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Building Faridabad. Charisma, Bureaucracy and the Monsoon after Indian Partition

This article examines how seasonality shaped refugee resettlement and statecraft in post-Partition India. In 1949, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru established the Faridabad Development Board to construct a New Town south of Delhi for refugees from the Indian Partition. Intended to provide housing "before the rains," Nehru bypassed traditional bureaucratic channels to create a high-powered autonomous board to manage the project. Drawing on archival sources, newspapers, and parliamentary debates, this article situates the "Faridabad experiment" at the intersection of Nehru's charismatic authority and powerful bureaucracies. By placing the monsoon at the center of political and planning history, I argue that temporality and seasonality were not merely environmental conditions but constitutive dimensions of governance.

1. Introduction

Roughly 20 kilometers south of New Delhi and 20 kilometers east of Gurgaon (Gurugram), Faridabad sits on the edge of the Thar Desert, bounded to the west by the Aravali Mountain Range and to the east by the Yamuna River. By Indian standards, Faridabad is a relatively small city with a population of just 1.5 million people. There is little scholarly work on Faridabad.[1] Most Indians would be hard-pressed to locate Faridabad on a map of the country. But in the late 1940s and early 1950s, it was India's most famous New Town.[2]

The Partition of India on August 15, 1947 displaced more than 12 million

[1] Cf. Sandip Kana, Voluntarism in Partition's Aftermath: The Faridabad Story, in: Contemporary South Asia 31:1, 2023, pp. 1-18; M. N. Panini, Networks and Styles: Industrial Entrepreneurs in Faridabad, in: Contributions to Indian Sociology 11:1, 1977, pp. 91-115; Pitamber Pant/P. C. Mahalanobis, Faridabad New Town: A Study of New and Expanding Towns, New Delhi 1954; Phillip Oldenburg, Survey of Faridabad Township, March–April 1954, Calcutta 1978; Narayanswamy Ramnath, Industrial Repression at Faridabad, in: Economic and Political Weekly 1978, p. 411; Shankar Ramaswami, Forces of Truth: A Struggle of Migrant Workers in Delhi, in: Ethnography 13:1, 2012, pp. 57-70.

[2] Cf. Constitution of a Statutory Board to Run the Faridabad Camp and Township, 1949, in: National Archives of India (NAI) 29(158)/49-PMS; Faridabad Scheme for Refugees: Foreign Experts Arrive, in: Times of India, February 9, 1950; Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML), Sudhir Ghosh, Private Papers, List 23, Correspondence with Nehru, November 19, 1950.

Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs. Displaced Persons (DPs) sought shelter across the subcontinent, but in independent India, Delhi, Bombay, and Calcutta were the largest receiving cities. All of these cities were already facing housing shortages driven by rapid population growth during World War II. In Delhi, more than a dozen large camps accommodating more than 100,000 people were rapidly assembled. An estimated 500,000 DPs took up residence in makeshift shelters on public lands, in commercial streets, or wherever else they could find space. It was agreed that the refugees had to be resettled as soon as possible – Satellite Cities needed to be created, New Towns needed to be built.[3]

New Towns proliferated across the globe in the postwar period. Historian Rosemary Wakeman suggests that, for all their differences, they articulated a utopian vision of the urban future.[4] This may also have been the case in India. But after Partition, New Towns across the subcontinent were built as refugee cities – as ways of dispersing DPs from overcrowded metropolises. Timelines for construction were impacted by a range of factors: the desire to alleviate human suffering or to mitigate urban disorder, and the struggle to manage material shortages. I hope to demonstrate that the rains–the monsoons that typically occur between June and September–were part of the human calculus that shaped New Towns, and human settlement in general, in India after Partition.

