ECONOMIC CONDITIONS AND TRANSFORMATION OF THE MIGRATED KHATRI COMMUNITY IN KURUKSHETRA, 1947–2014

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Abstract:

This study traces the socio-economic conditions and changes of the migrated Khatri community of Kurukshetra from 1947 to 2014. This paper is an attempt to analyze their evolving life experiences due to partition and also within the post-Partition rehabilitation process. The study highlights how the Khatri community who were the major contributor to the commercial and urban economy of Punjab were impacted at the time of partition of India. Their loss of housing, shops and livelihoods remain a point of discussion as the Khatri community was the major contributor to the commercial and urban economy of Punjab. However, the community still found ways to recover and strengthen their economic foundation through running small commercial establishments, trading and providing services in a new environment. Later on, some of them created bigger enterprises and even started industries. They were largely able to return to economic prosperity because they adapted and integrated with local economic structures. Furthermore, one of the ways in which they became both well-known and even prosperous was through local economic networks and kinship solidarity.The economic history of the Khatri Community in Kurukshetra saw a series of phases from a prosperous pre-migration period to the turmoil caused by partition and facing difficulties in resettlement and later slowly establishing themselves in the markets of Kurukshetra and eventually becoming strong economic segment of the society. Step by step, the Khatri community in Haryana initiated efforts that supported the growing agricultural economy and overall trade in the region. Their involvement in local trade helped the area prosper and with each succeeding generation their work diversified and they turned into professionals such as teachers, doctors and government officers. Today, the Khatri Community stands as one of the rich segments and has surpassed many other migrant and local groups in terms of economic success. The economic transformation of Khatri community in Kurukshetra serves as an illustration of the unyielding spirit of a refugee community and their capability to entirely overhaul the local economies.

Key Words:*Economic Transformation, Khatri Community, Kurukshetra, Partition of India, Resettlement and Rehabilitation.*

Introduction

The Partition of India in 1947 constituted one of the most dramatic changes in modern South Asian history. Apart from everything else, it brought the great upheaval of the regional population and the resulting changes in all the aspects of life in the North India[1]. The Khatri community was one of the many communities which faced their share of hardships as a result of the partition. Their migration to Kurukshetra is a prominent example of economic disruption, adaptation and even transformation. Migration was not only a matter of changing location but also represented a deep break in the ways of making a living as the members of the community lost their houses, shops and other means of income and were forced to start from the beginning. This paper traces the economic development of the Khatri community that moved to Kurukshetra since 1947 till 2014 and places their narrative in the larger framework of post-Partition rehabilitation and urban development in Haryana. This paper discusses their economic status before migration; the losses suffered due to displacement and the difficulties in resettlement. Also, the paper analyses the ways the community got economically established in Kurukshetra progressively strengthening their position and even playing a pivotal role in the economic development. It portrays how the community has converted from a group of displaced migrants to becoming one of the economically powerful segments of the local society.

Pre-Migration Economic Background

Before the partition of India in 1947, the Khatri community was one of the pillars in shaping the economy and society in Punjab[2]. Though their occupations were varied, Khatris by virtue of their stronger presence in urban areas emerged as commercial traders and small-scale industrial entrepreneurs. It is evident from historical documents like those of Satya M. Rai's "Punjab Since Partition" and Kirpal Singh's "The Partition of Punjab" that Khatris were one of the main components of the economic system of pre-Partition Punjab[34]. They ran shops,

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[1]Fitzpatrick, H. (2024). Mapping partition: Politics, territory and the end of empire in India and Pakistan (pp.12). John Wiley & Sons, Hoboken, NJ, United States.
[2]Jones, K. W. (1989). Socio-religious reform movements in British India (Vol. 1, pp.146). Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, United Kingdom.
[3]Singh, K. (1972). The partition of the Punjab (pp. 73). Punjabi University, Patiala, India.
[4]Rai, S. M. (1986). Punjab since partition (pp.58). Durga Publications, Jalandhar, India.

