

Patterns of Labour
Migrations
in Colonial Andhra

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By

Kali Chittibabu

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To My Teacher

Dr. Anindhita Mukhopadyay

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FOREWORD

Today India is a Democratic Republic and its people numbering 125 crores are its sovereigns. Yet the majority of the sovereigns, who live in around 7 lakh villages, have been deserting their villages for urban towns like Mumbai, Chennai, Delhi, Kolkata, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, Bangalore etc. or for Middle East countries. Even smaller towns like Allahabad, Agra, Lucknow, Vadodara, Pune, Hubli, Dharwad, Coimbatore, Thiruvananthapuram, Guwahati, Imphal, Medinipur, Bhubaneswar, Visakhapatnam etc. attract quite a large number of rural people herded together in the early morning after travelling 20-50 kilometres in search of work for a day. Even so-called lower and middle classes have been going from one place to the other in search of jobs. The question to ponder is: Why? Why do the sovereigns of India have to leave their place of residence/habitat? Why do they not stay on to enjoy their sovereignty over their lands, forests, rivers, mines and hills? The answer is most of the sovereigns have lost their sovereignty over their lands, forests, rivers, hills, and mines over the six decades of India's independence. They are left with nothing except their bodies and Gutka to live on. There is no source of livelihood for them. This phenomenon of movement of people from their place of residence to other place is known as 'migration' in Social Science Literature.

The question arises: Is migration of recent origin? The answer to it would be no, it is not of recent origin as everything that we see today has its past. Migration as a social process has its past; which needs to be well understood. Historicity of migration, therefore, calls for deeper investigation of social history of India during British rule. One has to look into a social process called impoverishment of the masses created by the British Raj and reinforced by the so-called democratic leadership in the Democratic Republic of India.

The present volume does the same with greater precision and rigour. It traces the genesis of poverty and migration of labour between 1845 and 1930 in one state of British India, namely, colonial Andhra. It establishes very high correlation between poverty and migration beyond doubt. The British rule set up four big sucking pumps called Bombay, Madras, Kolkata, and Delhi networked with rails and roads for taking out the wealth of the people of India. This they did first by making people poor and then by forcing them to leave their villages for working on low wages

at distant places. Those who were taken to Assam Tea Gardens and Burma were seldom allowed to return and those who returned had not become rich. Of course, those who were taken to Mauritius, Maldives, West Indies, Malaysia, etc. never returned.

Contrary to expectations migration of our people continued even after India's independence. A new process called 'Brain-drain' was born in the mid-sixties and continues till today. Migration of men and women from Kerala within and outside India topped the list in the Democratic Republic of India. Now the Middle East is full of migrants from all over India. So are the USA, Europe, Australia and Africa. Now Bihari Migrants to Mumbai, Delhi, Gujarat and Punjab etc. are being subjected to all kinds of violence, torture and humiliation.

The question arises: What does it mean or indicate? The answer to it may be left for the future historians as it does not fall within the purview of the present research. However, small conjecture can be made and its verification can be left to the future researchers, particularly social scientists.

It is quite (or most) likely that the departure of the British from India did not affect the system that they had built over 200 years. In other words, the British exploitation and anti-peoples, socio-political state system remained intact and perhaps became stronger in the Democratic Republic of India. If so, no wonder, if large-scale poverty-led migration is seen continuing and growing day by day in the Democratic Republic of India. Look at the Post-1991 LPG-based labour policies and labour laws. Look at the slogan of 'Cheap Labour' coupled with 'Made In India' like slogans.

Viewed from this perspective Dr. K. Chittababu's work on '**Patterns of Labour Migrations in Colonial Adhra 1845-1930**' is of great significance. It has made seminal contribution to our treasure of knowledge of Population, Poverty and Migration. He deserves our sincere appreciation and congratulations! Let us hope that he will continue his research on this issue in today's Democratic Republic of India with greater scientific rigour and precision.

