Advanced International Journal for Research (AIJFR)
E-ISSN: 3048-7641 ● Website: www.aijfr.com ● Email: editor@aijfr.com

Exodus, Adaptation, and Economic Reconstruction: Sindhi Hindu Refugees in India

Dr. Priyanka Hemant Jhamnani

Assistant Professor, Accounting and Financial Management
The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda

Abstract

During the 1947 Partition of India, more than one million Sindhi Hindus migrated from their historic province that became Pakistan. The 1947 Partition of India resulted in one of the most complete population transfers in South Asia. Since Sindh underwent internal migration as a result of structural transformation and not due to outright killings like Punjab's immediate massacre or Bengal's sudden violence. This chapter illustrates the peculiar character of the Sindhi Hindus' displacement due to the breakdown of their syncretic coexistence with muhajir influx, confiscation of property and targeted violence during December 1947 and January 1948 (Bhavnani, 2014; Ansari, 2005). The writer has made a concerted effort to trace the routes undertaken by migrants which deliberately avoided the killing fields of Punjab and also documents the reception at Indian camps with a mixed welcome and bureaucratic control. This study also looks at the rapid economic rebuilding which was possible because of pre-existing commercial networks (Bhavnani, 2014; Kothari, 2009). The chapter highlights how displacement occurred, not merely through physical violence, but through erosion of economic possibility and demographic change (Ansari, 2005). This scenario investigates resettlement challenges of a deterritorialized community without a linguistic state. However, these challenges involve language loss, way of life becoming orthodox Hinduism, strategic assimilation that translated into economic benefit and loss of identity and distinctiveness (Shahani 2022; Bhavnani 2018). This chapter examines the differences in the experiences of refugeehood by class, caste and gender and shows how privilege allowed for recovery to take place quickly while disadvantage ensured prolonged vulnerability of life (Bhavnani, 2014).This study contributes to Partition scholarship by documenting a migration pattern fundamentally different from Punjab and Bengal, revealing how complete territorial loss forced identity reconstruction and how memory work sustains community in diaspora (Kothari, 2009; Kumar & Kothari, 2016).

Keywords: Sindh Partition, Hindu Exodus, Refugee Resettlement, Sindhi Identity, Language Transformation, Syncretism

सुहिनी सिंधुडी

(इत्तूर भोजवाणी)

जेल भरियासीं देस लाड, छा तें भिलियोसीं दाद !

वतन शियो आजाद, असीं शियासीं बेवतन !

शियो सुतंत्र देश, आया ड्रोहं बहार जा,
करे फकीरो वेस, सिंधी निकिता सिंध मां !
मस्तक लाए खाक, भूइं चुमियाउं सिंध जी,
खणी दिलीयूं गमनाक, सिंधी निकिता सिंध मां !
सिंधी पहुता हिंदे मैं, पाताउं नईं जान,
पोखि खे जूनी विया, जमदे शिया जवान !
सर्यूं छडियाउं सिंध जो, सूर कयाउं साण,
सो सभु इज्जत काणि, न तं भिटिकणु केहिखे वर्णे!
जलु सिंधूअ जो पी, जपे हिति गगा जो नाउं,
अजु गगा ते आउं छा, भुलिजां सिंधूअ खे ?
तुहिंजी मीरत, सिंध ! साढीदासीं साह सां,
शाह सदो सोमुख, करसम निमाणे केवर जो !

(Souce: Sindhu Joti "VeerHado")

1. Introduction

In Sindh, daily life once softened boundaries between Hindu and Muslim in ways that felt natural to people sharing streets, foods, language, and songs (Bhavnani, 2014; Kumar & Kothari, 2016). Hindu and Muslim neighbors wore similar clothes, spoke Sindhi with its blend of Sanskrit, Persian, and Arabic words, and many Hindus wrote in modified Arabic script (Malkani, 1997). Shrines of Sufi saints drew mixed crowds, and at Uderolal, shrine and temple stood side by side with keepers from both faiths (Bhavnani, 2014).

