

# A Study among the Migrants in Nadia District

Dr. Paulomi Saha

Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Muzaffar Ahmed Mahavidyalaya

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51244/IJRSI.2025.120700089>

Received: 23 June 2025; Revised: 01 July 2025; Accepted: 03 July 2025; Published: 04 August 2025

## ABSTRACT

Independence –the most desired dream came to the sub-continent and it brought partition. Several families had to leave their homestead, village and enlisted themselves as refugees only to pay for the cost of independence. It has a far-off significance giving birth of pregnant questions from socio-economic point of views. Partition changes the socio-economic scenario of the Indian subcontinent, especially of West Bengal, a part of eastern India and the Punjab. This paper intends to focus on the causes of migration of people from East Pakistan to India and how partition affects the socio-economic scenario in West Bengal. As it is an empirical study, the researcher has gone through sampling method through field survey in the selected places of Nadia district. The whole timespan of migration is divided into three phases making 1947, 1971 and 1981, the years of landmark. Naturally, some relevant questions could have been raised like main reasons for migration, whether without partition, independence was possible or not, relation between partition and communal riots and how partition affected the moral values etc. our motto is to find out the answers of all the issues with scientific temperament and all have been reflected in this paper.

**Keywords:** Migration, Communalism, Partition, Employment, Development, Self-esteem.

## INTRODUCTION

The year 1947 marked as the year of independence as well as partition in Indian subcontinent. On 15<sup>th</sup> August, 1947, India got independence but for the sake of partition. After that the history of Indian subcontinent changed a lot. According to UNHCR, fourteen million Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims were displaced during partition of India. It was the largest mass migration in human history. Mass migration refers to the migration of people from one geographical area to another. Mass migration is distinguished from individual or small-scale migration and also from seasonal migration, which may occur on regular basis.<sup>1</sup>

Independence – the most desired dream came to the subcontinent and it brought partition. A family has to leave their homestead, village and enlisted themselves as refugees only to pay for the cost of independence. After 200 years of British Colonialism, India becomes independent, but not in a way as such the freedom-fighters and common people dreamt for. In “Freedom at Midnight”, Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre (1975) mentioned – “Independence Day had come for the Indian sub-content, but it was new two nations – India and Pakistan – the communal rioting continued to visit unimaginable suffering on 410 million people”.<sup>2</sup>

On the basis of religious bigotry, mainly 1947 partition took place. After partition, two new countries emerged

1. Hindu dominated India and
2. Muslim dominated Pakistan.

Communalism – this very word is the cause and the effect of the partition of India. It defiled the relationship between Hindus and Muslims. Two-nation theory, religious segregation, conflict between two leading political parties – Congress and Muslim League and above all religion predominated politics are seen in pre-partitioned

<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mass\\_migration](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mass_migration)

<sup>2</sup> Lapierre Dominique and Collins Larry, Freedom at Midnight, Vikas Publishing House, 1975.

India. Even the Swadeshi movement was also polluted by communalism. Many Muslims thought that it was totally a Hindu movement.

Bipan Chandra (1984) in his book, “Communalism in Modern India”, wrote, “Communalism is the belief that because a group of people follow a particular religion they have, as a result common social, political and economic interests.”<sup>3</sup> So religion determines a person’s social relationship. Partition came after a lengthy process of political discussion and it has a far-off significance in the immediate future.

The seed of communalism first sowed by Sir Syed Ahmad through his Aligarh Movement. A number of communal riots among Hindus and Muslims were outburst. The reasons behind the social disturbances mainly were language (Hindu-Urdu issue), cow-slaughter issue, playing music near mosques etc.

In main stream Indian politics there were two leading political parties- Congress and Muslim league. In 1885 Congress party was established and some years after that in 1906, Muslim league was established in Dacca. Mahatma Gandhi was the supremo of Congress and Mohammad Ali Jinnah was the leader of Muslim league. The political ideology of these two parties and the two leaders were different, as though their purpose was same – to keep India free from the British rule.

The British jurist Sir Cyril Radcliffe was the President of both Bengal and Punjab Boundary Commission in India. He completed the task of division within five weeks. On 20th June Bengal Assembly and on 23rd June Punjab Assembly accepted partition. It was decided that eastern part of Bengal and western part of Punjab were included in Pakistan. The latter part remained in India. The task of Radcliffe can be called as a farce. Any geographical area if properly divided then it will take minimum 2-3 years. Radcliffe did it within six weeks. So, it roused anger and pain to a million of people of Bengal and Punjab.

