already overcrowded, and the migrants who are having a positive impact on fertility should not be encouraged, but deported (Pranati Datta 2004). The narrative of *anuprabesh* feeds on a fear of numbers.

Two early manifestations of the Hindutva politics of migration around the issue of *anuprabesh* took place in two big metro cities in the country. In 1992 the Operation Pushback was launched in Delhi by the then Congress led government to oust alleged illegal Bangladeshi migrants. From the mid-1990s, a relentless campaign was carried out by the BJP-Shiv Sena combine in Mumbai to oust non-Marathis and alleged Bangladeshis. These incidents created ripples in West Bengal. The handful of migrants who were actually deported from Delhi and Mumbai were usually brought to West Bengal before being sent across the international border to Bangladesh. The Left Front government in West Bengal opposed such deportation. But as later events proved, they also participated in the anti-immigrant politics of the day, through their support to the amendment to the Citizenship Act brought in 2003 which was decidedly anti-immigrant.

The propaganda around infiltration had transformed the political atmosphere to a much greater extent by the turn of the millennium. The next significant amendment to the Citizenship Act came in 2003. Again, migration was the key driving factor behind this amendment. Not confined to Assam anymore, it became particularly contentious for a large number of refugees who had migrated to different parts of India from Bangladesh. By the Citizenship Amendment Act of 2003, the category of 'illegal migrant' which had been used in the IMDT Act in Assam, was first introduced in the text of the Citizenship Act itself. The category appeared in the sections on citizenship by birth (3C), citizenship by registration (5) and citizenship by naturalisation (6). The Amendment defined 'illegal

migrants' as 'a foreigner who has entered into India i) without a valid passport or other travel documents… ii) or with a valid passport or other travel documents… but remains therein beyond the permitted period of time.' 'Illegal migrants' were rendered ineligible to apply for citizenship. Citizenship by birth, already attenuated through the Amendment in 1986 saw further restrictions. Now a person could become a citizen of India by birth only where *both her parents were citizens of India* or one of her parents was a citizen and the other was not an 'illegal migrant' at the time of birth (section 3C of the Citizenship Amendment Act) ("The Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2003," *The Ministry of Law and Justice, Government of India,* 2004).

Tied to the conception of the citizen is also an idea of the alien, which has transformed with shifts in the citizenship laws. In the original Citizenship Act of 1955, the category of alien was a neutral outsider. While the citizens possessed certain rights, the non-citizens or aliens also enjoyed certain rights of personhood, for example, the right to life guaranteed in the Article 21 of the Indian Constitution. Over the years, the successive amendments to the Act have generated the conception of an inimical other, in the image of the migrant-infiltrator, now portrayed as a drain on the nation's economy and a threat to the nation's security.

While citizenship by birth has been diluted, in a parallel process scope for acquiring citizenship by descent has been expanded. In the original Act of 1955, a person was considered a citizen by descent if she was born outside India after 26 January 1950 but before the commencement of the Citizenship Amendment Act (1992), if her father was a citizen of India by birth. Following the Citizenship Amendment Act of 1992, a person could be a citizen of India by descent if either of her parents was a citizen of India at the time of birth. Citizenship by descent received renewed importance in the Citizenship Amendment Act of 2003, with the introduction of the category of Overseas Citizen of India (OCI). This introduced a version of dual/transnational citizenship for persons of Indian origin in the form of Overseas Citizen of India. This benefitted sections of the well to do Indian diaspora.

When the Citizenship Amendment Act of 2003 was passed by the BJP led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government at the centre, it was supported by the majority of the mainstream political parties including the Left Front in West Bengal. The All India Trinamool Congress (AITC) which was an opposition party in the Lok Sabha in 2003, fought the Left Front on the issue of immigration. Mamata Banerjee, the present Chief Minister of West Bengal, whose party now staunchly opposes the Citizenship Amendment Act of 2019, had back then said in the parliament that "infiltration into Bengal has become a disaster" and Bangladeshi nationals were included in the

voting list to benefit the Left Front ("2005 and Now: Mamata Banerjee's U-turn on Bangladeshi Immigrants," *Hindusthan Times,* 2018 https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/2005-and-now-mamata-banerjee-s-u-turn-on-bangladeshi-immigrants/story-6b8nRIst7BjZs4QWSXi0jN.html). Both the AITC and the Left Front who are political opponents in West Bengal supported the Amendment of 2003. This shows that by this time, the Hindutva agenda around migration had managed to establish a certain legitimacy in mainstream politics.

By this time political propaganda around immigration had escalated in the eastern Indian states of West Bengal and Assam. The terms *sharanarthi* and *anuprabeshkari* were being defined with more clarity, through the relentless campaign of the BJP. S*haranarthis* came to include religious minorities fleeing religious persecution, like the Hindus and the minorities of a few other religions from the neighbouring countries of Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan. It may be noted that in all three countries the state religion is Islam. It excluded the neighbouring country Sri Lanka whose official religion is Buddhism and where religious minorities include both Hindu and Muslim Tamils. The *anuprabeshkari* were the Muslim migrants who had already been defined as a separate and inimical nation with renewed reference to the two-nation theory. Soon this political narrative will be codified in law.

While 'illegal migrants' first made legal appearance in the context of the IMDT Act and was later incorporated in the Citizenship Amendment Act of 2003, till this time, there was no *legal* discrimination between 'illegal migrants' on the basis of religion. This discrimination only existed in the propaganda of right-wing political parties who had been advocating for a long time that India is a land of Hindus. The most recent amendment to the Citizenship Act has been passed in 2019 which have fulfilled the promise to correct this 'mistake'. The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) of 2019 has amended the definition of 'illegal migrants' of the 2003 Act. It has exempted six religious minority communities from India's neighbouring countries of Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan- who have travelled to India fleeing religious persecution without valid travel documents from being treated as 'illegal migrants'. They are Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, Parsees, Buddhists and Christians. It renders them eligible to apply for Indian citizenship. The amendment also relaxes a clause of application for citizenship by naturalisation. One religious community the Act does not mention are of course the Muslims, thus inscribing religious discrimination into the law. This is in clear violation of the Article 14 of the Indian constitution which ensures equality before law and Article 15 which prevents discrimination on the grounds of religion. The law represents an extreme example of

nation-states employing ethno-centric legislation in order to restrict citizenship and limit its full benefits.

Certain discrepancies in the Citizenship Amendment Act of 2019 may be noted here. While a person can apply for citizenship under birth, descent, registration, naturalisation, and incorporation of territory, the migrants from neighbouring countries will predominantly apply for it by the clause of registration and naturalisation. It is unclear what documents will be required to apply for citizenship by registration. A Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) report has been published in January 2019, which mentions that similar documents will be required to apply for citizenship as is required for application for Long Term Visa (LTV). Long Term Visas are granted to Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsee and Christians from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan coming to India on short-term visas. For securing Long Term Visa they need to provide a copy of passport, a copy of visa and residential permit, besides other documents. So far Long Term Visas have been granted to a total of 31,313 people. According to the JPC report only these refugees are eligible to acquire citizenship under the new amendment *("Report of the Joint Committee on the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016," Sixteenth Lok Sabha, Lok Sabha Secretariat,* 2019). "There cannot be too many Bangladeshis applying for the Indian nationality under the proposed new law. Otherwise, they would have already taken the LTVs for which criteria are the same," a Ministry of Home Affairs official was quoted saying ("Small number of Bangladeshis to be benefitted from Citizenship Amendment Bill: MHA," *The Economic Times* 2019, //economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/67612087.cms?from=mdr&utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst).

The new amendment also comes with a cut-off date. Only those migrants of the specified religion and from the specified countries who have come to India till 31 December 2014 will be eligible to apply for citizenship and not be treated as 'illegal migrants'. And citizenship will be granted to people after scrutiny and recommendations of district authorities and the state government. The local bureaucracy will retain significant power of arbitration regarding claims to citizenship.

A large number of people coming from East Bengal or Bangladesh who have been staying in India for a long time, have already acquired identification documents like Voters Identity Card, Aadhar Card, Ration Card etc. By the token of these documents, they are already citizens. But now they will suddenly become refugees or *sharanarthis* again because they might not have crossed the border with *valid travel documents*. The amendment does not secure them citizenship. It only renders them

eligible to *apply* for citizenship after some years as *sharanarthis*. But the JPC report has pointed out, that only those who have been able to secure Long Term Visa will be able to secure citizenship under this new Amendment. Does that mean that a large number of East Bengalis and other migrants who already consider themselves as citizens and possess identification documents will become stateless? There is no definite answer to this question.

Along with the successive amendments to the Citizenship Act, a parallel process has been set in motion from the turn of the millennium which implicate citizenship for a large number of people including migrants. This is the updating of a National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam and prospects of its updating all over the country. While the Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019 (CAA) is a legal devise of inclusion of migrants, the NRC is meant to function as a parallel mechanism of exclusion. In the instrument of NRC, the importance of citizenship through blood ties or descent shows more clearly. Like the successive amendments to the Citizenship Act, this process also started as a regional experience in Assam. It has now been officially declared that the NRC will be updated nationwide. A National Register of Citizens is a register containing the names of citizens, which is also supposed to function as the sole national identity document, replacing all other documents as proof of citizenship. In Assam a NRC was first prepared in 1951 with the objective to filter out Bengali speaking migrants coming from East Bengal. During the Assam movement of 1979-1985, demands were raised for updating it in order to identify and deport 'illegal migrants'. After a long delay and court cases, a Supreme Court order authorised the updating of the NRC and the process started in Assam in 2013. This in effect meant that the state's nearly 33 million people were put to a 'citizenship test'. They needed to provide evidence to the effect that they were Indian nationals prior to March 24, 1971. The process of NRC in Assam meant establishing residency status through 'legacy data' of Indian citizens. The NRC of 1951 and the electoral rolls in Assam updated till 24 March, 1971 are collectively known as 'legacy data' and has been accepted as primary proof of citizenship for people in these lists as well as their descendants. In the absence of these, certain other documents issued up to the midnight of 24 March, 1971 were listed as admissible. Other than the legacy documents, the apex court also released another set of documents which would be considered 'admissible' in case of persons born after 24 March, 1971, if one is to prove one's 'linkage' with the persons in possession of the legacy documents. The second set of documents is labelled as 'linkage documents' (Das 2019). In the updated NRC in Assam, published on 31 August 2019, about 19 lakh people failed to make it to the list. The government has decided to prepare a National Population Register (NPR) all over India. The NPR will work as a foundation for rolling out a citizens' register across the country. Once the NPR is completed and published, it is expected to be the basis for

preparing the National Register of Indian Citizens (NRIC), a pan-India version of Assam's NRC as per the provisions of the Citizenship Amendment Act 2003 (Article 14 A, "The Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2003," 2004). It is not clear what documents will be required to get enlisted in the nation-wide NRIC yet. If the experience of Assam is any indication, documents issued up to 24 March, 1971 may be required to prove that a person was an Indian national prior to March 24, 1971. 'Linkage documents' may be required for people born afterwards to trace their *descent* from people possessing 'legacy documents' in order to be eligible for citizenship. A stronger notion of *jus sanguini* principle has been introduced by the NRC. Without clearly declaring it, the process of NRC simply nullifies the criteria of citizenship by birth as provided in Article 3 of the Citizenship Act 1955, for all people born after March 24, 1971. The sole criteria of proving their citizenship might be through descent, traced through 'linkage documents' (unless a different process is followed for the nation-wide NRIC, than the one followed in Assam).

The two aforementioned instruments of citizenship, the CAA, 2019 and the NRC are intimately related and their full implication can be assessed by considering this interrelation. Other than strengthening the *jus sanguini* principle, the new legal instruments of citizenship also have a religio-communal agenda. The NRIC is an all India instrument with proclaimed religious neutrality. It promises to apply equally to all citizens of India irrespective of their caste, creed and religion. The CAA, 2019 promises to provide the status of *sharanarthi* to religious minorities of a select few religion from three neighbouring countries, and excludes the Muslims. The unspoken pledge of this instrument is that in case the Hindu *sharanarthis* and persons of a few other specified religions (Jains, Sikhs, Parsees, Buddhists and Christians) are excluded from the NRC due to lack of documents, they will be taken back within the national fold through the CAA, 2019. Muslims without documents will be excluded and face deportation.

The NRC exercise in Assam, however, has yielded paradoxical results which has left all of its proponents unhappy. The official record does not offer any data on the ethnic/religious background of the people left out of the list in Assam. Many organisations in Assam have claimed that out of the total number of those excluded from the NRC, a large majority, close to 12 lakhs are Hindus. And among the Hindus, a considerable section are dalit groups ("12 Lokkho Hindu r Naam Baad: Pyanch e BJP," *Anandabazar Patrika* 2019; "NRC Exclusion Spreads Panic in North Bengal Districts," *Times of India* 2019). No clear guidelines regarding the nationwide NRIC have been made available in the public domain as yet. The experience of Assam and the lack of information regarding the exact process has created fear in the minds of people in the neighbouring state of West Bengal, specially

among socially disadvantaged migrants who often live a paperless existence. It has surfaced as an important issue in the election campaign in the state. It has been declared by the state leaders of the BJP that West Bengal has two crore 'illegal migrants' and they will be identified and deported through initiating the NRC process in West Bengal ("NRC Hobe I Bonge: Baad Jabe 2 Koti: Dilip," *Anandabazar Patrika* 2019, 5). The BJP has made spectacular electoral gains in constituencies located close to the India-Bangladesh border in West Bengal on the basis of communal propaganda around the issue of citizenship. Significant among the Lok Sabha constituencies are Alipurduars, Coochbehar, Jalpaiguri, Bangaon, Ranaghat etc. The electoral promise that Muslim *anuprabeshkaris* will be deported through an NRC and Hindu refugees from East Bengal will be given citizenship has stoked communal sentiments. All of this has created an atmosphere of fear. More than 12 people in West Bengal have committed suicide due to anxiety over prospects of an NRC in the state ("Kono Bhagabhagi Korte Debona, Rajye NRC Hobena," *Anandabazar Patrika* 2019 https://www.anandabazar.com/state/mamata-banerjee-says-she-will-not-allow-nrc-in-bengal-1.1061297). In this changed context a large number of dalit East Bengali refugees feel the necessity to engage in a new identity politics to respond to the transforming citizenship regime.

4.3 Between the *Sharanarthi* and *Anuprabeshkari:* Fixing migrant sense of belonging towards a Hindu Rashtra

For a long time, the urban middle-classes were the main supporters of Hindu nationalist ideas. The relation between the mainstream Hindutva parties and dalit political parties has been fraught with tension. Recent studies on dalit politics in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh show that in these states the BJP has appropriated dalit symbols within the narrative of Hindutva. On the one hand, BJP has been using the icon of Rama to enter into the villages in large parts of north India. On the other hand, they are endowing dalit heroes with a Hindu identity and posing them against Muslims. Dalit political parties in Uttar Pradesh like the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) had earlier pursued their own distinct identity politics which was anti-Brahmin in nature. Now these regional parties are looking to forge alliance between caste Hindus and Dalits (Badri Narayan 2009). Ambivalence in collective memory provide fertile grounds for their reconstruction by political contenders and the BJP has been saffronising the dalit past in these areas with some measure of success.

For a long time, the Hindu right wing parties did not have a significant presence in the politics of West Bengal. Here political mobilisation happened along the lines of class by a long ruling Left Front government. It posed an effective challenge to majoritarian ethnic politics. From the mid-1980s the

BJP in its successive election campaigns in West Bengal made *anuprabesh* from Bangladesh the central issue and slowly started gaining a presence in the border districts of West Bengal. Border districts are areas of clandestine and everyday trade between India and Bangladesh and myriad forms of state violence. Border areas are often the first point of residence for incoming Hindu migrants fleeing religious persecution in Bangladesh. Sometimes the Hindus are pushed more to the interior from the border areas by their Muslims neighbours, who settle in the border areas themselves. Here the BJP has harped on an imagined fear of a Muslim political design to demographically overwhelm West Bengal, and acquire political domination. They stress on the allegation of demographic change in the border districts in favour of Muslims. It is alleged that the Left Front government has supported migration from Bangladesh and has been issuing identity documents to these 'infiltrators' due to considerations of vote bank politics. It is suggested that Muslims are overnight changing their religious identities to Hindus in order to acquire benefits of citizenship. It is among the new Hindu migrants from Bangladesh, a majority of whom are dalits, that such political propaganda has acquired a significant hold.

As noted in chapter two, the *namasudras* had formed an organised group and mobilised for the removal of caste discrimination from the late nineteenth century. For the most part of the colonial period, their movement had been directed against caste discrimination perpetrated by higher caste Hindus. At the same time, the relation between the *namasudra* cultivators and their Muslim counterparts in rural Bengal had remained multifaceted and fluid. From the 1940s there was increasing communalisation of the rural peasantry in Bengal and the *namasudras* slowly steered towards the Congress and the Hindu Mahasabha. But a straightforward story of their communalisation belies evidence. One strand of the dalit movement under the Scheduled Caste Federation in Bengal led by Jogendranath Mandal, still continued with their alliance with the Muslim League in East Bengal against upper caste Hindus after national independence in 1947. These were people who stayed on in East Bengal as a religious minority after the partition. They were provided leadership by Jogendranath Mandal who stayed in East Bengal as well and became the Minister of Law and Labour. But this alliance was eventually fractured. Mandal resigned from his office in protest against religious discrimination towards the dalits in East Bengal and migrated to West Bengal in 1950. But instances of cordial relation between the *namasudras* and the Muslims continued. As noted in chapter two, the dalit refugees did not feel the need to assume an overtly Hindu identity. Their social identity and sense of belonging remained multidimensional and fluid.