Dec. 02, 2014
Allahabad

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PREFACE

The introduction lays out the general framework of my argument after first setting out, the meaning and definition of migration, theories of migrations, review of literature, including the way in which various economic theories have grappled with serious economic political and social phenomenon that culminated in migration. I have also indicated the economic historian's interest in this area, as migrations changed qualitatively from the period of the pre modern to the colonial, as the mode of production sponsored by the ruling colonial power shifted from feudal to a capitalistic form of economy. I have demonstrated here some factors responsible for migrations

The first objective of the present study is to analyze public works largely carried out in a rural setting. And to know how the construction of irrigational canals, roads, railways and other infrastructural works stimulated labour migration during the last hundred years of colonial rule and those who worked on these labour intensive projects were huge armies of men, women and children- sometimes lodging for years in temporary camps on the actual work sites. The second chapter deals with the public works carried out in rural areas. The construction of irrigational canals, roads, railways and other infrastructural works stimulated labour migration during the last hundred years of colonial rule and in fact made it necessary. The second objective is to see how famine and unfavorable seasons drastically impacted the distressed sections like small land holders, peasants and labourers were turning into poor migrants for a shorter period for survival. My third chapter deals with famine and unfavorable seasons which drastically distressed all sections of small land holders, peasants and labourers. Famines could be complete or very extensive accompanied by general failure of food or water, or both, over a large area of country. For water famine there is but one remedy, i.e. migration to where there is water. The third objective is to understand agrarian expansions and commercialization of agriculture created new markets for labour migrants and to know what was the role of industrialization, urbanization and modernization in attracting the people to the urban areas. The fourth chapter deals with agrarian expansions and commercialization of agriculture which created new markets for labour migrants; migration from rural to rural was a general phenomenon here. And the urbanization,

modernization, trade, and industries that came in the wake of the colonial state had given new scope to rural to urban migrations. This chapter deals with changing structures of rural and urban spaces, and opportunities created by the colonial state, that again lead to migrations. I look at the different forms of “pull” that influenced a migrations pattern of demographic movement. The fourth objective is to know how the tea industry from the first half of nineteenth century was the earliest commercial enterprise established by private British capital in the Assam Valley became the major employer of wage labour during colonial rule. Faced with acute shortage of labour, the planters had to seek labour from sources some hundreds of miles away. They resorted to a policy of organized recruitment of labour from tribal/ semi- tribal, non-tribal low caste peasant, communities inhabiting from the Andhra districts of Ganjam, Vizagapatnam, Godavari, Kistna, Guntur and Nellore. The fifth is about plantation labour in Assam, as the tea industry from the first half of nineteenth century was the earliest commercial enterprise established by private British capital in the Assam. It had been the major employer of wage labour there during colonial rule.

Finally I would like to argue, after showing these developments that Indian labour first responded in a fragmented, need driven set of migratory practices. They were circumscribed by very local, highly inadequate information systems, which could not allow rural populations to understand the change in the scale of the demand for labour the colonial state was efficiently systematizing and bringing under general economic policies. Through the fourth and fifth chapters, I will show how the various Acts of the Colonial Government was actually creating an organized labour market. The labourers were getting an understanding of the scale of labour movements across the Indian economy, and were bringing to understand their own bargaining power vis-à-vis the labour contract actor and the Colonial State. I stop before 1930, as on and after this date, the Colonial State, hit by global recession, offered a slew of Acts to curb industrial unrest brought in sweeping changes without labour, which the scope of my book cannot address. I would, however, like to explore these later developments in a different research project in future.

Dr Kali Chittibabu

GLOSSARY

- Ameen*: The subordinate officer in the Revenue Police Department.
- Anna*: A small denomination of money; being the 16 part of rupee.
- Anicut*: A weir or dam of masonry across a river.
- Ayacut*: The term signifies the whole taxable area in a village, or under an irrigation work
- Bandy*: A wheel conveyance; most commonly used in the limited sense of a bullock cart
- Bund*: The retaining bank of a tank. A river embankment.
- Calingulah*: A masonry work in the bank of tank or channel, for the discharge of surplus water.
- Calwah*: A channel.
- Choultry*: A public shelter or lodging for native travelers.
- Cholum* : A species of grain
- Chunam* : Lime; also mortar.
- Circar*: The Government.
- Conocapillay*: An Accountant; duty involving the keeping of accounts.
- Cooly* : A Colonial term for labourer who works for daily hire; or a man who does single jobs for hire
- Cumbly*: A thin and coarse blanket; made of wool of Indian sheep.
- Curnam*: A village accountant.
- Cutchery*: The office of a Collector, A Tahsildar, or other Revenue Officer.
- Enam: Land held free, or partially free, of Government tax.
- Fusly*: The revenue year; it begins on the 12 July. Fusly began on the 12th July 1852.
- Ghaut*: A mountain pass.
- Gowdown*: A store –house; also an outhouse.
- Gomastah*: An accountant or writer in native language.
- Khoonds*: A wild people inhabiting the hill country west of Ganjam.
- Kamma*: A high Telugu caste composed mainly of agriculturalists.
- Kapu*: A high caste of cultivators.
- kudi-Maramat*: The clearance of smaller channels and similar petty repairs were generally carried out by the cultivators
- Maliahs*: A hill tribe in Ganjam

