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**Session V: Memories of Displacement, Discourses of Rootedness**

**By**

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**PARTITION MEMORIES, "MINORITIZATION" AND DISCOURSES OF  
ROOTEDNESS IN JHARKHAND: A COMPARISON OF CROSS BORDER DISPLACED  
AND "INVISIBLE REFUGEES" IN RANCHI DISTRICT**

Studying displaced people rightfully demands engagement with flows, with memories that describe physical movement. Yet, as this paper illustrates, the fundamentals of such narratives are often not about movement but about roots, about situating rather than uprooting. Besides, this paper also shows that though important, physical displacement is not the only form of dislodgment. Taking the Partition of British India as an example, this paper illustrates that both some who stayed as well as some who left (and arrived) felt uprooted in different sense. This paper begins with a short introduction to writings on the Partition of British India, which indicates the uniqueness of the two chosen case studies. The paper proceeds by introducing the two groups of displaced persons. It argues that both groups often, though not necessarily, experienced confusion, bewilderment or incompleteness after Partition, each in their own specific way as they were denied access to various communities (Cf. Chandhoke 1999: 1045). The following section illustrates this experience through memories of both these groups. It is then deduced that these memories

bring to notice a process of minoritization with accompanying discourses of rootedness. These discourses are discussed in the last section of this paper. The latter is followed by a conclusion, which underlines that apart from the internally displaced, the so-called invisible displaced should be included in studies on displacement. Besides, it should also be recognized that discourses of rootedness form as much part of the experience of displacement as narratives of movement.

### **Partition Studies and the Study of Displaced in Jharkhand**

Along with the termination of English rule over so-called British India came the division of the latter into India and (East and West) Pakistan in 1947. The attainment of India's independence brought thus simultaneously the division of the subcontinent. This disunion of British India is commonly known as the Partition written with a capital P. Scholarly work on Partition is rich<sup>2</sup> and of late scholars have started using memories to revise, complete or even altogether transform Partition historiography.<sup>3</sup> It is also generally understood that Partition should not be studied as an event (something with a clear beginning and a clear end) but as a process starting long before 1947 and lasting till day (Chatterji 1999). Nevertheless, notwithstanding a huge and excellent output of Partition research, all is not said and done.

A lot more needs to be explored and not in the least the experiences of, as Pandey (1997: 2261) aptly described, 'refugees in their own homes'. The latter rightly emphasized that dislocation is not the sole marker of the effect and meaning of Partition though an important one. Likewise, studies on displacement in South Asia do not mention these kind of displaced among the 'rejected people and unwanted migrants in South Asia'. They only include refugees who are the result from "flows", "migrations" or "flights" (Cf. Weiner 1993: 1737-1746). There are therefore almost no studies concerned with 'the trauma of moving with nowhere to move' (Pandey 1997: 2261). This paper therefore includes this type of displaced persons 'who did not leave their homes at all' (Ibid) and who's 'point of arrival' was, 'in a physical sense, no different from the point of departure: but in a physical sense alone' (Ibid: 2271). It is queried what there place was in Jharkhand and how they dealt with this 'tormenting history of displacement' (Ibid). Along with these so-called invisible refugees we also discuss the experiences of those who crossed the international border and the internal displaced people. This paper also deals with 'the construction of memory as a means of dealing with where one has arrived' after people had been 'pushed around from place to place' (Ibid).

Besides, it is now acknowledged that the experience of Partition was not the same for all people in India and as Sabyasachi Bhattacharya rightly wrote: 'Bengal and Punjab underwent Partition while the rest of India experienced it vicariously' (Singh 2000: 199). New geographical spaces have therefore to be included such as the experiences of those residing in present day Pakistan and Bangladesh (Sen 1997). Important also is to study how the Partition of 1947 worked in the so-called periphery of Partition. Yet, not withstanding the call for the inclusion of different regions and socio-economic locations, in practice Partition research has been confined to above mentioned two States with exception maybe of Assam. Very little is known about the reaction of other States in offering shelter to refugees, about the displaced people in these States and their impact.

In this paper we have selected Jharkhand (previously the Southern part of Bihar) and illustrate that identical historical and macro-social processes, such as the Partition of India, can bring about different results locally. Actually, whereas a few have attempted to include Bihar in Partition studies (Ghosh 1997), these studies tend to exclude Jharkhand. It seems that since most pre- as well as post-independence riots have taken place in (North) Bihar, these scholars therefore ignore happenings in Jharkhand. Yet, Partition is not about riots or violence alone. As shown in this paper, it is also about becoming a minority and how to cope with that.

Indeed, Jharkhand does become object of research after the 1960s when communal riots in Ranchi, Hazaribagh, Jamshedpur and Dhanbad took place. Yet, no attempt is made to link these riots to Partition or the existence of such a link is explicitly denied. In this paper, I do not explicitly intend to focus on this question whether post-independence riots in Jharkhand have anything to do with Partition, yet it is nevertheless argued that among the so-called Bengali refugees and the Muslims discussed here, Partition was and is very much a reality. This is not always verbalized however. But, and it should be emphasized, silence does not mean the absence of memory. It is believed of extreme importance to include, 'those on the margins, those who inhabit a world that is somehow - falsely - seen as peripheral literally and figuratively' (Butalia 1998: 223). It is thought that these two groups of displaced in Jharkhand provide 'other stories or other silences' (Ibid: 224), which not only sheds new light on Partition historiography but on studies on displacement as well.