Beneath this syncretic surface lay economic tensions that would matter when politics turned rough (Markovits, 2000). Though constituting only 25-30% of the population, Sindhi Hindus controlled trade, finance, and increasingly land itself (Kumar & Kothari, 2016; Salim, 2004). Merchants dominated commerce from Karachi to Central Asia, while moneylenders held rural Muslims in cycles of debt recorded in scripts that debtors could not read. (Markovits, 2000; Bhavnani, 2014). This unusual balance economic power with Hindus, religious authority and demographic majority with Muslims created precarious interdependence that Partition shatter irreparably (Sawlani, 2022).

When Partition arrived in August 1947, Sindh initially avoided Punjab's massacres (Kothari, 2009). A nervous peace held for months as Congress discouraged migration and many believed coexistence would continue (Bhavnani, 2014), But this calm proved fragile. The massive influx of traumatized Muslim refugees (muhajirs) from India fundamentally altered Sindh's social culture (Ansari, 1995, 2005). Government requisitioning of Hindu properties to accommodate newcomers, humiliating searches of departing passengers, and rising communal tension created an atmosphere where staying became untenable even without immediate physical threat (Salim, 2004; Bhavnani, 2014).

Two events shattered the nervous peace: Hyderabad riots in December 1947 and Karachi violence on January 6, 1948 (Bhavnani, 2014; Ansari, 2005). After these shocks, nearly the entire Sindhi Hindu population understood they had no future in their homeland (Kothari, 2009). The Indian government, abandoning its earlier discouragement, facilitated departure through free steamer tickets and special trains

deliberately routed through Rajasthan to avoid Punjab's killing fields (Bhavnani, 2014). More than 1.2 million people left one of the most significant demographic changes in Partition with 90-95% of Sindh's Hindu population.

This chapter follows that exodus and its aftermath, how Sindhi Hindus departed by carefully organised sea and rail routes, arrived in Indian camps to mixed reception of assistance and suspicion, and rebuilt with remarkable entrepreneurial speed across a nation where they had no linguistic state to anchor identity. (Bhavnani, 2014; Shahani, 2022) While the Punjab refugees moved within their homeland, the Sindhi Hindus faced almost total territorial loss, which resulted in their dispersal all over India and did not get concentrated in any state so that it could claim Sindhi territory (Kumar & Kothari, 2016).Sindh's Partition was different. Displaced communities especially the ones from the hinterland were not merely the result of immediate violence but of structural impossibility.

They lost all territorial base yet their identity was reconstructed around the only marker left language. While the community economically recovered, it also suffered cultural erosion. Strategy of assimilation-led material success, but loss of distinctiveness (Bhavnani 2014; Shahani 2022). Various refugee experiences emerged as a result of the interplay of class, caste and gender. Selective narratives about a utopian harmony, created by work on memory, show such an example. The building of communities that are deterritorialized to claim linguistic citizenship is another. Through territorial citizenship, there came to be linguistic citizenship in the nation state. (Kothari, 2007).

2. Review of Literature

To comprehend the exodus of Sindhi Hindus one has to engage with the various scholarly perspectives which help us to understand this exodus from various angles. The Partition experience conveyed in the literature is different from that of Punjab or Bengal. The Partition here is marked by total loss of territory. This also raises questions regarding how to reconstruct identity without having a homeland.

Major Scholarly Works

In 2014, the publication of The Making of Exile: Sindhi Hindus and the Partition of India by Nandita Bhavnani was the most comprehensive account on their exodus. This also focuses on how class and gender differentiated experiences. Bhavnani examined how Sindhi Hindus defined their culture while displaying great economic resilience as their physical departure from Pakistan and difficult arrival in India was documented. The displacement is very painful but at the same time it gives a new creativity.

Rita Kothari has researched on many issues and questions. In the year 2007, her book The Burden of Refuge: The Sindhi Hindus of Gujarat was published. this recorded the discrimination and exclusion faced by refugees in their struggle to maintain Sindhyat (Sindhi-ness). In her book Unbordered Memories: Sindhi Stories of Partition (2009), Kothari moves away from the immediate geography of the partition to cultural memory and testimony. The book brings together various literary texts through which the authors evoke a powerful nostalgia for the lost Sindh. An article on RSS in Sindh (2006) explores how the right-wing Hinduism gained ever greater strength among the displaced Sindhis and the ideological shift accompanying geographical displacement.

