

Partition of India in Print Media and Cinema
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Lecture - 39
Refugee, Desh and Nation - II

Good morning and welcome back to the lecture series on Partition of India in Print Media and Cinema. So, we are already discussing Concept of Refugee and the idea of how a refugee...So, we are discussing who is a refugee and the process of journeying from a state of refugeeness and becoming a citizen; and we are discussing the idea of refugee vis-a-vis the concept of desh and nation.

We have to understand that desh and nation are not always interchangeable terms. Desh is a word used in different Indian languages that would be translated to English as a nation. However, in the context of partition of India, desh is associated with the sense of nostalgia. It means one's homeland and so, it may not always overlap with and be considered as synonymous with the idea of nation

because postcolonial nation-state in the case of/ in the South Asian context (as we see) is an operation, is an implementation from above, a decision or redrawing of the cartography of the borders by the politicians, the enactors of the anti-colonial movements, as we have been discussing in our previous lectures.

And so, ah once desh is the land of the ancestors. Desh is... kind of one associates a natural belonging with desh, whereas a nation is a shaping of a social group or community in terms of.. in terms of a people, a given people's common language, common ethnicity and above all one's common religious community.

So, this is to say that nation is a kind of redrawing of the borders and bringing a people together in terms of their common language, ethnicity and religious identity. So, we have to understand that whenever a homogeneous people...the refugee as a social marker is never a homogeneous identity and we see that in transit camps as well as in the colonies.. In the permanent refugee housing colonies, there were hardly a levelling or a kind of casteless classless grouping or cohabitants among the refugee people. (Refer Slide Time: 03:53)

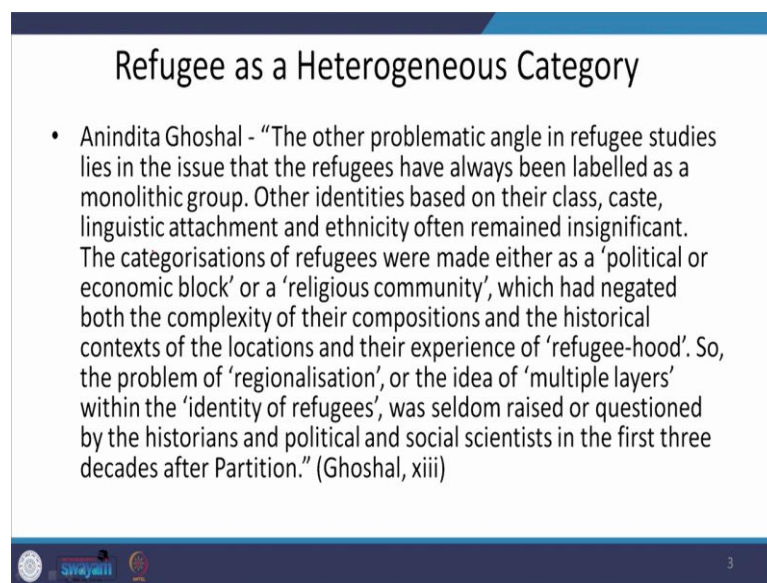
Refugee as a Heterogeneous Category

- Refugees were never of homogenous identities. Transit camps and permanent refugee housing colonies hardly levelled the caste, geography, class, and gender differences.
- Ravinder Kaur - Citizenship conceptualized a set of self-constituting practices in different settings of powers, where power itself is understood as a social technology that induces being made and self-making (431).

So, we see that the refugee housing colonies would maintain the caste, geographical, class-based and gender-based differences.

Ravinder Kaur notes how citizenship conceptualized a set of self-constituting practices in different contexts and different settings of power, such that power would enable self-making and power would induce being made. So, basically a successful refugee is in charge of a certain social, economic, cultural capital. Power makes the refugee and the refugee, in turn, is able to generate power. That is the notion of a successful refugee that has assimilated himself as a citizen in the host land.