For the purpose of this paper, I have selected two case studies from Ranchi District in Jharkhand. Though Ranchi became the capital of the newly formed State only in November 2000, the demand for separation from Bihar is an old one. When therefore politicians elsewhere were "merely" involved in discussions on the so-called Two-Nation Theory, referring to the splitting of British India in two separate nations, in Jharkhand another partition was simultaneously at stake. In the mineral rich and hilly terrain of South Bihar, the Second Jharkhand Chota Nagpur Pakistan Conference was held in 1946 in Ranchi District. This conference adopted a resolution supporting the demand for the separation of the Santhal Parganas and Chotanagpur from Bihar and the formation of these areas into 'the free state of Jharkhand as the homeland of the Adivasi' (Dawn, March 2, 1946). Whereas the Chota Nagpur Adivasi Mahasabha demanded complete separation from Bihar, the Muslim League at the time suggested a corridor passing through the tribal areas to link East and West Pakistan and sympathized with the tribal people who fully constituted the Mahasabha (Cf. Kuwajima 1998: 202). The demand for separation of Jharkhand by representatives of the *adivasis* and others remained but was only granted on the 3rd of August 2000 when the Parliament passed a Bill, which made Jharkhand a separate State in November 2000. Though Jharkhand had thus to wait, not so Pakistan, which came into being as a separate nation in 1947 itself. It however did not include the Jharkhand area, which became part of India and remained with Bihar during the following fifty years. Nevertheless, these two processes, i.e. demand for Pakistan by the Muslim League as well as the demand for Jharkhand separated from Bihar, are of extreme importance for the understanding of the memories as well as ensuing discourses on rootedness described below.

According to some figures, Jharkhand now has officially a population of 2.14 crore of which 27.67 are tribals (so-called *adivasis*), 15 per cent Harijan, 40 per cent other backward castes and the

rest (i.e. 18.33 per cent) Muslims (Roy 2000: 3633).<sup>4</sup> It should be understood that Jharkhand is not a tribal phenomenon as misconceived for long, though the tribals (*adivasis*) are the most important ingredients of it. All communities now support Jharkhand and claim participation in the movement. In general however, *adivasis* remained ahead in struggle and sacrifice. The fights of Tilka Manghi (1784), the Ho revolt (1820), the Kol insurrection (1832), the Santhal rebellion (1855) and the Birsa movement (1900) are often mentioned as forerunners of the movement. The tribal leader Jaipal Singh who submitted a memorandum to this effect before the State Reorganization Committee in 1955 again raised the demand for a separate Jharkhand state after independence. A second memorandum was given to the Prime Minister in 1973 by the Jharkhand Party leader N.E. Horo and a third by the Jharkhand Coordination Committee leader B.P. Keshori in 1989 to the president.

Barring a thin creamy layer, every section in the State feels exploited, subjugated and ignored. They perceived Jharkhand as an internal colony where everybody wants to become free (Ibid: 3631-3633). It will be shown here that in Jharkhand a curious phenomenon developed where minorities found themselves united against majoritarianism from Bihar. This became the basis on which the State was modeled and finally took shape in November 2000. Within this model it was the "outsider" (the *diku*) who was seen as the common exploiter of the "locals". There was emphasis on inter-communal unity among "locals" who identified differently according to religion, ethnicity and language. Yet, chronology became one of most decisive factors in this battle about "nateness". N.E. Horo of the Jharkhand Party said for instance during a seminar on Vartamaan Paridirishiya Mein Jharkhand Aur Jharkhandi (Jharkhand and its people in the present scenario) that only those who had been residing in the State before 1932 should be treated as Jharkhandis (Hindustan Times January 15 2001). In this setting so-called *adivasis* fared well.<sup>5</sup>

As will be shown the Bengalis, who mostly felt they had no other place to go to, in order to be recognized as legitimate "sons of the soils" started changing their nomenclature. Naturally, with this defining of "localness" came the "othering" of those who had settled after them in the region such as many from North Bihar. Muslims in the region underwent similar metamorphoses and some argued they should be called *adivasis* or *sadans* (non-*adivasi* natives). They maintained their religious identity as Muslims however. Again here too, "othering" takes place. What is fundamental however in the narratives both of Bengalis as well as Muslims discussed below is that they consider themselves as belonging to Jharkhand be it as Muslims, Bengalis, *adivasis*, *sadans* or otherwise.

### **East Bengali Refugees and Muslims in Ranchi**

As detailed elsewhere<sup>6</sup>, Hindus in East Pakistan had officially become religious minorities and many saw themselves forced to leave the newly formed nation. A great number of them first landed up in the State of West Bengal where they were received in so-called refugee camps as part of a majority of "Hindus" and "Bengalis" in the State. Yet, in 1956 it was resolved that, 'there is no further scope in West Bengal for the settlement of the displaced persons' and the, 'new camps to be opened hereafter will be outside the state'. Hence, 'relief and rehabilitation assistance', was only given to those refugees who were willing to settle outside West Bengal (Annual Reports 1956-57: 4). Some decided and others had no other option than to take the train from Calcutta to Ranchi. In Ranchi, they completed the already existing communities

of East and West Bengalis who had settled in the State of Bihar before Partition. Many of those who enlisted in the refugee camps in Ranchi, were later on "rehabilitated" in the so-called refugee colony in Kantatoli, Ranchi. They were referred to by locals as well as identified as "Bengali refugees".

These Bengali refugees had felt displaced in their own country, which many of them remained referring to as India. They therefore more felt like internal displaced people notwithstanding the fact they crossed the international border. Actually, they had become homeless and went searching for a home in India since for them the ground on which Partition had been accepted was the insecurity expressed by this Hindu minority about living under the Muslim League (Cf. Kumar 2000: 2734).

Before Partition, Bengalis in Ranchi had played a role in the Jharkhand movement as a result of their sense of insecurity after the separation of "Bihar and Orissa" from the province of Bengal in 1912. S.C. Roy had become an ideologue of the movement (Sharma 1993: 485-486). At the time, these Bengalis faced increased competition from Biharis in services and a debate started, which was referred to as "the Bengali-Bihari controversy". At stake had been the position of Bengalis in Bihar as "locals" or as "outsiders". Related to this in Jharkhand, many Bengalis considered Biharis *dikus* (outsiders) and at one point Jaipal Singh indeed declared the Bengalis to be *adivasis* and even asked the latter to adopt the Bengali script (Ibid). Yet later when Muslim League became close to Jaipal Singh and the latter fought for "Adivasistan" (instead of Jharkhand) as a link between the two wings of Pakistan, the "Congress Bengalis" got estranged. Consequently, support from the Bengali minority to the separation movement stopped and when in 1956 a portion of Chotanagpur was merged with Bengal most of these Bengalis lost interest in the movement altogether.