did wholesale trading and got involved in jobs and banking careers that required skills and knowledge. The participation of Khatri community in the local economies was diversified across textiles, granaries and artisan products and through these activities they contributed significantly to the local economic growth. Ravinder Kaur in her book "Since 1947: Partition narratives among Punjabi migrants of Delhi" stresses that Khatri community through these economic roles had even accumulated a great deal of social capital which enabled them to have an influence in areas other than the marketplace[5]. Before 1947, the community's status and role in local trade and commerce were characterized by prosperity and prestige. The Khatri community in cities like Lahore, Amritsar and Gujranwala were identified as a community with a perfect blend of business skills and adaptability. They were often compared with other mercantile groups of northern India however what set them apart was their ability to combine commerce and social leadership. As mentioned in Stephen Keller's "Uprooting and Social Change: The Role of Refugees in Development", the Khatri community like other comparable communities had earned their reputation for risk-taking and innovation which are the qualities that enabled them to be economic agents of economic growth in Punjab. Their enterprises were not only production and distribution of goods but they also generated employment, granted credit and created a network of trust which formed the backbone of the local economies. Performing this dual role of being economic operators and social leaders led to their high-ranking position in the society and they were active participants in the political and civic life.

In comparison, the economic status of the pre-partition Punjab was better than most parts in northern India. Ian Talbot and Gurharpal Singh in "The Partition of India" mention that the western districts of Punjab which later became Pakistan were agriculturally very rich and commercially very active[6]. The canal colonies had greatly improved agriculture and were producing not only enough to feed their inhabitants but also had surplus production that was sold in the cities. Industrial production remained limited as compared to that of Bombay or Calcutta but was on a growing trend with small-scale industries in textiles, brassware and food processing beginning to flourish. In this situation, the Khatri community did very well because they connected rural agricultural producers with urban consumers serving as middlemen in trade and distribution. Their economic success was not something separate but

[5]Kaur, R. (2007). Since 1947: Partition narratives among Punjabi migrants of Delhi (pp.121). Oxford University Press, Oxford, United Kingdom.
[6]Talbot, I., & Singh, G. (2009). The partition of India (pp.64). Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, United Kingdom.

a part of a big regional economic boom that made Punjab one of the most economically vibrant provinces of colonial India. The agricultural productivity in Punjab and the commercial networks gave an edge to the region's comparative advantage. As a result, the Khatri community had the opportunities to raise their socio-economic status and become wealthier which contributed to their cultural capital after the Partition. Prior to migration, the economic standing of the Khatri community was marked by them being a socially influential and economically prosperous community that was highly involved in the commercial activities of Punjab. Their wide range of occupations, their contribution to the continuity of trade and commerce and their settlement in one of the most economically advanced regions of India altogether attest to the magnitude of the misery they faced during partition.

The economic conditions before the partition as told during the various personal interviews in the Kurukshetra region has also told that they were prosperous and were involved in various trading works and running shops. They used to work different kind of works i.e. working in the factories in various accounting works, running small shops, working as mid man for trade. They have experiences in various fields of economic activities which help them out to improve and settle their socio-economic condition here during and after the partition.

Economic Disruption During Migration

The economic disruption experienced by the Khatri community during migration in 1947 was very extensive and deep rooted mainly due to the significant loss of their businesses and livelihoods that had been created over several generations. Scholars like Urmila Phadnis and Ian Talbot have highlighted the impact of displacement due to partition on entire population that separated them from their main economies and forcing them to leave the homes, shops and farms without any type of compensation or security[78]. For the Khatri community who were heavily involved in the trade and urban economy of Punjab, this indicated the breaking down of their social and business networks which had supported their sustenance. The enterprises that flourished in Lahore, Gujranwala and other towns had all been left behind and the community was forced to start from scratch in a new place. Besides the material loss, the event also had a metaphorical interpretation since it deprived Khatris of social position and power that had been closely associated with their economic success. Besides the difficulties of being displaced, the refugees also faced unstable finances and extreme lack of

[7]Phadnis, U., & Ganguly, R. (2001). Ethnicity and nation-building in South Asia (pp.89). Sage Publications, New Delhi, India.