- Maramut*: Strictly repairs. The whole department of public works under the Board of Revenue, is styled the “Maramut Department” and the term “Maramut” was applied to all work which engages that Department.
- Maistry*: A master workman in any trade; more particularly a head brick layer, carpenter, stonemason, &c. In Public Work Department, a subordinate officer employed to superintended building, &c.
- Mala*: Telugu outcaste.
- Monigar*: A head revenue officer of a village. A tank or channel Monigar is an officer charged with the custody of an important tank or channel.
- Mottah*: A few villages held on Zamindary tenure; a small Zamindary.
- Mottahdar*: The holder of such a property.
- Nizam*: The ruler of the Hyderabad country is commonly so styled; his title being Nizam-ool-moolk, or Regulator of the Empire.
- Paddy*: Un-husked rice
- Ryot*: An occupier and cultivator of land.
- Ryotwar*: The term used for the system of land revenue administration under which the Government officer deals with each Ryot.
- Sudr Ameen*: A subordinate native judicial officer.
- Sudr Adualat*: The highest Company’s Court at Madras.
- Sudra*: Member of the fourth or agriculturalist varna
- Tahsildar*: The native revenue officer in charge of a Talook.
- Talook*: A sub-division of a district or Collectorate.
- Wudder bandy*: A kind of bullock –cart used by the tribe called Wudders; it is of excessively rude construction, and has low wheels rudely cut out of a solid plank of wood, with axels of the same material.
- Zamindar*: One who holds a tract of country, and levies all the government revenues therein for his own benefit, paying a certain fixed amount annually to the Government.
- Zamindary*: A tract of country so held by zamindar.
- Zillah*: A division or part. A district or Collectorate, as being a division or portion of the Empire.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Meaning and Definition of Migration

The word 'Migration' derives from the Latin word *migrare*, which means to change one's residence¹. The simple meaning of the word migration can be a shift in physical space or change of domicile by a man or a group of people. But it is remarkable to note that the meaning of migration has also been changing simultaneously with the passing of time. The contemporary meaning and scope of migration has become more complicated and only mobility across physical spaces cannot fulfill the definition of migration. The temporary movements of villagers towards towns during their active period, their return, the shift of people to hill stations in the summer, etc. are included in the study of migration. Scholars of different disciplines have tried to define migration from different perspectives. Geographers have emphasized the significance of time and space when mobility is concerned. While sociologists have laid stress on social consequences of mobility, economists give importance to the economic aspect of migration². The term has been defined in the new Webster's dictionary as "the act or an instance of moving from one area to another in search of work"³. Smith emphasized in his definition of migration a change in the occupation of physical space with the assumption being more or less implicit that a change of residence or domicile is involved⁴. According to Theodore Caplow, "migration is, strictly speaking, a change of residence and need not necessarily involve any change of occupation, but it is closely associated with occupational

¹ International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences, Macmillan and Free Press, Vol. 10, 1968, p. 286.

² Dr. Sinha V.N.P. and Dr. Atullah M.D., *Migration – An Interdisciplinary Approach*, Seema Publications, Delhi, 1987, p. 5.

³ *Webster's Third New International Dictionary Vol. II*, Massachusetts, G&C. Mariam Company, 1966, p. 1432.