Though a "Bengali Bihari organization" had been established to look after the interests of the Bengalis in Bihar, the East Bengali refugees could not identify with the aims and activities of the organization. As a result, East Bengalis in particular those who had come after 1947 remained experiencing a sense of insecurity and dislodgment. They defined their grievances as directly related to their position as upper-caste refugees in Jharkhand and founded their own "East Bengali Refugee Organization". Their demands, as upper-castes, also differed somewhat from East Bengali refugees in (North) Bihar where not only lower-caste refugees dominated but where regional circumstances differed too. For quite a long time these refugees kept to themselves. There was not much interaction between them and the so-called locals. They established their own organizations where they tried to preserve the memory of their homeland. Yet, instead of seeing their land of birth as foreign, East Bengal never became Bangladesh and remained thus part of India. Intermarriage between West and East Bengalis was also exceptional and relations between the two communities somewhat strenuous. The most important demand of these refugees was that the Bihar Government should provide them with the full rights on the land they had received. In case the land would be in their name and not in the name of the Bihar Government they could get loans from banks as well as sell the land if needed (Husain 1993). Yet, the Bihar Government was not forthcoming and increasingly these refugees hoped a separate Jharkhand Government would better look after them. Besides, pressure of so-called locals made them also relocate themselves in Jharkhand.

It is still quite unclear when, why and which kind of Muslims first penetrated Jharkhand. Yet, Ansari wrote in 1964 (68), 'the whole of the Chotanagpur plateau known as Jharkhand or the "forest tract" appears never to have been completely subjugated by the Muslims'. It is known however that many came as Muslim traders to Jharkhand and got jagirs in exchange for luxury goods (jagirdars). In 1740 it was for the first time that a Muslim known as Hidamatullah Khan was nominated as jagirdar of Japla in Jharkhand. Muslim weavers, so-called *Julahas* later known as *Ansaris* or *Momins*, must have migrated to the area around that time as well. Javeed Alam (1989: 163n5) quoted that some of them were 'held by the zamindars as fief-holders for quasi-feudal services'. Whatever, conversion must have taken place among *adivasis* and lower castes as their number was quite considerable when representatives of the East India Company arrived in the area. Apart from Ansaris, other "castes" or *beradari* (Ali 1974: 190-212) arrived in Jharkhand during the beginning of the 19th century searching employment (Ranchi Gazetteers 1970: 143). This migration of Muslims in search of work from Bihar to Jharkhand continues till date. Besides, after big riots in 1946 known as the "Bihar Killings" (Damodaran 1992), the Muslim League selected Jharkhand as a most suitable area to which the displaced could migrate. Indeed, in "Reflections (No.3) of Bihar Tragedy" Syed Abdul Aziz played with the idea that Muslims who were displaced after the riots in places like Patna, Chapra, Bhagalpur, Monghyr, Bihar Sharif and Jharia<sup>7</sup> could very well migrate to Jharkhand or the Santhal Parganas. The Muslim League felt that migration to Pakistan 'should be decided upon as a last course for peace and security' (Ibid: 27-28) yet instead it was proposed that one 'should turn attention to Chota Nagpur and Santhal Parganas' which could 'offer best opportunities and facilities for new settlers, chiefly because their area is vast and population thin'. It had attractive features and good climate, and, above all, peaceful people. The writer of the report felt the displaced Muslims of North Bihar could find new roots in Jharkhand and with that incentive he wrote (Ibid 31 and 33):

I am strongly inclined to suggest that a large bulk of the Muslims from all parts of the province should shift to Chota Nagpur and some to Santhal Parganas. Their safety lies only in Muslim concentration.

Aziz further argued that, 'life, freedom of thought, independence of action and honor, are infinitely more valuable than properties and ancestral house or its remnant...'. He agreed these Muslims could migrate to Jharkhand as a 'Bard of Islam' (Ibid) and 'attachment to birth-place is natural, but reason and instinct of self-preservation should prevail upon ill-conceived sentiments' (Ibid: 34). What otherwise would happen to these 'human games, called Muslims, intended for sport or food to appease the communal frenzy and hunger of Hindus?', the Muslim League wondered (Ibid).

Some of these "internal displaced" indeed settled in Jharkhand, yet they were not the only Muslims whose memories were about displacement, who felt treated as exiles in the new environment of Jharkhand after Partition and who were in desperate search for "something and somewhere to come back to" and who had hopes to find a home in Jharkhand (Cf. Chandhoke 1999: 1045). Many among those Muslims in Jharkhand, who had not moved at all, experienced similar dislodgment after Partition. They were therefore

also part of the group of "Partition's Biharis" as Papiya Ghosh calls those Muslims who were internally displaced after the riots in Bihar (in Hasan 1998a: 229-264).

Though scholars have tried to show that there is not one Muslim community and highlight the diversity even within the various Muslim communities, Muslims, ever after Partition remain to be associated with Pakistan or the Partition movement, whereas Hindus were and are associated with the national movement. Similarly, within Ranchi most people (read Hindus) reproduce(d) the so-called Pakistan ideology. In this ideology Muslims were described as forming a unitary community constituting a distinct political community with a destiny different from that of the rest of the people of India. It was in particular difficult for Momins to come to terms with the new situation after Partition. Though Momin leadership in Bihar had never subscribed to the "Two Nation Theory" and Momins rarely had supported the Muslim League, these Muslims nevertheless felt a need after 1947, to memorize their close identification with the struggle for India's independence and their support for a united India. Some of them even experienced insecurity, alienation and anxiety after Partition.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, these Muslims had also to come to terms with the fact that many other Muslims in Bihar left the country and migrated to Pakistan. Besides, those who stayed in Bihar often despised them. 'They', as Hasan (2000: 23-24n74) quoted a well-known Urdu writer,

in the eyes of Hindus, were Muslims, and *vice versa*. Their sacrifices were reduced to ashes. Their personal integrity and loyalty were derided. Their morale was shattered like a disintegrating star; their lives lost meaning. Like the crumbling pillars of a mosque they could neither be saved nor used. India, for whose independence they had fought the British, refused to offer them refuge. So much so that they incurred the wrath of their own community (...) They were reduced to the status of harijans in India.