[8]Talbot, I. (2006). Divided cities: partition and its aftermath in Lahore and Amritsar (pp.102). Oxford University Press, Oxford, United Kingdom.

resources. According to Ravinder Kaur, the refugees came to India scarcely equipped with essentials, losing their bank accounts, movable assets, trade networks and connections[9]. The government tried to compensate the refugees through land divisions and exchanging properties but these schemes were highly inefficient and hardly matched the needs of refugees. The soil in East Punjab and Haryana was usually less productive than that of West Punjab which had been left behind and there were not enough urban properties to equate to the scale of losses. In fact, this led to a very strong feeling of economic insecurity everywhere as people were hardly able to get the basic things like food, shelter and jobs. The lack of resources was not an issue of personal sufferings but also of the collective trauma as the communities were forced to find a new spot in the economic ladder of the newly formed India.

The survival strategies adopted in refugee camps and transitional settlements to deal with the immediate effects of displacement were very vital. To name a few, near Kurukshetra and other towns, the camps turned into sites of despair as well as resilience[10]. Initially, refugees survived on the government rations, temporary shelters and makeshift employment opportunities. In addition to overcrowding, poor sanitation, lack of medical facilities and limited resources, the camps also acted as places where the displaced communities began to revive their social and economic lives. Having used their trading and organizing skills, the Khatris set up small markets inside the camps and started exchanging goods and services to create very simple economic systems. According to Datta and Phadke (1985)[11] and Kaur (2007)[12] these makeshift economies functioned as a source of livelihood and a feeling of power that counteracted their sense of loss. Gradually, these measures paved the way to the establishment of a more settled life for the families and using their newly formed connection they were able to get shops, land and jobs in different towns like Kurukshetra. The change in economic conditions during the migration was a break as well as a new beginning. To lose one's home, property and way of life completely is a terrible blow. In a single moment, all the accumulated wealth and social standing of many years were wiped out. The lack of money and other means of survival put the community in a very desperate position and they had to

[9]Kaur, R. (2007). Since 1947: Partition narratives among Punjabi migrants of Delhi (pp.137). Oxford University Press, Oxford, United Kingdom.
[10]Rao, U. B. (1967). The story of rehabilitation (pp.52). Department of Rehabilitation, Ministry of Labour, Employment and Rehabilitation, Government of India, New Delhi, India.
[11]Datta, V. N., & Phadke, H. A. (1985). History of Kurukshetra (pp.41). Vishal, Kurukshetra, India.
[12]Kaur, R. (2007). Since 1947: Partition narratives among Punjabi migrants of Delhi (pp.158). Oxford University Press, Oxford, United Kingdom.

face the difficult situation of becoming refugees. Nevertheless, it was in the refugee camps and temporary shelter places that some methods of survival were developed which showed that the Khatri community was able to adapt and recover from the loss. This laid the foundation for the Khatri community and they began to rebuild their lives in places like Kurukshetra in Haryana.

Resettlement and Initial Economic Struggles

The resettlement of the Khatri community in Kurukshetra after the Partition was accompanied by a series of setbacks that illustrated the limitations of the state-led rehabilitation efforts and the spirit of displaced populations to survive in new environments. The government mainly the Ministry of Rehabilitation, decided to hand over land, shops and housing to refugees so that they could replace to some extent the loss of property and means of living in West Punjab. In the words of Rao (1967)[13], the principle of equivalence was the main rule for the evacuation of property left behind by Muslims migrating to Pakistan and their redistribution among Hindu and Sikh refugees. In Kurukshetra which was one of the largest refugee camps in northern India, a lot of shops in bazaars that were used by Muslim traders leaving the town were given to the Khatri community as well as the houses that were left empty at the time of the migration. Unfortunately, this distribution was not only uneven but in many cases it did not reflect the level of suffering the recipients had undergone. Those who had owned prosperous businesses in Lahore or Gujranwala received only small stalls or humble accommodation which could not create an economic base for them comparable to what they had before. The gap between what was lost and what was given, was perhaps the greatest problem of resettlement. The Indian historian Ravinder Kaur[14] in her publication "Since 1947: Partition narratives among Punjabi migrants of Delhi" and Satya M. Rai[15] through his article "Punjab since partition" point out the compensation system was full of bureaucratic holdups, corruption and structural inequities. The land in East Punjab and Haryana that was allotted to the refugees was often less fertile compared to the refugee lands in West Punjab. Also, the urban properties were not enough to house the commercial activities that had existed previously. The Khatri community whose livelihoods were closely related to trade and commerce were now forced to start with much smaller businesses than