The caste based mobilisation of the *namasudra* cultivators, which had continued from the nineteenth century was disrupted due to the dislocations brought by the Second World War, the

famine in Bengal and the partition in 1947. After the partition, a large number of them continued to migrate to West Bengal. From this time onwards, due to persistently being pushed out of East Bengal and continued dislocations in India afterwards in the face of government policy of 'dispersal', the geographical unity of the *namasudra* movement was scattered. Physical dislocation, and the nature of left political mobilisation in West Bengal displaced caste-based identity politics of the dalit refugees (S. Bandyopadhyay 2009; S. Bandyopadhyay and Basu Ray Chaudhury 2014). While the language of caste was removed from electoral politics, it remained a significant factor in their negotiation for resettlement in India and in their movement for social upliftment. Securing caste reservation benefits remained one of the main demands of the *namasudra* refugees as expressed through different organisations like the Matua Mahasangha, Namasudra Vikas Parishad, and much later by the Nikhil Bharat Bangali Udbastu Samanway Samity (NIBBUSS) etc. In the initial days after the partition their de-jure legal national citizenship was relatively less contentious. From the 1990s the *namasudra* East Bengali refugees have come under increasing strain in the face of the highly charged Hindutva politics around the issue of *anuprabesh.*

The accentuation of the *jus sanguini* principle of citizenship through successive amendments to the Citizenship Act has affected these groups adversely. The passage of the Citizenship Amendment Act of 2003 has increased the severity of harassments regarding creation of identification documents for the dalit refugees in West Bengal. Its definition of 'illegal migrants' has been their main cause of concern. As already noted, the amended Act defines migrants who cross the border without valid travel documents as 'illegal migrants'. It also renders the descendants of 'illegal migrants' ineligible to acquire citizenship by birth. Hindu migrants fleeing communal conflict in Bangladesh often simply cross the border with the help of middle men through informal understanding with the border guards. They are usually not in a position to carry any travel documents with them. The Amendment of 2003 has been branded as a *kala kanoon* (black act) by different dalit refugee organisations in West Bengal. A dalit refugee leader based in 24 Parganas, Sukriti Ranjan Biswas, President of the Joint Action Committee for Bangali Refugees and also associated with the Matua Mahasangha, summarised the situation after the passage of the 2003 amendment thus

> … things have changed since 2003, the new law brands people coming without passport as illegal migrants and they are not eligible to acquire Indian citizenship… this was not the case earlier, there were some restrictions… sometimes the police used to harass the refugees, but those who challenged the authorities in court won because there was no law on this…
>
> …90% of the East Bengalis in the state are excluded by the present law as infiltrators, because we have not come to Indian carrying passports and visas… during the rule of the Left Front…. after the

> law (the amendment of 2003) was passed… 350 people were arrested as illegal migrants, arrest warrants came out against 1200 people…
>
> …today when I apply for caste certificate, they say I need to show my records of land ownership of 1950 as a proof of citizenship, there is a government circular to this effect… does this mean in case I have not been living here from 1950, I am not an Indian? Many don't have their names in the Voter's list… after living here for 30 years why are their names not enlisted as voters?... when they go to renew their passports, their applications are getting rejected, this is the situation for so many people from East Bengal… ("Sukriti Ranjan Biswas Addresses a Meeting with Ambedkarite and Muslim Organizations at Harua against NRC." *Dalit Camera: Through Untouchable Eyes,* 2019)

The following comment by Mr Majumdar, chairman of a dalit refugee organisation in 24 Parganas, Bangladesh Udbastu Unnayan Sangshad also raises a similar point

> At the time of independence, the minority in East Bengal were part of India… we were promised by our first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru that if Hindu minorities from East Bengal migrate to India, India's door will always be open.… but there has been persistent national discrimination towards the Bengalis. Even after 70 years of independence, people from Bangladesh still live by railway lines, canal sides, they have not been provided for… Bangladesh is now made almost Hindu-less. Their lands are being snatched from them, their mothers and sisters are sexually harassed. We have highlighted these issues, but nothing has been done. We send a report every month to the central government on these issues… We don't even get the minimum benefits of citizenship. We don't have Ration Cards, Voter's Cards… but the government take advantage of the refugees and use their labour. But the promise of independence, their right to citizenship, has remained unfulfilled… the government has brought several amendments to citizenship all through the years… by the citizenship act of 2003, the people from East Bengal are now made undesirables ("Talk by Bimal Majumdar," *Displacements Kolkata,* 2018).

The Citizenship Amendment Act of 2003 did not mention a specific cut-off date from which time such migration from Bangladesh to India is to be considered illegal. During my interaction with the dalit refugees at Bahirdoba camps, two dates were pointed out to me. Some taking the example of the NRC exercise in Assam and referring to the provision of the Indira Mujib Pact of 1972[6] opine that all who have migrated to India without valid travel documents after March 1971 have been branded as 'illegal migrants' by the Amendment of 2003. But the dalit refugee organisations like the Matua Mahasangha, NIBBUSS, Joint Action Committee for Bangali Refugees have been pointing out that people coming after 18 July 1948 will be considered as 'illegal migrants'. This threatens a large number of people and their descendants with dis-enfranchisement. From this time onwards the

repeal of the Citizenship Amendment Act of 2003 has been the single most important demand of the Bahirdoba camp refugees and the dalit refugees in West Bengal in general. However, for a long time there was no legal division between two types of migrants, *sharanarthis* and *anuprabeshkaris*. The law threatened everyone coming from Bangladesh and their movement was directed against the 2003 Amendment. Over the years, however, there has been a parallel process of communalisation of the dalit caste based identity politics in West Bengal. A section of them started building public opinion in favour of the newest amendment, the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) 2019. The communalisation of dalit politics can be traced by looking at certain shifts in demands voiced by some of these dalit refugee organisations.

The propaganda of two dalit refugee organisations active in the Bahirdoba camp area, reflect some of the recent transformations in dalit refugee identity politics.[7] The agenda of NIBBUSS have evolved over time. Their basic demands are the following: securing citizenship for all East Bengali refugees spread in different parts of India; securing legal ownership (*patta*) of land to the refugees in various refugee colonies; preservation of the Bengali language in refugee settlements outside the state of West Bengal in India and securing the benefits of caste based reservation for the dalit refugees. NIBBUSS publishes pamphlets and bulletins and maintains an active presence on social media handles. The newsletter of NIBBUSS, *Bhiteharar Lorai* (the Struggle of the Homeless), which is published at the interval of two to three months, declares it as a social organisation. In the early years after the organisation was created in 2005, their policy was to retain equidistance from all political parties. Their mode of agitation includes taking out rallies, sitting in *dharnas* (sit in protests) outside different state and central legislatures in session with their demands and handing memorandum to political leaders, and conducting meetings in different refugee colonies to create awareness and support for their demands. One of their first large scale national *dharnas* was called in November 2011 outside Jantar Mantar in New Delhi. In November 2015 they organised another large scale two-day protest in Delhi with demands for citizenship where their representatives from different states in India participated. Representatives from all political parties attended the meeting.

NIBBUSS

ভিটেহারার লড়াই

বুলেটিন ছয় ও সাত ❑ ফেব্রুয়ারী ২০১৬ ❑ সহায়তা : ৩ টাকা

নাগরিকত্বের দাবীতে দিল্লীর রাজপথে র‍্যালী ও ধর্ণা আন্দোলন

Figure 4.1. A page of the NIBBUSS Bulletin *Bhiteharar Lorai*, detailing their *dharna* in Delhi in support of their demand for unconditional citizenship.

They have articulated the oneness of the Bengali refugees through an appeal to the Bengali language. The NIBBUSS has agitated for the recognition of the East Bengali refugees' right to use Bengali as a medium of instruction in schools in different Indian states like the Kannada speaking state of Karnataka or the Maratha speaking state of Maharashtra ("Adhikarer Dabite Nikhil Bharat Sangathan er Bhumika," *Bhiteharar Lorai, Nikhil Bharat Bangali Udbastu Samanway Samity,* March 2012). Their strong support for the Bengali language is expressed through an initiative to celebrate the International Mothers Language Day or the Bhasha Dibas on 21 February all over India at different refugee colonies. In these ceremonies, they remember the *shahid* of the Bhasha Dibas who sacrificed their lives in Dhaka and connect their own struggle in India with the Bhasa Andolan in Bangladesh. They also celebrate their own success in preserving Bengali language in the refugee colonies in India. At an earlier time, they also took out rallies to voice support for political issues in Bangladesh which concerned the wellbeing of Bengalis. For example, a candle march was organised by NIBBUSS in Guwahati in March 2013 voicing support for protesters in Shahbag in Bangladesh.[8] Their slogan was 'শাহবাগ এগিয়ে চলো, আমরা তোমার সঙ্গে আছি' (Move ahead Shahbag, we are with

you') ("Guwahati-te Candle March, *Bhiteharar Lorai, Nikhil Bharat Bangali Udbastu Samanway Samity,* March 2012). Their movement has a strain of Bengali nationalism which does not always toe the Hindu nationalist line. This has become somewhat muted in the past one year or so.

Most of their supporters are dalit refugees and one of their main demand remains securing caste reservation benefits. Sometime they invoke a dalit identity to articulate their demands. Subodh Biswas, the all India President of NIBBUSS spoke in a meeting held at the Calcutta university:

> Our forefathers have sacrificed for the independence of the country. The memory of young martyr Namadas in the cellular jail in Andaman is our pride. ("Kolkata Biswabidyalay e Nikhil Bharat Bangali Udbastu Samanyay Samity r Sabha," *Bhiteharar Lorai, Nikhil Bharat Bangali Udbastu Samanway Samity,* February 2016)

Here Biswas refers to the contribution of a *namasudra* leader in the anti-colonial national movement. But in the face of a new politics of citizenship they have also started to assert a Hindu refugee identity. One of their most active branches has been in Assam, agitating for the rights of Bengali speaking Hindu refugees there. They have been agitating against the updating of the NRC in Assam, and fought for the release Hindu Bengali refugees labelled as Doubtful Voters and interned in detention camps in Assam. In the process they have been embroiled in conflict with 'sons of the soil movement' in Assam led by AASU among others. Of late, their attention has shifted to political developments in West Bengal.

Figure 4.2. Volunteers wearing NIBBUS T-shirts at the beginning of a big NIBBUSS meeting in June 2019.

From 2016 West Bengal has become their main area of agitation and citizenship has come to the forefront of their demands. In their newsletters they have started to present their demands for national citizenship in India in communal terms which was not the case earlier. *Bhiteharar Lorai* clearly states that they demand citizenship for Hindu Bengali refugees and for the Buddhists and Christians migrating to India ("Amader Dabi," *Bhiteharar Lorai, Nikhil Bharat Bangali Udbastu Samanway Samity*, May-June 2016). Muslims are simply not mentioned. On prodding Pramatha of Bahirdoba camp no J, also a member of NIBBUSS about the Muslim question in the wake of the passage of the citizenship bill, I received the following response

> I: If the citizenship bill is passed, it will exclude the Muslims, what is the position of your organisation regarding that?
>
> Pramatha: Nikhil Bharat is not concerned about the issue of Muslims; they are only concerned with the Hindus. No Muslim organisations have joined this organisation….
>
> I: but if you ally with the Muslims would not your movement get stronger?
>
> Pramatha: the issue of the Muslims is different. Our organisation does not match with theirs.
>
> I: what is the difference?
>
> Pramatha: the difference is in their social and religious ideologies. The ideologies are different.
>
> I: Muslims are also coming from Bangladesh and they will also be excluded from citizenship… they have also been excluded from the NRC in Assam…. But you are not thinking of any united movement?
>
> Pramatha: Muslim organisations have not come to join us…
>
> I: Have you tried to reach out to Muslim organisations?
>
> Pramatha: not to my knowledge… (Pramatha, Personal Interview, April 2019)

From January 2016 NIBBUSS organised a series of *Jagarani Sabhas* (meetings to awaken) all over West Bengal to create awareness against the Citizenship Amendment Act of 2003 and seeking its amendment. In these meetings they attempted to garner support for the draft amendment bill of 2016 as well. Meetings were held in places like, Kolkata, Murshidabad, Kakdwip, Halencha, Noyapara, Patikabari and Sundarban. They have also held Jagarani Sabhas in Bahirdoba, which their newsletter describes as 'the holy land of struggle'. Sometimes, they have participated in meetings organised by the Matua Mahasangha to voice their demands regarding citizenship. Their alliance

with the Matua Mahasangha has become stronger. The leaders of NIBBUSS have been trying to negotiate with the central leadership on the clauses of the proposed citizenship bill ("Nagarikotto kalo Ain 2003 er Songsodhan er Dabite Poschim Bonge Jagarani Sabha," *Bhiteharar Lorai, Nikhil Bharat Bangali Udbastu Samanway Samity*, February 2016). From a position of equidistance to all political parties, they have moved to an express support for the BJP. This has generated some unease within the NIBBUSS. Strains of dalit unity, ideals of Bengali nationalism and Hindu nationalism remain in uneasy entanglement in their political proclamations.

Figure 4.3. A NIBBUSS meeting held at Palta, West Bengal on 30 June 2019 where the newly elected MPs from the BJP were congratulated and demands for unconditional citizenship for East Bengali refugees reiterated.

Figure 4.4. A NIBBUSS meeting held in Kolkata on 22 November 2019, with demands of unconditional citizenship in the wake of placing the citizenship amendment bill, 2019 in the Rajya Sabha, where it became a law.

A section of the All India Matua Mahasangha now functions in close alliance with the NIBBUSS and also the BJP. The present positioning of the Mahasangha becomes explicable in terms of the evolution of their political agenda from an earlier time. Matua dharma was given organisation structure by Guruchand Thakur, the son of the founder of the sect Harichand Thakur, in the early 1930s. After the partition, his grandson PR Thakur migrated to West Bengal from East Bengal and revived the Matua movement in West Bengal. He created a dalit refugee colony in Thakurnagar in North 24 Parganas. Thakurnagar emerged as the first dalit refugee colony and the headquarters of the Matuas in India. After the partition, thus there emerged two Matua centres, one at the birthplace of Harichand Thakur, Orakandi in East Bengal, and the other at Thakurnagar, the new residence of his family, which grew as a centre of pilgrimage for the Matuas in India.

There have been internal differences within the Matua leadership for a long time.[9] The initial movement of Harichand and Guruchand Thakur had evolved around a strong dalit identity. Under their leadership the Matuas remained aloof from the mainstream Congress led anti colonial movement of the day. It was PR Thakur, who after migrating to India, joined mainstream politics by allying with the INC. He was elected from a reserved seat in 1962 to the West Bengal state legislature on a Congress ticket. But his support for the Congress was withdrawn in the context of communal riots in East Bengal in 1964 around the issue of Hazratbal in Kashmir, and retaliatory

communal violence in West Bengal. Around this time when *namasudra* communities in West Bengal came under police scrutiny, Thakur resigned from the assembly on the allegation that the Congress government has failed to protect the incoming dalit refugees from East Bengal (Bandyopadhyay & Basu Ray Chaudhury 2014, 14). After the Left Front came to power, the Matuas had lent their support to the left in the state. For a long time, they have been helping East Bengali refugees coming from Bangladesh. Through their religious preaching and social work, they have acquired a considerable support base among Scheduled Caste (SC) refugee population in West Bengal.[10] From the turn of the millennium, by which time the issues of migration from Bangladesh, infiltration and citizenship have become central to electoral politics in West Bengal, the Mahasangha started making its political presence felt. As already noted, they have been agitating against the 2003 amendment to the Citizenship Act. Their first big political rally was taken out in West Bengal on 28 December 2010. The rally congregated at Esplanade at the heart of the city of Calcutta. They demanded unconditional citizenship for all East Bengali refugees. The NIBBUSS also participated in the rally. All political parties including the AITC, members of the Left Front, Congress and BJP attended the meeting ("Vote Game Brings Rivals to Same Dias," *The Telegraph,* 2010 https://www.telegraphindia.com/west-bengal/vote-game-brings-rivals-to-same-dais/cid/458300).

According to the census of 2001, West Bengal has a total of 18452555 SC population, which comes to about 23% of the total population in the state. They have a predominance influence in elections in the reserved constituencies and in a total of about 74 constituencies in West Bengal's state legislature. The Matuas, who are primarily concentrated in the districts of North and South-24 Parganas, Malda, Nadia and parts of Hooghly, can influence the results in a large number of these reserved constituencies. From their earlier support to the Left Front, the Matuas slowly moved closer to the AITC. Mamata Banerjee, the leader of the AITC and the present chief minister of West Bengal was granted a lifetime membership of the community and blessed by the Matua matriarch Binapani Devi (wife of PR Thakur) known as Boroma ("CPM, TC Leaders Share Dais at Matua Meeting," *The Indian Express,* 2010 https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2010/dec/29/cpm-tc-leaders-share-dais-at-matua-meeting-214851.html). P.R. Thakur's younger son, Manjulkrishna Thakur, was made a minister for Refugee Relief and Rehabilitation by the ruling AITC government. PR Thakur's elder son, Kapil Krishna Thakur was nominated from the Bongaon constituency. These events reinforced the importance of the Matuas in the electoral politics of the state. From around this time there has also been a clear political split between the community, first between the supporters of the AITC and the Left, and eventually after the left lost political power in West Bengal, between the AITC and the BJP.

The official website of the Matua Mahasangha now describes the organisation as a sect of the Hindu folk religion. But its relation to both Hinduism and Vaishnavism has been fluid and wavered between allegiance and opposition. The ideologues and literatures of the organisation have debated the question of whether to treat Matua dharma as a separate religion, or as a sect which is an integral part of Hinduism. Particularly its relation to Vaishnavism has provided ground for discussion and dissent.[11] In the early phase of the movement, an anti-upper caste dalit consciousness was stronger among the Matuas. At the present political juncture, they find it politically expedient to highlight their connection to Hinduism, rather than posing against it.

There are also many who differ with the official position of the Mahasangha regarding its identification as a sect of the Hindu religion. Thus, Debendralal Biswas Thakur has authored a book called, *Matuara Hindu Noy: Dalit Oikyer Sandhane* (Matuas are not Hindus: In Search for Dalit Unity). He points out that the Matua Dharma provides an alternative spiritual space outside Brahminism. Sudhir Ranjan Halder's essay, *Dwicharitay Matua Dharma* (The Duality of Matua Religion) also points out that true Matua dharma is opposed to some of the basic tenets of Vedic Hinduism

> Harichand Thakur… has gone against the Vedas and placed all human beings on an equal footing. This stand is clearly against the Vedic religion. The division of the whole society into four varnas and its strict adherence is the main tenet of the Vedic religion. The Matua religion that Harichand Thakur initiated is against this core value of the Vedic religion… it does not differentiate between human beings… the Matuas are now placing undue emphasis on Vedic rituals and avatar-ism and idol worship… they have become Hindus, this is the double standard practiced by the Matua dharma. ("Dwicharitay Matuadharma," Halder, 2016, http://dalitliteratures.blogspot.com/2017/02/dwicharitay-matuyadharma.html)

There are practicing Matuas still living in Bangladesh. And among the Matuas in West Bengal, there are many who do not look upon the neighbouring country of Bangladesh as a breeding ground of religious fundamentalism. This excerpt from a news piece discussing Matua religion carried in the NIBBUS newsletter *Bhiteharar Lorai* may be repeated here

> The Matuas cannot survive away from Orakandi. If the Indian government would relax the barbed wired fence, then many devotees will be able to gratify themselves by touching the soil of the holy land of Orakandi. Both Bengals can build a bridge connecting their hearts through the connection between Orakandi and Thakurnagar. This will be better for both the countries. ("Orakandi Theke Thakurnagar," *Bhiteharar Lorai, Nikhil Bharat Bangali Udbastu Samanway Samity*, May-June 2016)

A longing for a unity of Bengalis in both sides of divided Bengal, and a sense of cross border fraternity is present in Matua dharma and politics.