To make things more complicated in Jharkhand, these Muslims felt exploited not only by the Congress leaders in Bihar who "broke their promises" (Cf. Damodaran 1992) and not even bothered to thank them, they also felt the crunch of fellow Muslims in the North. It should come therefore as no surprise that immediately after Partition some among these Momins formed a Momin Union (File no. 270 (3) 1947 Political Special, Patna State Archives). It was set up in Kanke (Ranchi) and supported a separate Jharkhand Province in collaboration with the *adibasis*. Through a leaflet which appeared just after Partition Momins were urged to become member:

You know that people of our community have been living in Chotanagpur and Santhal Parganas for a very long time. This is our home. Our people have been living here in close intimacy with Adibasis and Hindus. Adibasis have a very large population in Chotanagpur and Santhal Parganas and in these places our Momins also live in great number. Under these circumstances we Momin brethren should join Adibasis in Jharkhand demand, because we always have to live here with them and have with them all our dealings. They wear our handloom cloths.

The leaflet continued proving "our centuries old friendship to the Adibasis and others of Chotanagpur" and by becoming member of this Momin Union or the Chotanagpur Separation Momin Front their "low status" would improve. After Partition, these Momins were disappointed and felt insecure as no adequate provision for them was made in Government services and no measures had been taken for the supply of cotton yarn to the weavers. Other grievances had also not been addressed by Congress. Yet, whereas some Momins tried to root themselves in Jharkhand as a reaction to feelings of displacement, this did not entail forsaking the India. Indeed, though supporting Jharkhand they simultaneously vehemently remained trying to show their "Indianness" and their loyalty to the Indian nation. It seemed it was Bihar they renounced.

In short, the Muslim population in Jharkhand was multifarious with different professions, traditions, histories, memories, languages, needs and identities. As minorities some claimed and claim to be recognized as *sadans* or even *adi-vasis* (old dwellers), want Urdu medium schools or minority teachers, want inclusion as Dalit Muslims in the Scheduled Caste category (Prabhat Khabar December 7 2000) or inclusion as Scheduled Tribes (Hindustan Times November 24 2000). Again others want Urdu as second language of the new State (Prabhat Khabar September 28, 2000 and Times of India 24th October 2000) or other reservations (Prabhat Khabar June 13 1999 and 4 July 1999), special hostels (Prabhat Khabar December 15, 2000) or support of their hand or power loom industry and redress of their multifarious rural problems (Prabhat Khabar November 29 and 30, 2000). Yet, foremost they, like the Bengali refugees, want the right to live in Jharkhand, to become accepted as "sons of the soil" (Prabhat Khabar November 25 2000). Besides, they know and are prepared to live united with the other minorities in the separate State of Jharkhand (Prabhat Khabar September 24 2000).

Syed Mahmud wrote in 1964 to Moraji Desai (Datta 1974: 297) that,

the leaders of both communities have sinned, and both are equally responsible for the tragedy of partition. The general masses of either community have no hand. They hardly understand the meaning of partition of India.

The masses had however certainly had a hand in the Partition or its renouncement.<sup>9</sup> They very well understood the meaning of Partition. For both East Bengalis as well as Muslims in Jharkhand it meant they had lost their legitimate place of birth. They had 'floated upwards from history, from memory, from time' (Chandhoke 1999: 1045). After Partition, both these two groups of Bengali refugees as well as those of Muslims in Jharkhand were therefore looking for a place they could call their home and needed a new legitimization which placed them (back) in the history of India or Jharkhand. They therefore had a sense of roots, of rootedness; yet, these people belonged to Jharkhand in different ways - through their own languages, cultures, and religions. Since, as Chandhoke (Ibid) rightly writes: 'Belonging is always plural in its ties, its imagination, memory, sense of history, and perception of the present'.

### **Memories of Bengali Refugees and Muslims in Jharkhand**

"Partition" had unmistakably done its work. Memories of both Bengali refugees as well as Muslims clearly displayed them as "a hopeless minority"<sup>10</sup> in East Bengal /Pakistan, as members of the majority of Bengali Hindus in West Bengal but again as part of a minority of East Bengali refugees in Bihar. Nagi Gopal Ghosh<sup>11</sup> narrated:

I was already in Ranchi when the riots started in 1946 in Bihar. They were caused by the abduction of four Hindu women. Hindus had started killing all Muslims in Ara, Chapra, Saran, Patna, Balia and thousand villages were ruined by them. The Biharis are foolish (*muruk*). They are provoked by anything. But things started worsening in East Bengal already since 1945 when the Muslim League had defeated Congress, Muslims had started smoking pipe; sitting on our beds; chairs and were using our utensils. We knew then that more problems were to come. We also understood that prestige is better than wealth. We returned to East Bengal and sold our property. By that time Muslims wanted to share in our festivals, etc. Would that have been possible: that they consume food in our houses? Already before independence there had been rumors about Partition and that Hindus would be ruled by Muslims. It proved to be right.

Chittaranjan Ghosh<sup>12</sup> had also returned to East Pakistan after a short stay with his family in a camp in West Bengal where he lost two brothers:

We started all over again. But we saw Muslims were dominating and we had no right to protest. Muslims did not like Hindu students to do well in school. I joined, after IA, as a Principal in a primary school but we feared for life and property. I left Pakistan again in 1964. In 1972 I collected my parents. They died in Ranchi in 1982 and 1995 respectively. They never learnt Hindi or liked the food or weather here and always remembered Barisal. But what to do? I had to look after them and I did not trust the Muslims in Bangladesh.

Chittaranjan's parents clearly remained outsiders (refugees) in Jharkhand and like them there were many more who remembered the alienation which settlement - as a minority - in Ranchi had initially implied. Some like Chittaranjan's parents never got rooted in Ranchi but many more clearly expressed a sense of belonging. What they needed however was a (hi) story, which could legitimate their place in Jharkhand.

Muslims in the same Kantatoli area also feel "displaced" as minorities. Haji Kurashi<sup>13</sup> blamed Partition for his displacement:

Partition has influenced our lives fundamentally. Before Partition we did not belong to a minority. There was no fear, no tension. We all belonged to the same community. Now it is different.

Interestingly, he simultaneously emphasized that their families had since many generations been dwelling in South Bihar though they "originally" had come from North Bihar:

Even Moulana Abul Kalam Azad was born in Ranchi. He did not want us to leave after Partition. Those who went were not well received by the Pakistani Government and the locals there. Till now they face problems over there.