[13]Rao, U. B. (1967). The story of rehabilitation (pp.134). Department of Rehabilitation, Ministry of Labour, Employment and Rehabilitation, Government of India, New Delhi, India.
[14]Kaur, R. (2007). Since 1947: Partition narratives among Punjabi migrants of Delhi (pp.173). Oxford University Press, Oxford, United Kingdom.
[15]Rai, S. M. (1986). Punjab since partition (pp.96). Durga Publications, Jalandhar, India.

before[16]. Besides being an economic, the mismatch was also a psychological one as the refugees had to come to terms with their reduced situation while still cherishing the memories of their prosperous past. In spite of these difficulties, the Khatri community displayed a great deal of flexibility in adjusting their lives and business structures after the turmoil of partition. One of their first moves was to rebuild the supply chain and marketing network by engaging with the local farmers, artisans and consumers. Keller (1975) in his article "Uprooting and social change: The role of refugees in development, " wrote that the displaced people after being traumatized become more inclined towards entrepreneurship and risks and such was the case with the Khatri community who after the disaster were able to re-establish their economic position effectively[17]. The market stalls in Kurukshetra witnessed the most vibrant activity as families merged their financial resources to set up business again in textiles, grain and general merchandise. The community also made use of family relations and community spirit to establish informal loan networks through which the members could get money in the absence of formal banking facilities. Gradually, such methods empowered them to establish a firm position in the local market that slowly grew their business and help them achieve a certain level of stability. Adapting to change wasn't always easy. For the first few years, resettlement was hardly a bed of roses as the refugees had to face poverty, overcrowding and lack of opportunities. Nevertheless, the Khatri community had their past merchant experience and their network mobilization skills that gave them an upper hand vis-a-vis the agricultural refugees who not only had to contend with changing their livelihood but also had come to less fertile land. Besides, by the 1950s and 1960s, several Khatri households in Kurukshetra were economically prudent and were even instrumental in urban market growth and preparing the ground for their economic prosperity. In this way, their hardships at the time of resettlement are a testimony to the fact that while state rehabilitation measures were inadequate, the displaced Khatri community was resilient and capable of rebuilding their economic lives.

Economic Establishment in Kurukshetra

The Khatri community having lost their established businesses in West Punjab post partition they started with small-scale ventures mostly opening simple shops in the bazaars or doing petty trade. Such first enterprises were not just survival strategies but the base of a new economic identity. The Khatri community made use of their previous trading experience,

[16]Datta, V. N., & Phadke, H. A. (1985). History of Kurukshetra (pp.184). Vishal, Kurukshetra, India.
[17] Keller, S. L. (1975). Uprooting and social change: The role of refugees in development (pp.128). Manohar Book Service, Delhi, India.

their knowledge of market workings and their business skills to position themselves again in the urban economy of Kurukshetra. Slowly, these small businesses turned into major enterprises and family had their hand in textiles, grain trading and service-oriented professions. Many Khatri families started selling common commodities but later on they shifted to highly specialized trades which showed both their resilience and adaptability in the face of adversity. Getting into local economic networks and urban centers was an important stage in their establishment. On the one hand, Kurukshetra with the religious center and, on the other hand, the growing urban hub, presented many business possibilities for the Khatris which they promptly grabbed. They partnered with the local farmers to sell their agricultural produce and also set up a chain of supplies with the artisans, and addressed the needs of the growing refugee community. In U. Bhaskar Rao's "The Story of Rehabilitation", he explains that the government's role in providing shops and housing was just the starting infrastructure whereas the community's efforts was something that really changed these allotments into successful economic areas[18]. Khatri community turned out to be a key element in Kurukshetra's market operations, thus helping urban growth in Haryana. Their integration into the local networks was made easier not only as a result of their past experience in handling trade relations but also because of their desire to meet changing consumer preferences. By the 1960s and 1970s, many Khatri families had become well-known business proprietors contributing to the economic development of the region.