On 15-16th July, 1947, Indian Independence Bill was taken in British Parliament on the basis of Mountbatten plan. Finally, on 15th August, 1947, India and on 14th August, 1947, Pakistan got independence. Two new born nation acquainted their existence in the map of the world. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was the first Prime Minister of India and Mohammad Ali Jinnah was the first Governor-General of Pakistan. The undivided Bengal was divided into two new provinces. One is called West Bengal, which is a state of India. The remaining part is called East Pakistan, which is a province under Pakistan.

The distribution of districts between the two provinces was totally done in an improper way. There is no plan, no pre-conceived idea before the partition of two nations. The districts like Murshidabad and Malda which are Muslim-majority districts had gone to West Bengal. Surprisingly, Khulna, Faridpur, Barisal, Pabna, Chittagong Hill districts were merged to East Pakistan. In case of doing the whole distributional work, no opinion of the inhabitants had been taken by Boundary Commission.

Independence brought partition and partition brought refugee problem to independent India. Many people were homeless, lost their near and dear ones in communal riots, lost their property, ancestral house – and were forced to migrate to an unknown land and to an uncertain future. India’s last viceroy Lord Mountbatten was one of the responsible persons for the partition.

The morning of 15<sup>th</sup> August, 1947 had changed the political situation of Indian sub-continent. And it also changed the fate of the people of Bengal and Punjab.

## Migration

In Bengal the migration started before independence. Because of communal riots, political unrest, social insecurity and instability; the educated and upper-middle section of society migrated to Kolkata or nearby places from East Bengal. One of the reasons of this migration is that they were aware of contemporary socio-political situation of the country and the possibility of partition in near future. The influx of refugees like

---

<sup>3</sup> Chandra Bipan, Communalism in Modern India, Vikas Publication, 1984.

continuous stream one after another migrated to India. Before partition they lived peacefully with each other in villages. The sense of communalism hardly affects the relation between a Hindu and a Muslim in a remote village in Bengal. In most cases the Muslim did not disturb Hindu community.

### **The Causes of Migration:**

The trans-border between India and East Pakistan continuing till today has several causes. It is also a controversial subject in India and East Pakistan. After 1948 or contemporary years it is a forced illegal migration. The causes of the migration from 1947 to 1981 after are -

- (1) Due to partition of India the Hindus mainly came to India and the Musselman went to Pakistan.
- (2) To search for economic security and stability.
- (3) For secured shelter.
- (4) Poverty.
- (5) Lack of employment opportunity.
- (6) Self-esteem.
- (7) To get rid of religious bigotry.
- (8) Higher education.
- (9) Political instability.
- (10) Forced grabbing of landed property from minority group.
- (11) Friends and relatives migrated to India.
- (12) Communal riots.
- (13) Curtailment of facilities enjoyed by Hindu minority group.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

For Indians independence and partition are correlated. They are the two opposite sides of a coin. Several writers have provided as with a conceptual analysis of partition of India.

In "*Communalism in Modern India*" (1984) Bipan Chandra opined that Communalism has its roots and social functions during the period of its birth and growth in the colonial period. Why it developed to the extent of resulting in the partition of the land. The author tried to understand which aspects of India's social, economic, political and cultural life were responsible for the growth of communalism, from where it drew its social support, which section of society were 'represented' by it, whose interests it served, and which sections promoted and organized communal politics. The complexity, multiplicity of forces was responsible for the growth of communalism. He does not believe that it can have a simple, mono-causal explanation or solution. He has not treated communalism as equivalent to separatism.

Sumit Sarkar in his book "*Modern India*" (1983) also clearly discussed about freedom and partition in 1945-1947. Two basic strands emerge from the maze of events during the last two years of British rule: tortuous negotiations between British, Cong. And league statesmen, increasingly accompanied by communal violence and culminating in a freedom which was also a tragic partition, and sporadic, localized but often extremely

militant and united mass actions – the I.N.A. release movement and the R.I.N. mating in 1945-46, the Tebhaga upsurge in Bengal and the Telangana peasant armed revolt in Hyderabad.

Joya Chatterjee in the book “Bengal Divided-Hindu Communalism and Partition, 1932-1947” (1995) has depicted that Lord Curzon partitioned Bengal in 1905, this elicited a storm of protest which forced the Govt. to rescind his decision within six years. In 1947, Bengal was partitioned again, following horrific clashes between Hindus and Muslims.

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad in his autobiography, “India wins Freedom” (1959), said that “The country was free, but before the people could fully enjoy the sense of liberations and victory, they woke up to find that a great tragedy had accompanied freedom. We also realized that we would have to face a long and difficult journey before we could relax and enjoy the fruits of liberty.”