⁴ Smith, T.L., *The Fundamentals of Population Study*, Lippincott Publications, Philadelphia, 1960, p. 420.

shifts of one kind or another. The principal directions of migration are illustrated by more or less continuous movements from rural areas towards the city, from areas of stable population towards [the centres] of cities to their suburbs”⁵.

The migration/migratory patterns I am dealing with share a little of all these characteristics, and I will discuss these in detail in the introduction below. Further, I would like to state that the categories of labour are not necessarily that same as that of the peasantry. Therefore labour can be drawn from purely landless peasantry, or from peasants possessing a bit of land, or even the urban poor. My manuscript does not deal with the urban poor. However, the previous two categories, belonging to rural spaces, have to migrate for work out of necessity. Do they return? My data does not offer answers to this question, though it is an important one. I can only speculate on the fact that there is no inducement to return to their villages.

Rural populations were and are rooted in land, and South India is no exception. They are so tenaciously conservative and so averse to movement of any kind that when we find large numbers of them leaving their homes, we have to conclude that they do so only by being compelled by push factors like poverty, discontinuity of employment, pressures of the population on the land, bad seasons (famines) and caste repressions. There are also pull factors such as higher wages and continuity of employment. The categories who respond to these pull/push factors are generally the poor communities, low caste labourers, and semi-tribal or tribal people who want escape routes from caste repression. The conditions of village life in India, however, are opposed to anything like permanent migration on a large scale. Every individual family in a village community has its own assigned place. If a man holds a *puttah* from the government, for ever so small a quantity of land, he has every inducement to remain on his land, and if he is a labourer hereditarily attached to his soil, he would prefer not to migrate. Migration, therefore, generally is a desperate choice.

Importance of Labour migration studies in the discipline of History

The problem of migration is a prime example of a subject that requires the skills and approaches of scholars from several disciplines. It is clear that disciplines such as Anthropology, Demography, Economics,

⁵ Theodore Caplow, *The Sociology of Work*, The University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1959, p. 6.

* Push and pull factors discussed later on in the introduction.

Sociology, Law, Political Science, and History, can all be developed for this human problem. I have attempted to understand why a historical investigation is required⁶. Migration between one area and another within the same country and also between one country and another can be traced back to the pre-modern period. It continues to be an important socio-economic phenomenon in most parts of the world, in Europe, North America, Latin America, Russia, Asia, and Africa. More than the internal movement of people, the international angle has captured the global imagination of scholars interested in migration studies.

In India, migration of both varieties is distinctly traceable back to the 19th century through the colonial archives. In contrast to the movement within the country, the country witnessed the mass migration of Indian labourers to overseas territories in the wake of the migration of surplus capital, an inevitable consequence to the Industrial Revolution in the West that required new areas for investment in the economies of underdeveloped countries. As the present study is not concerned with international migration, the discussion here is focused on the movement of people within the political boundaries of India.

Internal migration has diverse facets; it is characterized by different, special types of movement: villagers moving to small towns, sub-divisions or districts, and small town dwellers moving to large ones. Many, again, are obliged to move like a floating population, under economic pressure, from a rural area to an urban area, or from one urban area to another. Among the different forms of internal migration – namely rural to rural, rural to urban, urban to urban, and urban to rural – rural to rural and rural to urban migration streams are considered more significant than the rest from a socio-economic point of view⁷. Internal migration has had a significant impact on the population growth of certain regions. People who declared themselves to be ‘immigrants’ formed about 1.8 percent of the total population of India in 1901, and 3 percent in 1931. In absolute terms, there had been an increase of about 5 million people who had moved long distances. The percentages varied between regions. For example, 12-15 percent of the Assamese population consisted of ‘immigrants’ in 1901-31. It is certain that in all of India, the percentage of immigrants was much smaller than 1.8 percent about 20 or 30 years before 1901. Internal migration in 1901 followed a pattern of movement of origin. The vast majority of migrants moved into specific occupations and areas of

⁶ Alan A. Brown, Egon Neuberger (eds.), *Internal Migration: A Comparative Perspective*, Academic Press, New York, 1977, p. 1.

⁷ Haraprasad Chottopadhyaya, *Internal Migration in India: A case Study of Bengal*, K.P. Bagchi & Company, New Delhi, 1987, pp. 1-12.

opportunities that had colonial origins, for example plantations, large scale industry, and service in Burma⁸.