So, the idea of a successful refugee is someone that is produced by the system of power, by different systems of power, by the different networkings and in turn, is an agent himself who is in charge, who is in control, in charge and who basically enables self making and making of power. (Refer Slide Time: 05:34)



Refugee as a Heterogeneous Category

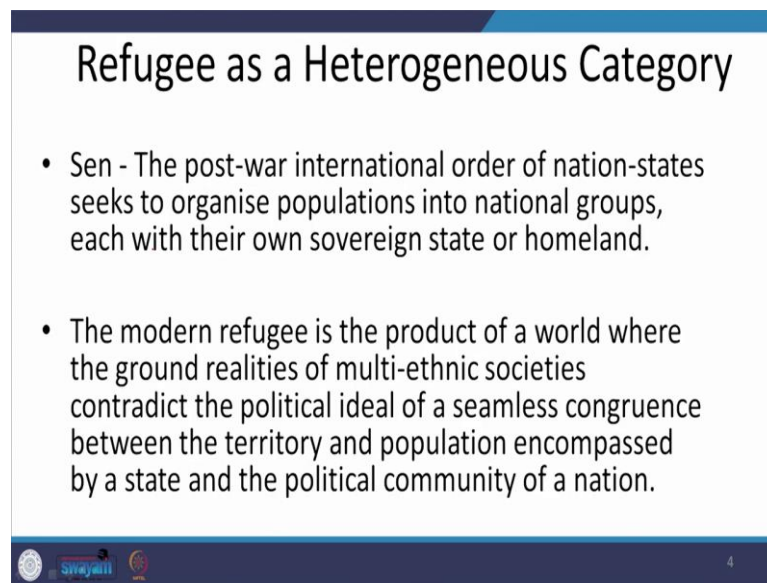
- Anindita Ghoshal - "The other problematic angle in refugee studies lies in the issue that the refugees have always been labelled as a monolithic group. Other identities based on their class, caste, linguistic attachment and ethnicity often remained insignificant. The categorisations of refugees were made either as a 'political or economic block' or a 'religious community', which had negated both the complexity of their compositions and the historical contexts of the locations and their experience of 'refugee-hood'. So, the problem of 'regionalisation', or the idea of 'multiple layers' within the 'identity of refugees', was seldom raised or questioned by the historians and political and social scientists in the first three decades after Partition." (Ghoshal, xiii)

So, Anindita Ghoshal notes how the social marker 'refugee' has, until a recent time, been seen/ been perceived as a monolithic group. So, we have not understood the refugee experience in terms of an individual's class, caste, linguistic and ethnic positions; however, all these dimensions actually speak to and determine in a way, colour one's experience, one's way of being a refugee.

So, the categorizations of refugees were made either as a 'political or economic block' or a 'religious community'. When we look at the refugee as a monolithic case, a homogeneous identity, we negate the complexity of their compositions and also the


historical contexts of their locations, under what circumstances they became refugees, what external and internal factors influence their experience of 'refugeehood'.

Until a long time, until recently...so it is only in the recent past that scholarship has taken into consideration the problem of 'regionalization' and it starts pondering on the idea of 'multiple layers' within the 'identity of refugees'. And so, this is something we need to look at - how a historical circumstance actually creates the refugee. (Refer Slide Time: 07:39)



Refugee as a Heterogeneous Category

- Sen - The post-war international order of nation-states seeks to organise populations into national groups, each with their own sovereign state or homeland.
- The modern refugee is the product of a world where the ground realities of multi-ethnic societies contradict the political ideal of a seamless congruence between the territory and population encompassed by a state and the political community of a nation.

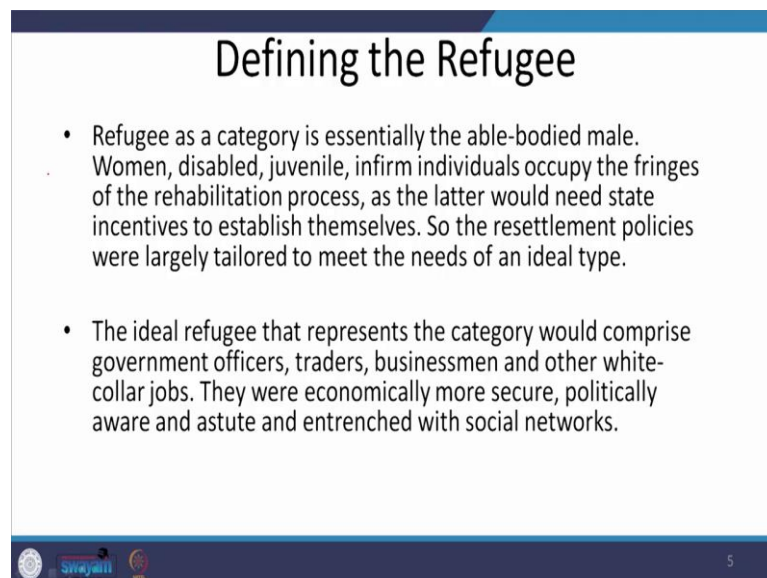
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So, Udit Sen notes that the post-war international order of nation-states seeks to organize populations into nation groups, each of which have their own sovereign state or homeland. So, one could argue that the modern refugee is a product of the world, where the ground realities are different from how we envision the nation as an ideal.