Figure 4.5. A Matua Mahadharma Sammelan held at the Bahirdoba camp area in December 2019.

The recent campaign of NIBBUSS and the Matua Mahasangha (MM) (its BJP faction), on the issue of citizenship has acquired a communal overtone. Till 2003, there was no legal separation between who is a *sharanarthi* and who is an *anuprabeshkari* and vagueness surrounded their definition. *Anuprabeshkari* is a Bengali term and used inside West Bengal. Its Hindi counterpart is *ghuspetiya*. This blanket Hindi term *ghuspetiya*, literally meaning infiltrator or trespasser was so long used to label paperless migrants coming from across the international border irrespective of their religion. NIBBUSS had for a long time been protesting against this labelling of the East Bengali refugees. Their newsletters repeatedly condemn the derogatory tag of *ghuspetiya* used to label the incoming Hindu refugees. In the most recent Hindutva propaganda around citizenship there is an attempt to separate the Hindu refugees from this blanket labelling. There is an attempt to clearly mark out the incoming Hindus and Muslims from Bangladesh as internally homogenised and mutually opposed religious identities. Some excerpts of speeches by political leaders addressed to dalit East Bengali refugees on the differences between the *sharanarthis* and *anuprabeshkaris* (or *ghuspetiya*) may be repeated here

> Narendra Modi's language is very clear about who is a *ghuspetiya* and who is a *sharanarthi*. Those who are minority in Bangladesh are the *sharanarthis*… minorities in Afghanistan, minorities in Pakistan… are being cheated of their rights there, the Bangladesh government does not want Hindus to live there. There are terrorist organisations are working in Bangladesh and they are vandalising Hindu temples… the only country in the world for the Hindus is India. If Hindus living all over the world face deception there, this country will give them *sharan* (shelter)… they will be considered as *sharanarthis* and they will be granted citizenship here… But when people who are in majority there, in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan, come here, they will be called *ghuspetiya*s. This country has no place for the *ghuspetiya*s. This is why we will bring the NRC. The *sharanarthis* may be poor, but they are *sajjan* (decent people) and they cannot survive there among hooligans. So they are coming here… West Bengal has two crore *ghuspetiya*s, NRC will help weed them out… you will get ownership of the houses they are living in, the land they are occupying, belonging to two crore people… (Speech by a BJP leader, Kailash Vijayvargiya, NIBBUSS Meeting, 30 June 2019, Palta)

A journalist and an associate of the MM observed on similar themes in a meeting organised by NIBBUSS in Calcutta in the wake of the passage of the citizenship amendment bill in Lok Sabha in November 2019

> We are citizens of *akhanda Bharat*. This *akhanda Bharat* spans the entire subcontinent. Here people have only one identity, they believe in the Hindu culture, even if their religions are separate. But people were divided, our forefathers migrated to this side (India) in the face of threats to their lives and religion. Wherefrom appears the question of citizenship, now that we have come here and lived here for so many years?... we have to understand the difference between *anuprebeshkari* and *sharanarthis*… who are the *anuprabeshkari*? Those who had left this country (India) in order to go to that country (Pakistan), in the hope of living there in peace, but after some time they felt there is nothing much for them on that side (Pakistan), now they are trying to come back again to this side (India), they are the *anuprabeshkaris*… (Speech by a Journalist, NIBBUSS Meeting, 22 November 2019, Kolkata)

Dr Subodh Biswas, the all India president of NIBBUSS highlighted the importance of an exchange of population for Bengal in the same meeting

> we have been sacrificed at the altar of the partition. There was an exchange of population in Punjab, but in Bengal no exchange of population took place, we were abandoned with our arch enemies… we came to India empty handed in search of shelter… that day, we did not want to leave West Bengal, because Bengalis love the soil of Bengal. But we were forced to disperse and go to distant parts of India… this citizenship amendment bill will provide relief to the East Bengali migrants… till the time

> there is torture on Hindus in Bangladesh, refugees will continue to migrate to India… we demand unconditional citizenship to all East Bengali Hindu refugees in India… (Speech by NIBBUSS President, Subodh Biswas, NIBBUSS Meeting, 22 November 2019, Kolkata)

In this propaganda, the Hindu refugees are now called *sharanarthis*, those who can rightfully seek *sharan* or shelter in a Hindu India. They may be poor, but are *sajjan* and can make for good citizens. As the above excerpts note, the idea of an *akhanda bharat* has returned in these discourses, one that spans the entire subcontinent, embraces Hindutva in a broader cultural sense as espoused by Savarkar, where other religionists can perhaps exist as second-class citizens. The other of this discourse are the *ghuspetiyas* or the *anuprabeshkaris*, who it is alleged had gone back to their co-religionists in the enemy nation (Pakistan or Bangladesh) after the partition, and now want to come back due to lure of economic benefits. Here is an uncanny repetition of the debates around citizenship which had taken place about seven decades ago in the immediate aftermath of the partition. It harks back to the two-nation theory. Displaced Muslims back then were called 'returnees', those who had committed a first act of disloyalty to India by fleeing to Pakistan, and their right to 'return' was disputed. Poor Muslims migrating from Bangladesh to India, the *ghuspetias* or the *anuprabeshkaris* are now equated with the treacherous 'returnees'. In a reminder of the communal political rhetoric surrounding the immediate post partition days, here is also an echo of the demand for an exchange of population between West Bengal and Bangladesh. A utopian promise is made by the advocates of communal politics that if the Muslims are ousted from India by means of an all India NRC, the land under Muslim occupation made vacant will be redistributed among the needy Hindu *sharanarthis,* another reminder of the post partition debates surrounding distribution of 'evacuee property'.

There is also a clear attempt to appropriate dalit identity within the Hindu fold. This observation of a Member of Parliament (MP) of the MM who has recently won the election on a BJP ticket, Shantanu Thakur, signifies the change in their political affiliation and associated discourse on dalit identity politics

> The partition broke the backbone of the Bengalis… Bengal has been neglected for the past seventy-five years… refugees in Bengal and adjoining region face numerous hardships… the Matuas provided strength to the anti-colonial nationalist movement… Khudiram Bose, Netaji Subhash Bose, Binay-Badal-Dinesh drew their power from the grass root strength of the Matuas. Bengal was partitioned in a manner which excluded Khulna, Jessore… if we go by the two-nation theory, why were these Hindu dominated regions included in Bangladesh?… this was a big conspiracy… the East Bengalis did not

> benefit from national independence, they could not migrate to India and were left behind in East Bengal to suffer… they were Indian citizens, they are Indian citizens and they will remain Indian citizens, this is our main demand… we will strengthen the refugee movement… the government made the mistake of passing the black act of 2003… in 2014 they have brought a solution to the refugee problem, an amendment bill has been adopted in the Lok Sabha in 2018, this is a historic moment…. Some people are worried that they will acquire citizenship only after six years, but don't worry… we will remain and continue in the same manner as we have done for years… those who are not Hindus, not Buddhists, not Christians, not Jains, not Parsee, will be ousted… if the All India Matua Mahasangha certifies that a person is Matua, that person will acquire citizenship in India… if the Nikhil Bharat certifies that a person is Matua and *namasudra* the Indian government will be forced to grant them citizenship… (Speech by Shantanu Thakur, NIBBUSS Meeting, 30 June 2019, Palta)

Here is an attempt to draw the lineages of the Matua movement from the mainstream anti-colonial nationalism in their effort to align with the dominant caste Hindu ideologies of the day and a covert assurance that all that is required for citizenship is political loyalty.

Their idiom of politics has a distinctly Hindu Bengali overtone. When prominent leaders of different political parties arrive at the meetings, women clad in white sari with red borders, welcome them by blowing the conch shell and garlanding them, signs of Hindu Bengali piety. In meetings organised by the NIBBUSS and MM, women are called to action as mothers. Thus, in a Matua meeting in Bahirdoba, Mr Biswas, a Matua leader living in Bahirdoba, called the mothers to action

> Our mothers in India have something of their very own, the sound of conch shells and *ulu dhwani* (ululation). Are we about to forget that? Let us see how our mothers can give *ulu dhwani*? Shanti Harichand Guruchand, horibol… (Speech at Mr Biswas, Matua Mahadharma Sammelan, 8 December 2019, Bahirdoba camps)

Following this call on the mike, the women present in the meeting started ululation together.

Figure 4.6. Women clad in red saris waiting to welcome their political guests of honour with petals in hand in a NIBBUSS meeting, Palta on 30 June 2019.

In their public speeches the leaders are silent about certain discrepancies in the CAA 2019 noted earlier. Some of these concerns were expressed to me during a discussion with Bipul of NIBBUSS

> Bipul: lakhs of people in Assam are in detention camp, it seems that unconditional citizenship may not be provided by the new act, you are saying that those who have come till 2014 will be granted (citizenship), but then why are you imposing conditions on that? The condition is that one has migrated due to religious persecution… proof in documents (need to be provided)… how will people show documents? My father came in 1953, but apart from the dalil we don't have any other documents, so according to them I am also be-nagorik (non-citizen)…
>
> I: what papers are required?
>
> Bipul: some papers will be needed, but our people… they don't have papers, they live on streets after coming here…
>
> I: is there any clear guideline regarding what papers will be needed?
>
> Bipul: no, they are not clear about that, our demand is unconditional citizenship… Dilip Ghosh repeatedly says, we will oust two crore people, are there two crore Muslims living here? Even if there are two crore Muslims, they have not come from that country (Bangladesh), they have preserved papers over thousand years, they will be able to provide all the documents… who don't have the documents? Us, we don't have… all the political parties play with us…. we will do a movement with all

> the people here… we are happy to die, but we will break down detention camps… (Bipul, Telephonic Interview, October 2020)

Deben, a member of the MM who lives in the Bahirboda camp area, pointed out

> …I saw in the newspaper yesterday, there are many gaps in it (the citizenship bill), who are the *sharanarthis*? people from East Bengal had been s*haranarthis* once in 1971, there weren't any *sharanarthis* after that… where is the mystery… what can I say… please don't mind, we the ordinary people… in order to support the party, are saying many vague things… I believe if we are not able to unite, our problems will increase in the coming days…. (Deben, Personal Interview, December 2019)

In a discussion at the side-lines of the aforementioned Matua Maha-dharmasammelan (big religious meetings of the Matua Mahasangha are called Maha-dharmasammelan) organised at the Bahirdoba camps, a local inhabitant and a Matua supporter shared with me on conditions of anonymity, how their leaders in Thakurnagar have an understanding with the BJP. Membership cards of the MM with a certain card number are being issued to people. Many Matuas from all over India, are coming to Thakurnagar in order to secure membership cards. More than a lakh of such cards has been issued in the past two months. He noted with confidence that people who possess those cards will be able to secure citizenship (Personal discussion reproduced from fieldnotes, December 2019). It is covertly communicated that people do not need to worry about the discrepancies in the CAA 2019. They will be provided citizenship on the basis of a personal understanding between the leaders in exchange for political loyalty. While the AITC faction of the Mahasangha also have a presence in the camp area, it is the BJP faction that has significantly gained in strength in the past year or so.

The leaders of the dalit refugee organisations are aware of the discrepancies in the CAA 2019. But these are not raised in public discussions. The dalit refugees have started to couch their demands in terms of their right to be included in a Hindu Rashtra. This demand is directly or indirectly pitched against the Muslims tagged as *ghuspetias* or the *anuprabeshkaris*. In spite of such shift however, the political space is still fluid and fiercely contested. Communitarian imagination which seek unity of Bengalis across India and Bangladesh and streaks of anti-brahmin dalit identity politics are also present.

The 'homeless' rural migrants by *khalpar* and *foot* have a much more uncertain *de jure* citizenship status. As already noted in chapter three, the majority of them have always been suspects to the law of the country and do not hold legal papers. A handful of leaders are aware of the new changes in the laws of citizenship and they are apprehensive that the changes will lead to renewed attempts to

brand them as Bangladeshis and evict them. But beyond a few of the leaders there is not much awareness regarding the transformations in the citizenship laws amidst this group. There has not been any significant political mobilisation on the issue.

4.4 Social citizenship: precarious life world of temporary people

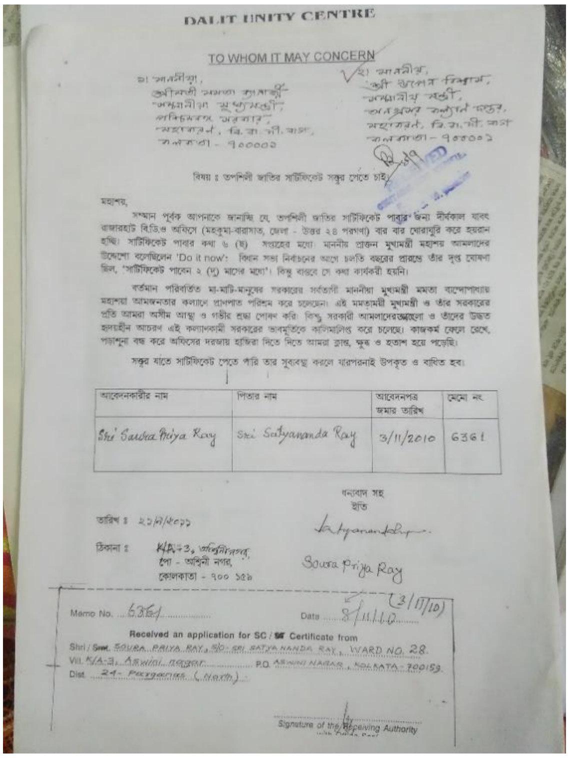
Apart from legal status, citizenship also involves social right (Marshall 1950). A significant number of new research assuming a right based approach to citizenship, claim that social movement of the urban poor for right to the city, mobilised around redistributive rights claim of citizenship, expand citizenship to new social bases (Appadurai and Holston 1996). The experiences of social citizenship of the two different migrant groups studied here present a variegated scene. Both groups of migrants have faced challenges to their right to shelter and a host of other associated rights to different extent. A section of the dalit refugees have waged a prolonged struggle, staking claims on the state as 'displaced persons' and as dalits deserving protective discrimination. They have achieved some degree of formality of their personhood, dwellings and secured some measure of social rights. But for a large number of the poorer dalit refugees and most of the peripatetic rural migrants the experience has been one of perpetual deferral. Their right claims have gone through multiple fractures.

The dalit refugees articulate their demands for social rights through the official status of 'displaced persons'. A lot of the camp refugees have been dispersed and live through serial displacements. Those who have managed to stay on have improved their living condition over the years. Now most of them have built houses, even though many do not have legal ownership of their lands. They have electricity (sometimes acquired by illegally tapping electricity) and piped water. Most of my interlocutors in the camp areas have acquired identification documents like Voters Identity Card and Ration Cards. The possession of identity cards works as proof of citizenship. They also stake claims for protective discrimination through their dalit identity. They have struggled to secure caste certificates. This has consolidated a sense of dalit unity in them. Pramatha of camp no J reflected how difficult it was for them to secure caste certificates

> Pramatha: there were a lot of hassles and we had to appeal to different individuals… it took five to seven years… in the process, what used to happen was the age for getting higher education or for applying for jobs would pass, their real intention was to stop us from being established in life and have decent jobs, we felt that they were doing this deliberately… in 2003 we created a committee, a Dalit Unity Centre… there is a government circular, we took help from the national commission…

I: was this only for the camps?

Pramatha: no, the Dalit Unity Centre is for all of West Bengal… when my daughter took admission in Bidhannagar college, they said there are no seats for the SCs, I told them that this is a government college, why don't you maintain seats for the SCs… they did not want to give admission… I challenged them, after that they published a SC list of four people and my daughter got admission in English honours… this is how it was for us…. so we created an organisation, the Dalit Unity Centre… (Pramatha, Personal Interview, January 2017)



DALIT UNITY CENTRE

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

বিষয় ঃ তপশিলী জাতির সার্টিফিকেট সত্ত্বর পেতে চাই।

মহাশয়,

সম্মান পূর্বক আপনাকে জানাচ্ছি যে, তপশিলী জাতির সার্টিফিকেট পাবার জন্য দীর্ঘকাল যাবৎ রাজারহাট বি.ডি.ও অফিসে (মহকুমা-বারাসাত, জেলা - উত্তর ২৪ পরগণা) বার বার ঘোরাঘুরি করে হয়রান হচ্ছি। সার্টিফিকেট পাবার কথা ৬ (ছ) সপ্তাহের মধ্যে। মাননীয় প্রাক্তন মুখ্যমন্ত্রী মহাশয় আমলাদের উদ্দেশ্যে বলেছিলেন 'Do it now'। বিধান সভা নির্বাচনের আগে চলতি বছরের প্রারম্ভে তাঁর দৃপ্ত ঘোষণা ছিল, 'সার্টিফিকেট পাবেন ২ (দু) মাসের মধ্যে'। কিন্তু বাস্তবে সে কথা কার্যকরী হয়নি।

বর্তমান পরিবর্তিত মা-মাটি-মানুষের সরকারের সর্বত্যাগী মাননীয়া মুখ্যমন্ত্রী মমতা বন্দোপাধ্যায় মহাশয়া আমজনতার কল্যাণে প্রাণপাত পরিশ্রম করে চলেছেন। এই মমতাময়ী মুখ্যমন্ত্রী ও তাঁর সরকারের প্রতি আমরা অসীম আস্থা ও গভীর শ্রদ্ধা পোষণ করি। কিন্তু সরকারী আমলাদের অবহেলা ও তাঁদের উদ্ধত হৃদয়হীন আচরণ এই কল্যাণকামী সরকারের ভাবমূর্তিতে কালিমালিপ্ত করে চলেছে। কাজকর্ম ফেলে রেখে, পড়াশুনা বন্ধ করে অফিসের দরজায় হাজিরা দিতে দিতে আমরা ক্লান্ত, ক্ষুব্ধ ও হতাশ হয়ে পড়েছি।

সত্ত্বর যাতে সার্টিফিকেট পেতে পারি তার সুব্যবস্থা করলে যারপরনাই উপকৃত ও বাধিত হব।

আবেদনকারীর নাম	পিতার নাম	আবেদনপত্র জমার তারিখ	মেমো নং
Sri Saura Priya Ray	Sri Satyananda Ray	3/11/2010	6361

ধন্যবাদ সহ
ইতি

তারিখ ঃ

ঠিকানা ঃ পো - অশ্বিনী নগর,
কোলকাতা - ৭০০ ১৫৯

Soura Priya Ray

Memo No. 6361 Date 8/11/10 (3/11/10)

Received an application for SC / ST Certificate from

Shri / Smt. SOURA PRIYA RAY, S/O: SRI SATYA NANDA RAY, WARD NO. 28.