Nitish Sengupta in his book “Bengal Divided – The Unmaking of a Nation” (2007) vividly searched for the root cause of partition of India. He said that – “There is no parallel in history to the paradox that while in 1905 a majority of the people of Bengal rejected the British-directed partition of their land and fought against it, only four decades later, in 1947, the same majority asked for a partition of Bengal between Muslim majority and Hindu majority areas.”

## METHODOLOGY

### Area of Sampling:

The area of sampling has been selected by the researcher is Nadia district. The numbers of respondents are three hundred. All of them live in Nadia district. The survey is conducted by Purposive sampling method. This district has been selected because it is located on the Indo-Bangladesh border.

The researcher selected some places of Nadia district for conducting the field survey. She selected Kalyani city, Ranaghat town and Cooper’s camp of Ranaghat.

### Tools and Techniques

In the present research, the method of interview with the help of interview schedule has been adopted for the purpose of data collection. Both qualitative and quantitative types of analysis have been followed. In case of quantitative type of analysis, sampling procedure has been used and in case of qualitative type of analysis, interview method has been adopted. Data analysis method has been done both theoretically and empirically. Theoretical analysis includes secondary data analysis and empirical analysis includes field-work method. The whole timespan of migration is divided into three phases –

1. 1947 and afterwords (intrusion period)
2. 1971 and afterwords
3. 1981 and afterwords

### Objectives

1. What are the main reasons for migration in India in 1947 and afterwards?
2. Was Independence without partition possible or not, according to the migrants?
3. Is Partition being the root cause for communal riots all over India – what are the opinions of the migrants?
4. How does Partition affect the socio-economic scenario of Nadia district of West Bengal in case of education and employment opportunity?
5. Do the social and moral values change a lot in compare between before and after Partition?

Table – I Opinion regarding the reason for migration to India by INCOME (In percentage)

Income (Rupees)	Economic security, stability, secured shelter	Religious bigotry	Self-esteem	Political Causes	Higher education	Total
1,001-3,001	74 (24.67)	5 (1.67)	4 (1.33)	2 (0.67)	-	85 (28.33)
3,001-5,001	46 (15.33)	20 (6.67)	5 (1.67)	1(0.33)	-	72 (24.00)
5,001-10,001	40 (13.33)	26 (8.67)	1 (0.33)	2 (0.67)	2 (0.67)	71 (23.67)
10,001-15,001	13 (4.33)	9 (3.00)	4 (1.33)	3 (1.00)	3 (1.00)	32 (10.67)
15,001-20,001	16 (5.33)	5 (1.67)	1 (0.33)	1 (0.33)	1 (0.33)	24 (8.00)
20,001 and above	14 (4.67)	-	-	-	2 (0.67)	16 (5.33)
<b>Total</b>	<b>203 (67.66)</b>	<b>65 (21.67)</b>	<b>15 (5.00)</b>	<b>9 (3.00)</b>	<b>8 (2.67)</b>	<b>300 (100.00)</b>

The table presents that majority of the people both male and female choose economic security, stability, and secured shelter as their reason for migration.

Table – II Opinion regarding independence without partition is possible by age (In percentage)

Age (year)	Strongly agree	Agree	Do not know	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
<b>CATEGORY – A (1947 – 1971) n = 178</b>						
30-45	-	2 (1.12)	5 (2.80)	-	1 (0.56)	8 (4.19)
46-59	1 (0.56)	15 (8.42)	11 (6.17)	8 (4.49)	1 (0.56)	36 (20.22)
60-75	19 (10.67)	44 (24.71)	18 (10.11)	12 (6.74)	5 (2.80)	98 (55.05)
76 and above	4 (2.24)	16 (8.98)	11 (6.17)	3 (1.68)	2 (1.12)	36 (20.22)
<b>Total</b>	<b>24 (13.48)</b>	<b>77 (43.25)</b>	<b>45 (25.28)</b>	<b>23 (12.92)</b>	<b>9 (5.05)</b>	<b>178 (100.00)</b>
<b>CATEGORY – B (1971 and afterwards) n = 122</b>						
30-45	2 (1.63)	12 (9.83)	30 (24.59)	3 (2.45)	-	47 (38.52)
46-59	3 (2.45)	20 (16.39)	15 (12.29)	2 (1.63)	-	40 (32.78)
60-75	2 (1.63)	11 (9.01)	15 (12.29)	1 (0.81)	-	29 (23.77)
76 and above	1 (0.81)	3 (2.45)	1 (0.81)	1 (0.81)	-	6 (4.91)
<b>Total</b>	<b>8 (6.55)</b>	<b>46 (37.70)</b>	<b>61 (50.00)</b>	<b>7 (5.73)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>122 (100.00)</b>

The table presents that majority of the respondents agree that independence without partition is possible.

