

## **Abstract**

The partition of 1947 affected the socio-economic position of the Punjab at large scale. It has differential impacts on the different areas of the Punjab. These varied impacts are historically rooted and desired a careful grass-root level academic research. To challenge general standard narrative of uniform migration process and homogenous rehabilitation of the refugees, this research is focused on canal colony areas in the West Punjab by taking Toba Tek Singh as a case study. The existing literature is confined to provincial and districts level accounts and desired extension to tehsil and town level understanding of this very complex process of migration and rehabilitation of the refugees.

The partitions of Punjab and Bengal, in the wake of the partition of 1947, was the major [though not the only] factor of violence, communal massacre and forced migration across the border between India and Pakistan. Apart from Bengal, where Pakistan-India border went through less catastrophic change and real migration started in 1950s, in Punjab the migration process was spontaneous and started even before August 1947. Because of migration of the Hindu and Sikh population and resettlement of millions of Muslims refugees from India, West Punjab had gone through massive socio-economic change after the partition. Rehabilitation of the refugees, after the partition, was shown as the top priority by the government of Pakistan, considering it 'lurking dangers' to the very existence of Pakistan. Most of these phenomena [the partition, refugee crisis, failure of democracy etc.] were interpreted with the help of 'high politics' approach, based on national or provincial level understanding. District and tehsil level micro socio-economic and political changes are generally overlooked because of variety of reasons, especially, comparatively a difficult research terrain. During last fifteen years or so West Punjab

has witnessed considerable attention by the historians in terms of the partition and its aftermath. But most of the research is still confined to border or industrial cities, like, Lahore, Gujranwala, Sialkot, Faisalabad. Especially the canal colony areas are generally overlooked.

This thesis is influenced by the project 'The Subcontinent Divided: A New Beginning' which intends to write 'a New History' of the partition through the lens of 'human dimension approach'. Through empirical based historical study and oral history techniques we counter-checked the established narrative of partition-related refugee's rehabilitation projects and analyzed socio-economic transformation in Punjab after the partition. Every day state approach also has been used to understand the changes in day to day affairs after the partition in Toba Tek Singh.

The case studies of three villages and town of Toba Tek Singh in tehsil Toba Tek Singh [district Lyallpur] proved very helpful to understand socio-economic changes in Lower Chenab Colony before and after the partition. The Lower Chenab Colony was the richest canal colony in west Punjab in which non-Muslim [Sikhs and Hindus] had dominant share in agrarian economy. They were replaced with Muslim refugees after the partition. This thesis helps us to understand the grass root level socio-economic changes to further comprehend provincial and national level issues. It also provides in-depth information about; factors of migration of Hindu and Sikh communities, role of the government in the refugee's rehabilitation, local-refugee relationships and refugee identity in Toba Tek Singh. This locality based information not only enhanced existing understanding about the partition and its aftermath but also question the official narrative of smooth and efficient refugees' rehabilitation process in post partition period.