Sarah Ansari gave important historical context by looking at migration from both sides of the border. The book Life after Partition: Migration, Community and Strife in Sindh 1947-1962 (2005) of hers and also previous research (1995) covering Hindus leaving Sindh and Muslims arriving as muhajirs. Ansari said the sudden arrival of Muslim refugees was a significant reason why Hindus left, owing to property disputes and changes in demographics fuelling communal fears further.

Claude Markovits located the financial bases in The Global World of Indian Merchants, 1750-1947. It depicts the business connections and financial power of Sindhi Hindus before Partition. The Hindu and Muslim communities in colonial Sindh had a unique and complex economic relationship that was based on interdependence and not on social stratification, his work shows. In the special section of a journal "Sindh, 1947 and Beyond", Kumar and Kothari (2016) expand the analytical frame to view the changing demographics because of the Partition. They also looked at how new ethnic identities were constructed in the crucible of displacement.

Uttara Shahani's (2022) research on language politics researched the fight for Sindhi language recognition in post-displacement India. She studied how a deterritorialized community was able to fight for their linguistic citizenship in a nation-state that privileged territorial language communities. It documents a twenty-year political struggle. It ended with the inclusion of Sindhi in the Eight Schedule of the Constitution in 1968.

Community-oriented works have also preserved memory. Malkani's 1997 The Sindh Story, a culturally rich history, is an important work that helps the reader understand pre-Partition Sindh. Aggarwal (2012) offered easy narratives on displacement, resettlement, and cultural sustainability in the diaspora.

Oral Histories and Literary Narratives

Survivor testimonieswhether poetry, fiction, memoir, or oral historyprovide deeply personal records that statistics cannot capture (Sawlani, 2022; Kothari, 2009). First-generation writers recreated Sindh as an idealized, pristine homeland, overwhelmed by viraha (nostalgic yearning) for what was lost (Sangari, 2011; Bhavnani, 2014). They often personified the homeland as Bhoori or Sindhri, a feminine land Sindhi Hindus carried in their hearts (Kothari, 2009).

These narratives emphasized pre-Partition religious harmony through portrayals of inter-communal marriages and syncretic practices (Hoskote & Trojanow, 2012). They also documented darker realities that bureaucratic violence, stigma of refugeehood, and the rhetorical transformation from sharnarthi (refugee) to purusharthi (hardworking) to retain dignity (Kothari, 2009; Bhavnani, 2014). One writer poignantly observed ," I am also a refugee. I wish to be part of society but locals constantly remind me that I am a refugee. " (Hiranandani, 1997).

Oral histories functioned as memory work constructing community identity (Neumann, 2008).Profound silences also emerged. Many maintained silence about trauma in desperate searches for integration (Kothari, 2009). Considerable silence surrounded camp life in autobiographies, reflecting urgent desire to distance from refugeehood's stigma (Balasubrahmanyan, 2011; Bhavnani, 2014).

Policy and Identity Transformation

Scholarship on policy frameworks reveals how bureaucratic systems shaped exodus and resettlement (Bhavnani, 2014; Shahani, 2022). The Bombay Refugees Act (1948) mandated compulsory registration and granted government power to shift refugees between camps, provoking resistance from Sindhis who saw this as criminalization. Property compensation proved protracted, lasting until 1971, causing bitterness among those who had already rebuilt lives independently.

Research indicates that identities can go through dramatic transformations (Bhavnani, 2018; Shahani, 2022). Many Sindhis especially younger generations and upper classes have given up on the Sindhi language for English and Hindi. They are scared that their children will get branded as 'refugees' (Hiranandani, 1980; Bhavnani, 2018). As per Bhavnani (2014), religious rituals were changed towards orthodox Sanskritic Hinduism with the recasting of Jhulelal as Vishnu's avatar. The proposal for the adoption of the Devanagari script and the abandonment of the Arabic script can be d-escribed as an attempt to "purify" the Sindhi identity of Islamic influences (Shahani 2022).