Vill. K/A-3, Aswini nagar P.O. ASWINI NAGAR, KOLKATA - 700159

Dist. 24- Parganas (North)

Signature of the Receiving Authority

Figure 4.7. A letter in the letterhead of the Dalit Unity Centre.

The Chairman of the Namashudra Vikas Parishad, Mukul Chandra Bairagya, has made similar observations regarding harassment faced by *namasudras* from East Bengal in securing caste certificates. When the refugees apply for caste certificates in West Bengal, they are asked to produce Birth Certificates. Upon producing their Birth Certificates, they are asked to submit land records prior to 1950. As already noted, they are now fighting for their legal status as citizens, which if lost will nullify all other social rights.

A few of my interlocutors at the Bahirdoba camp areas have benefitted from the experience and mobility associated with migration. They have struggled through the initial days after the partition. They have acquired education and secured jobs through the benefits of protective discrimination. They are well placed in government services. Their children work in the service sector.

A considerable number of the camp refugees also work in the informal sector. A majority of those employed in the informal sector work without basic labour rights. As per National Sample Survey's (NSSO) Employment-Unemployment surveys and the Periodic Labour Force Survey, conducted annually to complement the NSSO survey, in 2017-2018 more than 90% of India's workforce were in the informal sector ("Periodic Labour Force Survey 2017-2018," *Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India*, 2019). As per NSSO data for West Bengal in 2009-2010, the total proportion of workers engaged in the informal sector in the state came to about 80%. The coverage of social security schemes has been extremely sparce among the informal sector. About 74.8 % of the workers in West Bengal did not have any social security in 2009-2010 and about three fourth of the workers lacked any written contract for jobs and worked with very little job security ("Factors Impacting Non-Agricultural Employment Growth: A Study in West," *Institute of Applied Manpower Research,* 2013, 11, 21-26). While there is a government scheme for rural employment generation in India, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, there is yet to be a parallel urban employment scheme for the urban poor. A large number of the dalit refugees in the Bahirboda camp area work as construction workers, in transport, and hawking and in small shops. Many women work as domestic help in the middle-class townships around. Like the informal labour in the rest of the state, they are largely deprived of social security schemes.

For both the *namasudras* and the Matuas, education has been an important component of their movement for social upliftment. A large majority of the dalit refugees I have interacted with have basic literacy. As already noted, they have fought for securing caste certificates which ensures reservation in educational institutions. They send their children to schools in the nearby areas. There are many schools close to the camps. In government or government aided schools the mid-day meal scheme is operational. It is a scheme launched in 1995 by the central government, which guarantees free lunches on working days for children up to eighth grade in government and government aided schools. Some of the dalit refugees possess Below Poverty Line (BPL) cards which entitles them to subsidised food grain. Public health care system is fraught with problems all over the state and the camp refugees are no exception to the trouble faced by patients in government hospitals in general.

The floating rural migrants at *khalpar* and *foot* have access to fewer social rights compared to the dalit refugees. As already discussed in chapter three, their hold on their homes is tenuous. Tied to this basic right to shelter are other social rights. This connection is understood and emphasised by

their leaders. Anwar who lives at the Kuldanga stretch of the Round Canal in central Calcutta, and is a local leader, emphasised this during a discussion

> Anwar: We need an address, these work as proof of identity, people in Ultadanga don't have trouble anymore because they have been settled in a colony, they have a house number, what do people have here?
>
> I: so you are fighting for an address?
>
> Anwar: yes this is an important thing you have said… I have said this many times, there are big vacant areas, if they had created a colony for us there, that would have helped… (Anwar, Personal Interview, December 2017)

Due to lack of a fixed city address they find it difficult to apply for identification documents Sometime they acquire identification documents through the help of their local political patrons. For example, the erstwhile ward councillor for the kuldanga stretch at Round Canal facilitated a small number of Voters Identity Cards for the families living there. Similarly at the Haria stretch of the Pali Nala, Ratan, a local leader informed me during a discussion that he used his own home address to secure identification documents for a large number of the dwellers by the Pali Nala. Alternately they use the address of a big house next to which the families reside and the name of the road on which the families are staying. The presence of a city address in their documents is seen as important. Successful creation of one identification document with a city address facilitates the creation of other documents and helps them secure some benefits from schemes targeted for Below Poverty Line (BPL) families. But many at the *khalpar* and *foot* still lack documents.

From 2003, NGOs like The Calcutta Samaritan (TCS), have worked with 'homeless' population located in different *khalpar*, pavements, dwellings under footbridges and other areas spread across Calcutta. They have fought to create identification documents for them. After conducting a Rapid Action Survey at the behest of the West Bengal government in 2011 to ascertain the number of 'homeless' people in Calcutta, applications for Voters Identity Card were filed for these groups. A large number of people from the areas studied here, from the Round Canal, Pali Nala and the foot locations had sent in their applications at that time. Two attempts by the TCS with the community members to secure Voters Identity Card were rejected by the Election Commission, stating that these were Bangladeshi migrants illegally residing in the city ("The Urban Alliance for Addressing Rights of Homeless in Kolkata, Programme Strategic Plan," *The Calcutta Samaritans,* 2007-2009, 10). During my interaction at the Kuldanga stretch of the Round Canal, Anwar, who had been working with TCS recalled

> Anwar: When we submitted the applications for Voters Identity Card, the official said we are all Bangladeshi. I fought with the official, I said you are Bangladeshi…
> I: how long did the conflict continue
> Anwar: for about two years, I told the official that you are Bangladeshi, I can tell from your accent that your home is in Jashore… are not there Bangladeshis working in your office? You have a Bangladeshi accent, I speak very clear Bengali… I don't have an accent… afterwards we received the identity cards (Anwar, Personal Interview, December 2017)

One important identification document that provides the urban poor in India with some social security benefits is the Below Poverty Line (BPL) card, meant for families enumerated to be below the Poverty Line. The official Poverty Line in India is estimated based on a nutritional norm, which is, consumption of at least 2400 calories of food for rural areas and 2100 calories for urban areas per person per day. The Planning Commission has calculated the total expenditure required for this amount of calory consumption to be Rs 32 (approx. $0.44) in urban areas and Rs 26 (approx. $0.36) in rural areas per day per person. This has become the Poverty Line. Scholars have criticised the current Poverty Line as a 'destitution line' for being dated, for only considering food necessities and ignoring other basic necessities of life and grossly undercalculating even the basic minimum requirement of food. All of these function to exclude a large number of deserving poor from entitlements targeted for people below the Poverty Line (Drèze 2017, 54-68). If the estimates are low, exclusions are further entrenched through politics of deliberate non-enumeration. For example, there was an extension of the Public Distribution Scheme (PDS) in West Bengal in 1996.[12] The government of West Bengal was updating a database of families who could benefit from the PDS. It was revealed by a CMDA official, that they are deliberately leaving out the squatters from enumeration, because it would be tantamount to legally acknowledging their presence (Roy 2003, 26-27).

TCS has helped the 'homeless' communities in Calcutta with applications for BPL Cards. According to TCS's own estimate, with their help about 1569 'homeless' families have received BPL Cards, 877 families have received Voters Identity Cards, about 821 children have received Birth Certificates and 349 families have opened bank accounts ("Impact Assessment Report on Intervention under Project Titled: An Alliance to Address the Issue of Urban Homeless and Unregistered Slums in Kolkata," *The Calcutta Samaritan & Action Aid*, n.d., 12).

Only a small fraction of the total homeless population in Calcutta possesses identification documents. Some people in my field locale who possess identification documents, have been able to

tap some benefits from a few social security schemes. One such scheme is the Antodyay Anna Jojona Scheme meant for the poorest of all BPL families. The government issues them with the Antodyay Anna Jojona Ration Cards (known briefly as the Antodyay Cards), a category of BPL Card, which entitles them to subsidised food grain. Under the Antodyay scheme in West Bengal, their monthly entitlement comes to 15 kg rice per family and 20 kg wheat per family at the cost of Rs 2 per kg and 500 gm sugar at Rs 13.50 per kg ("Public Distribution System in West Bengal: An Overview," Report Compiled by Director of Rationing, West Bengal). At some of the field sites I have visited, a few families mentioned that they presently get about 10 kg rice and 5 kg wheat per family at Rs 2 per month. But some are getting less. Thus, Marina Bibi, a rag picker living on a pavement by the KP road in north-central Calcutta, has secured a Antodyay BPL card through the help of TCS. She responded upon my query

> I: Do you receive rice at the rate of Rs 2 per kg?
> Marina Bibi: yes, but the quantity has reduced, earlier they used to give us 10 kg rice and 5 kg wheat per month, now they are only giving 6 kg… this is not sufficient, if we ask for more, they misbehave… we have to buy the rest at higher prices… sometimes the quality is also very poor… (Group Interview, December 2017)

From 2015 the West Bengal government has initiated a process of digitisation of the Ration Cards. As part of the process, the Antodyay Card holders require to digitise their cards, which involves submitting fresh applications. Some of my interlocutors have managed to do this and they are still receiving supplies from the PDS shops. In four out of the five pavement dwellings that I have visited, Manosh Mitra Park area, Ambala street, Khayalipur and Nadirpur, the families have not been able to follow through with the process of submitting new applications for the digitised Antodyay Cards. The NGOs do not visit these areas any longer. Due to lack of literacy and bureaucratic know how, they have not been able to secure the new cards. Their supply has stopped. The cards still serve the purpose of identification documents. But many of them are wary that these may be nullified. There are many among these migrants who can barely afford two square meals a day.

There is paucity of drinking water. Their roadside makeshift homes usually do not have piped water. They collect water from what is known as *time kol*, which are roadside taps installed by the CMC where water comes at fixed times of the day. The dwellers stand in long queues and collect water in buckets. For example, at the Kuldanga stretch where tentatively 5000 families live, there are three taps in total and the water comes twice a day, once in the morning and once in the evening. It is usual for people to store water for use later (Imran, Personal Interview, December 2017). Bathing in

public at the street taps is often a problem for women. It exposes them to lewd comments by male passers-by. Due to lack of private bathrooms, defecating in the canals is all pervasive. There are often pay and use toilets nearby installed by the CMC, but few can afford these regularly.

Ill health and malnutrition are prevalent. Children suffer from diseases like malaria and diarrhoea. As per the estimates of TCS, more than 80% of the homeless, including men, women, adolescent girls and boys suffer from an inclination to various drugs and narcotics. A few of these are chemical adhesives (dendrite, rubber solution) and marijuana products. Many in the community, especially adolescent boys and girls are into some forms of addiction to kill the pangs of hunger. They sniff glue (dendrite) to avert hunger ("Being with Nothing: A Report on the Condition of Homeless Population of Kolkata," *The Calcutta Samaritans & Action Aid*, 2007, 4).

While they are entitled to free medical treatment at government hospitals, they try to avoid going to the hospitals because of the unwelcome attitude of the staff and long waiting time. Lack of cooperation at government hospitals make them resort to private medical aid. They only go to government hospital for maternity care and childbirth. For other types of ailments, they resort to private treatment at much higher costs. Monirul who lives in the Kuldanga stretch of the Round Canal, shared with me

> I: where do you go for medical treatment?
> Monirul: nobody goes to the hospital (government hospital)
> I: why?
> Monirul: it takes a lot of time, sometimes there are no doctors and they don't give free medicines, people only go to the hospitals in case of extreme emergencies… poor people meet with accidents frequently, at the place of work, on the streets, something is always happening… those who meet with accidents…. in case of serious accidents, the condition deteriorates quickly… they are unable to get proper food for two to three months… will they pay for the medicines, or for the treatment or for the food at home? Accidents are scary… (Monirul, Personal Interview, December 2017)

In case of prolonged illness these dwellers incur huge debts. They are completely bereft of any health insurance schemes. In Calcutta, big NGOS like Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) or Association for Community Cooperation & Rural Development (ACCORD) which provide health insurance to the poor in other parts of the country are not present.

Some of the homeless children have access to educational facilities in government schools or informal education centres nearby. There is a country wide scheme of Integrated Child Development

Services (ICDS), aimed at the overall wellbeing of children incorporating health, education and nutrition interventions. The programme provides some key services to children of up to six years and mothers including supplementary feeding, immunisation, health check-ups, nutrition education etc. Of all the field sites I have visited, I came across only one ICDS centre functioning at the Kuldanga stretch of the Round Canal run with the help of an NGO, Tiljala Shed. It works as a school for the very young. Immunisation is also provided here.

Figure 4.8. An ICDS centre at the Kuldanga area of the Round Canal run by an NGO, the Tiljala Shed

From 2010 the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) has come into effect, which ensures that children from 6-14 years are entitled to free and compulsory education. Child labour (of those aged below 14) is prohibited in certain industries like construction, heavy manufacturing, in restaurants or as domestic servants etc. Child rights and education for the 'homeless' is again tied to their possessing identification documents. Many of the children do not have Birth Certificates. A TCS survey among homeless children carried out in 28 wards of the CMC in 2013 mentions, 60% of the child respondents did not have Birth Certificates at that time. TCS has worked extensively on securing Birth Certificates. Earlier the school authorities often treated the homeless children with contempt and refused to admit them because they lacked Birth Certificates. The situation has

improved through NGO activism. The same TCS survey mentions that about 66% of the children receive some form of education including formal and non-formal education. But less than one percent of these continue their education beyond fourth grade ("Our Homeless Children, Forgotten and Highly Vulnerable: Vulnerability Mapping of Homeless Children and Young Adults of Kolkata," *The Calcutta Samaritans,* 2013, 15).

In most of the areas I have visited at *khalpar* and *foot* the very young children go to either formal government schools or informal education centres run by NGOs. They also receive their mid-day meals in schools. But they drop out early. They start working at an early age to substitute family income. Often the child's labour is needed at home. With little hope of education leading to employment, dropout rates are very high among them.

Figure 4.9. A street corner meeting organised by TCS with homeless children to increase awareness against drugs, child labour and child marriage. (Source: The Calcutta Samaritans Archive)

The women at *khalpar* and *foot* face extreme forms of gender-based violence. NGOs like the TCS and later the Kolkata Naba Jagaran Mancha (KNJM) have worked extensively to empower women and create awareness about their rights. A large number of the members of the KNJM are women. They have faced opposition from their husbands and families from attending meetings organised by the KNJM, but have persisted in spite of that. Violence against women come from both outside and

inside their homes. Outsiders ranging from the police and other civic authorities, local party boys, truck drives and a host of others harass them in different ways. They also face domestic violence from their own menfolk. It is very common for the men to get drunk and beat up the women and children. In cases of rape, the police often refuse to register cases against the offenders. In such cases, the staple reply of the officer in charge at the police station would be, that such crimes are bound to happen because the complainants live on open streets. They are advised to go away from the streets in order to avoid harassment. Now women at *khalpar* and *foot* protest more frequently than before against violence perpetrated by a range of people in their daily street lives. They have been sensitised against trafficking through NGO activism. But there is a lot more to be done regarding violence against women.

The migrants are exposed to extremely hazardous work conditions. They form part of the informal economy and work as headload carriers, rickshaw/van pullers, domestic labour and rag pickers on ad hoc terms and without any recognised rights. They work on very low wages.

Table 4.1. Findings of a sample survey on the monthly average expenditure of informal workers in Calcutta (Source: "Report on the Survey in Relation to Unorganised Workers," *Sristi For Human Society & The Calcutta Samaritan,* 2013-2014, 15).

Monthly Expenditure	**Number of Families**	**Percentage**
Below Rs 1000 to 1000 (approx. $13.6)	140	4.66
Rs 1000 to 2000 (approx. $13.6-$27.2)	451	15.3
Rs 2000 to 3000 (approx. $27.2-$40.8)	651	21.7
Rs 3000 to 4000 (approx. $40.8-$54.4)	783	26.1
Rs 4000 to 5000 (approx. $54.4-$68)	400	13.33
Rs 5000 to 6000 (approx. $68-$81.6)	307	10.23
Rs 6000 to 7000 (approx. $81.6-$95.2)	147	4.9
Rs 7000 to 8000 (approx. $95.2-$108.8)	73	2.43
Rs 8000 to 9000 (approx. $108.8-$122.4)	12	0.4
Rs 9000 to 10,000 (approx. $122.4-$136)	16	0.53
Rs 10,000 to 15,000 (approx. $136-$204.1)	20	0.66
Total	3000	

The data in the above table comes from a sample survey of informal workers conducted by two Calcutta based NGOs in December 2013-January 2014, Sristy For Human Society and TCS. The sample included 3000 families of unorganised workers spread over 32 wards in Calcutta. Out of the total sample, 1867 families were slum dwellers, 764 families lived in shanties by canal banks and railway lines and 335 families were pavement dwellers. For about 80% of the sample, the monthly expenditure is below Rs 5000 (approx. $68). According to the survey, about 70-80% of this expenditure goes to food, and next is clothing and room rent ("Report on the Survey in Relation to Unorganised Workers," *Sristi For Human Society & The Calcutta Samaritan,* 2013-2014, 15).