So, as ground realities we have multi-ethnic societies, there are contradictions, there are different political ideas and yet in an ideal nation, it is imagined that there would be seamless congruence between the territory and population encompassed by the state, such that the population, the mental landscape of the population and that of the political community of a nation

actually converge and there is no problematic relationship between the two -- that is something we imagine, but that is the ideal imagination of the nation and it is far different from the ground realities. We have already talked about how refugee as a category is essentially the able-bodied male.

So, in the definitions of the displaced person - the way we understand the legal language or the bureaucratic language that is used in the official parlance. In the official version the refugee is an able-bodied male, and in thinking in that way, we cast (Refer Slide Time: 10:05)



The slide is titled "Defining the Refugee" and contains two bullet points. The first bullet point discusses how women, disabled, juvenile, and infirm individuals are positioned at the fringes of the rehabilitation process. The second bullet point describes the ideal refugee as government officers, traders, businessmen, and other white-collar jobs who are economically secure and politically aware.

Defining the Refugee

- Refugee as a category is essentially the able-bodied male. Women, disabled, juvenile, infirm individuals occupy the fringes of the rehabilitation process, as the latter would need state incentives to establish themselves. So the resettlement policies were largely tailored to meet the needs of an ideal type.
- The ideal refugee that represents the category would comprise government officers, traders, businessmen and other white-collar jobs. They were economically more secure, politically aware and astute and entrenched with social networks.

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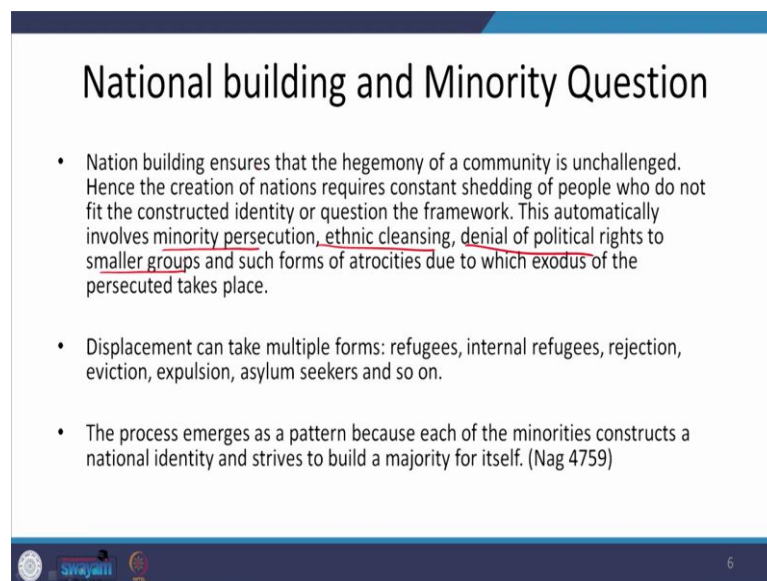
or we position the woman, the disabled, the juvenile, the infirm individuals towards the fringes of the rehabilitation process. This is also because refugee is always welcome into a nation, only/ majorly when he can self-rehabilitate himself, take charge of himself and

his dependents without much help from the nation; such a person is not seen as an economic abuser and in fact, seen as an asset to the nation.

So, by the same logic, the other or others, the women, the disabled that would not be able to establish themselves without state incentives are relegated towards the peripheries, towards the fringes of the rehabilitation process. So, the resettlement policies were largely shaped to cater to the needs of the ideal refugee.