He also emphasized that Government should help those below poverty line not only the Bengali refugees:

The refugees have received many good things from the Government. We, the Muslims and Harijans here, got nothing. Consequently, these refugees started feeling superior. They wanted to rule over us but could not succeed and therefore they keep distance now. In times of riots for instance we all shake hands. That is: the local Bengalis, Muslims, Harijans, other Hindus but not they. Only Gopal Ghosh is good. But the new generation is also better. We have no problem now. Only their fathers and grandfathers behaved like that.

Sultan Ahmad Ansari<sup>14</sup> of Irba village near Ranchi showed me a slip of a friend on which it was written that they had been displaced due to a dam, which was constructed where he lived. His friend, who was present during the interview, had gone at least five times to the city to request compensation yet he explained to us:

We were served notice to vacate our homes but no official compensation will be given to us. Muslims residing in this area are considered "outsiders". They say we have come to this area to look for jobs and have therefore no right to stay in this area anyway.

Some Muslims complained that since they had come from North Bihar, they had been treated like foreigners in Jharkhand. Hafiz Syed Shah Md Zainul Aabedin Qadri<sup>15</sup> remembered:

We are compared with them, the locals. They told us: "Go to Pakistan" and they shouted: "Hindu, Hindi, Hindustan" and "Muslim Jao Pakistan Mussalman ke do asthan: Pakistan ya Kabristhan"(graveyard). But we are different from them (those who went to Pakistan, KSK). Hindus had an obsession that Muslims were responsible for the creation of Pakistan and that we are disloyal to India. They think we are not proud of our Indian heritage. They tell us we come from outside, from some Arabic country. In fact, Aryans come from Afghanistan.

A few Muslims were accused by both parties. Md. Syeed<sup>16</sup> recalled:

Hindus thought we were not loyal and Muslim League people disliked us for not supporting Pakistan. I never wanted to go to Pakistan. Why I should have gone? My

house was here. I had some land. Nobody left. Rich people in North Bihar went. We were poor.

He felt humiliated:

I had voted Congress but was treated like a criminal. You know what had happened? I read it in the newspaper about Bihar Sharif. Hindus took a Muslim who was a big Congress leader and they tied a rope around him. He said he was a Congress leader but the Hindus had replied that it was not a matter of Congress and Hindus but a question of Hindus and Muslims. Then they tied him to a tree and killed him in front of his family members. This could have happened to me as well.

These memories illustrate that these displaced felt thus often treated as outsiders and what is more, as minorities and they often disliked it.<sup>17</sup> Yet, there was a difference between labelling and identification with the label. Narayattom Gayan<sup>18</sup> who was born in a camp in Bihar and speaks better Hindi than Bengali elaborated on the subtle interaction between labelling and identification and how it effects self:

Personally, I think about myself as an Indian with equal rights like others. But, the local environment forces us to reconsider our position as a citizen of an Independent country. Local people think: "Oh...the poor Bengalis, refugees!" They think we have no right to stay here. They look upon us as indigent.

In similar vein Kumudini Burman<sup>19</sup> told she felt powerless to claim her old age pension though she knew she was entitled but she commented:

We can not do much you see. We are a minority and we keep our mouths shut. You know? They still believe we are outsiders after 42 years. But what to do? They are after all *Bhumi Putro* (sons of the soil).

Yet, this labelling as minorities or outsiders did not only put them on the defensive, but these Muslims and Bengali refugees also started claiming the assurance of well-being of their community within the framework of the Indian Union, the Bihar State and the State of Jharkhand. In other words, memories triggered off discourses of rootedness.

### **Minoritization and Discourses of Rootedness**

One of the "legacies of a divided nation" (Cf. Hasan 1997) therefore was the "majority/minority paradigm" and the framers of the Indian Constitution were quite clearly prisoners of it (Sheth and Mahajan 1999: 48. See also 144). They were not the only ones as is shown above. Both the memories of Bengali refugees as

well as Muslims in Jharkhand are framed in similar vein. The "Two Nation Theory" as it matured from the late 1930s onwards was substantiated by this paradigm and initiated a process of minoritization in which the Britishers, the Congress Party<sup>20</sup> as well as Muslim League were involved, to mention only a few players in the tragedy. After independence, India became a secular state yet the discourse on minorities abided and with it the claims of minorities on different grounds such as religious, linguistic, caste and ethnic.

The Muslim League had continuously repeated that after Partition it would be very difficult for the Muslims in India who lived in so-called minority provinces. They systematically taught the Muslims in India to think of themselves as a minority and as a maybe unintended result taught Hindus to identify as a majority. Their predictions that minority Muslims would suffer under the tyranny of the Hindu majority became true in a most frightful form witnessed in 1946 (Aziz 1947: 12). The Muslim League warned Muslims that they would be suppressed by the majority unconditionally (Ibid 15):

The misery and ruin of the Muslims was great in the period that preceded the Congress ascendancy. It was greater during the first Congress regime and it became greater in the second Congress rule, which prevails at present.

Yet, not only were Muslims in Bihar - and for that matter Bengali refugees - labelled as minorities, many also had started identifying as such. Both groups nursed feelings of collective hurt for generations after generations, which was embedded in the historical memory of these victimized groups. In this atmosphere Chotanagpur or Jharkhand became like a heaven for many of these exploited minorities. The Sentinel report of January 27 1946 mentioned for instance in an article entitled "If you could, throw off Bihar's Yoke" that the exploiters of the Muslims were the Leaguer, the Bureaucrat as well as the Congressman of Bihar:

So all the trueborn sons of Chota Nagpur, be they Hindus, Muhamedans, Christians or Adibasis must unite and work for the success of Mr. Singh (Jaipal Singh the adivasi leader, KSK). Nor have we a different message for the Musalmans of Chota Nagpur. League and Congress are foreigners. They can have no inner pull for Chota Nagpur. The League has, of course favored Chota Nagpur's demand for separation. Yet to expect the outsiders to fight single-mindedly for the interests of Chota Nagpur to the extent of its separation is, of course, to expect too much.

