
After the Massacres: Nursing Survivors of Partition

Violence in Pakistan Punjab Camps



ILYAS CHATTHA

Abstract

This article explores the conditions and treatment of the ordinary refugees—survivors of the 1947 partition violence—in the Pakistan Punjab relief camps, in particular the circumstances of women, children and those who arrived with terrible wounds, yet received at best rudimentary medical assistance when the emergent Pakistan state was still working out its responsibilities in the process of transition. A large number of them succumbed to the epidemics which swept refugee camps. The impact of cholera on the camp population will be addressed in a discussion of the episode in Hanfia School Camp. This created the circumstances for the second major theme of this article—the adoption of children. Little if anything has previously been written about the extent of adoption following partition, or on its mixed motivations and social implications. Finally, the article considers the governmental responses to the camp population and state provision to the orphan refugee children. Much of the previously un-used material in this article is both harrowing in its character and disturbing for sanitised nationalist historiography. It is necessary however to address it in order to provide a full appreciation of the ‘lived experience’ of the partition.

Introduction

Unlike the noisy display of the evening ceremony of the Indian and Pakistani soldiers at the international border crossing Wagha, little is known about the 40-minute ‘Flag Lowering Ceremony’ at the Ganda Singh Wala—Hussainiwala border crossing every evening. In 1947, huge caravans of refugees traversed this route as part of the mass migrations which accompanied the partition of the Punjab. By late September 1947, over 400,000 refugees had passed through this route across the new borders, where relief camps had been established at Ganda Singh Wala (Kasur district in Pakistan) and Hussainiwala (Ferozpor district in India). The number of Muslim refugees at Ganda Singh Wala had already reached over 250,000 by the end of August, when the site was still without makeshift camps, without food supplies and medical aid. Thousands died in the first two days; many others were struggling for their lives.

On 6 September, a new convoy of 20,000 Muslim peasants from the Sikh princely state of Faridkot was directed to encamp in the Hanfia High School, four miles away from Ganda Singh Wala. A large number of the new arrivals were the survivors of violence, badly

wounded, mainly with ‘sword cuts’ and ‘gun shot wounds’. Many others were in poor health and morale. There were reports that as many as two-thirds of the original migrants had been butchered by the Faridkot State Troops.¹ The experiences of these camp residents form the case study at the heart of this article. They are uncovered through the use of new sources including the diaries of volunteer missionary workers, nurses and doctors. This work is the first detailed study of the experiences of refugees who were temporarily housed in camps in the Pakistan Punjab. Moreover, it looks not just at adults, but at the fates of refugee children including the circumstances in which they were adopted or kidnapped from the camp. Some were orphans; others were almost snatched from their mothers. This study on the lived experience of partition for subaltern groups can thus be seen as forming a contribution to what has been termed the ‘New History’ of partition.² Before examining such vexed issues, we will turn first to the circumstances surrounding the refugees’ flight over the new international boundaries.

It is now well established that the two-way mass movement over the new international Punjab boundaries can be termed as an example of acute migration, which was accompanied by violence.³ This had characteristics of calculated ‘ethnic cleansing’, as well as spontaneous elements of looting and a desire for revenge.⁴ There had been some anticipatory flight of rich urban Hindus from the West Punjab in the months leading up to partition.⁵ The bulk of refugees from August 1947 onwards were drawn from the ordinary townsmen and farming communities who had not anticipated the intensity of violence that now forced them to flee from their ancestral homes. The scale of the migration and the numbers of deaths remain open to dispute, estimates of the death toll vary from between 200,000 up to 2 million.⁶

The movement of refugees was both dangerous and harrowing; convoys were attacked, families detached, children orphaned, and women abducted. In addition to the mass killings of hundreds of thousands, thousands of people died of starvation, exhaustion, cholera and grief. “Thousands of these refugees have been without food, shelter and medical aid for days . . .”, Ghulam Mohammad, the Pakistan finance minister, speaking at Lahore on

¹United Presbyterian Church Records of Foreign Missions, Ralph Steward and Hladia Porter Papers, Record Group 415, (Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia; henceforth UPHS Archives).

²See for example, I. Talbot and G. Singh, *The Partition of India* (Cambridge, 2009), p. 17 & ff.

³G. Pandey, *Remembering Partition: Violence, Nationalism and History* (Cambridge, 2001); U. Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India* (New Delhi, 1998); I. Talbot, *Divided Cities: Partition and Its Aftermath in Lahore and Amritsar* (Karachi, 2006); Y. Khan, *The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan* (New Haven and London, 2007); A. Bigelow, *Sharing the Sacred: Practicing Pluralism in Muslim North India* (New York, 2010); N. Nair, *Changing Homelands: Hindu Politics and the Partition of India*, (Cambridge, 2011); V. Zamindar, *The Long Partition and the Making of Modern South Asia* (Karachi, 2007); P. Virdee, ‘Remembering partition: women, oral histories and the Partition of 1947’, *Oral History*, 41, 2, (2013), pp. 49–62; I. Chattha, *Partition and Locality: Violence, Migration and Development in Gujranwala and Sialkot 1947-1961* (Karachi, 2011); A. Singh, N. Iyer and R. K. Gairola (eds.), *Revisiting India's Partition: Memory, Culture, and Politics* (London, 2016).

⁴M. Mann, *Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing* (Cambridge, 2005); P. Brass, ‘The Partition of India and Retributive Genocide in the Punjab, 1946–1947: Means, Methods, and Purposes’, *Journal of Genocide Research*, 5, 1 (2003), pp. 71–101; S. Wilkinson and S. Jha, ‘Veterans and Ethnic Cleansing in the Partition of India’ Paper submitted to Workshop Rethinking the Punjab Violence University of Southampton, (15–16 April 2010); I. Kamtekar, ‘The Military Ingredient of Communal Violence in Punjab 1947’, *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 56, (1995), pp. 568–572; S. Aiyar, ‘August Anarchy: The Partition Massacres in Punjab 1947’, *South Asia*, 18, Special Issue, (1995), pp. 13–36; I. Ahmed, *The Punjab Bloodied: Partitioned And Cleansed* (New Delhi, 2011); I. Talbot (ed.), *The Independence of India and Pakistan* (Karachi, 2012).

⁵R. Kaur, *Since 1947: Partition Narratives Among Punjabi Migrants of Delhi* (New Delhi, 2007).

⁶For a survey of partition-related violence casualties, see Pandey, *Remembering Partition*.

9 September 1947, described the circumstance of a Muslim refugee convoy from Amritsar on its way to Lahore. “They are growing too weak to move. Most of them are moving on foot without any supplies. We learn that they are dying at a rate of about a thousand a day”.⁷ A great number of the new arrivals had suffered utter exhaustion, and sometimes it required a close inspection to distinguish between the dead and alive.⁸ The mass graves were excavated in advance to bury the dead. In Lahore, an engineer in charge of bulldozers digging mass graves at the Wagha described to a foreign journalist that “they had [already] buried 2,000 Moslems in the past seven days. The grave they were digging today was for the next convoy of Moslems from India”.⁹