German-Jewish exile Otto Königsberg designed Bhubaneswar, the capital city of Orissa (Odisha), as a refugee city.[5] Bhubaneswar was just one of the seven refugee townships and cities designed or planned by Königsberger, who left India in 1951 to become the head of the Institute for Tropical architecture

3 Cf. Relief Measures for Refugees: Government's Plan, in: Times of India, May 13, 1948; "Uprooted Millions," Times of India, February 19, 1951; Ravinder Kaur, Since 1947: Partition Narratives among Punjabi Migrants of Delhi, Oxford 2007; On "dispersal," see Joya Chatterji, 'Dispersal' and the Failure of Rehabilitation: Refugee Camp-Dwellers and Squatters in West Bengal, in: Modern Asian Studies 41:5, 2007, pp. 995-1032. Contemporaries also used the term "decongestion." Ministry of Home Affairs, Plans for the Development of Delhi: Meeting of the Central Coordinating Committee and Sub-Committee Members, Delhi, July 10, 1948, in: NAI F 51/268/P48.

4 Cf. Rosemary Wakeman, Practicing Utopia. An Intellectual History of the New Town Movement, Chicago 2016; Otto Königsberger, New Towns in India, in: Town Planning Review 23:2, 1952, pp. 95-132; Ann Forsyth, British New Towns. Lessons for the World from the New-Town Experiment, in: Town Planning Review 90:3, 2019, pp. 239-246; Y. Huang/V. J. Li/D. Wang, New Town Development and Housing Affordability: A Case Study in Hong Kong, in: Environment and Planning B: Urban Analytics and City Science 51:3, 2023, pp. 763-777; Ebenezer Howard, Tomorrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform, edited by Peter Hall, Dennis Hardy, and Colin Ward, London 2003 [1898].

5 Cf. Vandana Baweja, Messy Modernisms: Otto Königsberger's Early Work in Princely Mysore, 1939–41, in: South Asian Studies 31:1, 2015, pp. 1-26; Rachel Lee, Otto Königsberger, Transcultural Practice and the Tropical Third Space, in: Oase 95, 2015, pp. 70-82.

in London. In all, fourteen refugee "New Towns" and cities with the capacity to house a projected 470,000 refugees were in planning stages by 1949, and by 1951, many of them were under construction.[6]

Chandigarh is, of course, the best-known example of the Indian New Town movement. Planned by Albert Mayer and later Le Corbusier, Indian luminaries were on hand for the ground-breaking in 1953. It was completed in 1966, becoming the capital of the state of Punjab. In addition to being a New Town and a State Capital, Chandigarh was also a refugee city, planned to accommodate 60,000 people displaced from West Punjab and elsewhere. It is worth remembering that many of these refugees spent a decade waiting for permanent housing, living in temporary facilities, camps, and makeshift shelters where they were exposed to temperatures above 45 °C in the summer and several centimeters of rain within a few hours during the monsoon season.[7]

Like Chandigarh and Bhubaneswar, Faridabad was planned as a New Town. Faridabad was, however, different from those places. It was to be an experiment in cooperative living and working, built by and for refugees. Taking advantage of the loamy soil and the semi-arid climate, refugees made the kiln-fired or sun-dried mud bricks that were used to build Faridabad. They then built the structures. Eight schools, a meeting house, a hospital, neighborhood health centers, and, according to Sudhir Ghosh, who oversaw the project, even a cinema. And they accomplished all of this in less than three years.[8]

Impressed by the rapid pace of construction, the mobilization of refugee labor, and the possibilities for economic development, the Ford Foundation described Faridabad as a model New Town. In 1952, US Ambassador, foreign policy adviser to president John F. Kennedy, and future American Secretary of State Chester Bowles was so impressed that he suggested that 10,000 such towns be built across the developing world. By 1954, despite international acclaim, Faridabad was being attacked by Indian newspapers, bureaucracy, and various ministries for its failure to provide employment, for poor management, and for cost overruns.[9] Seasonality can help us to understand not just refugee resettlement and New Town development after India's partition in 1947, but also the different logics which shape the state's relationship with temporality. I think that a focus on seasons can contribute to an explanation of why Faridabad "failed."[10]

6 Cf. 14 New Townships for 470,000, in: Times of India, January 26, 1951.

7 Cf. Annapurna Shaw, Town Planning in Postcolonial India, 1947-1965: Chandigarh Re Examined, in: Urban Geography 30:88, 2009, pp. 857-878.