So, the ideal refugee represents a category that would comprise professions such as government officers, traders, businessmen and other white collar jobs. So, these people.. this section of the population, refugee population was economically secure; they were politically astute and they were entrenched with social networks.

In other words, their process of resettlement was smoother and [they] did not seek help from the government. So, nation-building as a process (when we look at it how is a nation built), it ensures that the hegemony of the majority of the population, the way the majority of the population think and exist, is not challenged. (Refer Slide Time: 12:09)



National building and Minority Question

- Nation building ensures that the hegemony of a community is unchallenged. Hence the creation of nations requires constant shedding of people who do not fit the constructed identity or question the framework. This automatically involves minority persecution, ethnic cleansing, denial of political rights to smaller groups and such forms of atrocities due to which exodus of the persecuted takes place.
- Displacement can take multiple forms: refugees, internal refugees, rejection, eviction, expulsion, asylum seekers and so on.
- The process emerges as a pattern because each of the minorities constructs a national identity and strives to build a majority for itself. (Nag 4759)

6

So, the majoritarian existence constitutes the nation and in an ideal nation, in a smooth-running nation such majoritarian way of being way of living would not be challenged.

So, the creation of nation automatically requires nation... the nation as an entity, in order to be stable, requires constant shedding of people that do not fit into this constructed

identity or someone that problematizes/ unsettles this framework, which is endorsed by the majority of its denizens.

So, one could say that a nation is.. the category of nation, the entity of nation can be secured through a systematic process of minority persecution, ethnic cleansing, denial of political rights to smaller groups; all these basically ensure that a nation can function in a smooth manner. And so, this in turn leads to... this in turn motivate, these factors motivate or in fact, force people to evacuate and to move to other lands in search of greater security.

So, "how is a refugee created?" is a question that is closely associated with the formation of nation, the process through which a nation is formed, the people that do not fit into a particular nation building process have to eventually evacuate. And so, that is how there is exodus; there is exodus of the persecuted, there is exodus of the persecuted constantly taking place.

So, displacement can take multiple forms, it could be the internal [factors], it could be as a result of rejection, eviction, there could be asylum seekers, and so on. What happens to the refugee community? The community of the exodus people, like a community of people that have emigrated from another part of ...from another nation and resettled in a new one, what happens to these people that have emigrated from another nation and resettled in a new one?

The minorities have this tendency...this process is actually a pattern, where one observes the minorities trying to construct a national identity and striving to build a majority for themselves. So, within one nation there is this endeavour, this constant struggle and desire to build sub-national identities within one nation space.

Ravinder Kaur talks about the refugee card, how the refugee card would have different significance for different refugees, depending on their class-caste belonging. (Refer Slide Time: 15:54)

Refugee Card

- Ravinder Kaur – Talks about the refugee card. Some elites who had transcended their refugeeness, rendered this card as defunct. For them, it only had a historical value. They were ashamed of showing it publicly to others.
- For the elite immigrants, refugee card was an uncomfortable reminder of an inglorious past. Its absence signified a family's successful self-rehabilitation.
- In contrast, those who failed to successfully establish themselves in the host country and land still retained their card. For the less socio-economically established, the card needed to be produced before the authorities for support.

So, for the elite immigrants that had/ that could easily transcend their refugeeeness, the card was redundant and defunct.

And it was... it only had a historical value and in fact, the socially, economically you know well-off section of refugees, the affluent refugees were ashamed, in fact, of showing the refugee card publicly to others. So, they were ashamed of showing it publicly to others. It was an uncomfortable reminder of an inglorious past.