3. Main Discussion/Analysis

3.1 Pre-Partition Sindh: Everyday Coexistence and Commerce

Before the Partition, Sindh was a paradox where people lived a life of duality. Sindhi Hindus made a mark on trade and finance with them constituting 25 to 30 percent of the population. So, they are increasing their land ownership. According to historians Markovits (2000) and Malkani (1997), the Lohana caste set up the great trading port of Karachi with links to the Persian Gulf while Shikarpur became "the banker of Central Asia" through extensive moneylending operations. The Sindhi Hindu merchants, called Sindhworkis, developed profitable trading networks from Yokohama to Panama, which brought in 2.5 crore rupees to Sindh every year when the province had a budget of only five crores (Bhavnani, 2014).
This economic power generated profound tensions. Creditors were mostly Hindu whereas Debtors were mostly Muslim, thus religious and economic relationship became indistinguishable (Salim, n.d.) Hindu moneylenders wrote in an Indian script that most Muslims couldn't read. This compounded resentment (Salim, n.d.). By 1947, Hindus owned 40% of land with a further 20% mortgaged to them. This represented a radical change from pre-British times when Hindus owned practically no land. (Malkani, 1997; Bhavnani, 2014)

The economy thrived as hybridization flourished. According to Kumar & Kothari (2016) and Bhavnani (2014), sufism had an all-encompassing influence on the two communities, with many Sindhi Hindus being murids or followers of Sufi pirs. This practice was more widespread than anywhere in India. Uderolal shrine housed the dargah and temple side by side with keepers from both sides. This unusual mix produced a harmonious world, but it was also hierarchical. Even those people who knew the world's inequalities would miss it.

3.2 From Unease to Rupture: Triggers and January 1948

Unlike Punjab, Sindh did not explode immediately after August 1947. A nervous peace held on for months as the province went through no massacres (Kothari, 2009; Bhavnani, 2014). Congress was dissuading people from migrating from Sindh. Those fleeing were labelled cowards. This created confusion among the Hindus who were increasingly anxious but were told they were overreacting (Bhavnani, 2014).

The Muslim refugees (muhajirs) from India were primarily responsible for the transformation in the social chemistry of Sindh (Ansari, 1995, 2005). Sindhi Muslims had cultural bonds and centuries of friendship with local Hindus, but the muhajirs arrived with no such friendliness. In fact, their own displacement shaped them with communal hostility (Ansari, 2005; Bhavnani, 2014). The new arrivals added to the competition for jobs and housing creating friction (Ansari, 1995).

Government policies accelerated departures. In June 1947, ordinances requisitioning Hindu properties and freezing of building materials for muhajirs indicated that Hindu property rights were no longer safe (Bhavnani, 2014). Systematic searches of Hindu passengers leaving India with confiscation of belongings made leaving humiliating experience (Salim, 2004; Bhavnani, 2014).

According to Bhavnani (2014) and Ansari (2005), Hyderabad riots in December 1947 and violence in Karachi on January 6, 1948 disturbed the nervous peace. After these traumatic events, the Indian government made it easier for the Hindus to flee by providing free steamer tickets and arranging for special trains which did not go through Punjab, and almost the entire Hindu population left (Bhavnani, 2014).

3.3 Ports, Platforms, and Partings: Routes and Departures

Sindhi exodus was fundamentally different from Punjab's bloody migrations. The escape routes were impacted by geography, since the Sindh being by the coast enabled them to take to the seas and leave via ships that carried them from Karachi across the Arabian Sea to Bombay, which became the main point of reception (Bhavnani 2014). The Indian government helped by giving them steamer tickets for free plus was providing food free of cost on-board. All this was paid for by India (Bhavnani, 2014).

Land routes required strategic planning. Due to the violent situation in Punjab, special trains were run from Hyderabad and Mirpur-Khas towards Pali and Marwar Junction in Rajasthan (Bhavnani, 2014). While trains crossing Punjab were attacked with passengers massacred, the Sindh-Rajasthan route through the Thar Desert remained relatively safe (Bhavnani, 2014).