8 Cf. Faridabad Development Board, 1950, in: NAI PMS 29(197)/50-PMS, Volume V.

9 Cf. Faridabad Refugees in Difficulties: Decision to Close Down All Enterprises, in: Times of India, January 16, 1953; Refugee Township, in: Times of India, May 16, 1955.

10 Faridabad Development Board, in: NAI.

India's New Towns were planned and built in the context of a radically transformed administrative and political framework; against the backdrop of a persistent fiscal crisis; and in the face of intensive material shortages. They were also, and most importantly, planned and built as millions of DPs lived in makeshift camps, informal shelters, or on urban pavements. The situation in Delhi was arguably the most dramatic: refugees were extremely visible across the entire spread of the city–in rich and poor neighborhoods, in public spaces, and occupied lands.[11]

Ecologist and Deputy Minister of (refugee) Relief and Rehabilitation M. S. Randhawa claimed that by 1949, Delhi was home to some of the "worst slums in the world" and that "surgery" would be required to reinvent some particularly congested areas. In many cases, though, these refugees were also middle-class urban denizens not unlike the native Delhiites, who wrote and owned newspapers, tended the shops, and staffed government offices.[12] The challenge of resettling refugees, therefore, included a variety of planning considerations–securing material resources, managing urban disorder. However, these planning considerations were also informed by a politics rooted in empathy and affect: Delhi's newest residents were visible evidence of the failure to anticipate what it meant to disentangle an empire. The monsoons made the plight of refugees even more visible.

Floods in July 1949, caused by cloudbursts that dropped nine inches of rain in a few hours, highlighted the particular concern not just with the roofless population, but also with the refugees. According to the Times of India, the "worst affected of the city's dwellers were the refugees living in hutments and tents in eight areas of the city. Many (hutments) have fallen, 31 of them in one township alone."[13] Delhi's Chief Commissioner, Shankar Prasad, together with the future Minister of Rehabilitation, Mehr Chand Khanna, toured the largest refugee settlements. Prasad remarked that while "very few" tents, hutments or barracks had collapsed, the camp inmates were extremely distressed. The lives

[11] Cf. Ministry of Home Affairs. Plans for the Development of Delhi. Meeting of the Central Coordinating Committee and Sub-committee Members, Delhi, July 10, 1948, in: NAI F 51/268/ P48; Ministry of Home Affairs, Revival of Unauthorized Constructions and Encroachments over Public Lands in Delhi: Assurances Given by Shri Gadgil in Parliament on September 29, 1951, in: NAI HI/6(40)/57.

[12] Cf. Ministry of Home Affairs. Plans for the Development of Delhi. Meeting of the Central Coordinating Committee and Sub-committee Members, Delhi, July 10, 1948, in: NAI F 51/268/ P48.

[13] Monsoon Rain in Delhi Paralyses Normal Life. Refugees Worst Affected, in: Times of India, July 22, 1949.

of 18,000 refugees had been "totally dislocated."[14] Unsurprisingly, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru expressed his sympathies at public events, which were later reported in the newspapers.[15] He also, however, made explicit reference to the monsoons in his private correspondence, demanding that refugees must be provided with adequate shelter before the rainy season began. In April 1949, for example, he complained that the tents housing refugees in the Kurukshetra camp to the northwest of Delhi "have gone to pieces and afford no shelter from rain. Therefore, it is important that these hutments should be ready before the rains come in [...]. Time is strictly limited because all this has got to be done at the most by the end of the month. If the rains have come before that the whole place where the tents are may become a swamp and the children specially will be in a bad way."[16]

At its peak capacity, Kurukshetra housed 300,000 refugees. It was the largest refugee camp the world had ever seen, housing a population nearly one-third the size of Delhi.[17] Nehru was, in effect, calling on the Ministry of Rehabilitation to build between 60,000 and 80,000 semi-permanent hutments for the refugees in Kurukshetra, and he demanded that it be done within months, not years. Kurukshetra was the largest camp in India, but it was just one of many. And camps housed merely a fraction of India's refugees.