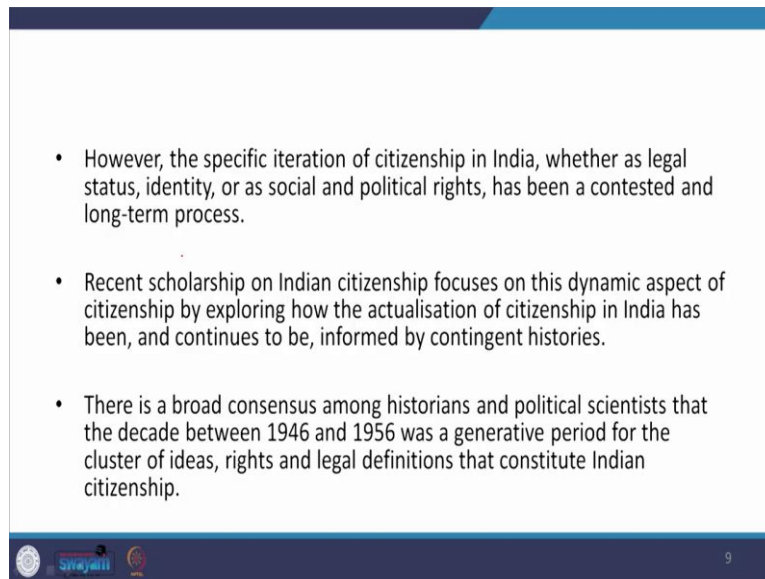
And so, the absence of the refugee card would mean that a family has successfully self-rehabilitated itself; contrarily, the card would have a different meaning altogether for the poorer section for those that had failed to successfully establish themselves in the host country.

The card needed to be produced before the concerned authorities for seeking support. So, by way of producing the card, one could become claimant to doles, to other different government welfarist schemes. So, for the poorer section of refugees, the refugee card was actually indispensable.

Uditi Sen says that the idealized visions of citizenship were not new in South Asia. So, we have different ways of understanding and construing citizenship; multiple ideals and ideas of citizenship coexisted in the late colonial and postcolonial India. These ideas would generally not gel with one another.

So, we had the notion of Islamic or Muslim belonging of Hindu homelands, of liberal feminist notion of citizenship...the liberal feminist vision of universal Indian citizenship that was unmarked by any caste, class, ethnic belonging.

And then, the colonial understanding of citizenship, which was increasingly becoming irrelevant - the idea of the loyal subject citizen; so, we see that the specific iteration of citizenship in India, whether as legal status, identity or as social and political rights, have been an area of contestation - something that has been contested and revisited for a long time. (Refer Slide Time: 18:52)



- However, the specific iteration of citizenship in India, whether as legal status, identity, or as social and political rights, has been a contested and long-term process.
- Recent scholarship on Indian citizenship focuses on this dynamic aspect of citizenship by exploring how the actualisation of citizenship in India has been, and continues to be, informed by contingent histories.
- There is a broad consensus among historians and political scientists that the decade between 1946 and 1956 was a generative period for the cluster of ideas, rights and legal definitions that constitute Indian citizenship.

So, there is no consensus about this definition or meaning of citizenship. Recent scholarship on Indian citizenship focuses...recent scholarship on Indian citizenship focuses on this dynamic aspect of citizenship. It explores how, whenever we are trying to define and actualize who a citizen is, what constitutes citizenry, we have to position our understanding or inform our understanding by contingent histories.

So, citizenship cannot be defined historically and so, when we look at history we find that there is a broad consensus among historians and political scientists that between the period of 1946 and 1956, there was a generative phase that gave birth to a cluster of ideas, rights and legal definitions - all of which could differently constitute the notion of Indian citizenship.


We have much scholarship that actually examines the process of the refugees becoming citizen; the journey through which a person becomes citizen from a refugee. And in fact, in an Indian context (one could say in a South Asian context) one does not so much become a citizen from a refugee as one remains a paradoxical figure of the citizen-refugee or the refugee-citizen both, in a kind of oxymoron.

So, Pippa Virdee notes how state mechanisms at the time of partition were unprepared for the mass migration, which resulted in, you know, displacement of millions of people, uprooting of millions of people and eventually, planned evacuations had started taking place. It was not until some time..so, the states, the newly formed nation-states needed

some time to prepare themselves and respond to unprecedented crisis. (Refer Slide Time: 21:37)

Refugee to Citizen

- Pippa Virdee - At the time of Partition, state mechanisms were unprepared for the mass migration that resulted in 12 -14 million people being uprooted. Eventually, organization by the state came into force and a planned evacuation could take place.
- When we move away from the official response to migration, we begin to see the differential experiences of refugees. While the state directed some of the refugees, others made their own plans. Utilizing personal networks, refugees with better economic and socio-cultural resources were able to migrate to places which had an element of familiarity in the shape of family, friends, and business or professional links. The presence of pre-existing business or family links not only influenced the destination of migration, but also assisted in the process of acceptance by the local population.