Conditions in the refugee camps

Before looking in detail at the refugee experience in Kasur’s Hanifia School Camp, it is necessary to set this in the wider context of refugee camp conditions throughout North India. The greater development of the history of partition from beneath with respect to the Indian experience is reflected in accounts of life in refugee camps. Ravinder Kaur has written on both the Kingsway Delhi and the massive Kurekshetra camps for refugees from Pakistan.¹⁰ Vazira Zamindar has provided an account of the Purana Qila camp in Delhi in which Muslims took refuge before their transit to Pakistan.¹¹ Likewise, Joya Chatterji has highlighted the striking differences between the experiences of ‘camp refugees’ in the case of West Bengal.¹² There is scant mention of the Pakistan experience, aside from Ian Talbot’s reference to the Walton Camp for Muslim refugees in Lahore.¹³ New source material drawn from the archives of Christian missionaries who were active in refugee treatment, allows however a more detailed understanding to emerge of the general conditions in Lahore and other West Punjab camps which received growing numbers of Muslim migrants from India. According to a volunteer missionary worker, who worked in the Lahore camps, “There was little or no sanitation. Medical aid was likewise nominal or nil. Those who had brought food generally finished it in 1 to 3 weeks, and the ration given by government was entirely inadequate”.¹⁴ A great number of refugees died of cholera, malaria, diarrhoea and respiratory diseases. Many wounded died because they could not receive any immediate medical treatment. Statistics of death rate were shocking in the West Punjab camps in the month of October 1947. “The death rate in one camp of 150,000 was reached 600 a day; 200 a day in a camp of 80,000 was no exaggeration”, according to a British Dr H. B. T. Holland, who was with the Christian Relief Mobile Medical Units in West Punjab.¹⁵

⁷‘Too weak to walk’, *Advertise* (Adelaide) 19 September 1947, p. 2.

⁸‘Disease and Famine in India’, *Argus* (Melbourne) 6 October 1947, p. 4.

⁹‘Digging mass graves’, *Mercury* (Hobart) 9 October 1947, p. 8.

¹⁰Kaur, *Since 1947*, pp. 99 & ff; 89–91.

¹¹Zamindar, *The Long Partition*, p. 34 & ff.

¹²J. Chatterji, ‘Dispersal’ and the Failure of Rehabilitation: Refugee Camp-dwellers and Squatters in West Bengal’, *Modern Asian Studies*, 41, 5, (2007), pp. 995–1032; and also see her seminal work, *The Spoils of Partition: Bengal and India 1947–1967* (Cambridge, 2007).

¹³Talbot, *Divided Cities*, p. 181.

¹⁴University of Birmingham, Church Mission Society Archive, CMS/ACCZ, Typescripts Annual Reports, 1947–48, Punjab.

¹⁵CMS Archive, CMS/M/YIG/I, Report from Dr H. B. T. Holland on Relief work in the Punjab.

As early as September, Lahore's hospitals were already swamped with refugee patients and the capacity of the indoor accommodations of 800 odd beds was described as a "totally insufficient".¹⁶ The doctors were perturbed by the flood of patients and their gruesome condition. "Independence Day should be written not in letters of gold, but in letters of blood", told a bitter doctor, in Lahore, to an American journalist who visited the city's camps on 7 September 1947.¹⁷ The plight of the refugees was much worse in the more remote areas where a large number of refugees were squatted on the roadside without shelter and medical aid.¹⁸ As with respect to other professions Pakistan greatly suffered as a result of Hindu and Sikh migration. These communities provided over 50 per cent of the Medical Officers in the colonial West Punjab.¹⁹ Till late October, there was just a single doctor to cover the needs of over 80,000 refugees in the town of Narowal's three camps. Most of their occupants required some sort of medical treatment. The following account from Katherine Cox, a missionary worker with Church Mission Society, graphically describes the conditions in Narowal's Corn Mandi Camp in October 1947:

We went to the Refugee Camp with one of the Modhn [Muslim] doctors, one of our nurses and a man carrying a box filled with medicines... in camp there was a great deal more disease, and the people were in far worse conditions than the others were. There seemed to be hardly anyone who did not want medicine or treatment of some kind, the whole place might just as we have seen [sic.] turned into a hospital. Only just inside were two children lying on the ground, with cholera; one had died by the time we left an hour later. We did what was really a lightning tour of the whole camp; the nurse and I each had a medicine glass into which we poured a dose of whatever medicine the doctor ordered; then if the patient had no receptacle out of which to drink it, it had to be poured directly into their mouths, I should hate to have take medicine like that, but fortunately, they are more used to drinking that way than we are... There were innumerable cases of dysentery, diarrhoea and others had malaria, pneumonia, bronchitis or measles. The bottles of the most needed medicines were finished before we had really finished the round of the camp.²⁰

Many volunteer missionary workers, like Katherine Cox, had answered the appeals for help the Pakistan Punjab Government had placed in both the local and English press. The Punjab Governor for example had placed an appeal in the *Times* (London) for the "volunteer workers . . . to help the administration with the refugee relief problem". Calls for assistance were met by the British Red Cross, the Friends Unit and the Christian Relief, with the result that the number of beds for indoor patients in Lahore had risen to 4,500 in November 1947.²¹ This included a 1,000 beds hospital in a wing of the Forman Christian (FC) College, Lahore. The British Red Cross earmarked £100,000 funds in the form of 'field hospitals'

¹⁶NDC, File no 36; 128/CF/48, Pakistan Ministry of Refugees and Rehabilitation.

¹⁷*Argus* (Melbourne) 8 September 1947.

¹⁸In early October 1947, in Lyallpur there were over 110,000 refugees receiving rations and of these some 60–80,000 were without shelter. In Multan over 90,000 of whom 50–60,000 were with shelter. In Montgomery, there was no proper camp and up to 40,000 were estimated to be scattered by the roadside up and down the district. CMS Archive, CMS/M/YIG/1, Report from Dr H. B. T. Holland on Relief work in the Punjab.

¹⁹NDC, File no. 36; 128/CF/48.

²⁰CMS Archive, CMS/ACC532 F1, 'Journal of Partition' by Katharine J. Cox.

²¹NDC, File no. 36; 128/CF/48.

staffed with British personnel.²² In other places, such as Sialkot, where many refugees from Jammu and Kashmir were encamped in four different camps, the habitat of thousands of them was reported as “a grave”. “Without doubt hundreds of thousands are going to die of disease and exposure and wounds before this is over”, a volunteer worker who cared for the refugees in the city’s Hajipur camp noted in the late October 1947.²³

To make matters worse, in the later months of 1947, flood and cold weather took their toll. In the Lahore camps, over 1,200 died of cold by the mid-December. On Sunday 27 December, in the Walton Camp another 79 refugees died in cold. The “weather casualties” at the Kasur camp reached the peak figure of 314 in one day: “The number of casualties on the road side could not be ascertained”. As of December 10, 1948, the Punjab Refugee Council estimated that the government had provided anti-malaria and other tablets to the refugee population in the camps about a cost of Rs 6 million.²⁴

Within the general tale of misery, there were differences in the physical well-being of refugee populations. This is yet another example of the highly differentiated experiences of partition which have been revealed by modern scholarship, whether it is to do with patterns of violence, migration, or refugee resettlement.²⁵ Those refugees who travelled longer distances and came from hilly and desert areas were much more exhausted and disease afflicted. Some of the refugees in the Narowal camp had travelled on foot as far as 600 miles from destinations in the Kulu Valley and Kangra Hills. For example, a caravan of 12,000 of these ‘hill people’ took two months to arrive at the Narowal camp in late October. Apart from climatic change, the journey itself proved a cruel physical punishment for them. Almost all of the refugees were “gravely ill... in a miserable condition, underfed, weary... full of diseases, dirt and smells”. A nurse, who provided them vaccine in the camp, was perplexed about their ‘unnecessary’ trek and uncertain future survival:

They are a different type of people from the Punjabi both in feature and to some extent in dress and this must be a tremendous change for them from their life in the hills. They are not used to this climate and county or to the water here and I wonder how many will ultimately survive and what will happen to them... these hill people turned out of their homes for no fault of their own and how unnecessary it was.²⁶

Meo migrants from Rajasthan were another community that suffered badly during their migration and arrived in the West Punjab camps in a terrible way. It had taken them six weeks to reach Lahore. Unsurprisingly, many in their state of exhaustion soon succumbed to the epidemics which swept refugee camps, or simply expired because of diseases such as pneumonia brought on by the cold. Chaudhry Mehtab, a spokesman of the community, appealed directly to Jinnah, the father of the nation. “After reaching Pakistan, one *lakh*

²²British Higher Commissioner, Karachi, ‘Contribution of British Red Cross’, DO142/28, (National Archives, Kew Garden).