The dramatic 1949 floods were not the first time that the Indian political elite concerned itself with the hardships facing refugees during the monsoons. Just months after Independence, which falls in the middle of the monsoon season, Nehru launched a campaign to speed the construction of (semi)-permanent shelters for refugees. Nehru again insisted that refugees should be housed before the next rains–and the cold and hot seasons that invariably follow.[18] In January 1948, Nehru wrote to N. V. Gadgil, his Minister for Mines, Power and Works, that the construction of semi-permanent mud huts was a top priority, warning that if progress was too slow, the government would operate outside of traditional bureaucratic channels, using private contractors or the labor of

[14] Monsoon Rain in Delhi, in: Times of India, July 22, 1949.

[15] Cf. Ibid.

[16] Constitution of a Statutory Board to run the Faridabad Camp and Township (1949). Nehru report with addendum from A.V Pai to Sudhir Ghosh, June 6, 1949, in: NAI 29(158)/49-PMS.

[17] The population of Delhi shifted dramatically. The 1941 census reports a population of roughly 920,000 with the 1951 census reporting 1,740,000. These shifts were due to the mass exodus of Muslims in 1947, and then waves of displaced Sikh and Hindu arrivals. In late 1947, the population hovered around 1,000,000 residents.

[18] Cf. Ministry of States G(R) Branch, Accommodation for Refugees during the Monsoon Season, 1948, in: NAI (53)-G(R)/48.

refugees themselves in lieu of the Department of Public Works.[19] India's bureaucracy, he suggested, worked too slowly: employees at the Public Works Department, he wrote, took a "leisurely view of existence."[20]

Nehru argued that refugee resettlement needed to be treated as though it were a matter of wartime mobilization. In this case, it was a war against time. On July 5, 1949, the Hindustan Times reported that the Ministry of Rehabilitation had undertaken a plan to provide "roofed shelter before the monsoon for every displaced family" and that Nehru "is believed to be taking a keen interest in the programme."[21] The goal was, in Nehru's words, to house refugees "before the rains."[22]

In his rightly famous work, Max Weber analyzes what he calls the three forms of legitimate authority–traditional, charismatic, and legal-rational–in order to better understand how power functions across different domains of the political.[23] "Charismatic" authority is endowed with extraordinary personal qualities that ensure allegiance or obedience, and for a variety of reasons, Nehru was the embodiment of charisma. Because it is bound to a person rather than to institutions, though, its practice can be willful, mercurial, and even capricious. Many agreed that these were some of Nehru's failings.[24] To use a metaphor that combines meteorology with the planetary, one could say that Nehru was moved by the effects of storms, but less resolute in planning for the seasons. As Nehru put it in October 1951, in correspondence with Mohanlal Saxena: "I have been connected with planning for the last dozen years. I am a bit tired of planning now for it seems to me that it just leads to schemes on paper and delays everything so much that little results for the present."[25]

What Weber terms the legal-rational (and I call bureaucratic) functions differently: it is organized by rules and regulations, established hierarchies, and

[19] Cf. Jawaharlal Nehru, Selected Works, 2nd Series, vol. 5, letter to N. V. Gadgil, January 19, 1948, New Delhi 1972, p. 169.

[20] L. C. Jain, City of Hope – The Faridabad Story, New Delhi 1998, p. 72.

[21] Roofed Shelter Before Monsoon for Every Displaced Family, in: Hindustan Times, July 5, 1949.

[22] Management of Faridabad and Rajpura Camps and Townships for Displaced Persons (1949). Nehru to (East Punjab Chief Minister) Bhimsen Sachar, April 17, 1949, in: NAI File No. 29(150)/49- PMS.

[23] Cf. Max Weber, Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology. Edited by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, vol. 1, Berkeley 1978 [orig. published posthumously in 1922], p. 215.