The Sentinel editor supported the separation of Jharkhand from Bihar and mentioned in the newspaper's issue of April 21 1946 that all who had made Jharkhand their home were convinced that their "salvation" was only in separation from Bihar. Jharkhand should not be ruled by "dikudom" and Jaipal Singh also thanked the Muslims for their collaboration. Indeed, a great number of Muslims had defined Bihar as an *aqalliat* (minority) province (Cf. Ghosh 1997)<sup>21</sup> and some looked upon Chotanagpur as a safer place where they could find jobs, where there was no communal violence, or dominance by the "Hindu majority" or where they could introduce madarsas. Similarly, the Bihar Conference convened by Mr. Mahboob Ahmad Warsi demanded "the immediate division of the present province of Bihar", which was hastily carved in 1912. This was demanded on the ground that otherwise the Muslims and the other downtrodden

minorities of the Province would be doomed forever. 'They have no future', it was argued, under a Caste Hindu dominated Congress Ministry. It was observed that 'after the last Bihar Carnage no sentient being could ignore the urgency of dividing Bihar into Hindu and non-Hindu Bihar' (Sentinel 27-4 1947). The strongest reason for this demand lay in the fact that the 'Muslims of the Province must have some place under the sun wherein they might live their lives in peace and honor' and 'numerical strength alone cannot be the basis of partition' even 'if they are not in the majority in one of the 16 districts'. Warsi wanted partition on ground of 'safety, good governance and for the full exercise of religion, and the development of culture and language'. So like Punjab and Bengal also Bihar should be partitioned since,

How can the 13 per cent, helpless unprotected and scattered, Muslims of Bihar dare to live again in the midst of 87 per cent militant, fully armed and aggressive majority of the Province?

The Conference participants also wondered what would happen to these "minority Moslems" (Ibid). They would be 'cut off from Pakistan and marooned in Hindustan'. They could go to 'one of the Pakistans in India' but no mass migration was possible. It was therefore proposed Muslims should 'develop a different psychology and evolve a different technique'. To be 'perpetual at war with Congress or the majority' would be suicidal however and Muslims had to come to 'honorable terms with the majority community'.

Not only did the Muslim League therefore adopt "the majority-minority paradigm". The Congress rhetoric too was in terms of the majority and the minority (Ghosh 1991).<sup>22</sup> Similarly, the Jamiyat al-ulama-i Hind's (JUH) theory of *muttahidah qaumiyat* (broadly composite nationalism)<sup>23</sup> gathered for "Muslims living in a non-Islamic state" and the *Imarat i Shariah* was fighting the Pakistan movement and accused the Muslim League of ignoring the "*aqalliat subahs*" (minority provinces). They argued that the Muslim minority was jettisoned for Muslims of the majority provinces (Ghosh 1997: 7). The Momin Conference was in particular popular among Muslims in Chotanagpur (Ansari 1989) and its leaders as well "minoritized" this weaver community as subjects under British rule. Whereas JUH supported complete independence for all the provinces within a loose federation, the Momin conference supported "*Akhand Bharat*" (undivided independent India). Yet, when also Congress leaders agreed to Partition, there was a greater urge among them for a separate Jharkhand where Momins would be comparatively better off than in undivided Bihar. Immediately after independence they withdrew from politics but remained active in social reform among their *biradari* members. Yet, some other Muslims in the region felt that the Momin Conference was dividing the community and proposed Muslims should work united for their upliftment as they all faced as a religious community - and a minority - similar problems.

Not all were in favor of being called a minority however. Mr. Tajammul Husain of Bihar for instance (Quoted in: Ansari 1996: 403-404) in 1949 felt that reservation in any shape would victimize them and give them an 'inferiority complex':

Because we worship the same God by different names, in a different way, that is no reason why we should be considered a minority. *We are not a minority. The term*

*'minority' is a British creation. The British created minorities. The British have gone and minorities have gone with them (italics in original).*

In general however, both Bengalis as well as Muslims in Jharkhand responded to the "minority discourse" by strongly identifying as minority and demanding their rights. What is more, this identity triggered off discourses of rootedness. Yet, this rootedness was expressed in different ways: as Muslims or Hindus, as converts of adivasis, as Bengalis, as long time traders or as Jharkhandis. The Bengali refugees increasingly abandoned their "refugeeness" and a few of them now agree that 'a person who has come from East Pakistan is no longer a refugee' (Prabhat Khabar 22 September 1995). Many more Bengali refugees in the Kantatoli Colony put their "localness" to test by becoming "Jharkhandis". For identical reasons for which these people vehemently argued against India's Partition of fifty years ago, with the same vigor now support the partition of Bihar. "Losers" during the former, this time they are convinced they live at the right side of the border. They even changed the name of their "Refugee Colony" into "Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Colony". In the words of Surya Kumar Ghosh<sup>24</sup> who was interviewed before Jharkhand was separated from Bihar:

I support either Jharkhand or Vananchal. To me both seem identical. When a separate State is established, the whole area here will develop and people will get their rights. The law and order situation and roads will improve and finally there will be social justice. Patna's dominance will be brought to a stop. Yet, I feel Jharkhand can not materialize in the near future as all political parties play their cards differently.

Biran Kumar Das another "ex-refugee", supported Jharkhand with similar elan:

Without Jharkhand we, the inhabitants of Chotanagpur, can not develop. Moreover, the dominating attitude of Patna might also come to a halt. The people of Jharkhand finally can show their ability in various fields.

Though mostly preserving their identity as Bengalis, they know that in Jharkhand they cannot remain refugees (i.e. outsiders) any longer. In the words of Labanya Prabha Karmakar<sup>25</sup>:

Nowadays people respect us, if they know we are refugees they will hate us. Six or seven months ago, two Jharkhand leaders have requested us to drop the word "refugee" during a public meeting in Kantatoli. You simply say you are a Bengali, they advised us.

One of her grandsons added that, 'local people demoralize because we are refugees. But I am an Indian. I love India because India is my motherland but it is strange we are still refugees'.