The primary object of K. C. Zachariah's study is to measure and describe the pattern of internal migration in the Indian Sub-Continent during the period from 1901-1931. As a Statistician who gives only a statistical analysis of internal migration in India, he does not explain the reasons for internal migrations. He analyzed migration estimates by sex and age. These estimates have been prepared for regions, states, and to a limited extent, for towns with population of 20,000 people or more. These estimates are used to describe the contribution of internal migration to overall population redistribution, and whether there were any gains or losses. Two sets of migration estimates have been prepared: one uses the total population by age and by sex for each state, and the other uses the data on record for birth and by the location of residences. In accordance with K.C. Zachariah's model, I have given the statistical details of internal migration in the third chapter⁹.

According to Kingsley Davis, the population of India is comparatively immobile or static. He attributed this immobility to factors like the predominance of agriculture, the caste system, marriage, culture, and lack of education. According to the 1931 census of India, only 3.6 percent of the population lived in provinces or states other than those where they were born. Granted that the proportional movement was very small, the absolute numbers involved in internal movements have been very large. In 1931, about 12,000,000 people were enumerated outside the province or the place of their birth. Therefore the study of internal migrations in the Indian sub-continent is a study of the movement of millions of people who, for one reason or another, have changed their community or residence during the course of their lives. In my study, I have dealt with the internal migrants in Andhra who exclusively migrated only to their neighboring districts. In the Andhra region, migration was mainly seasonal in character¹⁰.

Relevant to discussions of internal migration in Andhra is the question of whether the people of Andhra were normally inclined towards mobility or were averse to it during the period of the present study. The populations of Andhra were comparatively immobile. But what are the reasons for this

⁸ Tirthankar Roy, *The Economic History of India 1857-1947*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2000, p. 276-77.

⁹ K.C. Zachariah, *A Historical Study of Internal Migration in the Indian Sub-Continent 1901-1931*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1964, pp. 1-9.

¹⁰ Kingsley Davis, *The Population of India and Pakistan*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1931, appendix A.

comparatively low mobility in Andhra? The people of India in general and of Andhra in particular, have a traditional attachment to their native locale. Besides the predominance of agriculture, carried on at a subsistence level, allowing little or no surplus accumulation to meet the cost of travel or a change of residence, there were other factors acting as a deterrent on people's movement away from their birthplace or their usual place of residence, such as the impact of the caste system, which made it difficult to sever ties with one's birthplace. Davis Morris states that though the mobility of the Indian population has been 'historically limited,' it will be 'entirely inappropriate to deduce from this the proposition that the Indian social structure was responsible for this phenomenon.' He assigns economic reasons for responsible mobility. Could it be that poorer classes of Indians were deterred from migrating as the place selected for migration were too distant from their usual place of residence? Could distance, in other words, be treated as a dissuading factor in connection with migration? It is clear that the Indian population is not wholly static; it is only less mobile as a population when compared to Western countries. The proportional movement might be small, but the absolute numbers involved in internal movements have been impressive due to the size of the Indian population when compared to Western countries.

According to A. V. Ramanarao, the internal migrations in Andhra are basically rural-urban migration and rural-rural migration. He put forward the theory that the majority of the lower classes began to seek outlets to earn their livelihood. Large groups of people began to move from one district to another in search of seasonal employment or an occupation which would enable them to earn their livelihood. These internal migrations were mostly to the contiguous districts of the same province and the contiguous parts of other provinces as well, while migrations towards the non-contiguous parts of other provinces were very small. The causes for these disturbed features of moving populations, or inter-district migration, or coast-wise immigration, were the decline of the age-old agricultural communities with their self-sufficient economies, the extinction and forceful suppression of native crafts and indigenous industries because of the influence of cheap, machine made foreign commodities, and high rates of rigid land revenue¹¹.