The role of community solidarity and kinship in economic recovery was invaluable. Keller (1975) pointed out that displaced communities often depended heavily on their collective support systems to get out of the trauma of migration[19]. For the Khatri community, not only did kinship ties give them emotional support but they also served as source of practical resources to rebuild themselves. Several families contributed jointly towards financing the reopening of businesses, sharing shops and households during the initial times and establishing informal credit networks which became the substitutes for formal banking institutions. Kaur (2007) remarked on how community groups and caste-based solidarity assisted members in finding opportunities and handling bureaucratic processes in property

[18]Rao, U. B. (1967). The story of rehabilitation (pp.167). Department of Rehabilitation, Ministry of Labour, Employment and Rehabilitation, Government of India, New Delhi, India.
[19]Keller, S. L. (1975). Uprooting and social change: The role of refugees in development (pp.142). Manohar Book Service, Delhi, India.

allotment[20]. Besides, the kinship networks helped in passing skills and knowledge so that the younger generations could operate the already existing businesses or even start new ones. Such a communal spirit made sure that the economic recovery step was not just a personal one but a common one. This ensured that there was communal cohesion on one hand while contributing to overall prosperity on the other. This community solidarity and kinship played a crucial role in the economic recovery of Khatri community. Clearly, the growth and development of Kurukshetra's economy as a whole is a reflection of both the community's individual entrepreneurial efforts and their collective solidarity through market integration. The Khatri community were able to bounce back from having their livelihood destroyed by depending on trade and services. They were able to become part of the urban economic network and took advantage of their family ties to get support. All these factors helped in their metamorphosis from struggling refugees to major economic players. By the end of the twentieth century, the existence of Khatri community in Kurukshetra not only symbolized survival against all odds but also made them the main economic actors in regional growth.

During various personal interviews and records it is observed that the slowly settled their businesses at small levels and slowly they grow at a big level and even today they have a strong hold in the market places and established big businesses in the Kurukshetra. The best example of this growth can be seen in the Mohan Nagar market where Migrated Khatri community established at small level and now they almost controlled the whole market.

Economic Transformation Over Time (1947–2014)

The economic transformation of Khatri community in Kurukshetra from 1947 to 2014 is one of the clearest examples of how displaced people after Partition reconstructed their lives and transformed local economies. Initially, the community started with small shops and trading during the first years of resettlement. Then, they slowly moved to bigger businesses and industries. Rai (1986)[21] and Kaur (2007)[22] noted that by the 1960s and 1970s many refugee families who had started from a very small trade had expanded their businesses into wholesale, textile and manufacturing units. The Khatris were very good at using their previous knowledge of trade to get the best out of developing urban centers in Haryana. Later, their businesses became involved in food processing, construction materials and retail stores.

[20]Kaur, R. (2007). Since 1947: Partition narratives among Punjabi migrants of Delhi (pp.149). Oxford University Press, Oxford, United Kingdom.
[21]Rai, S. M. (1986). Punjab since partition (pp.132). Durga Publications, Jalandhar, India.
[22]Kaur, R. (2007). Since 1947: Partition narratives among Punjabi migrants of Delhi (pp.166). Oxford University Press, Oxford, United Kingdom.

Their transformation from being dependent on trade for survival to enjoying long-term economic consolidation was a major change. This growth was not merely a sign of business enterprise but also showed the community's skills in adapting to new economic conditions in the new independent India. In fact, their work has had a major effect on giving a new look to farming and development of cities. During the Green Revolution, the refugees played a big role in adopting modern farming methods[23]. Khatri community, mainly dwelling in urban areas brought money into farm-related industries and they suppled agricultural inputs and mechanization. Basically, the community indirectly helped in agrarian change during the Green Revolution in Haryana[24]. In Kurukshetra after Partition, the involvement of Khatri community was mainly in local trading and commerce manifesting the entire mercantile aspect of the community and also its function of linking the market[25]. By time, significant changes happened in the role of occupations across different age groups within the families of Khatri community. The migrants of first generation mainly reestablished their livelihoods by starting trade and setting up small businesses often continuing the same types of occupations that they used to do before Partition. But the new generations shifted to occupations like teaching, doctor, lawyer and working for government. This change in profession not only reflected that they were moving ahead socially but also indicated that they were adapting themselves to situation economically as well socially[26]. Besides, the younger members of refugee families started aspiring for higher education in increasing numbers which opened the gate for them to enter the professional world and widen the economic base of the community beyond just trade. Towards the end of twentieth century, a number of Khatri households had not only changed their line of work but had also shifted the very nature of their work from that of the traditional trading community. This change in the professional orientation of the working-age generation also coincided with the major changes that were happening in the Indian economy. The opening up of the economy in the 1990s through liberalization created fresh opportunities for those wishing to start businesses or pursue professional careers. With the community's readiness to adopt to the changes, the Khatri community succeeded in maintaining their economic clout till the present time. Hence, the economic development of