[24] Cf. Mountbatten interview with Nehru, Feb. 5, 1948, in: Nehru, collected works, vol. 5, p. 521. For a particularly scathing historical resume, see Perry Anderson, The Indian Ideology, London 2013.

[25] Management of Faridabad and Rajpura Camps and Townships for Displaced Persons, 1949, in: NAI 29(150)/49-PMS.

chains of command.[26] Because of their different logics, charismatic and bureaucratic authority are always potentially in conflict with one another, and in post-Partition India–even though it was agreed that refugee resettlement and rehabilitation was a priority–Nehru's insistence that thousands of housing units must be built "before the rains" catalyzed tensions between the two. Ultimately, these tensions centered on questions of power: Who had the authority to determine when, where, and how refugee housing would be built?[27]

3. The Janus Face of Sarkar: Charisma, Bureaucracy, and the Rains

In Hindi, Sarkar is an everyday term that can variously refer to the "state" or the "government." It can also be used as a noun that indexes a person (the Prime Minister or a local forestry officer) or a place associated with the state (for example, the national capital Delhi or a district headquarters in Dehra Dun), and as an adjective describing "official documents" (sarkarki Kaghaz) or bureaucratic procedures. As Nayanika Mathur has argued, it is not just state representatives, "but anyone who is seen as a figure of authority or is seen to wield power, legitimately or illegitimately, can be called Sarkar as a sign of respect."[28] In this avatar, Sarkar elicits respect and admiration, even affection or awe.

Sarkar also refers to those petty bureaucrats who do nothing but push around paper and drink tea; who ask that a complaint be certified and submitted in triplicate; who demand obeisance while having no intention of acting on petitions. Bureaucratic Sarkar is embodied in "staff of subaltern officials and scribes of all sorts"[29] who act lordly in front of villagers, tremble when higher officials come for inspection, treat files as ritual objects, and take their tea at the same time every day. However, the bureaucratic Sarkar does not operate only at the lowest level of state administration. It operates up and down the chain of Indian bureaucracy, from the country's northeastern edge to provincial and national capitals. Some bureaucrats–department heads, deputy secretaries, and countless others with more or less impressive titles–are extremely powerful. Sarkar is a lively concept because it helps us to understand how and why the state is simultaneously understood as impactful and impotent, existentially involved and distant from the lives of vulnerable citizens.

[26] Weber, Economy and Society, vol. 1, p. 215.
[27] Jain, City of Hope, p. 59.
[28] Nayanika Mathur, Paper Tiger: Law, Bureaucracy and the Developmental State in Himalayan India, Cambridge 2015, p. 22.
[29] Max Weber, quoted from: Mathur, Paper Tiger, p. XXI.

Sarkar in its plural sense–and this is true of governance as such–cannot be practiced exclusively through the charismatic domain of the political. It must also be implemented through bureaucratic and administrative actors who are disciplined by regulations, laws, professional norms, and so on. These are ideal types, leaning heavily on Max Weber's taxonomy of legitimate authority. One of Weber's most important insights is that the political/charismatic and the bureaucratic/legal-rational are governed by different logics, even when they share the same goals. Faced with refugees who had lost temporary homes to monsoon storms, charisma was mobilized. In principle, at least, bureaucratic Sarkar was motivated less by individual storms than by planning for enduring seasonal cycles.

In practice, however, bureaucratic Sarkar reacted to the Nehruvian imperative as a challenge to bureaucracy as such: to the rules, norms, hierarchies, and chains of command that structured the ways in which bureaucracy should function.[30] How can seasonality help us to understand tensions between the two faces of Sarkar? The case of Faridabad is instructive in thinking about the ways that seasonally recurring extreme weather events drove charismatic authority to act, and how bureaucracy rationalizes charisma.[31]

4. The Story of Faridabad: Charisma and Rationalization; Politics and Planning

Now the largest city in Haryana, Faridabad was a project in the early 1950s that was supposed to rapidly resettle refugees, creating respectable housing and work "before the rains." To facilitate speedy construction, Nehru tried to circumvent the agencies traditionally tasked with housing, development, and refugee rehabilitation. He called for the creation of a high-powered, "autonomous board" that he himself would chair, and that included, among others, the president of India Rajendra Prasad, representatives from various ministries, industrialists, philanthropists, and political activists. Nehru himself took on a highly personal role. Between 1949 and 1952, he attended 20 of 21 meetings of the Development Board.[32]