Similarly, Muslims while not forsaking their religious identity or *beradari*<sup>26</sup>, try to root themselves as a minority in Jharkhand. They often emphasize the fact that Muslims came to Jharkhand "a long time back" and some even say that Muslims stepped into Jharkhand territory 800 years ago. The well-known Momin

leader of Ranchi Amanat Ali<sup>27</sup> argued: 'The adivasis were depending upon us and also learnt Arabic and Persian'. Jamshedpur wrote (2000:6): 'the most surprising matter is that the residents of this territory treated them as their own'. He added that Muslims 'forgot their own culture, language and life style' and became 'same like adivasis'. Above mentioned Amanat Ali furthermore contended:

I used to visit their *dhumkuria* (dormitory) when I was a little boy. We spoke the same language in our village and the villagers became drunk together. Yet, now things have become really bad. This is due to the influence of the RSS who want to Hinduize the *adivasis*.

Md. Iradat Karim<sup>28</sup> an Ansari rationalized:

We are all from outside. *Adivasis* originated from Africa and we got converted later on. But we remained on good terms with them.

Momins in particular claim their legitimate place as a minority in Jharkhand by emphasizing the fact that they supported the national movement. They refer to Shaikh Bhikhari, Nadir Ali and Salamat Ali, Shaikh Haru who are depicted as heroes who fought the Britishers. They also often mention the fact that when he was 38 years old in 1857, Thakur Vishwanath Shahdeo provided Bhikhari Saheb with the opportunity to become an active member of the Mukti Vahini and the latter helped the Indian army during a revolt at Doranda (Ranchi) on 31 July 1857. His role to awaken the Santhals of the Santhal Parganas to revolt against the Britishers is also centralized. Furthermore, these Muslims make it a point to detail their involvement and vital role in the Jharkhand Movement (Ifkar Mili, July 2000). Abdul Hamid Asar<sup>29</sup>, an Iraqi, wrote even a poem on this theme. Mirdaha from Kadujora village in Bero Block<sup>30</sup> claimed that his title had been given by the Maharaja of Ratu. He is an expert in Nagpuri and knows very little of Urdu. He also described how the Momin Conference was established at Murma in 1923 near Ranchi and that it immediately had condemned the Jalianwala Bagh massacre. It had also paid homage to the Muslim martyrs and he described how the Conference had tried to save the weaving profession from "British tyranny". Other heroes were mentioned like Imam Ali (Brombay) Nazahat Hussain (Bundu), Jaggu Mian (Bijulia) Farzand Ali (Itki) Abdullah Sardar (Sisai) Zakir Ali (itki) Ali Jan Mian (Gudri Ranchi) Sohbat Mian (Ranchi) and Chandan Mian (Dumri) who all protested against the Britishers in India. When in 1912 the Santhal Parganas became part of Bihar separated from Bengal, Asmat Ali protested since, Mirdaha narrated, 'the social culture of Jharkhand was at stake'. Again in 1919, Chiragh Ali also demanded the separate State of Jharkhand. Finally, Mirdaha concluded with an account of how in the 1990s some Muslims even sacrificed their lives for the Jharkhand Movement. In the words of Mustaqim Hazi<sup>31</sup>:

Our contribution to the national movement is not recognized. Not even our role in the Jharkhand movement. In 1936 the Momin conference, which was first known as Jamiyatul Momin resolved to demand a separate state. But often our demands were frustrated by the Muslim League. We fought for the welfare of all the Jharkhand inhabitants. But from the very beginning there was a close relation between the *adivasis*

and the Muslims. Later, the Jharkhand Qaumi Tahrir was established in 1989 and we fought along with the All Jharkhand Student's Union (AJSU) for the rights of the minorities. We have the same old customs and rituals. We want a Sunni Waqf Board, reservation, an Urdu Mushawarati Committee, madaras Examination Board, a Haj Committee and an Arabic-Persian Research Institute. I think Urdu should be the second language in Jharkhand because in Bihar it is also recognized.

In short, these victims of Partition did no longer remain victims but developed into claimers by (re-) writing history. Indeed, the partition of the country along religious lines and frequent communal riots thereafter reinforced in some way the religious identities of these groups. However, this should not make us loose sight of the fact that the Indian Muslim or Hindu, apart from his or her religious identity has various other regional, linguistic, cultural, ethnic and other identities as well, and very often in normal day to day life, these are more important and determining factors than his or her religious identity (Cf. Aslam 1985: 282)

## **Conclusion**

The events of the 1940s were constructed in the minds of Bengali refugees as well as Muslims in Jharkhand as dislocation and their memories produced minority consciousness. Yet, the latter did not solely mark suffering but also the spirit to claim rights as minorities. Above all these two groups claimed their land rights, the right to live in Jharkhand. In some way it might seem that with the establishment of Jharkhand, Partition has ended for these groups. Muslims and Bengali refugees now have their *bhumi putro*. Yet, there seems no end to the history of Partition as evidenced from "riot after riot" (Cf. Akbar 1988) in the State. Vibhuti Narain Rai (1988: 229) argued that,

Post 1960 riots in our country are of a different character than those that occurred at the time of the partition in 1947. The Partition (syndrome) did not remain strong enough after 1960. And if we leave out the few riots sparked off by reports of excesses by the Hindu refugees from the then East Pakistan, most others had little to do with the memory of Partition. Riots have occurred due to the restrengthening of Hindu and Muslim communal organizations, which had weakened after the Partition, and the growing tendency to use communal riots for political ends.

Yet, it is evident that politicians already played a role in the Bihar Killings of 1946 and it seems therefore of ultimate importance to find out whether communal riots like 'the split-level war in Jamshedpur' of 1979 (Akbar 1988: 15-32 and Ansari 1994) or for that matter those in Ranchi have something to do with the process of minoritization (and majoritization) which accompanied the process of Partition. Many of these so-called communal riots can possibly be attributed to competition among minorities over who are the real "natives" in the State (Cf. Sarkar 1995).

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>. The present researcher participated in a project on "Displaced Populations & Development in the Context of the South Asian Economic and Institutional Order. A Study of the displaced populations originating from Burma, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, now living in India and Bangladesh" (1997-2000). This project was sponsored by the Indo-Dutch Programme on Alternatives in Development (IDPAD) which is part of the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), New Delhi. Project directors: Dr. Abhijit Dasgupta and Dr. Willem van Schendel. Other researchers: Dr. Imtiaz Ahmed and Mr. Gautam Chakma. The author thanks IDPAD, above-mentioned scholars as well as her research assistant, Mr. Dipankar Mukherjee. Since September 2000, the researcher is involved in a two years research project on 'Partition Memories: Identities and those who stayed: a Comparison of Muslims in India and Hindus in Bangladesh' sponsored by the South-South exchange programme for research on the history of development (Sephis). The author thanks Sephis as well as her present research assistant Mr. Md. Noor Alam. The present paper is an effort to combine the (preliminary) findings of two projects.