10

We begin to...when we move away from official response, we see the differential experiences actually; how the case for each group of refugees, like I said, was different. So, the state directed... some refugees were directed by the state; they were sponsored by the state's others to make their own plans. So, they utilized personal networks.

Some utilized personal networks; the refugees with better economic and socio-cultural resources were able to migrate to places of their choice, they could resettle the way they wanted to, they could exchange properties because they had some...in many cases better (you know) social mobility, let us say because of better education, more awareness, people were more... the elite individuals, elite populists were more familiar, you know, with the... they were more familiar with the host land.

And so, they already had family, friends and business or professional links in the host land; it would make their process of resettlement easier or smoother. So, the process of transition, the process of resettlement would be smoother for them.

So, the presence of pre-existing business or family links not only influenced the destination of migration in the case of the elite refugees, but also assisted the process of acceptance by the local population. Once a person is aware of/ familiar with the local culture in the host land, it enables their absorption; it expedites, it facilitates the process of their absorption or the process of their assimilation with the local native people.

So, there is less conflict and there is less tension in that regard. So, the experience of the elite refugees were quite different in this; we could say it was quite different. Now, there is this paradox associated with the upper-class migrants, where on the one hand, by virtue of being a part.. by virtue of being a part of the refugee historical background, howmuchevery elite they might be...

they could not actually dissociate themselves from the common historical background, where they had migrated from another land few generations back. (Refer Slide Time: 24:36)

Refugee to Citizen

- A paradox associated with the upper-class migrants – as a part of common 'refugee' historical background, they would be often conflated with the displaced mass' "miserable image" yet with successful rehabilitation, they could smoothly transit into citizenship and become a part of the upper echelon of the society.
- Haimanti Roy- Although citizenship was the end goal for the Indian government and the refugees, the latter retained their refugee identity as a political choice in many cases, as it provided a concrete platform for them to articulate and negotiate demands for socio-economic integration.

And so, very wrongly even the upper-class people would be conflated with the popular image of the 'destitute refugee', the "miserable image" of the refugee.

And yet, the ground reality was very different for this section, where they could, they had (I mean in most cases) the upper-class refugees could smoothly transit into citizenship and they had become a part and parcel of the upper echelon of the society.

They, in fact, constituted the upper echelon of the society. This is a paradox that they had to carry all along, where they would frequently be, you know, they would be associated with the popular image of the poor refugee and yet their experiences.. they had a very different past to recount, to narrate.

Now, Haimanti Roy notes how citizenship was the end goal for the refugees as well as for the Indian government. And yet, retaining the refugee identity would be considered as a political choice in many cases so, this was also another paradox that the refugees dealt with.

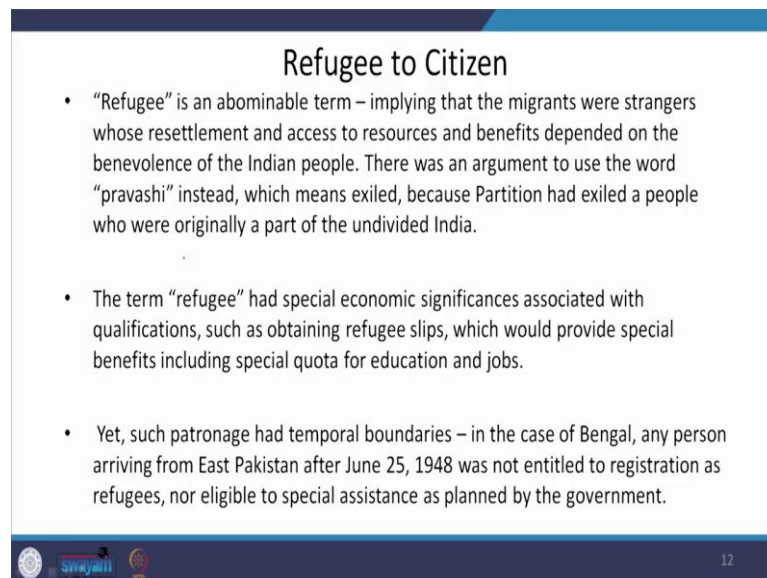
On the one hand, they wanted to be assimilated and treated with the same dignity, with the same sense of legitimacy as the citizen, and yet they would retain the refugee identity because it was a rich ground for articulating and negotiating demands from the state, from nation-state.