They lack access to dignified systems of social security. Only one of my interlocutors, who works as a van puller and is a local leader at the Ragbazar stretch of the Round Canal, mentioned that he has enlisted for a pension scheme for informal labour launched by the West Bengal government, Asangathito Sramik Der Jonno Rajya Sarkar er Sahajya Prapta Bhabishya Nidhi Prakalpa (SASPFUW), meant for people below a monthly income of Rs 6500 (approx. $88.4) (Sanat, Personal Interview, January 2018). They often meet with fatalities. One of my informants, Roma lost her husband due to accident at his place of work and some others have talked about injuries during work (Roma, Personal Interview, February 2018; Monirul, Personal Interview, December 2017). Mother of young children are often put out of employment because their children are not allowed at the places of work. Their work is performed with bodily labour, and after incapacitation due to accidents, or reaching a certain age when bodies are naturally incapacitated, some of them fall back on savings, but a considerable number is reduced to begging and starvation.

Of all the informal workers, two groups, the rag pickers and the domestic workers face particularly humiliating work conditions. Domestic work is exploitative and involves humiliation. The work condition of the waste pickers is also precarious. They are among the lowest earning groups of all the informal workers. A survey conducted by TCS in 2008 on ragpickers of a sample size of about 700, puts their average daily income between Rs 30-60 (approx. $0.4-$0.8). Their monthly average income comes to around Rs 1500 (approx. $20.4) (“The Precarious Status of Ragpickers in Kolkata,” *The Calcutta Samritans & Action Aid*, n.d.). They work under threat from stray canines and harassment by the civic authorities including the officials of the CMC and the police. They face humiliating and derogatory treatment, verbal abuse as well as physical assault on an everyday basis. Now the CMC is installing Solid Waste Compactors (SWC) and the rag pickers are apprehensive of becoming jobless. At one of the pavement dwellings I have visited, Kheyalipur in south Calcutta, the homeless population have christened their dwelling place as Kangali lane. This translates into

Beggars lane. It indicates the social stigma attached to their work as waste pickers. Interaction with people in this area provided me with a sense of disdain, a lack of claim on the city and strong irony about the hardships of life.

They live a precarious existence, largely deprived of the legal and social rights of citizens. They often couch their demand for life and livelihood in the language of universal human rights rather than the rights of citizens of a nation state. Some of the Supreme Court judgements (from the mid-1980s till the mid-1990s) on the question of 'encroachment' in urban areas, reveal the way footloose labour migrants at urban margins articulate claims by recourse to human rights. An important court case which brought the issue of 'encroachment' on public space and eviction to wide public notice was the *Olga Tellis and Others v. Bombay Municipal Corporation and Others* case in 1985. The petitioners, a group of pavement dwellers and squatters, who had migrated to Bombay from adjoining rural areas, resorted to a court case against an eviction order issued by the Bombay Municipal Corporation (BMC). They contended that they have no option but to flock to big cities like Bombay, which provide them means of bare subsistence. They only choose a pavement or a slum which is nearest to their place of work. Thus, they petitioned that eviction amounts to depriving of their right to livelihood, which is comprehended in the right to life guaranteed by Article 21 of the Constitution. The Article 21 provides that no person shall be deprived of his life except according to procedure established by law. In a landmark judgement, the right to livelihood was read into the right to life of the Constitution for the first time. The Supreme Court thus considered

> The sweep of the right to life conferred by Article 21 is wide and far reaching. It does not mean merely that life cannot be extinguished or taken away as, for example, by the imposition and execution of the death sentence... That is but one aspect of the right to life. An equally important facet of that right is the right to livelihood because, no person can live without the means of living, that is, the means of livelihood. If the right to livelihood is not treated as a part of the constitutional right to life, the easiest way of depriving a person his right to life would be to deprive him of his means of livelihood to the point of abrogation. Such deprivation would not only denude the life of its effective content and meaningfulness but it would make life impossible to live… ("Olga Tellis and Others v. Bombay Municipal Corporation and Others," 1985, https://indiankanoon.org/doc/709776/)

The Court held that the respondents, BMC, must provide with alternative shelter to the petitioners before eviction from the pavements. A few judgements in the 1990s followed in this vein which read the right to shelter and right to livelihood into the right to life.[13] Other than the right to life, in different Supreme Court cases fought on the issue of 'encroachment' in urban areas, the petitioners have also invoked the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). It may be noted that the

fundamental right guaranteed by the Article 21 of the Indian Constitution and the UDHR applies to natural persons and can be appealed to by citizens and aliens alike. In articulating their claims in this manner, their rights as human beings are emphasised and human right become their avenue through which the rights of the citizen are sought.

But legal redress is often outside the reach of floating rural migrants who lack literacy and means to access the juridical machinery. Unless assisted by NGOs, they fail to resort to court cases to claim their rights. As noted in chapter three, from the late 1990s, the judiciary has increasingly turned away from such an approach. Now their roles as 'pollutants' and 'criminal' are highlighted to nullify their demands of shelter in the urban areas. Eviction without rehabilitation follow. The 'vagrant', the 'destitute', the 'pauper', the 'encroacher' or the stateless person are not valued as citizen-voters. They perpetually relocate and constitute a residual category of citizen. In such condition, their vulnerable bodies become the vehicle of enacting the demands of a livable life.

4.4. Conclusion

The *de jure* citizenship regime in India is in a process of contraction and socially disadvantaged dalit groups or the urban 'homeless' are faced with many challenges. Dalit migrant identity politics has consolidated in the face of recent ethnicisation of citizenship. There is an attempt to appropriate dalit history and identity within the Hindu fold in West Bengal. Identity politics of many of the dalit refugees is mediated by the mainstream Hindu ethno-religious chauvinism in attempts to separate their lot from the *anuprabeshkaris,* now meaning Muslim infiltrators. But my attempt has been to highlight that the social identity of the refugees still remains fluid and multifaceted. They retain a strong sense of caste based and linguistic solidarity which pull in contrary directions. The other group, peripatetic rural migrants variously labelled as 'encroachers' 'infiltrators' or 'homeless' have much less political clout. For the longest period of time, they have lived a status-less and stateless existence at the margins of legal as well as social citizenship. Their right as citizen-voters is devalued and their political participation is eroded. In course of the past two decades, NGO activism has empowered them to a certain extent and they now voice demands for entitlements of the urban poor. But they are still far from securing the most basic necessities of life like food, shelter, healthcare and survive through long term structural violence of poverty. Their sense of belonging to the nation is rarely expressed in terms of rightful or useful citizens. What prevails is a strong sense of irony.

Notes

[1] The question of property left behind by the displaced was an important aspect of this conflict. The property left behind by the Muslims in India, were often allotted to incoming Hindu refugees and there was no question of a simple return of this property to their erstwhile Muslim owners. The properties left behind by those fleeing were taken over by a government agency known as the Custodian of Evacuee Property. Attempts to control movement between India and Pakistan first through a system of permits and then through the introduction of passports in India, and the related provisions of 'evacuee property' and the category of 'intending evacuee' through which the property of Muslims were appropriated by the state all show how ethno-religious discrimination operated on the ground against the Muslims in India. For a detailed discussion, see (Zamindar 2007).

[2] The IMDT Act was operative exclusively in Assam. Determination of illegal or alien presence in Indian territory in general is done by the Foreigners Act 1946 and the rules of 1964. These two acts prescribed two contradictory modes of defining citizenship and identifying an alien or a foreigner. The IMDT Act reversed the process of identification provided in the Foreigners Act. Under the Foreigners Act it was the responsibility of the person suspected of being a foreigner or an illegal migrant to prove his or her identity. The IMDT Act shifted the onus of proof onto the 'applicant' claiming that a person was illegal migrant (Roy 2010, 105). Eventually the IMDT Act would be scrapped in 2005 by the Supreme Court of India.

[3] The All India Bharatiya Jana Sangh was established by Shyama Prasad Mukherjee who had earlier been a prominent leader of the Hindu Mahasabha. He left the Mahasabha to establish a new political party in 1951. Unlike the Hindu Mahasabha, the Jan Sangh aimed to widen its reach in order to strengthen their political clout. Its membership was not to be limited to the Hindus alone. It was to be open to all Indians and aimed to be the spearhead of nationalist forces in India (Andersen 1972, 725). From its inception, the Jan Sangh drew on Rastriya Swayamsevak Sangha (RSS) for its organisational cadre. The Jana Sangha reflected the aspirations of the Hindutva forces for a long time after independence. The plight of Hindu refugees in India and Hindu minorities in Pakistan became one of the main demands of the Jana Sangha. Another important demand was that Pakistan occupied Kashmir should be freed (K. Dasgupta 2020).

[4] The Ayodhya or Ram Janmabhumi movement started in the mid-1980s, in a town called Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh. Ayodhya is described in the Hindu tradition as the birthplace of god king lord Rama. The site was supposedly once occupied by a Rama temple, until it was destroyed in the sixteenth century by the first Mughal emperor Babur, and replaced by a mosque, now known as the Babri Masjid. In 1984, the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) called for this site to be returned to the Hindus by destroying the mosque. The BJP supported the movement, eventually leading to the demolition of the mosque in 1992. This was followed by widespread Hindu Muslim communal riots in different parts of the country.

[5] The epic Ramayana is tentatively dated to around 500 BCE to 100 BCE. It is traditionally attributed to the authorship of the sage Valmiki. The epic poem narrates the life of lord prince Rama of the kingdom of Kosala. The story of Ramayana has been retold many times in Sanskrit and regional languages. The Ramayana's characters now form part of the common speech and idiom in large parts of India and provide a religious ethical code of living for the Hindus. Ramlila or a short version of the epic of Ramayana is performed during the festival of Dussehra in North India. The epic has been adapted into TV series and films. Similarly, the other Indian epic, the Mahabharata, appeared in its present form tentatively between 400 BCE and 200 BCE (the dates of the epics are debated). While a text of the length of the Mahabharata could not have been written by one singe author, traditionally the sage Vyasa is said to be its author. The story of the epic revolves around the struggle between two branches of a family, the Kauravas and the Pandavas. It is regarded as a text of Hindu moral law and one recording the history of the Hindus. The Mahabharata includes Hindu cosmological stories and philosophical parables which teach Hindu philosophy. The Mahabharata includes Hinduism's most widely read scripture, the Bhagavad-Gita.

[6] According to the Indira Mujib Pact, all refugees who entered into India before March 25, 1971 were allowed to stay in India.

[7] It may be mentioned here that, a considerable number of grassroots organisations are agitating against the new Citizenship Amendment Act and the NRC in West Bengal. These include a host of student bodies and small political outfits like the No NRC Movement, Joint Forum Against NRC, Bandi Mukti Committee etc. Some of these like the Manabikata Mancha and Joint Action Committee for Bangali Refugees, Namasudra Vikas Parishad are dalit refugee organisations. The AITC faction of the Matua Mahasangha led by Mamata Bala Thakur has been opposing the recent amendment to the citizenship act and the prospects of an NRC. My research draws on NIBBUSS and the BJP faction of the Matua Mahasangha as they have gained a stronger presence in my filed site. It may be noted that NIBBUSS is the biggest contemporary all India Bengali refugee organisation which has branches in 18 Indian states. These two organisations also have a stronger presence in border areas like North 24 Parganas where BJP's agenda has been more successful.

[8] In February 2013, protests were held in Shahbag, Bangladesh with demands for harsher punishments for those who have conducted war crimes during the Bangladesh liberation war against *mukti joddhas* (freedom fighters). More specifically they were demanding more severe punishments for Abdul Quader Mollah, convicted for war crime by the International Crime Tribunal of Bangladesh.

[9] In the early 1930s the Matua organisation was known as the Sri Sri Harichand Mission. Pramatha Ranjan Thakur, was the first *shanghadhipati* or the organisational head of the institution appointed by Guruchand Thakur. He migrated to India after the partition and took the initiative to revive the organisation in West Bengal. But there were differences of opinion between Matua leadership in West Bengal. One group of the Matuas, formed a separate organisation, called the Harichand Seba Sangha in 1965. The two organisations functioned separately for over a decade. In 1980, the two

separate outfits merged to form the Harichand Matua Seba Sangha. In 1983, a change in the name of the central organisation was proposed and it was renamed as the Matua Mahasangha in 1986. The Mahasangha was registered in 1988, with its headquarters at Thakurnagar in North 24 Parganas (Sinharay 2015).

[10] From the late nineteenth century, the untouchable and peripheral groups within the Hindu caste system were enumerated in the British decennial censuses as the Depressed Classes. Later these groups were renamed as Scheduled Castes in the Government of India Act of 1935. As noted previously, the Scheduled Castes were provided reservation within a joint electorate by the Government of India Act of 1935. This classification has been continued by the Government of India after independence. The Constitution of India guarantees the rights of the Scheduled Castes under several provisions. The Constitution provides for proportionate reservation of seats for the Scheduled Castes and Schedules Tribes in different legislative bodies including the panchayats, the municipalities, the state legislatures and the national parliament. Seats are also reserved for them in educational institutions and public offices under the State.

[11] The first book to be published by the community was a hagiography of its founder, Harichand Thakur, *Sri Sri Harililamrita*. In an interesting study of Harichand Thakur's hagiography, Sipra Mukherjee has shown how the text of the hagiography underwent significant changes between the first edition in 1916 and later editions running into the 1990s. The debates centred around the attitude towards Vaishnava and Hindu influence on Matua dharma. Later editions of the text, included a genealogical table of Harichand Thakur's roots that claimed a Brahman as Harichand Thakur's ancestor. It included a story of how Harichand's ancestor had a caste Hindu birth, but lost caste status due to a morganatic marriage, as a punishment for disregarding societal rules (Sipra Mukherjee 2018).

[12] The Public Distribution Scheme (PDS), is a rationing system that provides food grains at subsidised rates, specially targeted at households below the Poverty Line.

[13] Mention may be made of the Chameli Singh and others v. State of U.P. and Another 1996 judgement, in the mid-1990s, which recognised that the right to shelter is integrally related to other basic rights to food, access to amenities which together constitute the 'right to life'; or the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation v. Nawab Khan Ghulab Khan and Other judgement which upheld similar rights for the urban poor (Roy 2010, 168).

Conclusion

In this thesis I have pursued two central thematic, displacement and citizenship. My contention has been that in post-colonial contexts displacements are an *endemic* condition for the urban poor. Such all-pervasive dislocations are most visibly at work at informal urban margins. Taking the cue from recent theories of informality (Ong 2006; Roy 2009) which explain informality as an integral part of state planning, I have tried to extend the same logic to understand forces of displacements. For this I have found useful the analytical lens of displaceability that captures this deliberateness of the process. Rather than thinking of displacement as an act, displaceability implies an overarching condition of marginal and informal urban living, whereby actual displacements or the impending threats thereof are utilised as an administrative tool to extract services from the urban poor. Displaceability opens up analytical insights into dislocations which are almost everyday occurrences, otherwise invisible and remain undiscussed. By highlighting the insidiousness and all pervasiveness of such processes, this study underscores that displacement is a broader and more endemic phenomena than conventionally granted.

Rather than taking the failure of refugee rehabilitation or migrants' lack of shelter as resulting from deficiencies of otherwise well intended development or rehabilitation plans, I have emphasised that the tenuous access of displaced people to their dwellings and associated weakening of citizenship are part of deliberate policy regimes. Furthermore, displaceability works in neoliberal contexts, but is not entirely explained by the logic of Structural Adjustment Programmes and the 'accumulation by dispossession' approach to contemporary displacements which foregrounds the role of the SAPs. Informal urbanism is not always causally tied to neoliberalism and neither are dislocations that ensue within such conditions. In my study I have found these processes at work from an earlier time, which have perhaps increased in intensity of late.

The first three chapters of the dissertation have addressed mechanisms of deliberate de-planning in its different manifestations with regard to the migrants. In the first chapter I have explored migration to Calcutta in the transitional decade of the 1940s and highlighted how a wide array of mobile people were categorised in keeping with the agendas of governance. Two labels were devised for classifying the migrants, 'sick destitutes' and 'evacuees'. The reality that did not fit the official grid of legibility were displaced. Such archival displacements have emerged as crucial for migration governance in the subsequent years. In chapters two and three, I have examined governance through *planned* informality by tracing the role of official tools of surveys and

enumeration with respect to two different migrant groups. In the immediate aftermath of the partition of 1947, the dalit refugees coming from East Bengal were enumerated and included within the fold of government policy. They were recognised as 'displaced persons' with the promise of rehabilitation. The religious partitioning of the Indian subcontinent on the basis of two-nation theory implied a historical debt the nation owed to the religious minorities displaced from the territory of the so called 'enemy' nation. The new Indian nation-state could not deny the promise of rehabilitation to the refugees coming from Pakistan. But I have shown, how over the years the legally recognised status of a large number of dalit refugees have been eroded through a process of state initiated informalisation. Informalisation operates as a graded regime. A considerable number of dalit refugees have succeeded in transforming their marginal social status through long drawn struggle, resisted informality and achieved varying degrees of formality. They have done so by way of the legalisation of their dwellings, by drawing benefits from protective discrimination, through securing jobs in the formal sector of the economy. But many dalit refugees live in the informal zones of indistinction. Their lives are informal, their dwellings are insecure and their political loyalties are controlled. The second case study presented in this thesis is of 'distress' migrants, dislocated due to long term structural violence of poverty. Their right to urban shelter has never been acknowledged. For them the state has followed a purposeful politics of non-enumeration. While they are not counted, they are *seen* in the official discourses through the images of illegality and crime which devalues their life and labour.

Zones of such purposeful informality foster the condition of displaceability. Displaceability emerges as a deliberate policy instrument. Displaceable migrants have a tenuous right to shelter and live through a series of interconnected deprivation that result from lack of housing rights. In this condition sometimes people are physically evicted for usurpation of land. More often, rather than actual displacement, the threat of displacement becomes an instrument of governance. The menacing prospect of eviction is used to extract a variety of political services depending on contextual power equation. However, subjects of state intervention are seldom passive recipients of policy. The meaning of displaceability is refracted by the aspirations and actions of the displaced.