The exodus, though organized, carried profound trauma. Refugees faced wrenching decisions about what to abandon houses, shops, farmland accumulated over generations (Bhavnani, 2014). Systematic searches at ports and stations added humiliation, with authorities confiscating belongings and treating departing Hindus as smugglers rather than displaced citizens (Salim, 2004; Bhavnani, 2014). Stories circulated of survival tactics: marking luggage with Muslim pir photos, bribing officials, sewing valuables into clothing (Bhavnani, 2014). Departure experiences differed sharply by class wealthy merchants arranged comfortable passage while the poorest left with almost nothing (Bhavnani, 2014).

3.4 Thresholds of Arrival: Camps and Reception

Sindhi refugees arrived in India to a reception mixing assistance with suspicion and bureaucratic control. The Bombay Refugees Act of 1948 mandated compulsory registration of all refugees, with failure to register carrying punishment threats (Bhavnani, 2014). The legislation granted government power to shift refugees between camps and forcibly remove them from temporary lodgings, measures Sindhi Hindus deeply resented as criminalization (Bhavnani, 2014; Shahani, 2022).

The refugee definition initially narrow, was later expanded to include anyone leaving "due to such a civil disturbance or fear of such disturbance.," recognizing that Sindhis fled anticipated rather than actualized violence (Bhavnani, 2014). Financial allocations were substantialthe Government of India spent Rs 29 crores by mid-1949 on relief and rehabilitation, proposing Rs 56 crores more through the First Five-Year Plan (Bhavnani, 2014). The Rehabilitation Finance Administration offered loans for establishing businesses, though recipients deemed conditions stringent and harassing (Bhavnani, 2014).

Sindhi refugees vehemently rejected the term sharanarthi (refugee) with its connotations of helplessness, preferring "displaced person" or adopting purusharthi (industrious) to emphasize self-reliance and retain dignity (Bhavnani, 2014; Kothari, 2009). This linguistic resistance reflected determination to avoid the stigma of permanent refugeehood.

3.5 From Camp to Commerce: Resettlement and Enterprise

Unlike Punjab refugees who settled in the same area, Sindhi Hindus dispersed all over India without any territorial concentration as they did not have a linguistic state for identity (Shahani, 2022; Kumar and Kothari, 2016). The lack of a Sindhi homeland in India and the community's commercial approach made Sindhi families to settle in different places that offered economic opportunities (Bhavnani, 2014).

The speed of economic rebuilding proved remarkable. Merchant families having commercial links all over India and abroad employed the pre-existing networks to resuscitate the old relations and establish new enterprises (Markovits, 2000; Bhavnani, 2014). The Sindhi community was quick to adapt from camps to commerce due to their commercial skills. A driven group of individuals utilized their trading expertise to enter textile, retail, and import-export businesses. Others pursued vocations, putting their education to work. (Kothari, 2007).

Township became an individual resettlement model. Gandhidham in Gujarat is a city built for and by the Sindhi refugees in 1947 and is one of the most prominent examples of a planned city which gave meaningful physical space and symbolic anchoring Kumar & Kothari (2016)Bhavnani (2014). Through their efforts, these townships managed to create alternative territorial bases but did not manage to acquire the same cultural richness (Kothari, 2007).

Economic success came with costs. Property compensation took a long time. It continued up to 1971. This made people angry. This anger was because those people had already rebuilt their lives on their own (Bhavnani, 2014). The emphasis on rapid economic recovery often overshadowed deeper cultural and psychological needs.

Figure 1 Cultural University. Indian Institute of Sindhlogy, Adipur-Gandhidham is the premier institute in India for the preservation of Sindhi language and culture.

(Souce: Google)