It would enable the refugee in different ways; it would, you know, offer them... through such negotiations, through such bargains with the government the refugee could actually

have greater access to the state's resources. So, like I said, the refugee-citizen as an entity was, I mean...it was a dual entity that was being in a way maintained, being upheld.

It was...one would not want to be one at the expense of losing the other aspect. So, one would like to be the citizen and still want to remain or retain the refugeeness; let us say, the reality of refugeehood or the historical weight of refugeehood. So, 'refugee' the term has been traditionally seen as abominable and yet it engenders, it harbingers the question of right.

The question of demanding for agency, for access and fighting for more power, struggling for more stability; so, it implies, it has so many significances. When we look at the "refugee" as an abominable term, it implies that the migrants were strangers, whose resettlement and access to resources depended (Refer Slide Time: 28:12)



Refugee to Citizen

- "Refugee" is an abominable term – implying that the migrants were strangers whose resettlement and access to resources and benefits depended on the benevolence of the Indian people. There was an argument to use the word "pravashi" instead, which means exiled, because Partition had exiled a people who were originally a part of the undivided India.
- The term "refugee" had special economic significances associated with qualifications, such as obtaining refugee slips, which would provide special benefits including special quota for education and jobs.
- Yet, such patronage had temporal boundaries – in the case of Bengal, any person arriving from East Pakistan after June 25, 1948 was not entitled to registration as refugees, nor eligible to special assistance as planned by the government.

12

...their access to resources depended on the benevolence of the Indians, of the native people, of benevolence of the government. A lot of refugees argued that 'udbastu', the word 'udbastu' was instead a better term; it means 'exiled' because partition had exiled people who were originally a part of the undivided subcontinent.

So, the term "refugee" had special economic significances associated with qualifications, which would refer to obtaining, for example, obtaining refugee slips. And so, like I said, shedding this term, shedding this social marker or disowning this social marker was not something that all sections of refugees could afford. And, you know, owning one's

refugee slips could provide special benefits, including special quota for education and jobs.

However, this patronage had its temporal boundaries in the case of Bengal. Any person arriving from East Pakistan after June 25, 1948 was not entitled to registration as refugees, and they were not eligible for any special assistance, which was planned by the government. (Refer Slide Time: 30:00)

Refugee to Citizen

- On and after 1950- “displaced person” had a fixed definition – someone that had arrived on account of communal disturbances after 1 October 1946 and before 31 December 1950, has no land in West Bengal and does not intend to return to East Bengal (pointing to the fact that the displaced person should have political and not economic incentive).
- 1956 - The Indian government introduced “migration certificate” to control refugees by regulating it as authorised migration. Decision was influenced by the fact that no relief/rehabilitation will be given to people infiltrating in India after 31 March 1958. Post-1958, the Indian state adopted the policy of no longer recognizing a new immigrant as refugee.

Swajathi 13

So, on and after 1950 "displaced person" acquires a fixed definition; the definition is kind of exclusive, reductive because any person that does not fit into the definition would automatically not be refugee enough, and not be entitled to the benefits offered by the government thereby.

So, someone that had arrived on account of communal disturbances after 1st of October 1946 and before 31 December 1950... so, we have this temporal bracketing. Once again, any person before and after that is not recognized as refugee enough. And so, any person arriving between this time and also not having any land in West Bengal and someone that does not intend to return to East Bengal --

When someone meets all these criteria, such a person fits into the category of displaced person. So, it is a way of ensuring that the displaced person should only have political reasons to move base and not economic incentive to look for greener pastures in India from another abutting country. In 1956, the Indian government introduced "migration certificate" to control refugees through regulating it as authorized migration.

So, migrants occupying or obtaining migration certificate would warrant one's authorized migration. This decision was influenced by the fact that no relief or rehabilitation would be given to people infiltrating in India after 31 March 1958; and after 1958 the Indian state actually adopted the policy of no longer recognizing a new migrant as a refugee. We will talk more on this topic, but in our subsequent lectures.

Thank you.