For some of the dalit refugees, the condition of displaceability has emerged as 'grey-space' of temporary living, where they are stigmatised and socially ostracised. Here refugee agency manifests in oscillating between claiming to be rightful and deserving citizens by assuming a Hindu religious identity or by imagining non-normative collectives, drawing on the tropes of linguistic or caste based solidarities. For the rural 'homeless', displaceability is more coercive. It erodes their political

subjectivity and renders them into a disposable and bodily existence. They provide certain services for politics while themselves being excluded from the political. I have shown that rural migrants who are reduced to *mere* bodies, are political in a more basic sense and retain political agency at the level of the body. For groups whose voice do not register in the conventional political speaking order, forms of bodily communication, alliance and politics take precedence. Shifting focus from appeal to rational mind based cognitive capacities for political action taken to be characteristic of the political realm, this calls for re-imagination of the political in terms of embodiment.

Integrally tied to displaceability is the question of citizenship, addressed in chapter four. Displaceability has an inverse relation with citizenship. The more widespread and coercive its functioning, the weaker the migrants' claims to legal status as well as social rights of citizenship. Some of the dalit refugees have fought for their legal rights to be included within the nation, and acquired *de-jure* citizenship. However, the recent series of transformation to the Citizenship Act and the instrument of the NRC threatens a large number of migrants with disenfranchisement. This is perhaps the newest device which aims at large scale disenfranchisement. They are now experiencing communal polarisation around the politics of citizenship. The dalit refugees have started to couch their allegiances to the nation in terms of a Hindu religious identity. But feelings of solidarity based on caste and the Bengali language also surface in dalit identity politics. The footloose and impoverished migrants move from place to place to survive and it hinders their access to identification documents. For them the *de jure* status and legal rights of citizenship often remain in deferral. Their right to franchise is devalued, and they largely continue at the margins of mainstream politics. Social rights accruing to citizens has always been a matter of hard negotiation for the migrants. Legal and social citizenship interweave and ultimately involve a political question, and one form of deprivation leads to another. In the spectrum of the rights of citizens and aliens, socially disadvantaged migrants are placed at the very far end and constitute citizen-outsiders.

The experience of a large section of dalit East Bengali refugees and urban 'homeless' reveal citizenship not so much as an expression of equality, but a way of organising relations of superiority and hierarchical difference. The progressive notion attached to citizenship, which perhaps found its fullest modern expression in eighteenth century enlightenment (for example in Kant's Idea for a Universal History) and viewed citizenship as essential for the full realisation of human capacity, emerges as somewhat banal and full of vagaries in its post-colonial rendition. In many erstwhile colonies like India, citizenship was defined through its colonial encounter and subsequently in the context of violent and bloody partition of territories as new nation states emerged. Here all

subsequent ideas of political membership have been refracted particularly in and through ceaseless migration. In this thesis I have traced some of the disruption migration has caused to a sense of civic community, lying at the core of ideas of citizenship. The story of post-colonial citizenship and its relation to migration cannot be understood in terms of linear progression of migrants towards an emancipatory and universalising status of citizen, but needs to be told through its moments of rupture, crisis, and breaks.

Appendix I

Preliminary Questionnaire for *Namasudra* Refugees

Identifiers

Name

Place of residence

Approx. age

Occupation

Details of family members

Migration History

Place of origin in East Bengal

Occupation and property ownership in East Bengal

Memory of ancestral home

Date of leaving East Bengal

Reason for Migration

If any movable assets brought at the time of migration

Persisting connection with Bangladesh

Struggle for rehabilitation

Memory of migration

Experience of taking shelter in government camps

Description of the physical camp area

Organisation of the camps and camp committees

Local leadership

Assistance from government regarding rehabilitation

Relation with political parties and welfare organisations

Relation with middle class refugee movement

Relation with the police

Modes of protest

Occupation and income

Organisation the squat and housing condition

Materials used for building homes

Access to public spaces (like temples, clubs etc) in the camp area

Celebration of different pujas in the camps and other social functions

Struggle for legalisation of the dwellings

Rights and entitlements

Access to identification documents

Access to caste certificates

Access to road, water, electricity and other amenities

Education and healthcare

Access to government schemes for urban poor

Social identification and sense of belonging

Participation in politics and citizenship

Demands regarding citizenship

Views on CAA and NRC

Participation in political meetings and rallies on citizenship

Strategy of alliances with other refugee organisations

Preliminary Questionnaire for Peripatetic Rural Migrants

Identifiers

Name

Place of residence

Approx. age

Occupation

Details of family members

Migration History and Rural ties

Place of origin

Family occupation

Memory of ancestral home

Property ownership

Time of migration from the village

Reason for Migration

Contacts for migration to urban areas

Persisting connection with villages

Visits to villages

Housing condition and evictions

Materials used for building homes

Experiences of eviction

Promise of rehabilitation

Contacts for retuning after evictions

Formation of committees for organising to fight for their rights

Relation with neighbouring slum dwellers

Work and income

Nature of work

Contact for work

Location of work

Income

NGO activism

Work done by NGOs

Participation in NGO work

Rights and entitlements

Access to identification documents

Access to government welfare schemes

Access to basic urban amenities including food, shelter, health care and education

Participation in politics and citizenship

Role of political parties and political mobilisation

Alliances with political parties, NGOs, other groups

Franchise

Relation with the local police

Relation with the Calcutta corporation and town planning bodies

Views on CAA and NRC

Social identification and sense of belonging

Appendix II

Interviews

List of semi-structured, recorded interviews with dalit East Bengali refugees, and leaders of dalit refugee organisations.

Respondent	**Date**
Kartik	December 2015
Ganesh	December 2015
Guruchand	February 2016
Pramatha	February 2016, April 2019, June 2019
Shyam	February 2016
Sobhanath	February 2016
Sunil	February 2016
Naren	February 2016
Jogen	February 2016
Anukul	February 2016
Shibdas	January 2017
Bishnu	February 2017
Rajan	February 2017
Laxmi	February 2017
Rina	November 2017
Bindu	December 2017
Nitai	June 2019
Shyamal	June 2019
Deben	December 2019

Bipul	October 2020
Shantanu	January 2021
Prasanta	January 2021
Anupama	January 2021
Samiran	January 2021
Kakoli	February 2021

List of semi structured, recorded interviews with 'homeless' families in Calcutta and their local leaders, councillors, activists and NGO workers.

Respondent	**Date**
Anwar	December 2017, January 2018
Tanjum	December 2017
Amina	December 2017
Joush	December 2017
Monirul	December 2017, January 2018
Rinki	December 2017
Imran	December 2017
Nusrat Bibi	December 2017
Hasina	December 2017
Tamanna	December 2017
Marina	December 2017
Sanjib	December 2017
Suman	December 2017
Sabir	December 2017
Sobha	January 2018
Parimal	January 2018, February 2018
Monali	January 2018
Sarmistha	January 2018
Ratna	January 2018

Kanak	January 2018
Roma	February 2018
Ratan	February 2018
Simanta	February 2018
Kainat	January 2018
Shirin	January 2018
Rabia	January 2018
Umra	January 2018
Nurul	January 2018
Sukumar	January 2018
Nirman	January 2018
Sayan	January 2018
Ashis	February 2018
Madhuri	February 2018
Sabita	March 2018
Gaur	February 2018

Apart from these voices, informal conversations and semi-structured, non-recorded interviews with other community actors also took place.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Files of the Special Branch, Calcutta Police, Calcutta Police Museum

Calcutta Police, Special Branch, KPM No SB/02658/05, File No PM 510/42, 1942.

Calcutta Police, Special Branch, KPM No SB/01569/05, File no PM/ 757/A/42, 1942.

Calcutta Police, Special Branch, "KPM No /SB/01646/05, File No PM 841/45," 1945.

Calcutta Police, Special Branch, KPM No SB/01814/05, File no PM 937/46, 1946.

Calcutta Police, Special Branch, KPM No SB/01817/05, File No PM/938/46/I, 1946.

Calcutta Police, Special Branch, KPM No SB/01794/05, File No PM 918/46-48, 1946-1948.

Calcutta Police, Special Branch, KPM No SB/01655/05, File No PM 845/46, 1946.

Calcutta Police, Special Branch, "KPM No SB/01647/05, File No PM 841/46/1," 1946.

Calcutta Police, Special Branch, "KPM No SB/01648/05, File No PM 841/46 II," 1947.

Calcutta Police, Special Branch, KPM No SB/01648/05, File No PM 841/46II, 1946-1948.

Published Reports

"Administrative Report for the Year 1942-43." 1943. Calcutta: Corporation of Calcutta.

"Administrative Report for the Year 1942-43, Annual Report, Health Department." 1943. Calcutta: Corporation of Calcutta.

"Administrative Report for the Year 1945-46." 1946. Calcutta: Corporation of Calcutta.

"Administrative Report for the Year 1950-51, Annual Report, Health Department." 1951. Calcutta: Corporation of Calcutta.

"Annual Report on the Operation of the Calcutta Improvement Trust for the Year 1950." 1950. Calcutta: Calcutta Improvement Trust.

"Annual Report on the Operation of the Calcutta Improvement Trust for the Year 1960." 1960. Calcutta: Calcutta Improvement Trust.

"Being with Nothing: A Report on the Condition of Homeless Population of Kolkata." 2007. Kolkata: The Calcutta Samaritans & Action Aid.

"Census Operations." 2010. Office of The Registrar General & Census Commissioner, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India. 2011 2010. https://censusindia.gov.in/Data_Products/Library/Indian_perceptive_link/Census_Operation_link/censusoperation.htm.

"Factors Impacting Non-Agricultural Employment Growth: A Study in West Bengal." 2013. IAMR Report No 6/2013, Institute of Applied Manpower Research, Planning Commission, Government of India.

Government of India. n.d. "Constitution of India, Part II, Citizenship." Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. https://www.mea.gov.in/Images/pdf1/Part2.pdf.

"Imagined Homes: Homeless People Envision Shelter." 2011. Kolkata: The Calcutta Samaritans & Action Aid.

"Impact Assessment Report on Intervention under Project Titled: An Alliance to Address the Issue of Urban Homeless and Unregistered Slums in Kolkata." n.d. Kolkata: The Calcutta Samaritans & Action Aid.

"Living on the Edge: Women on the Streets of Calcutta." 2008. Kolkata: The Calcutta Samaritans.

"On Rehabilitation of Displaced Persons from East Pakistan Living at Bahirdoba Group of Ex-Camp Sites in West Bengal, 6th Report." 1971. Committee of Review of Rehabilitation Work in West Bengal, Ministry of Labour Employment and Rehabilitation, Government of India.

"Our Homeless Children, Forgotten and Highly Vulnerable: Vulnerability Mapping of Homeless Children and Young Adults of Kolkata." 2013. Kolkata: The Calcutta Samaritans.

"Periodic Labour Force Survey 2017-2018." 2019. Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India. http://www.mospi.gov.in/sites/default/files/publication_reports/Annual%20Report%2C%20PLFS%202017-18_31052019.pdf

"Refugee Rehabilitation Committee's Report." 1981. Kolkata: Refugee, Relief & Rehabilitation Department, Government of West Bengal.

Report Compiled by Director of Rationing, West Bengal. n.d. "Public Distribution System in West Bengal: An Overview." Government of West Bengal. https://wbpds.gov.in/writereaddata/TrainingMaterials/PDS%20network%20in%20WB%20-%20An%20Overview.pdf.

"Report of the Joint Committee on the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016." 2019. New Delhi: Sixteenth Lok Sabha, Lok Sabha Secretariat. https://www.prsindia.org/sites/default/files/bill_files/Joint%20committee%20report%20on%20citizenship%20%28A%29%20bill.pdf.

"Report on Rehabilitation of Displaced Persons from East Pakistan at Ex-Camp Sites in West Bengal." 1969. Committee of Review of Rehabilitation Work in West Bengal, Ministry of Labour Employment and Rehabilitation, Government of India.

"Report on the Survey in Relation to Unorganised Workers." 2013. Kolkata: Sristi For Human Society, The Calcutta Samaritan, Action Aid.

"The Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2003." 2004. The Gazette of India, Ministry of Law and Justice, Government of India. http://egazette.nic.in/WriteReadData/2004/E_7_2011_119.pdf.

"The Famine Inquiry Commission: Report on Bengal." 1945. Government of India.

"The Precarious Status of Ragpickers in Kolkata." n.d. Kolkata: The Calcutta Samaritans & Action Aid.

"The Urban Alliance for Addressing Rights of Homeless in Kolkata, Programme Strategic Plan." 2007. Kolkata: The Calcutta Samaritans.

Census of India, 1951-2011

Secondary Sources

Aajkaal. 2003. “Khalpar: Taka Pacchen Ucchinnora,” April 24, 2003.

Agamben, Giorgio. 1998. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press.

Agarwala, Rina. 2013. *Informal Labor, Formal Politics, and Dignified Discontent in India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Anandabazar Patrika. 1951. “Jami Pherot Paoyar Proshno,” April 20, 1951.

———. 1954. “Land as Compensation for Acquired Land:,” January 31, 1954.

———. 1955. “Discontent over Land Acquisition Notice in Rajarhat,” May 3, 1955.

———. 1956a. “Poor Example of Refugee Rehabilitation in Bagjola,” April 9, 1956.

———. 1956b. “Pitiable Plights of the Refugees in Bagjola,” September 29, 1956.

———. 2003. “Khalpar Er Manush Ke Garden Reach e Flat Debe Rajya,” January 23, 2003.

———. 2007. “Shilpamahalke Park, Footpath ‘Dattak’ Purosabhar,” April 26, 2007.

———. 2018. “Lagbe 700, Ache 3 Ti Noishabash,” March 3, 2018.

———. 2019a. “12 Lokkho Hindu r Naam Baad: Pyanch e BJP,” September 12, 2019.

———. 2019b. “Kono Bhagabhagi Korte Debona, Rajye NRC Hobena,” October 22, 2019. https://www.anandabazar.com/state/mamata-banerjee-says-she-will-not-allow-nrc-in-bengal-1.1061297.

———. 2019c. “NRC Hobe I Bonge: Baad Jabe 2 Koti: Dilip,” December 9, 2019.

Anandabazar Patrika, Hawker Sangram Committee Archive. 2001. “Juvenile Boarder Ray Sattyeo Anishchit Punarbasan,” June 24, 2001.

———. 2003. “Kagojkurani Ucchede Abhijan,” August 20, 2003.

———. 2005. “Du Saptaha Somay Dilo Court: Pher Ucched Er Pothe Lake Er Railcolony,” 2005.

Andersen, Walter. 1972. “The Rastriya Swayamsevak Sangh: IV: Jan Sangh and Other Organisations.” *Economic and Political Weekly* 7 (14): 724–27.

Anderson, Benedict R. O’G. 2006. *Imagined Cmmunities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Rev. ed. London ; New York: Verso.

Appadurai, A. 2001. “Deep Democracy: Urban Governmentality and the Horizon of Politics.” *Environment and Urbanization* 13 (2): 23–43. https://doi.org/10.1177/095624780101300203.

Appadurai, Arjun. 2006. *Fear of Small Numbers: An Essay on the Geography of Anger*. Public Planet Books. Durham: Duke University Press.

Appadurai, Arjun, and James Holston. 1996. “Cities and Citizenship.” *Public Culture* 8 (2): 187–204.

Arendt, Hannah. 1958. *The Human Condition*. Chicago & London: The Univeristy of Chocago Press.

Axel, Brian Keith, ed. 2002. *From the Margins: Historical Anthropology and Its Futures*. Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press.

Badri Narayan. 2009. *Fascinating Hindutva: Saffron Politics and Dalit Mobilisation*. Los Angeles: SAGE.

Bagchi, Debarati. 2016. "Street Dwelling and City Space: Women Waste Pickers in Kolkata." *Economic and Political Weekly* LI (26 & 27).

Bakhle, Janaki. 2010. "Country First? Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (1883-1966) and the Writing of Essentials of Hindutva." *Public Culture* 21 (1): 149–86.

Bandyopadhyay, Hiranmay. 1970. *Ubdastu*. Calcutta: Deep Prakashan.

Bandyopadhyay, Ritajyoti. 2016. "Institutionalizing Informality: The Hawkers' Question in Post-Colonial Calcutta." *Modern Asian Studies* 50 (02): 675–717. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X1400064X.

Bandyopadhyay, Sekhar. 2004. *From Plassey to Partition: A History of Modern India*. New Delhi: Orient Longman.

———. 2009. "Partition and the Ruptures in Dalit Identity Politics in Bengal." *Asian Studies Review* 33 (4): 455–67. https://doi.org/10.1080/10357820903363736.

———. 2011. *Caste, Protest and Identity in Colonial India: The Namasudras of Bengal, 1872-1947*. 2nd ed. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Bandyopadhyay, Sekhar, and Anasua Basu Ray Chaudhury. 2014. "In Search of Space: The Scheduled Caste Movement in West Bengal after Partition." *Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group, Policies and Practices 59*, 1–22.

Banerjee, Paula, Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury, Samir Kumar Das, and Bishnu Adhikari, eds. 2005. *Internal Displacement in South Asia: The Relevance of the UN's Guiding Principles*. New Delhi ; Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications.

Bartaman. 2003. "Beliaghata Khaler Dhare Jhupri Ucched Shuri Kaal Theke," December 14, 2003.

Bartaman, Hawker Sangram Committee Archive. 2000. "Tali Nala Sanskar Hoyni, Othano Jayni Dakhaldarder, Kendrer 30 Koti Taka Pore," October 30, 2000. Hawker Sangram Committee Archive.

Bates, Crispin. 2000. *Coerced and Migrant Labourers in India the Colonial Experience*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh university. Centre for South Asian studies.

Batra, Lalit, and Diya Mehra. 2008. "The Demolition of Slums and the Production of Neoliberal Space in Delhi." In *Inside the Transforming Urban Asia: Processes, Policies, and Public Actions*, edited by Darshini Mahadevia. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company.

Bauböck, Rainer. 1994. *Transnational Citizenship: Membership and Rights in International Migration*. Aldershot, Hants, England ; Brookfield, Vt: E. Elgar.

Baviskar, Amita. 2003. "Between Violence and Desire: Space, Power, and Identity in the Making of Metropolitan Delhi." *International Social Science Journal* 55 (175): 89–98.

Benhabib, Seyla. 2007. "Twilight of Sovereignty or the Emergence of Cosmopolitan Norms? Rethinking Citizenship in Volatile Times." *Citizenship Studies* 11 (1): 19–36. https://doi.org/10.1080/13621020601099807.