<sup>2</sup>. See for a discussion of this work my chapter entitled 'Partition and the Making and Unmaking of the Refugee Identity. A Case study of two districts in the State of Bihar, India'. This will be published in a book edited by Abhijit Dasgupta and Willem van Schendel.

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<sup>3</sup>. See for instance Memon and Bhasin (1998); Butalia (1993) and Hasan (2000). See for a more detailed discussion of collective memory my article entitled "Futurising the Past: Partition Memory, Refugee Identity and Social Struggle in Champaran (Bihar, India) to be published in the South Asian Refugee Watch (SARF).

<sup>4</sup>. Compare for instance Afsar Ali Jamshedpur (2000: 6) who writes that Muslims represent 32 percent out of the 28.4 million population in Jharkhand. Compare with another figure of 27 per cent Muslims in Jharkhand (Hindustan Times November 24, 2000). Actually, Roy (2000) did not explicitly mention the presence or percentage of Muslims, which is inferred by me only. Important to mention is also that most interviewed Muslims mentioned a number of 32 per cent Muslims to me, whereas non-Muslims normally rendered a lower figure.

<sup>5</sup>. Significantly, those *adivasis* who converted to Christianity remained labelled as *adivasis* whereas those who converted to Islam lost the label. One Christian *adivasi* explained to me that this was right as, 'after conversion we only change our place of worship. The rest remains same. Yet, conversion to Islam means that everything changes'. He added that Muslims were completely different from *adivasis*: 'Sirf juta siddha hai, bakhi jo hai sab ulta hai' (Only their shoes are in the right way, otherwise everything is the other way round).

<sup>6</sup>. See note 2.

<sup>7</sup>. See also Amrita Bazar Patrika 30 October 1946 to November 8 1946.

<sup>8</sup>. During my interviews however there were also many who recounted their happiness when India became independent from British rule. They had retained high hopes and only later on became disappointed when Congress leaders failed to satisfy their expectations. Some argued that Partition had had no impact on their lives whatsoever. They had no memory of it, they said. It is good to repeat here however that one should listen to silences too.

<sup>9</sup>. The existence and activities of these groups of so-called National Muslims or Congress Muslims are rarely acknowledged and Hasan (1999: 29) therefore rightly says they should not be 'written

off or relegated to a historian's footnote'.

<sup>10</sup>. This refers to Rajendra Babu's appeal to Muslims to vote for the Congress Party since, 'if Pakistan is achieved, the Muslims in Hindu majority provinces will be no where as they would be in a hopeless minority' (Sentinel February 20, 1946).

<sup>11</sup>. Interview date: 23-12-98.

<sup>12</sup>. Age: 57; Interview date: 27-08-98.

<sup>13</sup>. Age: 69. Interview date: 29-5-98.

<sup>14</sup>. Age: 72. Interview date: 23-12-2000.

<sup>15</sup>. Age: 76. Interview date: 15-9-2000.

<sup>16</sup>. Age: 80. Interview date: 17-9-2000.

<sup>17</sup>. Syed Mahmud one of these "nationalist or Congress Muslims" (Datta 1974: 261, 263 and 264) who after Independence became Minister in Bihar, complained in a letter to S.K. Sinha the then Chief Minister of Bihar around 1948: "Muslims were treated by many in India as enemies, as representatives of Pakistan". He felt, "the entire Muslim community of this Province is regarded as a body of criminals and that there can be no exception to it". "Half of my life I had to suffer such humiliation as a Congressman at the hands of British Government in India. Now it seems for the remaining period of my life I have to suffer all these indignities and insults at the hands of the Congress Government".

18.18. Age: 30. Interview date: 23-10-97.

<sup>19</sup>. Age: 65. Interview date: 15-10-98. Crossed border in 1956.

<sup>20</sup>. See also Presidential Address of Abul Kalam Azad in Ramgargh in 1940 (In: Hasan 1999: 59-68). The "real question of the day" was he thought "the communal question" and the Congress had "always held to two basic principles in this connection": "(i) Whatever constitution is adopted for India, there must be the fullest guarantee in it for the rights and interest of minorities. (ii) The minorities should judge for themselves what safeguards are necessary for the protection of their rights and interests. The majority should not decide this" (Ibid: 61). Compare this with a comment in the Sentinel (January 1, 1946) a weekly from Ranchi, which reported in an article on 'the Congress's election tactics' that the "divide-and rule strategy" formed the main plank of the Congress policy and in this way they were 'setting up Momins and Nationalist Muslims against the Muslim League'.

<sup>21</sup>. Papiya Ghosh argues that 'the centrality of enumeration in colonial sociology carried over into the politics of the 1920s-1940s, therefore the reference *toaqalliat* (minority) Bihar, where Muslims comprised 10.1 per cent of the population, in contrast to the provinces where they were the *aksariyat* (majority).

<sup>22</sup>. See also Ghosh (1997: 1n2) about Abul Kalam Azad who used similar wordings already in his writings of 1916 during his internment in Ranchi.

<sup>23</sup>. See for the role of the JUH: Yohanan Friedmann in Hasan (2000: 157-178).

<sup>24</sup>. Age: 74. Interview date: 12-1-99. Permanently came to India in 1956.

<sup>25</sup>. Age: 70. Interview date: 12-3-98. Crossed border in 1956.

<sup>26</sup>. See Ali (1974: 190-212) for *beradari* and its meaning in Ranchi.

<sup>27</sup>. Age: 72. Date of interview 30-11-2000.

<sup>28</sup>. Age: 69. Interview Date: 21-11-2000.

<sup>29</sup>. Age: 76. Interview date: 18-10-2000.

<sup>30</sup>. Age: 60. Interview date: 27-11-2000.

<sup>31</sup>. Age: 70. Interview date: 25-12-2000.