²³UPHS Archives, ‘Hajipur Camp, Sialkot, 23 October 1947’, Group Record 47.

²⁴NDC, File no. b50; 20/CF/49.

²⁵S. Ansari, *Life After Partition: Migration, Community and Strife in Sindh 1947-1962* (Karachi, 2005); Chatterji, *The Spoils of Partition*; Talbot, *Divided Cities*; D. Rahman and W. V. Schendel, ‘I Am Not A Refugee: Rethinking Partition Migration’, *Modern Asian Studies*, 37, 3 (2003), pp. 551–584.

²⁶CMS Archive, CMS/ACC532 F2, ‘Journal of Partition’ by Katharine J. Cox.

[100,000] Meos had already died due to cold and diseases” he wrote, going on to say that the lives of a further 600,000 Meos were imperilled by the conditions in the refugee camps.²⁷

Press reports provide further insights into the demoralisation of the general refugee population. This is of course not unique to the Pakistan Punjab, but is mirrored in the experiences of their fellow refugees in India. “We spent our life’s earnings to bring our women and children back, to save our names and honour, for all else is lost”, an unsophisticated peasant at the Lahore camp told the reporter of the *Pakistan Times*, “but we have no food, no medicine... and are treated here in an inhuman way”.²⁸ Refugees resorted to crime in a desperate effort to survive their daily depredations as camp inmates. In Lahore’s camps, where bedding was a premium in the cold weather, some individuals were found making a fortune by selling blankets: “An American blanket was at sell in Lahore less than two dollars . . . A man will take a blanket, and then sell it for very little, and return naked to say that he has nothing”, a volunteer worker, in-charge of one of the camp stores, reported.²⁹

The travails of refugees in the Kasur camps which form the focus of the remainder of this article must be set in this wider context of refugee degradation both sides of the border. It must also be understood that all who could avoid camp life did so. These fortunate refugees tended to be drawn from the better off classes, or had pre-existing family, political or business connections which they could utilise in order to secure shelter with relatives or in abandoned so-called evacuee properties. The partition brought everything the poor refugees of Kasur’s camps had to go through, from the ‘ethnic cleansing’ to the suffering of epidemic and forced adoption of their loved ones.³⁰ The focus here in this section is on those who suffered rather than on those who caused suffering.

Experiences of refugees in the Hanfia High School Camp

By early September, the refugee populations in the Kasur camps had reached 250,000. Supplies of vaccine had run out even although Government efforts to obtain it reached as far as France. The refugee population was thus vulnerable to the outbreak of cholera. It also had to survive the rains living in the open. After one night of heavy downpours on 4 September, there were many victims in the Ganda Singh Wala camp, the following morning. The divisional officer of Kasur visited the camp and appealed to the local population to assist the refugees. That day one immediate effort was the segregation of refugees into three camps—Cholera Camp—Women Camp—Main Camp. Kasur’s municipal hospital, which had the capacity of thirty-two beds, had already admitted 750 “surgical cases of extensive wounds”. The hospital areas had already extended to adjoining houses and a nearby school. “Hundreds of women, men and children in critical position still had to be catered in the hospital”. “When I visited Kasur a week ago”, *The Times* (London) journalist reported on

²⁷ ‘An asset for Pakistan: an introduction to the Mao community’, *Inquilab* (Lahore) 1 February 1948, p. 4; and also see the daily’s 12 February publication. For a study on the mass violence against the Meo tribe, see S. Mayaram, ‘Speech, Silence and the Making of Partition Violence in Mewat’, in S. Amin and Chakrabarty, *Subaltern Studies IX*, (1997), pp. 132–162.

²⁸ *Pakistan Times* (Lahore) 30 August 1947.

²⁹ UPHS Archives, ‘Lahore Camp October 1947’, Group Record 47.

³⁰ For the mass violence against the Muslim population in the region, see I. Copland, ‘The Master and the Maharajas: The Sikh Princes and the East Punjab Massacres of 1947’, *Modern Asian Studies*, 36, (2002), pp. 657–704.

12 September 1947, “there was one doctor attending to more than 700 cases, nearly all surgical cases in hospital”.

The increasingly chaotic situation had worsened following the arrival of a caravan of 20,000 Muslim peasants from the Sikh princely state of Faridkot. Many of these survivors of the onslaught by the State troops were badly wounded. The situation reached such an emergency level in Kasur that it was visited by international journalists from the *BBC*, *The Times*, and *Life Magazine*. The renowned American photographer Margaret Bourke-White was driven to record:

[We] had visited an improvised hospital in Kasur where I photographed eight hundred victims lying on the floor . . . Their lives depended partly on how much nourishment they had been able to get on the roads before the disease struck them down. The sight of these helpless sufferers had made me very angry. These were innocent peasants; some had been driven from their ancestral homes; the others had listened to the drumming of religious slogans and left home to pursue a dream.³¹

Earlier on 5 September, a Christian leader Dewan Bahadur Singha, in his capacity as the member of the West Punjab Assembly, visited Kasur and his statement was repeatedly aired on Pakistan Radio: “I was at the boundary town, Kasur yesterday. I cannot get the sight of the maimed and fiendishly wounded and acid-burnt out of my mind... I earnestly appeal to Christian nurses and medical missionaries, men and women to immediately offer their services to Government for Kasur and other casualty centres”. Alongside this message, the West Punjab Government issued a widely circulated press note for the volunteers who intended to choose Kasur as their ‘venue of service’:

Kasur is a missionary centre, so, there should be no difficulty about accommodation. Moreover, the local officials assured that they will be responsible for the board and lodging of lady doctors and nurses who choose Kasur as their venue of service. Even help for a fortnight, 10 days of a week will save life and mitigate suffering.³²

Within days, apart from a unit of the six medics attached to the Christian Relief, medical students, missionary nurses and volunteer workers from Lahore arrived in Kasur. Although the ‘priority no 1’ was the Ganda Singh Wala camp, Hladia Porter, a volunteer worker representing the American United Presbyterian Church Missions, along with other two “partly trained” nurses worked in the Hanfia high school, where over 20,000 Muslim peasants, either badly wounded or seriously ill, were encamped. The majority of the inmates were widows and minors because of the massacre of male adults and the abduction of young girls by the troopers of Patiala State. The Hanfia school camp was run by a committee of the members of the local population, mainly the merchants of the town of Kasur and the school teachers. The school headmaster with many school boys remained in the camp every day. The pupils helped to direct the refugees to the camp and assisted with dressing the wounded. Funds donated by the local population were supplemented by government hand-outs. Basic necessities such as cots and linens were taken out from the vacated Hindu and Sikh houses.

³¹M. Bourke-White, *Halfway to Freedom: a Report the on New India in the Words and Photos* (New York, 1949).

³²NDC, File no. b50; 20/CF/48-49.

The committee also had taken over the possession of a number of the abandoned cows of Sikhs to provide milk to the refugee children.