Benjamin, Solomon. 2008. "Occupancy Urbanism: Radicalizing Politics and Economy beyond Policy and Programs: Debates and Developments." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 32 (3): 719–29. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2427.2008.00809.x.

Bhan, Gautam. 2009. "'This Is No Longer the City I Once Knew'. Evictions, the Urban Poor and the Right to the City in Millennial Delhi." *Environment and Urbanization* 21 (1): 127–42. https://doi.org/10.1177/0956247809103009.

Bhattacharya, Sanjoy, and Benjamin Zachariah. 1999. "'A Great Destiny': The British Colonial State and the Advertisement of Post-War Reconstruction in India, 1942-45." *South Asia Research* 19 (1): 71–100. https://doi.org/10.1177/026272809901900105.

Bhiteharar Lorai, Nikhil Bharat Bangali Udbastu Samanway Samity. 2012a. "Adhikarer Dabite Nikhil Bharat Sangathan Er Bhumika," March 31, 2012.

———. 2012b. "Guwahati-Te Candle March," March 31, 2012.

———. 2016a. "Kolkata Biswabidyalay e Nikhil Bharat Bangali Udbastu Samanyay Samity r Sabha," February 2016.

———. 2016b. "Nagarikotto Kalo Ain 2003 Er Songsodhan Er Dabite Poschim Bonge Jagarani Sabha," February 2016.

———. 2016c. "Amader Dabi," June 2016.

———. 2016d. "Orakandi Theke Thakurnagar," June 2016.

Bose, Sugata. 1986. *Agrarian Bengal: Economy, Social Structure, and Politics, 1919-1947*. Cambridge South Asian Studies 36. Cambridge [Cambridgeshire] ; New York: Cambridge University Press.

Butler, Judith. 2015. *Notes Towards a Performative Theory of Assembly*. Cambridge, Massachusetts; London: Harvard University Press.

Byapari, Manoranjan. 2012. *Itibritte Chandal Jivan*. Kolkata: Kolkata Prakashan.

Chakrabarti, Prafulla K. 1999. *The Marginal Men: The Refugees and the Left Political Syndrome in West Bengal*. Calcutta: Naya Udyog.

Chakrabarty, Dipesh. 2000a. “Remembered Villages: Representations of Hindu Bengali Memories in the Aftermath of the Partition.” In *Inventing Boundaries: Gender, Politics and the Partition of India*, edited by Mushirul Hasan. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

———. 2000b. *Rethinking Working-Class History: Bengal 1890-1940*. 2nd print., 1st pbk print. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Chatterjee, Ipsita. 2014. *Displacement, Revolution, and the New Urban Condition: Theories and Case Studies*. New Delhi: SAGE.

Chatterjee, Nilanjana. 1992. “Midnight’s Unwanted Children: East Bengali Refugees and the Politics of Rehabilitation.” Unpublished PhD thesis, Providence, Rhode Island: Brown University.

Chatterjee, Partha. 1986. “The Colonial State and Peasant Resistance in Bengal: 1920-1947.” *Past & Present*, no. 110 (February): 169–204.

———. 1993a. *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

———. 1993b. *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*. Princeton Studies in Culture/Power/History. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press.

———. 2004. *Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Chatterjee, Salil. 2018. Personal Interview.

Chatterji, Joya. 1994. *Bengal Divided: Hindu Communalism and Partition, 1932-1947*. Cambridge South Asian Studies. Cambridge, [England] ; New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press.

———. 2007a. *The Spoils of Partition: Bengal and India, 1947-1967*. Cambridge Studies in Indian History and Society 15. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press.

———. 2007b. “‘Dispersal’ and the Failure of Rehabilitation: Refugee Camp-Dwellers and Squatters in West Bengal.” *Modern Asian Studies* 41 (05): 995. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X07002831.

Chattopadhyay, Swati. 2000. “Blurring Boundaries: The Limits of ‘White Town’ in Colonial Calcutta.” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 59 (2): 154–79.

———. 2009. “‘Bourgeois Utopias’? : The Rhetoric of Globality in the Contemporary Suburban Landscape of Calcutta.” *Centre for East and South-East Asian Studies, Lund University.* Working papers in contemporary Asian studies (30).

Chaudhuri, Jayasri Ray. 1992. “Migration Linkage of a New Town and Its Significance in Town Planning.” *Modern Asian Studies* 26 (02): 209. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X00009768.

Chaudhuri, Pranati. 1983. “Refugees in West Bengal: A Study of the Growth and Distribution of Refugee Settlements Within the CMD.” In Occasional Paper No 55. Calcutta: Centre for Studies in Social Sciences.

Clark, Peter. ed. 2013. *The Oxford Handbook of Cities in World History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cohn, Bernard S. 1987. *An Anthropologist Among the Historians and Other Essays*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.

Cooper, Frederick. 2014. *Citizenship Between Empire and Nation: Remaking France and French Africa, 1945-1960*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Copland, Ian. 2002. “Crucibles of Hindutva? V.D. Savarkar, the Hindu Mahasabha, and the Indian Princely States.” *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 25 (3): 211–34. https://doi.org/10.1080/00856400208723499.

“Daliyo Rang Dekhe Garibder Abasan Nay: Buddha.” 2004. *Sangbad Pratidin, Hawker Sangram Committee Archive*, August.

Das, Samir Kumar. 2019. “Governing Citizens: National Register of Citizens (NRC) and the Question of Migration in India.” *Calcutta Research Group*, Policies and Practices, 109 (December): 1–19.

Das, Suranjan. 1993. *Communal Riots in Bengal 1905 - 1947*. Oxford University South Asian Studies Series. Delhi: Oxford Univ. Press.

Das, Tarakchandra. 1949. *Bengal Famine (1943): As Revealed in a Survey of the Destitutes in Calcuta*. Calcutta: University of Calcutta.

Dasgupta, Koushiki. 2020. *Electoral Politics and Hindu Nationalism in India: The Bharatiya Jana Sangh, 1951-1971*. Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, NY: Routledge.

Dasgupta, Ranajit. 1976. “Factory Labour in Eastern I Ndia: Sources of Supply, 1855-1946 Some Preliminary Findings.” *The Indian Economic & Social History Review* 13 (3): 277–329. https://doi.org/10.1177/001946467601300301.

Datta, Partho. 2012. *Planning the City: Urbanization and Reform in Calcutta, c. 1800-c. 1940*. New Delhi: Tulika Books.

Datta, Pranati. 2004. “Push-Pull Factors of Undocumented Migration from Bangladesh to West Bengal: A Perception Study.” *The Qualitative Report, Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata* 9 (2): 335–58.

Davis, Mike. 2004. “Planet of Slums: Urban Involution and the Informal Proletariat.” *New Left Review* 26: 5–34.

Dey, Ishita, Ranabir Samaddar, and Suhit K. Sen. 2013. *Beyond Kolkata: Rajarhat and the Dystopia of Urban Imagination*. Cities and the Urban Imperative. London: Routledge.

Dey, Tamal K. 1999. *Chittaranjan Colony r Itihash*. Calcutta: Chittaranjan Colony Committee, Jadavpur.

Dirks, Nicholas B. 2001. *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press.

Drèze, Jean. 2017. *Sense and Solidarity: Jholawala Economics for Everyone*. Ranikhet: Permanent Black.

Dupont, Véronique. 2008. "Slum Demolitions in Delhi since the 1990s: An Appraisal." *Economic and Political Weekly* 43 (28): 79–87.

Dutta, Debabrata. 2001. *Vijaygarh Ekti Udbastu Upanibesh*. Progressive Publishers.

Dutta, Tejendralal. 2011. *Udbastu Andolaner Smriti Chitra*. Kolkata: Pratyay.

Fernandes, Leela. 2004. "The Politics of Forgetting: Class Politics, State Power and the Restructuring of Urban Space in India." *Urban Studies* 41 (12): 2415–30. https://doi.org/10.1080/00420980412331297609.

Foucault, Michel. 1998. *The Will to Knowledge: History of Sexuality*. Translated by Robert Hurley. Amended reprint. Vol. 1. London: Penguin Books.

———. 2003. *"Society Must Be Defended": Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-1976.* Macmillan.

Fuller, C. J. 2016. "Colonial Anthropology and the Decline of the Raj: Caste, Religion and Political Change in India in the Early Twentieth Century." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 26 (3): 463–86. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1356186315000486.

Ganguly, Indu Baran. 1997. *Colony Smriti*. Calcutta: Indu Baran Ganguly.

Ghertner, D. Asher. 2011. "Rule by Aesthetics: World-Class City Making in Delhi." In *Worlding Cities: Asian Experiments and the Art of Being Global*, edited by Ananya Roy and Aihwa Ong, 279–306. Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Government of India. n.d. "Constitution of India, Part II, Citizenship." Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. https://www.mea.gov.in/Images/pdf1/Part2.pdf.

Greenough, Paul R. 1980. "Indian Famines and Peasant Victims: The Case of Bengal in 1943–44." *Modern Asian Studies* 14 (2): 205–35. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X00007319.

Haan, Arjan de. 1994. *Unsettled Settlers: Migrant Workers and Industrial Capitalism in Calcutta*. Vol. 17. Uitgeverij Verloren, 1994.

Halder, Sudhir Ranjan. 2016. "Dwicharitay Matuadharma." *Dalit Shahitya, Matua Shahitya O Manabatabadi Dharma*. http://dalitliteratures.blogspot.com/2017/02/dwicharitay-matuyadharma.html.

Hansen, Thomas Blom. 1999. *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Harvey, David. 2009. “The ‘New’ Imperialism: Accumulation by Dispossession.” *Socialist Register* 40 (40): 63–87.

Hawker Sangram Committee. 2004. “Khalpar/Jhupri/Railpar Basindader Samikkha Patro.” Survey. Kolkata.

Hawker Sangram Committee Archive. 2009. “Agami Bochor e Kestopur Khal e Launch Chalu,” 2009.

Hindusthan Times. 2018. “2005 and Now: Mamata Banerjee’s U-Turn on Bangladeshi Immigrants,” February 8, 2018. https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/2005-and-now-mamata-banerjee-s-u-turn-on-bangladeshi-immigrants/story-6b8nRIst7BjZs4QWSXi0jN.html).

Hindusthan Times, Hawker Sangram Committee Archive. 2000. “CMC Fears Ragpickers More Than Hawkers,” October 21, 2000.

Holston, James. 2008. *Insurgent Citizenship: Disjunctions of Democracy and Modernity in Brazil*. Information Series. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press.

Jaffrelot, Christophe, ed. 2009. *Hindu Nationalism: A Reader*. 1. paperback printing. Ranikhet, Cantt: Permanent Black.

Jagannathan, Vijay N, and Animesh Halder. 1988a. “A Case Study of Pavement Dwellers in Calcutta: Occupation, Mobility and Rural-Urban Linkages.” *Economic and Political Weekly* 23 (49): 2602–5.

———. 1988b. “Income Housing Linkages: A Case Study of Pavement Dwellers in Calcutta.” *Economic and Political Weekly* 23 (23): 1175–78.

———. 1989. “A Case Study of Pavement Dwellers in Calcutta: Family Characteristics of the Urban Poor.” *Economic and Political Weekly* 24 (6): 315–18.

Jayal, Niraja Gopal. 2013. *Citizenship and Its Discontents: An Indian History*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

Joppke, Christian. 1999. “How Immigration Is Changing Citizenship: A Comparative View.” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 22 (4): 629–52. https://doi.org/10.1080/014198799329323.

Jugantar. 1943a. “Muslim Byabosayi Samitir Seba,” March 9, 1943.

———. 1943b. “Mondo Bitorone Somosya,” May 8, 1943.

———. 1943c. “Sraddhananda Parke Sosta Bhojanalay,” May 8, 1943.

———. 1943d. “Kolkatar Pothe Ghyat Bitoroner Siddhanta,” July 27, 1943.

———. 1943e. “Kolkatar Pothe Mritodeho,” July 27, 1943.

———. 1943f. “Aro 9 Jon Bhabaghure Greftar,” August 13, 1943.

———. 1943g. “Kolkatar Sastha Hani,” August 21, 1943.

———. 1954. “Usurpation of Peasant’s Paddy Land: Local Discontent,” January 23, 1954.

"Kolkata Municipal Corporation Launches `Clean City` Campaign." 2014. News. *All India Trinamool Congress*. http://aitcofficial.org/aitc/kolkata-municipal-corporation-launches-clean-city-campaign/.

Kron, Stefanie, and Henrik Lebuhn. 2018. "Solidarity Cities: Global Social Rights and the Right to Mobility." Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung. *RLS-Publications* (blog). October 2018. https://www.rosalux.de/en/publication/id/39274/solidarity-cities-global-social-rights-and-the-right-to-mobility-1/.

Lefebvre, Henri. 1992. *The Production of Space*. Translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith. Nachdr. Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell.

Lucassen, Leo. 2013. "Population and Migration." In *The Oxford Handbook of Cities in World History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lucassen, Jan, and Leo Lucassen. 2014. *Globalising Migration History: The Eurasian Experience (16th-21st Centuries*. Leiden: Brill.

Lorea, Carola Erika. 2020. "Contesting Multiple Borders: Bricolage Thinking and Matua Narratives on the Andaman Islands." *Southeast Asian Studies* 9 (2): 231–76.

Majumdar, Bimal. 2018. "Talk by Bimal Majumdar." *Displacements Kolkata*. https://www.facebook.com/calynn.dowler/videos/10100449383883084/.

Majumdar, Sohini. 2015. "A Different Calcutta: INA Trials and Hindu Muslim Solidarity in 1945 and 1946." In *Calcutta: The Stormy Decades*, Tanika Sarkar, Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, 235–66. New Delhi: Social Science Press.

Mallick, Ross. 2008. *Development Policy of a Communist Government: West Bengal since 1977*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mandal, Nalini Ranjan. 2015. *Khandito Desh Er Sangrami Bangali*. Kolkata: Nikhil Bharat Prakashani.

Mandar, Harsh, and Smita Jacob. 2010. "Homeless Death on the Streets." New Delhi: Centre for Equity Studies. https://www.hlrn.org.in/documents/Homeless_Deaths_Streets.pdf.

Marshall, Thomas Humphrey. 1950. *Citizenship and Social Class, and Other Essays*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mbembe, Achille. 1992. "Provisional Notes on the Postcolony." *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 62 (1): 3–37.

Mongia, Radhika. 2018. *Indian Migration and Empire*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Mujahid, Sharif Al. 1999. "Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and Muslim Nationalism in India." *Islamic Studies* 38 (1): 87–101.

Mukherjee, Janam. 2011. "Hungry Bengal: War, Famine, Riots and the End of Empire 1939-1946." Ann Arbor: University of Michigan.

———. 2015. *Hungry Bengal: War, Famine and the End of Empire*. London: Hurst.

Mukherjee, Jenia. 2016. “The Adi Ganga: A Forgotten River in Bengal.” *Economic and Political Weekly* 51 (8).

Mukherjee, Sekhar. 2001. “Low Quality Migration in India: The Phenomena of Distressed Migration and Acute Urban Decay.” 24th IUSSP Conference, Salvador, Brazil, August.” Brazil. https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/7daa/85187cc34aea7b64739618402e8a8d5c7a85.pdf.

Mukherjee, Sipra. 2018. “In Opposition and Allegiance to Hinduism: Exploring the Bengali Matua Hagiography of Harichand Thakur.” *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 41 (2): 435–51. https://doi.org/10.1080/00856401.2018.1445400.

Nakazato, Nariaki. 2015. “The Role of Colonial Administration, ‘Riot Systems’ and the Local Networks during the Calcutta Disturbances of August 1946.” In *Calcutta: The Stormy Decades*, Tanika Sarkar, Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, 267–319. New Delhi: Social Science Press.

NEWZBangla. 2012. “Kolkata Sajbe Notunbhabe,” May 1, 2012.

Ong, Aihwa. 2006. *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty*. Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press.

Padhi, Ranjana. 2007. “Forced Evictions and Factory Closures: Rethinking Citizenship and Rights of Working Class Women in Delhi.” *Indian Journal of Gender Studies* 14 (1): 73–92. https://doi.org/10.1177/097152150601400105.

Paul, Sadananda. 2009. *Eka Kumbha: Ak Udbastu Kumbhakarer Maatimakha Athyakatha*. Kolkata: Camp.

Pokhrel, Neeta. 2016. “Our Water-Sensitive, Climate-Resilient Dream for Kolkata.” *Asian Development Blog* (blog). December 27, 2016. https://blogs.adb.org/blog/our-water-sensitive-climate-resilient-dream-kolkata.

Rabben, Linda. 2011. *Give Refuge to the Stranger: The Past, Present, and Future of Sanctuary*. Walnut Creek, Calif: Left Coast Press.

Rajat, and Ratna Ray. 1975. “Zamindars and Jotedars: A Study of Rural Politics in Bengal.” *Modern Asian Studies* 9 (01): 81. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X00004881.

Ramanathan, Usha. 2006. “Illegality and the Urban Poor.” *Economic and Political Weekly* 41 (July): 3193–97.

Rao, Aparna, ed. 1987. *The Other Nomads: Peripatetic Minorities in Cross-Cultural Perspective*. Kölner Ethnologische Mitteilungen; Bd. 8. Köln: Böhlau.

Ray, Manas. 2002. “Growing Up Refugee.” *History Workshop Journal*, no. 53: 149–79.

Rogaly, Ben. 1994. “Rural Labour Arrangements in West Bengal, India.” Oxford: Oxford University.

Rogaly, Ben, Daniel Coppard, Kumar Rana, Abdur Rafique, Amrita Sengupta, and Jhuma Biswas. 2003. “Seasonal Migration, Employer-Worker Interactions, and Shifting Ethnic Identities in Contemporary West Bengal.” *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 37 (1 & 2).

Rogaly, Ben. 2009. “Spaces of Work and Everyday Life: Labour Geographies and the Agency of Unorganised Temporary Migrant Workers: Spaces of Work and Everyday Life.” *Geography Compass* 3 (6): 1975–87.

Rotter, Rebecca. 2010. “Hanging In-between’: Experiences of Waiting among Asylum Seekers Living in Glasgow.” Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh.