[30] Though the context was different, Minister of Mines, Power, and Works N. V. Gadgil wrote the following to Nehru: "As far as I am able to remember you said 'I am the Prime Minister under the constitution. I am to take decisions of major policy–cabinet or no cabinet. Normally things are discussed in the cabinet, decisions are taken, something by a narrow majority.' This is in my humble opinion a proposition that has an air of absoluteness about it and which is also contrary to what is stated in the constitution [...]," N. V. Gadgil (Minister–Mines, Power and Works from 1947-1952) to Jawaharlal Nehru, N. V. Gadgil Papers, March 22, 1950, in: NMML List 39, Installment 2.

[31] Weber, Economy and Society, vol. 2, p. 1134.

[32] Cf. Jain, City of Hope, p. 61.

Nehru personally chose Sudhir Ghosh to manage the project. Ghosh was notable for his youth and energy, as well as his personal connections to Indian luminaries including Mahatma Gandhi and Amrit Kaur, who was both a princess (Rajkumari) and an Oxford-educated Minister of Health. Perhaps most importantly, though, Ghosh was chosen because his professional development had been largely independent of colonial and post-colonial bureaucracies. The Times of India wrote that he was "a young man with initiative, free from rigid bureaucratic training."[33] His task: to rally 30,000 displaced Hindu Pathaans to build the city that would also be their home.[34]

With support from the Autonomous Board, construction of mud huts began in 1949, bypassing both the Public Works Department and state contractors. "To avoid wastage," Ghosh explained, "you get rid of PWD (Public Works Department) and profit-makers [...] you make the job as inexpensive as possible."[35] Building with mud and clay is a common architectural practice on four continents. It has become increasingly popular in the practice of innovative architecture firms. But there are also limitations. If one builds with mud, it must be properly baked or fired. When the decision to build before the rains came, the monsoon was already on its way, and the materials were only partially prepared. "The mud houses [...] were all washed away," Nehru told a crowd in Faridabad. "Perhaps if the rains had held off a few more days, the roofs would have been put up."[36] One might say that, while charismatic authority was swayed by the weather, bureaucrats were, at least in principle, planning for the seasons.[37]

This is not to imply that Indian bureaucrats were experts in New Town development, or even that they were competent in managing their established portfolios. Unlike charismatic figures like Nehru, though, they were reluctant to promise housing on timelines that would be impossible to meet. The Times of India once again highlighted the "sentimental approach," claiming that it undermined the work of housing DPs. While the press and politicians thought it was lamentable that roofless DPs struggled with seasonal hardships, their suffering did not change the barriers to creating housing. Bureaucrats were clearly in agreement on this point.

33 Experiments in Living. I: Faridabad – Nilohkeri – Etawah, in: Times of India, Feb 14, 1952.

34 Cf. Pathaans are an ethno-linguistic group that had lived for centuries in current day Pakistan and Eastern Afghanistan. After Partition, Hindu Pathaans primarily from Peshawar and Baluchistan settled in India.

35 Faridabad Development Board, in: NAI.

36 Jain, City of Hope, p. 78.

37 Cf. Rehabilitation of Refugees. Difficult Stage, in: Times of India, June 28, 1948; Unfinished Job, in: Times of India, June 11, 1952.

The Prime Minister admitted that much had been wasted, and predictably, bureaucrats were quick to condemn the ad hoc approach taken by Nehru's autonomous board. More surprisingly, refugees themselves also criticized the Prime Minister. They did not want resources allocated to semi-permanent shelter. They wanted permanent homes built with standardized mud-bricks and concrete foundations. The aspiration to provide refugees with shelter before the rains, while admirable, was both unrealistic and unpopular.