[23]Kudaisya, G. (1995). The demographic upheaval of partition: Refugees and agricultural resettlement in India, 1947–67. South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies, 18(s1), 73-94.
[24]Bhalla, S. (1976). New relations of production in Haryana agriculture. Economic and Political weekly, A23-A30.
[25]Randhawa, M. S. (1954). Out of the ashes: An account of the rehabilitation of refugees from West Pakistan in rural areas of East Punjab (pp.88). Public Relations Department, Punjab, India.
[26]Kaur, R. (2007). Since 1947: Partition narratives among Punjabi migrants of Delhi (pp.182). Oxford University Press, Oxford, United Kingdom.

the Kurukshetra Khatris has been a story of coming to terms with one's situation after being uprooted and then going on to a life of growth and diversification. At a deeper level, this development is a story of how displaced communities can influence local economies and a demonstration that migration, notwithstanding its initial disruptions can lead to the unveiling of new sources of economic growth and social changes that are positively sustained. By 2014, the Khatri community in Kurukshetra had re-built their economic base and also emerged as a significant contributor in regional development.

Present Economic Conditions

Behind the scars of partition and the hardships of a new beginning, the Khatri community amassed considerable economic clout in Kurukshetra. Scholars like Kaur (2007) and Rai (1986) highlight that refugee populations who were able to reconstruct their lives not only became major contributors to the evolution of urban spaces and the Khatri community of Kurukshetra are very much the living illustration of this phenomenon[27]. Their involvement in the city's commercial development through owning well-established enterprises and being part of the service sectors such as education, healthcare and administration bear testimony to their economic integration. Datta and Phadke (1985) had also remarked that starting with simply running small shops in the market, many families have over several decades progressed to operating larger businesses thereby forging a legacy of economic stability that continues to benefit the community[28]. In comparative measures, the affluence of the Khatri community brightly shines against other migrant and local groups in Kurukshetra. While agricultural refugees had to cope with degraded land and scarce resources, the inclination of Khatri community towards the urban sector and their background in commerce provided them with a comparative edge in entering and conquering new market areas. According to Talbot and Singh (2009), in most cases urban refugee groups were the main drivers of economic growth in towns and cities and their business activities led to the development of urban centers[29]. The economic position of the Khatri community in Kurukshetra was consolidated faster than that of most other refugee groups and their wealth frequently exceeded that of local people who had not experienced the upheaval[30]. This relative success

[27]Rai, S. M. (1986). Punjab since partition (pp.147). Durga Publications, Jalandhar, India.
[28]Datta, V. N., & Phadke, H. A. (1985). History of Kurukshetra (pp.136). Vishal, Kurukshetra, India.
[29]Talbot, I., & Singh, G. (2009). The partition of India (pp.118). Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, United Kingdom.
[30]Kaur, R. (2007). Since 1947: Partition narratives among Punjabi migrants of Delhi (pp.169). Oxford University Press, Oxford, United Kingdom.

was not only in terms of wealth but also in a way that it strengthened the image of the community as hardy and versatile which set them apart as one of the economically powerful communities in the area. Besides their considerable impact on Haryana's overall economy, the role of Khatri community in Kurukshetra has been very significant. They have been involved in districts other than Kurukshetra as many families entered different industries and professions in the entire state. Their participation in agro-industries, goods distribution and urban trade helped link Haryana to the economic circuits beyond the state. In addition, their involvement in civic and political activities helped to strengthen their economic power as wealth brought social status and leadership opportunities.