Roy, A. 2009. “Why India Cannot Plan Its Cities: Informality, Insurgence and the Idiom of Urbanization.” *Planning Theory* 8 (1): 76–87. https://doi.org/10.1177/1473095208099299.

Roy, Ananya. 2003. *City Requiem, Calcutta: Gender and the Politics of Poverty*. Globalization and Community 10. Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press.

———. 2004. “The Gentleman’s City: Urban Informality in the Calcutta of New Communism.” In *Urban Informality: Transnational Perspectives from the Middle East, Latin America and South Asia*, edited by Ananya Roy and Nezar AlSayyad, 147–70. Lanham: Lexington Books.

Roy, Ananya, and Nezar AlSayyad, eds. 2004. *Urban Informality: Transnational Perspectives from the Middle East, Latin America, and South Asia*. Transnational Perspectives on Space and Place. Lanham, Md. : Berkeley, Calif: Lexington Books ; Center for Middle Eastern Studies, University of California at Berkeley.

Roy, Anupama. 2010. *Mapping Citizenship in India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Sailer, Anna. 2015. “When Mill Sirens Rang Out Danger: The Calcutta June Mill Belt in the Second World War.” In , 121–50. New Delhi: Social Science Press.

Samaddar, Ranabir. 1999. *The Marginal Nation: Transborder Migration from Bangladesh to West Bengal*. New Delhi: Sage Publ.

Sangbad Pratidin, Hawker Sangram Committee Archive. 2002. “Aaj Tali Nalar Du Dhare Ucched,” December 4, 2002.

———. 2003a. “Beliaghtay Jhupri Ucched Shuru,” December 15, 2003.

———. 2003b. “Jhupri Ucched,” December 16, 2003.

———. 2004. “Ak Hazar Notun Park Gorbe Purosabha,” 07 2004.

Sanyal, Romola. 2008. “An Architecture of Displacement: Spatialising Identity and Refugee Space in Beirut and Calcutta.” University of California, Berkeley.

Sassen, Saskia. 2002. “The Repositioning of Citizenship: Emergent Subjects and Spaces for Politics.” *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, 4–26.

Schendel, Willem van, and Aminul Haque Faraizi. 1984. *Rural Labourers in Bengal, 1880 to 1980*. Rotterdam.

Scott, James C. *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition have Failed.* Yale University Press, 1998

Sen, Uditi. 2011. "Dissident Memories: Exploring Bengali Refugee Narratives in the Andaman Islands." In *Refugees and the End of Empire*, edited by Panikos Panayi and Pippa Virdee, 219–44. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230305700_10.

———. 2014. "The Myths Refugees Live By: Memory and History in the Making of Bengali Refugee Identity." *Modern Asian Studies* 48 (01): 37–76. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X12000613.

———. 2018. *Citizen Refugee: Forging the Indian Nation after Partition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Shalti Research Group (Kolkata, India), ed. 2003. *Uchched Uchched: Dharabahik Amanabikatar Khandachitra*. Kolkata: Camp.

Sinha, Pradip. 1978. *Calcutta in Urban History*. Calcutta: Firma KLM Private Ltd.

Sinha, Tushar. 1999. *Maranjoyee Sangrame Bastuhara*. Kolkata: Abhijit Dasgupta.

Sinharay, Praskanva. 2015. "Building up the Harichand-Guruchand Movement: The Politics of the Matua Mahasangha." In *The Politics of Caste in West Bengal*, 147–68. New Delhi ; London; New York: Routledge.

———. 2019. "To Be a Hindu Citizen: Politics of Dalit Migrants in Contemporary West Bengal." *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 42 (2): 359–74. https://doi.org/10.1080/00856401.2019.1581696.

Soysal, Yasemin Nuhoğlu. 1994. *Limits of Citizenship: Migrants and Postnational Membership in Europe*. Chicago: University of Chicago.

"Sukriti Ranjan Biswas Addresses a Meeting with Ambedkarite and Muslim Organizations at Harua against NRC." 2019. *Dalit Camera: Through Untouchable Eyes*. https://www.facebook.com/DalitCameraDC/videos/1120434234818424/.

Tan, Tai Yong, and Gyanesh Kudaisya, eds. 2008. *Partition and Post-Colonial South Asia: A Reader*. London ; New York: Routledge.

The Economic Times. 2019. "Small Number of Bangladeshis to Be Benefitted from Citizenship Amendment Bill: MHA," January 20, 2019. https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/politics/small-number-of-bangladeshis-to-be-benefitted-from-citizenship-amendment-bill-

mha/articleshow/67612087.cms?from=mdr&utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst.

The Indian Express. 2010. "CPM, TC Leaders Share Dais at Matua Meeting," December 29, 2010.

The Statesman, Hawker Sangram Committee Archive. 2001. "Tolly's Nullah Banks to Be Cleared of Encroachers," June 16, 2001.

The Telegraph. 2010. "Vote Game Brings Rivals to Same Dias," December 28, 2010. https://www.telegraphindia.com/west-bengal/vote-game-brings-rivals-to-same-dais/cid/458300.

The Telegraph, Hawker Sangram Committee Archive. 2000. "State Balks at Resettlement Term for Aid," 10 2000.

The Times of India. 2016. "Gap in KMC's Bid to Check Ganga Pollution," January 20, 2016. https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kolkata/Gap-in-KMCs-bid-to-check-Ganga-pollution/articleshow/50645503.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst.

Times of India. 2002a. "Eviction Deals Suicide Blow," October 12, 2002. https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kolkata/Eviction-deals-suicide-blow/articleshow/30801126.cms.

———. 2002b. "Shanties Set Ablaze at Beliaghata During Eviction Drive," November 12, 2002. https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kolkata/Shanties-set-ablaze-at-Beliaghata-during-eviction-drive/articleshow/30902078.cms.

———. 2003. "Kolkata Gate May Have to Be Shelved: Mayor," February 9, 2003. https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kolkata/Kolkata-Gate-may-have-to-be-shelved-Mayor/articleshow/160612.cms.

———. 2019. "NRC Exclusion Spreads Panic in North Bengal Districts, 3 September, 2019," September 3, 2019.

Times of India, Hawker Sangram Committee Archive. 2004. "Govt Too Soft on Encroachers: HC," June 15, 2004.

Unnayan. 1992. *Basti Movement in Calcutta: Housing Struggle of Basti Dwellers in the 1950's in Calcutta*. Calcutta: Unnayan.

Woodhead, Sir John. 1945. "Famine Inquiry Commission: Report on Bengal." Government of India.

Yiftachel, Oren. 2009. "Critical Theory and 'Gray Space': Mobilization of the Colonized." *City* 13 (2–3): 246–63. https://doi.org/10.1080/13604810902982227.

———. 2020. "From Displacement to Displaceability: A Southeastern Perspective on the New Metropolis." *City* 24 (1–2): 151–65. https://doi.org/10.1080/13604813.2020.1739933.

Zamindar, Vazira Fazila-Yacoobali. 2007. *The Long Partition and the Making of Modern South Asia: Refugees, Boundaries, Histories*. Cultures of History. New York: Columbia University Press.

Summary

In this dissertation I have explored everyday forms of displacement in third world metropolitan contexts by drawing on the concept of displaceability. The empirical references of the study come from migrants in Calcutta and North 24 Parganas in West Bengal, India. Rather than displacements of climactic and exceptional magnitude, this dissertation takes into account the low key and everyday modalities of dislocations, techniques of its operationalisation through post-colonial governmentality and the way such dislocation shape the nature of citizenship for socially disadvantaged migrant groups. To understand such drawn out processes, I have found useful Oren Yiftachel's concept of displaceability. It expands understanding of displacement from an act to a systemic condition through which power is exerted by means of policy and legal systems (Yiftachel 2020). Such shadowy presence of displaceability particularly pervades informal urban contexts. I unpack the nuances of the concept of displaceability from three inter-related vantage points: i) by tracing the operationalisation of displaceability at informal urban margin among socially disadvantaged migrants, ii) by looking at its negotiation by the migrants themselves, and iii) finally, by exploring how displaceability shapes legal and social citizenship of the migrants.

I draw on two case studies of two different groups of migrants in Calcutta and North 24 Parganas in West Bengal: i) East Bengali dalit partition refugees coming from East Bengal (present day Bangladesh) to West Bengal and ii) a group of peripatetic impoverished rural migrants coming from the villages of East Bengal and West Bengal to the urban agglomeration around Calcutta. I have followed the methods of historical anthropology, combining archival research with multi-sited ethnography. The time frame of the dissertation is from the beginning of the Second World War in 1939 till the present.

The first three chapters of the dissertation charts the operationalisation of the condition of displaceability. I have traced mechanisms of deliberate de-planning with regard to the migrants, through which displaceability works. I highlight the importance of the official tools of surveys and enumeration for the operationalisation of *planned* informality vis-a-vis the dalit partition refugees and the peripatetic rural migrants. The first case study of the thesis, the East Bengali dalit refugees were initially surveyed and documented. They were given an officially recognised status as 'displaced persons'. But I have shown that this legal status has eroded over the years through deliberate state initiated de-planning. The status-less rural migrants have also faced a deliberate politics of non-enumeration. Both migrants live informal lives. Zones of such purposeful informality foster the condition of displaceability. Displaceability emerges as a deliberate policy instrument.

Displaceable migrants have a tenuous right to shelter and live through a series of interconnected deprivation that result from lack of housing rights. Their lives are informal, their dwellings are insecure and their political loyalties are sought to be controlled.

However, subjects of state intervention are seldom passive recipients of policy. The refugees and the migrants negotiate this condition to the best of their abilities. My study highlights that the dalit refugees skilfully negotiate such informality through different context driven strategies. They oscillate between assuming a Hindu religious identity (which enables their claims to citizenship rights) or imagining non-normative and non-statist collectives, drawing on the tropes of linguistic or caste based solidarities. The peripatetic 'homeless' migrants live under more coercive conditions and their agency manifests through a form of 'bodily politics'.

The other concern of this thesis is how such informal and displaceable migrants experience citizenship. My study shows that displaceability has an inverse relation with citizenship. The more widespread and coercive its functioning, the weaker the migrants' claims to legal status as well as social rights of citizenship. The experience of the two different migrant groups studied here underscores that the story of post-colonial citizenship and its relation to migration cannot be understood in terms of linear progression of migrants towards an emancipatory and universalising status of citizen, but needs to be told through its moments of ruptures, breaks and crisis.

Summary in Dutch / Nederlandse samenvatting

In dit proefschrift heb ik alledaagse vormen van 'displacement' (ontworteling) in de grootstedelijke contexten van de derde wereld onderzocht door gebruik te maken van het concept van *displaceability* (ontwortelbaarheid). De empirische referenties van de studie zijn afkomstig van migranten in Calcutta en North 24 Parganas in West-Bengalen, India. In plaats van de nadruk te leggen op climactische en uitzonderlijke vormen van ontworteling, richt dit proefschrift zich op de onbeduidende en alledaagse manifestaties van deze ontworteling, de technieken waarmee het geoperationaliseerd wordt en de wijze waarop het de aard van het burgerschap sociaal achtergestelde migrantengroepen vormgeeft. Om zulke langdurige processen te begrijpen, is Oren Yiftachel's concept van *displaceability* bruikbaar gebleken. De reikwijdte van het begrip 'displacement' (ontworteling) wordt hiermee uitgebreid van een handeling naar een systemische machtsuitoefening via beleid en wetgeving (Yiftachel 2020). Een dergelijke schimmige aanwezigheid van *displaceability* doordringt vooral informele stedelijke contexten. Ik belicht de nuances van het concept van *displaceability* vanuit drie onderling gerelateerde gezichtspunten: i) de operationalisering van *displaceability* onder sociaal achtergestelde migranten in informele, stedelijke marges, ii) de onderhanddeling van *displaceability* door de migranten zelf, en iii) tenslotte, het vormgeven van het wettelijke en sociale burgerschap via *displaceability*.

Ik maak gebruik van twee casestudies van twee verschillende groepen migranten in Calcutta en North 24 Parganas in West-Bengalen: i) Dalit-partitievluchtelingen uit Oost-Bengalen die van Oost-Bengalen (het huidige Bangladesh) naar West-Bengalen komen en ii) een groep verarmde, rondtrekkende, plattelandsmigranten die van de dorpen in Oost- en West-Bengalen naar de stedelijke agglomeratie rond Calcutta trekken. Ik heb de methoden van de historische antropologie gevolgd, waarbij ik archiefonderzoek heb gecombineerd met *multi-sited ethnography.* Het tijdsbestek van het proefschrift loopt van het begin van de Tweede Wereldoorlog in 1939 tot heden.

De eerste drie hoofdstukken van het proefschrift brengen de operationalisering van de toestand van *displaceability* in kaart. Ik heb de mechanismen opgespoord achter de opzettelijke *de-planning* aangaande migranten, op basis waarvan *displaceability* werkt. Ik benadruk het belang van officiële instrumenten als *surveys* (onderzoeken; registraties) en *enumeration* (tellingen) voor de operationalisering van de *planned* (geplande) informaliteit rondom de Dalit-partitievluchtelingen en de rondtrekkende plattelandsmigranten. In eerst instantie werden de Oost-Bengaalse Dalit-vluchtelingen, onderwerp van de eerste case-study van het proefschrift, geregistreerd en van

documentatie voorzien. Zij kregen een officieel erkende status als 'displaced persons' (ontheemden). Maar ik heb aangetoond dat deze juridische status in de loop der jaren is uitgehold via opzettelijke door de staat geïnitieerde *de-planning*. De statusloze plattelandsmigranten, die in de tweede casestudie centraal staan, hebben ook te maken gehad met een opzettelijke politiek van *non-enumeration*. Beide migrantengroepen leiden een informeel leven. Domeinen met een dergelijke doelgerichte informaliteit, bevorderen de toestand van *displaceability.* Hier blijkt dat *displaceability* een bewust beleidsinstrument is. Door een beperkt recht op huisvesting en onderdak zijn *displaceable* (ontwortelbare) migranten overgeleverd aan allerlei ontberingen. Hun leven is informeel, hun onderkomen is onbestemd en hun politieke voorkeuren zijn onderwerp van controle.

Wie onderworpen is aan staatsinterventie is echter zelden enkel een passieve ontvanger van beleid. Vluchtelingen en migranten onderhandelen zo goed en zo kwaad als ze kunnen over de voorwaarden van deze interventie. Mijn onderzoek laat zien dat de Dalit-vluchtelingen, door de inzet van verschillende contextgestuurde strategieën, succesvol omgaan met vormen van informaliteit. Ze schakelen tussen het aannemen van een hindoeïstische religieuze identiteit (die het mogelijk maakt aanspraak te maken op burgerschapsrechten) en het ontwerpen van ongereguleerde staatsonafhankelijke collectieven, voortbouwend op eerdere aanzetten tot solidariteit die op taal en kaste terugvallen. De rondtrekkende 'dakloze' migranten leven onder meer dwingende omstandigheden, hun keuzevrijheid manifesteert zich vooral in vormen van 'bodily politics' (lichaamspolitiek).

Een ander aandachtspunt van dit proefschrift is hoe dit soort informele en *displaceable* (ontwortelbare) migranten burgerschap ervaren. Mijn onderzoek laat zien dat *displaceability* omgekeerd evenredig is met burgerschap. Hoe wijdverbreider en dwingender *displaceability* functioneert, hoe minder de migranten aanspraak kunnen maken op een wettelijke status en sociale burgerrechten. De ervaringen van de twee verschillende migrantengroepen die hier zijn bestudeerd, benadrukken dat het verhaal over postkoloniaal burgerschap niet kan worden geschetst als een lineaire progressie waarin migranten naar een emancipatorische en universaliserende burgerstatus toe bewegen, maar dat dit verhaal moet worden verteld via de momenten van crisis, verbrokkeling en verscheurdheid.

Curriculum Vitae

Aditi Mukherjee is a PhD Candidate at the Leiden University. Her PhD dissertation is titled *In the shadow of Displaceability: Experience of Refugees and Migrants in suburban Calcutta*, funded by the Erasmus Mundus IBIES PhD fellowship. Her PhD dissertation draws on ethnographic research with two migrant groups in Calcutta and North 24 Parganas in West Bengal, India and address questions of displacement and citizenship within third world contexts. She is a Research Associate at the Institute of Development Studies, Kolkata. She has previously been a Research Associate at the Calcutta Research Group, Kolkata. She is associated with the 1947 Partition Archive based at Berkeley, California as a Citizen Historian. She holds a BA and MA degree in History from the Presidency College, Kolkata and University of Calcutta respectively and an MPhil in Foreign Policy Studies, from the Institute of Foreign Policy Studies, University of Calcutta. Her broad research interests include processes of third world urbanism, displacement, citizenship and gender.

Propositions

1. Most migration around the world are mixed and massive and take place due to multiple and concurring factors. The categories of refugees and migrants do not adequately capture the ground reality of displaced people who move due to mixed reasons.
2. Informality of dwelling and informality of labour conditions of the urban poor are centrally connected to forces of displacements. The urban poor in most parts of the developing world live informal lives and experience displacement as an endemic condition.
3. Rather than thinking of displacement as an act, it is useful to look at displacement as an overarching condition of informal urban living. Everyday displacements are often deliberately operationalized as part of policy regimes. Actual displacements, or threats of displacement are used as administrative tools to extract various services from the urban poor.
4. Caste is a critically important category for understanding organisation of society and political mobilisation in West Bengal. Caste discrimination has remained in the social, economic and political life in West Bengal, contrary to the long held political myth about the irrelevance of caste in West Bengal.
5. Citizenship in India has evolved through the entanglement of principles of civic and ethnic forms of membership to the nation. There is no easy resolution of this entanglement.
6. Identity groups who share a history of oppression, for example dalit caste groups or religious minorities have participated in their own identity politics since colonial times and through India's post-colonial transition. In a country like India with entrenched socio-political inequalities, identity politics by marginal groups play a positive role securing justice.
7. Men, women, transgender people and other gendered people experience migration differentially. Migration is a gendered experience.
8. The conventional assumption of the discipline of history that the past is qualitatively separate from the present and can be studied from an objective distance is flawed. The past persists and proliferates into the present.
9. The conventional conception of anthropological field work that prioritises the intimate experience of the ethnography and postulates that such intimate and direct ethnography leads to a transparent representation of society is misleading. Representation can produce conditions of experience.