Porter wrote a memoir of her days in the camp under the title '*Hanfia High School*'. This account which is held in the UPHS archives in Philadelphia has not been previously used by historians. Sections of her account are reproduced below. While it provides a unique and extraordinarily detailed insight into one particular refugee camp in Pakistan Punjab, many of the conditions described were repeated in camps throughout North West India. Porter begins her account by providing the context of the refugees' tragic flight from their ancestral homes in Faridkot:

To this centre were brought Muslim wounded patients who had escaped the Sikhs when they butchered so many of the refugees escaping from the East Punjab to Pakistan... the 40,000 to 60,000 who started out from Faridkot, only 20,000 arrived in Pakistan and great many of these were badly wounded.

She then goes on to describe the makeshift arrangements which were made to house the refugees in the school buildings:

There were a good many beds out in the courtyard and the classrooms on three sides of the court were full of patients. One small room was a store room, four others and a passageway were occupied by women patients of better call who did not wish to be mixed up with the men outside, or a men's ward and two of the rooms opposite to the women's wounded side had been fixed for the doctors to work in.³³

Medical provision was initially non-existent in these primitive surroundings, although the division officer was eventually able to conjure up some dressings and most importantly morphine for the seriously injured patients. Porter recalls that the "partly trained nurses" were shocked by the extent of some of the wounds:

I (had) never see(n) such wounds . . . some gaped five and six inches They were five days old, with only a rough temporary bandage... They could not be stitched, only packed. The maggots were so big they looked like caterpillars. I think that all my life I shall smell the smell of the room. It was packed with cases sitting or lying on the floor for there was only a mud path out side for a waiting room. Some of the patients yelled under the pressure of their fingers, many were completely apathetic as if they could suffer no more. There was very little morphia . . . I had never put on a bandage bigger than a half inch cut before. I was rather proud that I neither fainted nor become sick.³⁴

Porter recalls that it was often difficult to differentiate between the living and the dead and that some patients were too "feeble to move". Equally disturbing however were those patients who were continuously crying out both in pain and for assistance. "They called from every bed and all the times and I kept repeating like a machine, 'Wait for your turn. I'll be there in a moment'", Porter writes in her diary. A number of men and women who had sustained head and neck wounds had to shift to the municipal hospital but there were no spaces available for them in the operation theatre, yet. A group of fifty wounded had to

³³UPHS Archives, Record Group 415, Hanfia High School by Hladia Porter.

³⁴*Ibid.*



A sight of the refugee circumstances in the Hanfia school camp, Kasur (Courtesy UPHS Archives)

wait a week before admitting to the hospital. In fact, she writes, “each day’s deaths vacated spaces for the next day’s new arrivals”.

The conditions in the School were like those in a nightmarish horror story. She records of patients who were covered in flies and maggots. “Flies turned many feeble people black”. Unsurprisingly the volunteer school boys frequently recoiled in horror, when they had to move such patients. Porter remembers one old lady who, “was totally covered with flies from head to foot and with the filthiest clothes. I got a stretcher. It was black with flies. I

found a man; [initially] he did not want to give help... We scared off some of flies and rolled the old lady on the stretcher and took her to the dressing room, they did a grand job on her but she died that night". Porter tells a similar harrowing story of another woman:

There was a little old woman who, when I first noticed her, was the most horrible sight. She was curled up on a broken cot, the flies black around her head and hands. She was only skin and bone and her pathetic old eyes looked at me with such pain in them that I decided she was my next chore. We got her in to a doctor and found she had a deep wound in the neck, another at the back of her head and her hands were badly cut. When she was ready to leave the room she looked like a nun with pure white bandages over her head and across her forehead and all over her hands to the elbows. We found clean clothes and a pretty cover and gave her water to drink. Next time I saw her, a relative had found her. She said he was her brother but he looked more like a grandson. And how he loved her! He crooned over her like a mother, and passed his hands lovingly over her bare shrunken body, and she fell asleep with a dim little smile on her face. . . . A couple of hours later she was dead. . . . She had had to lie all night in that crowded women's ward, but nobody seemed to mind. They had become used to death.³⁵

Along with the sheer horror of the conditions surrounding wounded refugees, Porter provides insights into attempts to maintain social conventions and human dignity amidst the suffering. In one instance, which Porter noted in her diary for 17th September, a wounded girl, who was sitting on a stool in a corner of the room, repeatedly refused to move when asked to go the bandage room for treatment. "When I asked her what the trouble was, she said she was naked under the piece of cloth she had wrapped around herself and was afraid it would show if she walked, so I stood in front of her and she put her hand on my shoulder and walked to a bed where I brought her some clothes. We didn't bother to cloth the children or the young boys. No time". In other cases, wounded women refused treatment from male camp helpers of the camp. "The school staff called me to bandage a girl who had bad shoulder and neck wounds", Porter remembered. "The bandages had to cross her breast and she did not want the men to touch her. I helped a bit and then stayed on to try my hand with other cases".³⁶

Despite the gruesome nature of the account, Porter's diary importantly provides a human face to what would otherwise be bald statistics of deaths and injuries arising from the partition violence. It must be stressed here that all communities possessed their aggressors and victims. The cost of human suffering at partition has not always sat well with the nation-bound historiographies in India and Pakistan that downplayed the darker side in order to trumpet the achievement of freedom or, worse perhaps, to fold that suffering into a master-narrative of sacrifice for the nation. This is something that Gyanendra Pandey is very concerned with the official histories of violence in contemporary India, which see violence as an aberration, as "mere glitches, the result of an unusual conjuncture of circumstances".³⁷ Porter's account certainly chimes in with the emerging picture in the gendered violence of partition of

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ G. Pandey, *Routine Violence: Nations, Fragments, Histories* (Palo Alto, 2005), p. 33. Diana Lary's scholarly inquiry on wartime suffering has observed that "it seems so difficult to say anything meaningful about suffering that it is easier to ignore it or push it aside". Diana Lary and Stephen MacKinnon, *The Scars of War* (Vancouver, 2001), p. 14

women being the 'chief sufferers' of the violence in 1947.³⁸ It is clear from her diary that the majority of those in the Hanfia camp were older women and children. "There were almost no young girls in the group", she writes, "they had all been captured and taken off by the Sikhs". It also helps one to understand the acts of revenge which fuelled the killings in the Punjab, in the same way as what Paul Brass has conceptualised as the cycles of 'Retributive Genocide' in the region.³⁹ According to Porter, the first thought of those healed from wounds was a longing for 'revenge'. An injured young farmer who lost all members of his family was lying in bed for many days and now was improved. When a nurse asked him what he was going to do when he left the hospital, his face darkened. "Kill a few Sikhs", he replied".⁴⁰

Others after recovery set out to locate missing family members. "Groups after groups poured out their stories and the names of their daughters", Porter noted in her diary, "and all I could say was, go and report to the police station when you leave this place. They will do what they can".⁴¹ The families had registered complaints about missing relatives, particularly missing girls to the local police. By the second week of September, the refugees reaching Kasur from the princely state of Faridkot had reported the abduction of 600 Muslim women and girls alone, according to the police statistics.⁴² As of November 18, 1947, according to one report, 34 Muslim women and 12 children were recovered and handed over to the authorities in Kasur.⁴³

Pregnant women and those who had more recently given birth had a very uncomfortable time in the Hanfia camp, according to Porter. "There were many of the pregnant women in the centre... I found several women who had dropped their babies along the way. One had had twins. The babies were born dead or had been left behind as not likely to live. Several of these women had to be taken to the women's hospital for treatment". For the women who gave birth in the camp, there was no support from a midwife or traditional birth attendant. They were left drained by a difficult and risky delivery process. Each pregnant woman had an individual torment. In one case, a woman who had walked for eleven days had her baby at the gate before she could even enter the yard. In other instances, babies were born in primitive way. "Madam, my wife is giving a birth. Kindly come and do the needful", a man came to Porter one morning. "No what! I had never seen a baby being born", Porter responded:

³⁸Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence*; R. Menon and K. Bhasin, *Borders and Boundaries: Women in India's Partition* (New Delhi, 1998); A. Major, "'The Chief Sufferers': Abduction of Women during the Partition of the Punjab", *South Asia*, XVIII, Special Issue, (1995), pp. 57–72; J. Bagchi and S. Dasgupta (eds.), *The Trauma and the Triumph: Gender and Partition in Eastern India* (Kolkatta, 2003); A. Jalal, 'Nation, Reason and Religion: The Punjab's Role in the Partition of India', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 33, 32 (8–14 August 1998), pp. 2183–2190; P. Virdee, 'Negotiating the Past: Journey through Muslim Women's Experience of Partition and Resettlement in Pakistan', *Cultural and Social History*, 6, 4 (December 2009), pp. 467–483; V. Das, V. and A. Nandy, 'Violence, Victimhood and the Language of Silence' in V. Das, (ed.) *The Word and the World: Fantasy, Symbol and Record* (New Delhi, 1986).