Broader Economic Impact

The main economic impact of the Khatri community resettlement in Kurukshetra post-1947 can be understood from their transformation which in turn helped the local economic progress and urbanization of the region. For instance, Kaur (2007), Rai (1986) point out that refugee groups did not just accept the rehabilitation plans of the government but they turned out to be main contributors in changing the economic profile of the region[3132]. The Khatris by initiating and running their own businesses played a key role in market growth at the local level that increased commerce and generated jobs. Their enterprises laid the foundation for the development of markets in Kurukshetra that over time turned into lively economic centers drawing both buyers and sellers. The growth of trade was one of the factors leading to an increase in the level of urbanization as new residential areas, commercial centers and service industries came up to cater to the rising economic activities. Gradually, Kurukshetra changed from a mostly religious place to a flourishing urban economy and the Khatri community was largely responsible for this change. Owing to their experience in trade and excellent organizational skills the Khatri community played a major role in setting up new business establishments providing funding for small-scale industries and connecting Kurukshetra with larger economic networks. The Khatris not only got their livelihoods back but used their resourcefulness and ability to transform new environments to also become a major force in the regional economy. Keller (1975) stated that the displaced groups often turned into more forceful and politically conscious individuals as a result of their experiences and the Khatri

[31] Kaur, R. (2007). Since 1947: Partition narratives among Punjabi migrants of Delhi (pp.154). Oxford University Press, Oxford, United Kingdom.
[32]Rai, S. M. (1986). Punjab since partition (pp.109). Durga Publications, Jalandhar, India.

community followed this pattern[33]. Their economic success led to social capital which in turn gave them the opportunity to be involved in civic activities, educational system and local administration. The families usually took up the leadership in community groups thus elevating their stature in both social and political domains. By the end of the twentieth century, the Khatri community were a significant economic, social and political force in Haryana playing a pivotal role in the modernization and democratization of the state. The economic imprint of Khatri community in Kurukshetra therefore goes far beyond their mere rehabilitation and includes regional development and urban changes. The community have helped the revival of local economy through working in trade, agriculture and industries along with active participation in the political and social lives showing the role of displaced communities as development engines. Their rise from being refugees to becoming main players in regional economy highlights the powerful ways in which migration has changed the area.

Conclusion

Prior to Partition, the Khatri community were the major stakeholders in commercial and urban economy of Punjab having well-knit trade networks and established commerce. The sudden break up in 1947 due to partition of India caused loss of property, business and source of income which led to very critical financial insecurity and loss of resources for the community. The phase of settling down at Kurukshetra was full of hardships as government compensations of land, shops and housing hardly satisfied the extent of losses that people had suffered. The difference between the value of lost property and that of property allocated caused not only discontent but also acute hardship. However, the Khatri community recovered by pooling resources, sharing spaces and gradually re-establishing themselves in local markets. With their background in trade and excellent organizational skills, they were able to adjust in a new environment more easily. Gradually, they integrated into the economic networks of Kurukshetra and through their activities the inter-regional trade expanded. They revived their community solidarity and family connections which was a must for them to survive as they were dependent on informal credit, helped each other and handed down their skills from one generation to another. They spread their business activities in the textile manufacturing, food processing, construction and retail sectors which were a reflection of their entrepreneurial spirit as well as their ability to change according to the economic situation. Apart from that, they engaged in agricultural modernization by becoming the link

[33]Keller, S. L. (1975). Uprooting and social change: The role of refugees in development (pp.151). Manohar Book Service, Delhi, India.

between farmers and markets during the Green Revolution and they also offered support in urban development through their financing of small-scale industries and the creation of commercial centers. Generational changes also made their economic impact even greater, as the younger generation went after better education and got jobs in professional fields like law, medicine and administration, which means they didn't only stick to their traditional business. By the modern times, the Khatri community of Kurukshetra had come to a point where they were a very well-off and influential community. Their relative prosperity, when compared with other migrants and locals, highlights their capability of using previous experience and unity to not only restore themselves but also to flourish. The findings of the study reveals that the economic transformation of Khatri community in Kurukshetra is a sign of how migration despite the initial upheavals can turn into an opportunity for expansion, assimilation and even social transformation.

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