Table – III Opinion regarding partition as the cause of riots by educational qualification

Educational qualification	Strongly agree	Agree	Do not know	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Illiterate	4 (1.33)	21 (7.00)	34 (11.33)	2 (0.67)	-	61 (20.33)
Up to Madhyamik	20 (6.67)	63 (21.00)	43 (14.33)	19 (6.33)	-	145 (48.33)
Up to H.S.	1 (0.33)	8 (2.67)	6 (2.00)	6 (2.00)	-	21 (7.00)
Graduation	17 (5.66)	22 (7.33)	6 (2.00)	8 (2.67)	-	53 (17.67)
P.G. and above	5 (1.67)	11 (3.67)	2 (0.67)	2 (0.67)	-	20 (6.67)
<b>Total</b>	<b>47 (15.67)</b>	<b>125 (41.67)</b>	<b>91 (30.33)</b>	<b>37 (12.33)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>300 (100.00)</b>

Table – IV Opinion regarding migration as the cause of unemployed by sex

Sex	Strongly Agree	Agree	Do not know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Male	40 (13.33)	141 (47.00)	14 (4.67)	13 (4.33)	2 (0.67)	210 (70.00)
Female	12 (4.00)	62 (20.66)	10 (3.33)	6 (2.00)	-	90 (30.00)
<b>Total</b>	<b>52 (17.33)</b>	<b>203 (67.67)</b>	<b>24 (8.00)</b>	<b>19 (6.33)</b>	<b>2 (0.67)</b>	<b>300 (100.00)</b>



Table – V Opinion regarding the nature of style of living of the migrants after partition by educational qualification

<b>Educational Qualification</b>	<b>Upgrading style of living</b>	<b>Traditional style of living</b>	<b>Degrading style of living</b>	<b>Total</b>
Illiterate	48 (16.00)	10 (3.33)	3 (1.00)	61 (20.33)
Upto Madhyamik	104 (34.66)	21 (7.00)	20 (6.67)	145 (48.33)
Upto H.S.	14 (4.67)	4 (1.33)	3 (1.00)	21 (7.00)
Graduation	34 (11.33)	18 (6.00)	1 (0.33)	53 (17.67)
P.G. and above	17 (5.67)	3 (1.00)	-	20 (6.67)
<b>Total</b>	<b>217 (72.33)</b>	<b>56 (18.66)</b>	<b>27 (9.00)</b>	<b>300 (100.00)</b>

Table – VI Opinion regarding impact of partition on social and moral values of society.

<b>Social/Moral values</b>	<b>At the time of Undivided India</b>			<b>After Partition</b>		
	<b>Present</b>	<b>Absent</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Absent</b>	<b>Total</b>
Loyalty to the Elders	300 (100.00)	-	300 (100.00)	27 (9.00)	273 (91.00)	300 (100.00)
Respect to the Parents	300 (100.00)	-	300 (100.00)	19 (6.33)	281 (93.67)	300 (100.00)
Honesty	300 (100.00)	-	300 (100.00)	53 (17.67)	247 (82.33)	300 (100.00)
Sincerity	300 (100.00)	-	300 (100.00)	67 (22.33)	233 (77.67)	300 (100.00)
Family Disorganization	-	300 (100.00)	300 (100.00)	215 (71.67)	85 (28.33)	300 (100.00)
Nature of interaction among family members	300 (100.00)	-	300 (100.00)	57 (19.00)	243 (81.00)	300 (100.00)

### Analysis of tables

On the basis of some prime variables, the field study has been conducted. Variables identifying age, sex, educational qualification, occupation, income of the respondents. The table reveals the opinion regarding the reason for migration to India by income. The table scrutinize that the lower income group i.e. 1,001-3,001 group agree in majority 24.67% that economic security is the reason for migration. Only 2.67% respondents opined for the higher education reason.

The table presents the opinion regarding independence without partition is possible by age. In category- A (1947 to 1971) the majority respondents i.e 43.25% agreed the fact. Among them 24.71% are majority come from 60–75-year age group. On the contrary, in category –B (1971 afterwards) the majority respondents i.e. 50% choose do not know option. Among them 24.59% are majority come from 30–45-year age group.