³⁹Brass, 'The Partition of India and Retributive Genocide in the Punjab'.

⁴⁰UPHS Archives, Record Group 415, Hanfia High School by Hladia Porter.

⁴¹*Ibid.*

⁴²Punjab Police Abstract of Intelligence (PPAI), Week Ending 13 September 1947, p. 377.

⁴³NDC, File no. b50; 20/CF/49. At the state level, efforts for the recovery of women continued in following months. In 1948, official statistics on the recovery of 'abducted persons' revealed out of all 6,000 'rescued Muslim women' recovered from India, 1,400 were from the princely states of Patiala and Faridkot, alone.

I called the cook's son. "Go to the Government hospital for women and ask the doctor if she will come for ten minutes and show me what to do". He went off in a hurry and was back very soon. "The doctor says she is much too busy to leave the hospital" [later the doctor reasoned that she was attending two cases of birth delivery at the time]. I ran crazily up and down the quadrangle trying to find my own Christian boy helper. I sent him off on the fly in a cart to fetch the lady doctor's Christian assistant. . . . We found that someone had succeeded in separating the baby from its mother though no one had an instrument of any sort. The after birth had fallen to the floor and been covered with a handful of dust.⁴⁴

This was by no means an unusual case. A day later, another woman thought her baby would be born that night and this time fortunately the school committee found a refugee woman in the camp who claimed to be midwife so a place was fixed for her "to do the needful" in a tiny room with little privacy. After this case, an announcement was made in the camp, questioning "every pregnant woman and took her to the women's hospital if she was likely to need help very soon".⁴⁵ It is in these terrible conditions we turn now about the experiences of children.

Understanding the Experiences of Refugee Children

Alongside women, children were among the foremost victims of the partition violence. Official figures point to a large number of abandoned, orphaned and missing children, although they are inexact and in all probability play down the scale of this tragedy. According to the Punjab police chief at the time, over 100,000 abducted women and children were found to be 'missing' in the province.⁴⁶ A confidential memo of the Pakistan government titled "Recovery of abducted women, children and converts", stated that "as the moment of refugees continued over a period of weeks and months, it became increasingly clear that large numbers of women and children have been left behind on either side".⁴⁷

Children's experiences can be understood within the wider historiography and theoretical context of the impact of mass violence, forced migration and resettlement on juveniles.⁴⁸ Urvashi Butalia's seminal work on women and children aside, surprisingly little has been written about the experiences of refugee children in the aftermath of partition. "No history of Partition that I have seen so far has had anything to say about children. This is not surprising: as subjects of history children are difficult to deal with", Butalia has declared.⁴⁹ In this section of the article, we piece together material drawn from newspapers, missionary archives and official records to shed light on the travails of children and charitable assistance and state provision to the orphans. Porter's memoir again provides an exceptionally rich and previously untapped source.

⁴⁴UPHS Archives, Record Group 415, Hanfia High School by Hladia Porter.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*

⁴⁶*Inquilab* (Lahore) 22 February 1948, p. 4.

⁴⁷'Recovery of abducted women, children and converts', NDC, File no. 36, 128/CF/48.

⁴⁸See for example, T. Zahra, *The Lost Children: Reconstructing Europe's Families After World War II* (New York, 2011); M. C. Plum, 'Orphans in the Family: Family Reform and Children's Citizenship during the Anti-Japanese War, 1937-45', in J. Flath and N. Smith, (eds.) *Beyond Suffering: Recounting War in Modern China* (Toronto, 2012), pp. 186-208.

⁴⁹Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence*, p. 197.

Katherine Cox, a British missionary worker, representing the Church Mission Society, visited Amritsar's St Catherine Hospital on 22 September 1947 and wrote in her diary log that day, "most of children had been found beside their murdered mothers and some were injured themselves with cuts".⁵⁰ Children's circumstances varied considerably. Some were left behind; others were separated from the families; some reunited with their relatives. Many died in the camps due to malnutrition and diseases; some orphans were quickly adopted out by the individual families. Others were taken by the Christian missionaries and the Muslim welfare trusts for caring; yet others were kidnapped in the vicinity of camp. Still a great number of the small children were sent to the newly set up children's centre in Lahore, where some were traced by their relatives; still a large number ended up as 'orphans' in the state-run-homes. Others in the ploy of adoptions ended up as "domestic servants in the hands of wealth people".⁵¹ There were many others who took themselves on the street to beg, or became prostitutes. This had social implications, too, that were mainly seen as "disgrace to new nation", at the time.⁵² Such somber aftermath of partition rarely finds its way into scholarship.

Porter provides perhaps the most detailed surviving account of the refugee child experience. It is of course a single and unique account, but it remains likely that the experiences of the Hanfia school camp were mirrored elsewhere in the Punjab. "The children distressed me most . . .", she noted in her diary on 12 September 1947, "so many of them were absolutely alone, [for] all their folks had been killed and the children themselves wounded".⁵³ In another diary log a few days later she wrote, "Several little girls were badly wounded and we had to carry them to the dressing room each time. They had no one with them". Most of them were between 4 and 11 but some were newborn babies. On the night of 17 September, she poignantly records that two infants died of starvation in the camp. Their mothers' breast milk had dried up and there was not enough milk in the centre that night to feed them. In one instance, one peasant woman, who with two kids was lying on a cot, "was badly wounded and had great gash across her face and her eyes hardly showed between the rolls of bandage. Her one child got cholera and other whole night cried for milk. Her own milk dried up and she went all around the camp to find milk; but she could not". In the morning a nurse came to her and asked "what can I do for you this morning?" "She said bitterly, 'Bury my child'. It hurt me that we had to wait a couple of hours for the truck to come and that they had only one bed and nowhere else to lay the body".⁵⁴ That same night another woman lost her child. "My milk had dried up and I had not been able to get it to drink from a cup', the distraught mother tragically informed the camp nurse".⁵⁵

It is clear from Porter's account that there was never enough food and milk in the camp, despite the fact that the cows abandoned by Sikh farmers provided around 20–30 quarts each

⁵⁰CMS Archive, CMS/ACC532 F2, 'Journal of Partition' by Katharine Cox.

⁵¹See for example the proceedings on the Punjab Children Bill in the West Punjab Legislative Assembly Debates (PLAD), 9–12 December 1952, pp. 185–186, 152, 169.

⁵²Maik Qadir Bakhsh, a member of the Punjab assembly, concerned that "some people are exploiting the children not only for earn livelihood, but children are sexually abused...This is a stigma on the face of nation..." See for example, PLAD, 9 December 1952, p. 160.