In the wake of collapse, the PM pivoted. Permanent housing was now the mandate: 4,000 homes by the summer of 1950. The work was completed by 1951, and for a moment Faridabad became a showcase of what cooperative, community-driven development could look like: the DPs had built their homes themselves; they would earn a living from industries that would locate in Faridabad; they would reinvest their profits in the development of cottage industries that would be refugee owned and operated. The Times of India reported admiringly. Officials called it "a big human experiment." Ghosh began to meet major political figures from the United States and Commonwealth countries, and was later invited to Washington to testify before Congress. America responded with a grant of $5 million.[38]

But this success did not survive tensions between charismatic and bureaucratic Sarkar. The archival materials, including extensive correspondence between Nehru, Ghosh, and cabinet-level heads of relevant ministries, are too extensive to summarize here. Key elements can be found in a substantial file dedicated to correspondence relating to an audit of the Faridabad project from 1952. The auditor reported on budget overruns, misallocation of materials, the failure of promised industries to set-up production, and the DPs' ongoing demands for financial support.[39]

The "Faridabad experiment" was less a test of whether refugees could be put to work building homes and lives for themselves than a question of what the relationship between charismatic and bureaucratic authority would look like. While Ghosh was nominally attached to the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation, he actually reported directly to the Board. This was intolerable to those who would, traditionally, have overseen the project. As Ghosh's deputy administrator put it, Ghosh was "a thorn in the flesh of the hierarchy in the Rehabilitation Ministry ('a mere Deputy Secretary having direct access to the PM!')."[40]

The autonomous board and the decision to elevate Ghosh disastrously compromised Nehru's relationship with vested interests (the so-called contractor

[38] Sudhir Ghosh, List 23 Correspondence Nehru. Ghosh to Nehru, November 19, 1951, in: NMML.

[39] Cf. Faridabad Development Board, in: NAI.

[40] Jain, City of Hope, p. 68.

raj, for example) and the bureaucrats who had experience with the rhythms of construction, the associated costs, and the capacities that needed to be mobilized. As L. C. Jain lamented: "The men in ministerial dress could not stomach the autonomy of the Board and connived at its downfall. Its lessons were not only ignored, but every worthwhile experiment with the new approaches in Faridabad was dismantled. Gone was its centre-piece: the replacement of contractors by labour cooperatives as a means of employment and equitable basis of sharing income."[41] By 1953, the cracks had widened, and Nehru—preoccupied by his reelection campaign—began to pull away. L. C. Jain, an important figure in India's cooperative movement and deputy to Sudhir Ghosh, summarized the unraveling: "Eventually he shut out Faridabad from his mind as if it were a bad dream."[42] By 1954, families who had built the town with their own hands were being relocated again—this time to Gandhinagar or to Delhi's growing urban edge. The rains did more than cause roofs to collapse—they exposed the structural tensions between politics and planning, between charisma and the bureaucratic.

In Arabic, the word for season is mawsim. Mawsim is also the etymological root of monsoon. In a vast territory known for its incredible diversity in ecological, social, religious, linguistic, and other terms, the monsoon is a constant that structures every imaginable area of life.[43] Mawsim (season) and mawsim (monsoon) also, unsurprisingly, shaped the planning, practice, and politics of refugee resettlement. Seasons help to explain why and how Faridabad was built in the way that it was; they suggest why a city built by and for refugees saw refugees resettled so soon after they had completed the city; and how Faridabad subsequently came to be occupied by highly polluting small and medium-sized factories that planners hoped to exclude from the National Capital. Seasons help to understand not just the political tensions between charismatic and bureaucratic authority, but also why, instead of becoming a center for cottage industries producing fabrics and other craft products, Faridabad has become one of the most polluted cities in the world.

41 Jain, City of Hope, p. 7.

42 Ibid.

43 Cf. Sunil Amrith, Unruly Waters. How Mountain Rivers and Monsoons have Shaped South Asia's History, London 2020; Lindsay Bremner et al., Monsoon as Method, in: Cultural Geographies 31:2, 2023, pp. 249-270.

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