The table presents the opinion regarding partition as the cause of riots by educational qualification. 21% respondents of up to Madhyamik group agreed the fact in majority But the illiterate group choose do not know option in majority i.e. 11.33%

The table presents the opinion regarding migration as the cause of unemployment by sex. 67.67% respondents agree in majority that migration as the cause of unemployment. Only 6.33% respondents disagreed the fact. 8% respondents do not know about it. 47% male respondents and 20.66% female respondents choose agree option.

The table show the opinion regarding the nature of style of living of the migrants after migration by educational qualification. Among the post-graduation and above group, majority of respondents i.e. 5.67% lead upgrading and 1.00% respondents lead traditional style of living. Only 1% respondents from graduation group lead degrading style of living. It means that higher education group after migration mainly lead upgrading and traditional style of living.

The table reveals opinion regarding impact of partition on social and moral values of society. The social and moral values degraded if we compared between at the time of undivided India and India after partition. Loyalty to the elders, respect to the parents, honesty, sincerity such values are present in undivided India. But after partition in India only 9% respondents state that loyalty to the elders is present. Likewise, 6.33% respondents,

17.67% respondents, 22.33% respondents respectively agreed that respect to the elders, honesty and sincerity are present in today's society. 71.66% respondents state that after partition family disorganization is seen in society. 81% respondents commented that interaction among family members none found in present society.

## CONCLUSION

The study reveals that migration- after partition and even at the present time is a continuing process in India. After 1947 the nature of migrants were mainly rich and upper middle educated section of society. But after 1971 and 1981 especially the poor uneducated section of society migrated largely from Bangladesh to India. So, it showed that the nature of the migrants changed through time. It is because the causes of migration changed in between 1947 to 1981. In 1947 the partition was the main reason for migration. Then the migrants are known as refugees. But later, after 1971 *Mukhti-Yuddha* (freedom fighting) and afterwards the causes of migration were economic insecurity, political disturbances, social turmoil etc. It is the tragic saying that the government of India did not refer the migrants as refugees now.

In this paper, the researcher wants to highlight on the views and attitudes of the migrants towards partition, how partition affects the socio-economic structure and changing nature of social and moral values of the society. This paper also focused on the present socio-economic condition of the migrants.

The study shows that the migrants mainly crossed the border for economic stability, social security and a secured shelter. They felt very much unsecured in East Pakistan. So, it can be said that mainly for economic reason, migration occurred in 1947 and afterwards.

The migrants thought that without partition independence was possible. The migrants are the direct sufferer of partition. So, naturally they felt that partition could be avoided. 41% respondents agreed that without partition independence is possible in our country. Among them 29% are male respondents and 12% are female respondents. Secondly, 35% of the total respondents have no idea about it. 10.66% respondents strongly agreed with it. Whether 10% respondents disagreed and 3% respondents strongly disagreed that without partition independence is possible. Migrants thought that the partition is one of the reasons of communal riots. 41.67% respondents agree to this issue. The after effect of partition was severe. The socio-economic condition of West Bengal was affected a lot. At that time, a huge wave of migrants coming from the other side of border is a common scenario in the border areas of West Bengal. As a result, population exploded. Connected to this, unemployment problem also affected the society.

The study revealed that 72.33 % migrants led upgraded style of living after their migration. Their economic condition was improved than before. They led the most westernised urban standard of living. Most of the respondents opined that social and moral values were degraded. Honesty, sincerity, loyalty- such values gradually were diminished.

Lastly, we can say that the migrants are quite happy now in West Bengal. After a long struggle, they settled here happily.

## REFERENCE

1. Azad Abul Kalam, (1959). India Wins Freedom. New Delhi: Orient Longman.
2. Bandopadhyay Sekhar, (2004). Plassey to Partition: A History of Modern India. New Delhi: Orient Longman.
3. Butalia Urvashi, (1998). The Other side of silence: voices from the Partition of India. New Delhi: Penguin Books India.
4. Chandra Bipan, (1984). Communalism in Modern India. New Delhi: Vikas Publication.
5. Chattopadhyay Bhabani Prasad, (1993). Deshbibhag Rashta O Nepathya Kahini. Kolkata: Ananda Publication.
6. Chakraborty Prafulla, K., (1990). The Marginal Men: The Refugees and the Left Political Syndrome in West Bengal. Toronto: Lumiere Books.
7. Hasan Mushirul, India Partitioned – The other Face of Freedom, (1995). 2 vols. New Delhi: Roli-

Books.

8. Hachey, Thomas, E., (1972). The Problem of Partition – Peril to World Peace, Chicago: Rand McNally and Company.
9. Lapierre Dominique and Collins Larry, (1975). Freedom at Midnight, New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House.
10. Pandey Gyanendra, (2001). Remembering Partition: Violence, Nationalism and History in India. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.