⁵³UPHS Archives, Record Group 415, Hanfia High School by Hladia Porter.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*

⁵⁵*Ibid.*

morning. The supply was rationed to those adults who were sick and unable to swallow and to the camp children, yet it was totally inadequate. "In the morning all the kids were crying and the sickest people were complaining feebly. They had had no milk". At times the divisional officer provided canned milk, but there were no feeding-bottles for infants at the camp. "Feeding bottles were a dollar a price in the bazaar and we felt that we couldn't afford for one baby", Porter wrote. "Once the committee gave us half a dozen cans of pet milk and the women were so gratefully that they invented a whole string of perfectly new blessings the babies stopped crying and the committee were very pleased with themselves".⁵⁶ The orphaned infants were particularly vulnerable. The mothers, who had miscarriages or their babies had died, were requested, by the school committee, to feed the motherless infants, in order to save their lives. Some were so agonised; they simply refused. One of the most poignant cases described by Porter is of the three women who refused to feed the motherless babies.

I found two little babies with no mothers. No one knew anything about them. I remembered three women who were in pain because they were not able to feed their babies who had died. I asked each woman in turn if she would feed a motherless child but they all said, "it is not mine". I was so cross I could hardly speak decently to them after that, though one of them had her arm cut off at the shoulder.⁵⁷

Porter in frustration concluded at the end, "When we went home at noon I picked up the babies and took them to the women's hospital, hoping to find someone there to nurse them. They told me later that one of the babies had died and [sic] the other would probably die too. Perhaps it was just as well". This was not the situation everywhere, however. Elena an American nurse, who cared for the wounded refugees in Ferozapore's Mission Hospital, noted differently: "[We] had had a Muslim woman in the hospital who had a deep cut on the shoulder and one breast cut off, but having lost her own child, she was glad to feed a little Hindu baby that had lost its mother".⁵⁸

Older children in the camp were hardly less vulnerable than the infants because of the continued threat of outbreaks of cholera. The situation improved, according to Porter's account, in late September when supplies of vaccine became available. This was brought to the camp by a party of medical students from Lahore. Many of the already traumatised children were however frightened and refused to accept the vaccine, or spat it out immediately. In one instance, a medical student took half an hour to dose one little girl "who shrieked as was being murdered". Porter recalls however that many children displayed an amazing toughness and resilience and recovered rapidly from their traumatic loss of home and family:

There were two little boys who were my pride and joy. Neither of them had any folks . . . they followed me round, stroking my dress grinning when they were caught and laughing with impish glee when I threatened to smack them. They swallowed anything. I poked into them and the day I turned them over to a woman helper and asked her to give them a bath at the tub well.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

They appeared shining and puffed with pride to show me how clean they were. I hated to leave them behind. The girls called them my puppies and they would chuckle over this word as if it was the best joke in the world.⁵⁹

Despite its patronising tone, the above extract lifts the gloom which surrounds much of the memoir and offers insights into how for some children at least, the nightmare events of partition could be overcome. Porter also provides good news of the successful reuniting of some families. It is true that for every family reunited, there were many others that were permanently torn asunder by partition. Nonetheless, outside of this memoir, there are few documented accounts of the former process at work:

One afternoon a group of people came in with a little boy with them and a helper reported to me that one of the women in [Hanfia school camp] knew the name of the child's father and he lived in the city [Kasur]. I went to talk to her and she told me that he was the child of a policeman who had left his family across the border when his wife had gone to visit her folks. All had been killed but this one child . . . Within ten minutes the father was there with his little son clinging to his neck.⁶⁰

Porter provides examples of other equally happy family reunions. "See this is my son? Now our whole family is complete", a happy Muslim mother expressed her feelings to the in-charge of the camp. "Isn't God good to us? We don't know how this boy found us. Isn't it wonderful?" The other side of the coin was the giving away for adoption of newly born infants. This was often linked with the fear that the new born would catch cholera from their mothers. Some infants were sent to the orphanage in Lahore. Porter tells the poignant story of this cholera-afflicted woman, to whom she took to the hospital for her delivery.

I took one poor soul along one day because she wanted to find out what had happened to her child. It had been born in the women's hospital and had to be left there when the mother developed cholera and was sent to the cholera camp. She made one of the women promise not to give her child away but this woman had come from Lahore and one day all the Lahore women helpers returned to the city. Then someone else thinking the mother had died, gave the child to people waiting to adopt a baby. My friend the assistant had spent much precious time trying to find the child again. I never heard whether she succeeded in the end or not.⁶¹

It is clear that this was not an isolated episode. "Every day we had women asking to adopt babies", Porter observed. In the camp, like in the hospital, the children were given away for adoption to men and women, who were regarded as 'responsible people'. Appalling stories of the distribution of the infants added to the torment of refugee parents whose children were either missing or being kept in the hospital for caring. "Another frantic woman accused me of giving her son to someone, thinking he had no parents. It was before this order had come through", Porter noted in her diary. The mothers' fear was real. Porter hesitantly explained to another angry mother who was concerned that her child was given away by the school committee:

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

The committee, it is true, had given a child to people they felt were responsible people, but they had the name and address and a promise that the child would be returned if someone claimed him. We told her not to despair; we would get the child back. Then I had a hunch. “How old was your son, mother?” “Nearly eight years old”. She replied. “We have given only one boy today and he was less than three years old” . . . I never heard if she found her son.⁶²

The state authorities seemed to be in complete abdication in that state of affairs. Porter justified children’s and infants’ adoption as “the best way to save their lives”. Its scale at the Hanfia camp appears quite extraordinary. It is certainly a hidden part of the partition story. If it was repeated across the Punjab, it would indicate a social consequence of the 1947 uprooting that possessed a wide significance.

The adoption of small children at the time of partition is seldom acknowledged. Similarly little has been written about minors’ kidnapping in the camps. Porter’s memoir however provides a number of documented cases. One of the most shocking instances was an unfortunate mother “who lost her child along the way, found it at the hospital, put it down on the path to get some water from the pump and returned to find it gone . . . She was nearly frantic. When we inquired (one) woman said she had seen a woman come in the gate and pick up the child and go off with it. As far as I know she never found it again”.⁶³

The theme of adoption was perhaps best expressed in the ‘New History of Partition’ by Urvashi Butalia: “The small boys were sought out by women and men, not looking for a child to love and care for, but for labour. These children became work mules and servants”.⁶⁴ Often assumptions are made that many children ended up in ‘brothels’ and in the street ‘begging’.⁶⁵ In West Punjab, there were frantic demands that the government must take the responsibility of women and children upon itself. Begum Salma Tasadduq Hussain, in her capacity as the member of the West Punjab Assembly, raised a concern of refugee begging on the House floor on 25 March 1948. “Mr Speaker . . . If you go out in the streets of cities, you can see small innocent refugee children who are fighting for lives because of starvation. There is not any arrangement by the government to feed them . . . I fear that these orphans, to whom we hope to become mujahid, would be ended up as street beggars because of the government’s insufficiency”.⁶⁶ Four years later, indeed the number of both beggars as well as prostitutes augmented in the streets of Lahore, and in particularly the women who had turned into prostitutes was seen not only as victim of economic compulsions, but dishonoring to the entire community. As Khadija Begum, a Lahore-elected member of the assembly expressed her concern for this social paranoia in a debate in the session of assembly on 11 March 1952:

As members of this House are aware about the tragic consequences of the 1947 bloodshed, a large number of our sisters and daughters became widows, and many children became orphans...

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence*, p. 221.

⁶⁵ Khan, *The Great Partition*, p. 163; S. Banerjee, ‘Displacement within Displacement: The Crisis of Old Age in the Refugee Colonies of Calcutta’, *Studies in History*, 19, 2 (2003), pp. 199–220; P. Chakrabarty, *The Marginal Men: The Refugees and the Left Political Syndrome in West Bengal* (Calcutta, 1999); and also see Bapsi Sidhwa’s account, *Ice-Candy-Man* (London, 1988); S. Bhisham, *‘Pali’ Translating Partition* (New Delhi, 2001).