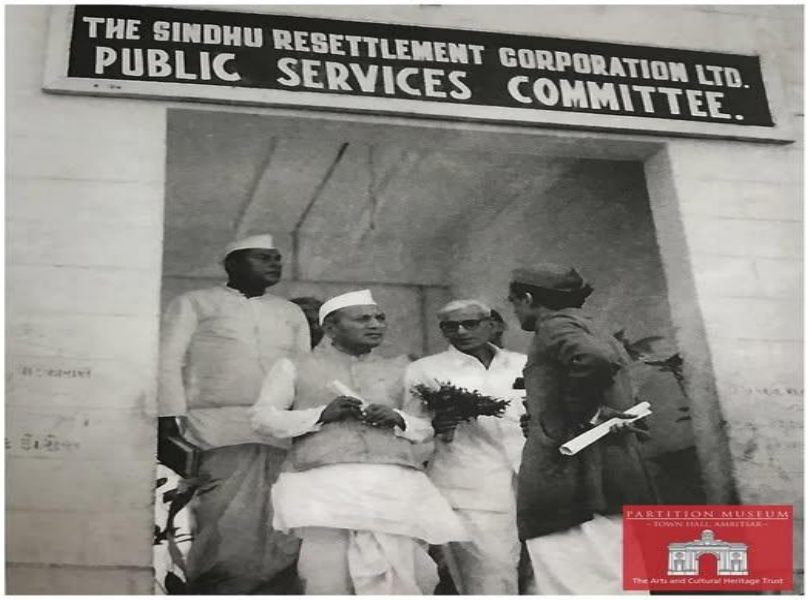

Figure 2 The Corporation was established in 1948 is pioneer builder of Gandhidham in Kutch, Gujarat, for the resettlement of Hindu Sindhis

(Souce: Google)

3.6 Lines Within the Line: Class, Caste, and Gender

Refugeehood was experienced profoundly unequally along lines of class, caste, and gender (Bhavnani, 2014). Wealthy merchant families from dominant Lohana and Amil castes, who departed early with portable wealth and international business networks, could arrange comfortable passage and rapidly reestablish enterprises (Bhavnani, 2014; Markovits, 2000). Their knowledge of the market and reading and writing skills offered them clear advantages in bureaucratic navigation and accessing rehabilitation loans (Bhavnani, 2014).

On the other hand, poorer refugees especially from rural areas and lower castes remained vulnerable for a longer time (Bhavnani, 2014). They arrived with almost nothing, depended on government support for

extended periods than before, and struggled to find work in urban Indian contexts where their agricultural skills had limited utility (Bhavnani, 2014). Community narratives for comprehensive entrepreneurship (Kothari, 2007) ignore the class differences among the members of the group.

Gender added another layer of vulnerability. Women faced particular dangers when they fled from their homes. Also they had to shoulder an unequal burden in the camps. There under difficult circumstances, the women kept the household going as the men searched for work (Bhavnani, 2014). Women's experiences were largely unseen in dominant narratives of male economic achievement (Bhavnani, 2014). Internal community tensions emerged post-resettlement. The broad idea of a Sindhi identity conceals important divisions among caste and class and gender which the fracture of genocide disrupted, but did not erase (Bhavnani, 2014; Kothari, 2007). The economic success that took place was geared towards the privileged groups while others who had a much slower and more incomplete recovery were neglected.

3.7 Language, Script, and Identity Transformation

In post-Partition India, language turned the battleground for the Sindhi identity. Many Sindhi Hindus particularly younger generations and the upper classes have abandoned the language Sindhi in favour of English and Hindi as they feel their children may be tagged as refugees in case they speak it (Bhavnani 2014, 2018; Hiranandani 1980). Parents intentionally did not teach children how to read and write in Sindhi, and many pretended to be Gujaratis and Punjabis to escape the stigma (Bhavnani 2014)

Script debates symbolized deeper identity struggles. The suggestion to embrace Devanagari and discard the adjusted Arabic script demonstrates the efforts to "purify" the Sindhi identity of its Islamic influence and make the people more assimilable (Shahani, 2022). This will enable smoother integration into the Indian mainstream, said supporters. However, it was opposed by intellectuals arguing that this would disown stable literary heritage while also severing ties with Sindhi writers in Pakistan (Shahani 2022; Daswani n.d.).

For twenty years, Sindhi’s incorporation in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution became a major conjuncture of community mobilization (Bhavnani, 2014, Shahani 2022). Advocates purposefully underscored Sindhi's ties to Sanskrit. They claimed the desire to preserve the rhetorical moves of “original purity”. This proved appealing to Hindu nationalist sentiment pan-Indian (Shahani, 2022). In 1968, the successful inclusion marked an important rupture. It proposed linguistic citizenship for a deterritorialized community. And destabilizes the logic corresponding territory, ethnicity, and language (Shahani 2022).
Religious practices became orthodox based on Sanskrit. After Partition, Jhulelal was reimagined as an avatāra of Visnu, marking a de-theologizing of syncretic Sufi influences toward pan-Hindu frameworks (Bhavnani, 2014). This religious transformation accompanied linguistic assimilation as Sindhi Hindus strategically remade themselves to claim belonging in postcolonial India.