⁶⁶ PLAD, 25 March 1948, pp. 338–339.

While the government set up homes for them, they were neither enough nor satisfactory. As a result, we can see now many orphans, both children and girls, on the streets of cities and places [for begging and prostitution] . . . Mr Speaker, the plight of these destitute orphans is deplorable and I fear this would corrosively affect nation's social values and morality, if the government does not take a serious action in this regard, immediately.⁶⁷

It would be however wrong to assume that all the 'unaccompanied' children at partition ended up in this way; some were looked after by welfare organisations and charities. For example, in the city of Lyallpur, the local Anjuman-e-Himayat-e-Islam was at the forefront in taking care of refugee orphans in its *Yateem Khana* [orphanage]. In Lahore, such care institutions as the Poor Children Home, Strangers Home, Dar-ul-Niswan, Beyond House and Mrs Inglis Home spared many such children from the unsavoury prospect of wandering in the streets begging for food or, even worse, for crime. While the charities raised amounts of money themselves to finance refugee children and other activities, a collaboration with the state was also maintained at this stage that was an important predecessor to the emergence of modern charitable institutions in Pakistan, in general, and Lahore Charitable Association in particular. In other places where the missionary activities had dominated, some refugee orphan children were taken over by the mission centres. A prime example was Narowal's Mission Girl School that took over six orphan minors from one of the refugee camps in the town.⁶⁸

Children's responses to adoption are as little known as individual motives for this. Porter recalls that a small girl in the Hanfia camp insisted that she would prefer to live with someone from her home village than move to an orphanage in Lahore. "She was taken, by a camp helper, from bed to bed through the whole place to see if she could find someone from her village at least and finally a woman had promised to look after her". In other cases, the children were adopted by far-flung blood relatives who might never have met them, in some cases not for care and love, but for the temptation of their assets. A memo circulated by the West Punjab Ministry of Rehabilitation for Refugees indicates that the position in the latter regard:

It came to notice that the relatives or guardians of the widows and orphans, whose husbands or parents were the victims of disturbances at the time of Partition, were trying to register their claims on their own names solely . . . [Early] the Rehabilitation Commissioner in a memo . . . directed to the land rehabilitation officers that the widows and orphans . . . should be allowed to register their own claims . . . on their own names. They should be allowed to register their claims in the congested districts [canal colonies] provided their relatives or guardians had already secured allotments there under the Rehabilitation Scheme.⁶⁹

Porter not only provides an account of the pressures for adoption in the Hanfia camp, but a glimpse into the circumstances of the children who had been taken from there to the orphanage which was part of F. C. College Lahore's newly established hospital.

⁶⁷PLAD, 11 March 1952, pp. 616-617.

⁶⁸CMS Archive, CMS/ACC625Z, Typescripts Annual Reports, 1947-48, Punjab. The Lahore Catholic Church's Gosh-e-Aman, situated in the locality of Garhi Shahu, also sheltered some orphan children and unattended persons in 1947.

⁶⁹Punjab Secretariat Archives (PSA), Punjab Rural Settlement Scheme, File no. E.33, 19 September 1951.

When I got back to Lahore and went to the hospital that had been set up in a wing of our brother college, the first ones I recognised were a number of orphans for whom we had cared in Kasur. They saw me and came running, threw themselves on me and cried, ‘Our Mother has come’. I wished I could adopt them all. They were such bright youngsters and amazingly resilient. I wondered what the future would hold for them and for the nation.⁷⁰

Not all unaccompanied children were sent to the children’s centre in Lahore. A number of minors were living in the different camps on rations. The local newspapers from time to time highlighted their woeful plight. For example, the *Pakistan Times* journalist made the front page headline after visiting one of four camps of Lyallpur, along with the deputy commissioner of the district. “I was informed the local Muslim Orphaned Authorities had not accepted one orphan to their institution although there were plenty of them all over the camp without any one to look after them”.⁷¹ The reporter, too, spotlighted refugees’ complaints against the local Anjuman-e-Himayat-e-Islam: one of them was that while the organisation had “grabbed twenty-eight abandoned cows, but never provided one *tola* of milk to the under-nourished refugee children at the camps”.⁷²

We have mentioned earlier the anguish caused by family separation and the practice of wealthier and literate refugees to place advertisements in local English and Urdu language papers in the hope of tracing missing relatives.⁷³ These have an unmistakable gender bias, especially in the Urdu press, with few if any advertisements about daughters, reflecting the fact that families did not want publicise missing girls in the public domain, in order to uphold the honour of the community and family. Here is the backdrop of preservation of purity of the population to what Veena Das has theorised as the emergence of ‘a masculine nation’ in the notion of national honour.⁷⁴ As we have seen, in the case of male children, there was a repeated demand that the state ought to take responsibility of their well-being, mainly seeing them as ‘*mujahid*’ and ‘valuable assets’ for the nation-state. At the state level, there were little efforts in the recovery project of abducted women, in contrast to the well-being of refugee children, as we will argue in the last section of the article. There were many families who personally approached agencies such as the Red Cross and Christian missionaries for help in tracing both children and adults. These agencies were seen as helpful both because they operated freely in Indian and Pakistan Punjab and because they would not publicise sensitive family matters regarding abductions.

The fate of ‘lost’ and orphaned children increasingly became a matter for public concern as well as a private cause of family grief. Evidence for this can be found in letters to newspapers. One such missive was sent by M. A. Aziz, a lawyer from Lyallpur, to the editor of *Pakistan Times* on 5 November 1947:

On the account of the disturbances in East Punjab and forced migration to the West, thousands of children, between 7 and 12 years old have lost their parents. If the Pakistan Government takes the view that these children are valuable assets of the State, it should put them in military schools,

⁷⁰UPHS Archives, Record Group 415, Hanfia High School by Hladia Porter.

⁷¹*Pakistan Times* (Lahore) 24 December 1947.

⁷²*Ibid.*

⁷³In addition to the well known ‘Refugee Corner’ in the *Pakistan Times*, the Urdu paper *Nawa-i-Waqt* ran a regular column entitled, ‘*Talash-e-Gumshada*’ (‘search for the missing’) for several months.

⁷⁴V. Das, *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary* (Berkeley, 2006), pp. 18–30.

where they may be educated to the middle standard and given military training. Thus cared for they can prove useful citizens of the new State.⁷⁵

The government began to gather up children from the camps, hospitals and railway stations placing them in the state-run homes. Along with other categories of ‘destitute persons’ such as widows, ‘deserted women’ and unmarried women who had lost all their family, they were regarded as a state responsibility.⁷⁶ Nonetheless, the authorities did not want them to become permanently dependent and strove instead to enable ‘productive’ economic activity for them. In the case of single women it would even go so far as to arrange their marriage, as setting adoptions in the case of minors. A date—“15 March 1948 in Lahore”—was announced for such arrangements by advertising it in the local press.⁷⁷ Pressure upon the government, too, came from the refugee families who had carried the orphan children with them at the uprooting, and now they did not regard them to become as a permanent liability. They approached both the authorities and charitable bodies. “Every day, refugee families come to me and ask what they should do with these children . . .,” Khadija Begum—a member of the Punjab assembly and Children Aid Society—explained to the House debating the Children Bill. “I know families who fetched between 5 and 6 children of their neighbours who were killed during the disturbances . . .”.⁷⁸

Hundreds of ‘destitute persons’, what the state described them at time, were provided shelter in newly set up four homes in Lahore: (i) the unaccompanied minors were housed in the Milli Darul Atfal [Children House] in the Mazong’s Bahawlpur House; (ii) the widows and unattached women were housed in the Darul Aman Zanaana [Shelter Home]; (iii) the ‘rescued’ Muslim women were housed in the Darul Mahajirat [Refugee Women House] in a wing of the Mental hospital at Jail Road; and (iv) the Hindu and Sikh ‘recovered’ women and children were assembled in the famous Ganga Ram House. Similar institutions were established elsewhere. In the city of Lyallpur, for example, thirty families of widows were accommodated in the Darul-Taskin (Widows Home) in April 1949. The celebration of Independence Day in 1950 was used by Lyallpur’s deputy commissioner R.A.F. Howroyd and the assistant deputy commissioner Syed Masood Ahmed to launch a collection of a sum of Rs 100,000, to build a ‘Destitute House’. Its future establishment was hailed as “a significant chapter in the lives of orphans”, where they “would be trained to earn their livelihood and become useful citizen of Pakistan”. By October 1950, the authorities had collected a sum of Rs 60,000. Another humanitarian organisation Lyallpur’s well-know Killa Gift Fund Trust also raised funds for the orphan refugee children.⁷⁹ Members of the local population in the city of Lahore also took up the task of setting up charitable funds such as Punjab Children Aid Society, Hospital Welfare Society and Voluntary Poor Fund to finance the orphans.

The state provided its own modest support for the maintenance of refugee children and female ‘destitutes’. By 14 January 1954, the government’s estimated expenditures stood at Rs

⁷⁵ ‘Refugee Children’, letter to editor *Pakistan Times* (Lahore) 5 November 1947.

⁷⁶ PSA, E.33, 19 September 1951.

⁷⁷ PLAD, 24 March 1948, p. 315; and also see *Amroz* (Lahore) 17 March 1948, p. 3.

⁷⁸ PLAD, 9 December 1952, p. 163.

⁷⁹ *Inquilab* (Lahore) 26 August 1950.

394,594. With the introduction four years later the Displaced Person Act, the financial aid was increased in a scheme called 'Rs 5,000 Cash Compensation Scheme'.⁸⁰ Apart from the individual stipend, the government long before began debating minors' well-being, rights and citizenship laws by the introduction of the Punjab Children Bill in 1952, thanks to the uncertainties over refugee children in the aftermath of partition. The bill was described first step towards "social legislation to save delinquent children by providing them moral, social, sensual and educational safe guard".⁸¹ It envisaged not only saving the orphan children from crime, but to appoint 'probation officers' and set up 'certified schools' in order to make them 'good citizens'. The legislation not only declared that prosecution could be initialled against the 'fake orphanages' that would collect the charities for mundane, but also certified some charitable institutions such as Children Aid Society permitting them to appoint their own probation officers or guardians for the orphan children, by defining their rights and duties.

The government also funded the orphanages. A meeting of the Central Cabinet on 9 May 1950, held in Karachi, considered the financial difficulties facing refugee homes in Punjab. It agreed to bear 33 percent of the annual expenditures on the Ganga Ram Home and 10 percent on the Darul Muhajirat.⁸² While most of the daily expenses of these homes were met by the Centre government, in a debate in the Punjab assembly session on 8 January 1952, the issue of the rehabilitation of the orphan children and the rescued women was further taken up. Punjab Refugee Minister explained the provincial government had provided an amount of Rs 100,000 to Lahore's Darul Aftal.⁸³ The Central government in July 1953 projected to the Industrial Rehabilitation Board to allocate a few industrial concerns to the Punjab Government "for the pure benefit to refugee widows and orphans who are left with no means of maintaining themselves". It was proposed that that between 30–40 percent of the proceeds would be given to widows and orphans and the rest to be constituted a 'Destitute Relief Fund' for the permanent rehabilitation of 'destitute refugees'.⁸⁴ While official records can provide some insights into state responses, they cannot shed light on the feelings of the orphans themselves. Psychologists say that traumas inflicted on minors leave deep scars.⁸⁵ One can only guess at the burdens carried by some of the orphans and ordinary people for the remainder of their lives.⁸⁶

⁸⁰PSA, West Punjab Year Book, 1961; E1 (12) p. 85.

⁸¹PLAD, 'Punjab Children Bill', 9–12 December 1952, pp. 151–197, 350–356. At the same time, there was also a discussion on the introduction of the Punjab Youthful Offenders Bill and Prostitution Act.

⁸²National Archive Pakistan (NAP) Islamabad, 'Establishment of Orphanage and Women's Home in the Punjab', 9 May 1950, File no. 21/EF/50.

⁸³PLAD, 8 January 1952, p. 547.

⁸⁴NDC, Cabinet File no. b50; 20/CF/49, 9 July 1953.

⁸⁵R. Williams, 'The Psychosocial Consequences for Children of Mass violence, Terrorism and Disasters', *International Review of Psychiatry*, (2007), pp. 263–277; V. P. Georgiou, P. Smith and P. Vostanis, 'War trauma and Psychopathology in Bosnian Refugee Children', *European Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 9, 2, (June 2000), pp. 84–90.

⁸⁶The medical anthropologist Paul Farmer, who has dealt with suffering firsthand in rural Haiti, suggests that we may agree on what represents suffering, yet the suffering of others has a lesser level of veracity than the suffering of our own. P. Farmer, 'On Suffering and Structural Violence: The View from Below', in A. Kleinman, V. Das, and M. Lock, (eds.) *Social Suffering* (Berkeley, 1997), pp. 261–283. Other essays in this volume shed light on the different representations and themes of suffering and atrocities.

Conclusion

“When the future historian comes to record the ghastly happening of the 1947, posterity would wonder both at the spirit of sacrifice and resilience shown by our leaders to the rescue of the refugees”. These are words from an official document *A Review of First-Five Years of Pakistan*. Challenging national histories and narratives requires us to not only consider non-official sources but also to think out the very units of analysis, sites and phase of the events. 70 years on, this study has attempted a departure. It has reflected the reality articulated by the ‘New History’ of partition that for the ordinary people, the partition was experienced as suffering and violence, although this has largely remained unacknowledged in official histories. The individual circumstances and experiences, which form the source material for the piece, are rarely as single-mindedly simplistic as those employed by the official histories, whose meta-narrative rushes to choose a particular religious ideology and community to blame for the violence or, worse perhaps, to fold and re-enact that suffering into a tale of sacrifice for the nation, exploiting to push forward agendas and provoking further cycles of action. Diana Lary, in *The Scars of War*, suggests that blame may be assigned in cases of specific acts of violence but it is hard to generalise in such a way that deeper explanations are avoided.⁸⁷ By recognising the human dimension as partition history’s integral subject, not just its by-product or an aberration, we can not only better comprehend the suffering of refugee families, but may lead to holistic understanding of the mass displacement and its powerful effects. Equally important for acknowledging violence as history we may look at not just what caused violence but also what human suffering it caused, subsequently. The circumstances of refugees in the Hanfia school camp are entirely at odds with the joyful celebrations of freedom and promises of the politicians. They have for too long remained a hidden history of partition. It is both shocking in its details and disturbing for sanitised nationalist historiography. More research is required especially on the hitherto unacknowledged issue of camp adoptions and kidnappings of refugee children to advance a full understanding of the broader social implications of partition. It is likely to reveal that such episodes were not confined to this particular case study but were part of the refugee camp experience. Its misery and the wider sufferings of ordinary people caught up in the violence is obfuscated by the triumphalist and reductive nationalist histories. ilyaschattha@googlemail.com

ILYAS CHATTHA
University of Southampton

⁸⁷Lary and MacKinnon, *The Scars of War*, pp. 6–8.