3.8 Memory Work: Testimony and Nostalgia

Sindhi identity started to centre around memories. First-generation writers depicted Sindh as an imagined untarnished homeland occupied through their virahanostalgic yearning to return to a pure world lost to Partition (Kothari, 2009; Sawlani, 2022) Sindhi Hindus referred to their homeland as Bhoori or Sindhri, portraying it as a feminine identity that they ”rescued” and carried in their hearts (Kothari, 2009).

Literary narratives emphasized pre-Partition communal harmony, portraying inter-communal marriages and syncretic practices as utopian ideals contrasting sharply with post-Partition realities (Hoskote & Trojanow, 2012). This selective remembering was used to construct functions of identity, although it romanticized the past and concealed economic disparities and social conflicts.

Figure 3 Hindu Sindhi refugees migrated from Pakistan to Kutch, settling in Gandhidham as part of the post-Partition resettlement efforts.

(Source "A Final Homecoming: The Story of Bhai Pratap: My Father and builder of the new Sindh in India" by Aruna Jagtiyani)

Figure 4 Maharashtra: Seventy years later, hope of a 'home' for Sindhi migrants in state

(Source: The Indian Express)

Many survivors remained silent about their trauma in a desperate bid to become integrated. There was also a great deal of silence about what occurred in camps. All this reflected an urgent desire to distance oneself from refugeehood (Kothari, 2009; Balasubrahmanyan, 2011; Bhavnani, 2014). There was a difference between generations older Sindhis retained a stronger ethnic identity as well as memories of Partition. However, the younger generations (especially the privileged ones) distanced themselves from Sindhi culture as they considered it a painful memory they would rather forget. (Bhavnani, 2018)

4. Findings and Discussion

The exodus of Sindhi Hindus represents a distinctive chapter in Partition history due to its comprehensive and strategic nature. Unlike Punjab and Bengal, where violence and division produced fragmented refugee experiences, Sindh witnessed the near-total departure of a minority community 90–95% of Hindus forced not by immediate massacre but by comprehensive erosion of social, economic, and political possibility (Bhavnani, 2014; Kumar & Kothari, 2016).

Distinctive Features of the Sindhi Exodus:

Important differences include when and under what conditions migration. Punjab may have witnessed mob violence during Partition, but Sindh witnessed the exodus after months of relative peace. There was increasing tension on account of structural changes, as more and more stories of arrival of the muhajirs, requisitioning of government property, search & seizure by the bureaucracy, social ostracism etc. were witnessed (Ansari, 2005; Bhavnani, 2014). But this was not followed by any direct mob violence from any community. The government took some action such as giving free tickets for steamers and rerouted trains to avoid violence. Therefore, the migration sometimes took a quieter form. However, in 1947, a greater force the trauma and loss of dignity due to forced abandonment switched it into a riot (Bhavnani, 2014; Salim, 2004).

Role of Pre-Existing Networks:

The pre-existing commercial networks of Sindhi Hindus proved essential for economic rebuilding. Merchant families rapidly reactivated business ties across India and abroad.Literacy and entrepreneurship enabled many to shift successfully from camps to commerce (Markovits, 2000; Bhavnani, 2014). The outcomes of the resettlement were decisively shaped by these networks with privileged castes and classes reaching stability at an earlier time.Poorer refugees remained vulnerable for a longer period of time (Bhavnani, 2014; Kothari, 2007).

Recalibration of Identity:

Displacement made Sindhi identity rethink their identity on the basis of language and religion. The community rallied around language politics, focusing without a linguistic state and territorial base. A twenty-year long constitutional struggle to get Sindhi recognized, heated debates on script, and a shift by the youth to English/Hindi (Shahani, 2022; Bhavnani, 2018). Religious practices underwent a change as the importance of syncretic Sufi traditions was downplayed and Jhulelal was presented as a Hindu avatar for incorporation into pan-Indian identity (Bhavnani, 2014; Kothari, 2009).

Memory, Silences, and Resilience:
Survivors' stories show how memory and silence work together. Memoirs describing experiences at the trauma camp and loss rootedness coexist with nostalgia's re-constructions of Sindh. Community memory work preserves and reorganizes identity. However, generational differences have deepened the tensions between the preservation of culture and pragmatic assimilation. (Kothari, 2009; Bhavnani, 2018).

5. Conclusion

The mass migration of Sindhi Hindus is one of the most significant changes caused by Partition, and yet it is also one of the least studied. More than a million persons left their country of origin not because of the violence of the moment, but as a result of a structural impossibilitythe transformation of a condition whereby coexistence is rendered impossible (Bhavnani, 2014; Kumar & Kothari, 2016). The experience of the Sindhi Hindus is quite distinct from that of the Punjabis (Ansari, 2005; Shahani, 2022). This chapter covered how displacement was caused by economic power without the political security, syncretic culture without a territorial base, and commercial networks without a homeland. Displaced from their homeland, Sindhi Hindus experienced significant cultural identity erosion. Economic success comes at the price of a loss of culture.
At the same time, the 2nd generation faces problems of memory and loss in the context of assimilation. Collective memory serves both memorial and ethical functions, documenting both resilience and vulnerability in displacement narratives. The unequal imposition of burdens on the more marginalised section of our society by class, caste and gender counters the impact of it. (Bhavnani, 2014)

Contemporary refugee studies gain significant lessons from the Sindhi experience–displacement happens through structural transformation as much as direct violence, economic resilience can co-exist with cultural loss, and communities that become deterritorialized need frameworks of recognition beyond territorial logic (Shahani, 2022). Memory work is a way to make community but only a critical engagement with silence, inequality and selective nostalgia can do justice to the complexity of displacement and survival.

References

1. Bhavnani, N. (2014). The making of exile: Sindhi Hindus and the Partition of India. Tranquebar Press.
2. Bhavnani, N. (2018). 'Remembering' Sindh, reconstructing Sindh: The politics of memory among Sindhi Hindus in India. Revista Canaria de Estudios Ingleses, 76, 15–28. https://doi.org/10.25145/j.recaesin.2018.76.02
3. Iob, E. (2017). Refugees and the politics of the everyday state in Pakistan: Resettlement in Punjab, 1947–1962 (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203729700
4. Gehani, M. (2015). Desert land to homeland: The land that could have been New Sindh. Indian Institute of Sindhology.
5. Jain, K., & Varma, U. (2024). How Partition in 1947 impacted the culinary culture of India? A historical discussion on the shared culinary practices across the border. South India Journal of Social Sciences, 22(4), 99–107. https://doi.org/10.62656/SIJSS.v22i4.1193
6. Kothari, R. (Ed.). (2009). Unbordered memories: Sindhi stories of Partition. Penguin Books India.

7. Kumar, P., & Kothari, R. (2016). Sindh, 1947 and beyond. South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies, 39(4), 773–789. https://doi.org/10.1080/00856401.2016.1244752
8. Malkani, K. R. (1997). The Sindh story. Allied Publishers.
9. Salim, A. (n.d.). Partition of India: The case of Sindh migration, violence and peaceful Sindh. Government of Sindh.
10. Sawlani, G. (2022). Sikk for Sindh: A study of utopianism in Sindhi Hindu narratives of Partition. Language, Literature, and Interdisciplinary Studies, 5(1), Article 4271. https://doi.org/10.71106/IHQU4271
11. Shahani, U. (2022). Language without a land: Partition, Sindhi refugees, and the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. Asian Affairs, 53(2), 336–362. https://doi.org/10.1080/03068374.2022.2096308
12. Jagtiani, A. (2018). A Final Homecoming: The Story of Bhai Pratap: My Father and builder of the new Sindh in India [Kindle edition]. Amazon. https://www.amazon.in/Final-Homecoming-Pratap-Father-builder-ebook/dp/B07KP5HWK8