According to V. Ramakrishna, the movement of the rural population to urban areas was largely due to the higher wages and freedom from caste repression, which the towns held out to the lower sections of the

¹¹ Ramanarao A.V., *Economic Development of Andhra Pradesh 1766-1957*, Popular Book Depot, Bombay, 1958, pp. 1-9.

population. The superior social and educational advantages and various amenities which the towns offered to the better-off classes served as another source of magnetic attraction to the upwardly mobile. Generally, railways increased the trade of the places where they reached and also created new trading centers along its tracks. Due to the famines, cheap labour increased; rich land lords and other similar classes started to live in the towns; for modern education, many people started migrating to the towns. New professional classes came into existence, with these towns providing the core of their access to new opportunities. The revenue settlements on the one hand, and industry and commerce on the other, failed to develop rural capitalists and strong commercial classes respectively. The colonial interests in importing cloth from England ruined the native handloom industry, and spinning as a separate profession rapidly disappeared. So millions become jobless and began to flock to agriculture or migrate to the towns which were growing¹².

A. Satyanarayan has argued that there existed a “mobile and free labour” in Andhra, and felt optimistically that his view was confirmed by labour migrations. Migration and mobility were an increasingly important feature of rural Andhra, not only rural to urban, but rural to rural. Many of the “ruined” peasants and artisans migrated to towns in search of work. As we have seen earlier, particularly during the depression years and after the “flight” of rural capital, there was also the “flight” of people to urban centres. In fact, the growing agro-industries to some extent provided employment to such immigrants. The fact that there had been an increasing degree of rural labour “exodus” to towns where the industrial activities were being established was overwhelmingly confirmed by our data. The jute mills in Vizagapatnam district, the rice mills in the deltas, and cotton presses and ground nut decorticating factories in the ceded districts certainly absorbed some of the rural proletariat. However, this kind of employment on a regular basis for a longer period of time, though their growth in Andhra was not very considerable when compared to the processing industries, did not go a long way towards ameliorating rural poverty. By and large, it is true to say that the process of urbanization and limited “industrialization” did take place. During the post-depression period, there were indications of an “exodus” of the rural populations to towns. More significantly, the phenomenon of migration on a seasonal basis from “backward” areas to more developed ones was on the increase. “Thousands move every year from Vizagapatnam, from [the] uplands of

¹² Ramakrishna, V., *Social Reform Movements in Andhra*, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Limited, New Delhi, 1993, pp. 33-34.

Godavari, Kistna and Guntur to the lands watered by the Kistna and Godavari rivers". Poor peasants and landless labourers from Andhra also migrated to Assam, Burma and other contiguous provinces. Most of the emigrants generally had connections with land. They often returned to the village after accumulating some capital and usually began to lease a plot of land and purchased agricultural implements and cattle. Thus they became the budding small peasants¹³.

Colonial Perceptions on Bio-Power

Theories of migration became a major area of enquiry in the nineteenth century, as it has been clearly understood by Western powers that bio-power (human resource) was an enormous economic resource. Human labour, whether in the rural or urban areas, represented the effects of the new capitalistic markets and a new range of price fluctuations. The modern state machinery was intervening in rural economies at unprecedented levels and therefore unleashing economic changes, leading to a change in the scale of migrations.

In the *Wealth of Nations* (1776), Adam Smith became the integral core to liberal social thought, which advocated a drastic curtailment of the government's role in the socio-economic process. The liberals of that time viewed the utility-of-poverty doctrines as morally unacceptable and as an impediment to dynamic human progress. Smith advocated the interplay of market forces without interference by government to allow free trade and free labour market wages which would be governed by demand and supply. Adam Smith, and later John Stuart Mill, provided a strong rationale for both internal migration, and colonial emigration and settlement. On the domestic front, Europe experienced a boom in internal migration to urban areas, largely in response to institutional changes and opportunities generated by the liberal political economic system, dominated by their colonial empires.

Karl Marx argued that a free labour system was imperative for industrial capitalism's growth and productive operation, as was the free movement of labour. This meant that the removal of obstacles to the free flow of labour was an economic imperative. Lenin had articulated the need for the dynamic role of labour flows in the capitalist development of Russia in the late 19th century. The diversion of the population from agriculture is expressed in the growth of towns, factories and commercial

¹³ Satyanarayana, A., *Andhra Peasants Under British Rule: Agrarian Relations and Rural Economy 1900-1940*, Manohar, New Delhi, 1990, pp. 130-136.

and industrial townships, as well as in non-agricultural migration. All processes are necessary components of capitalist development and are profoundly progressive when compared to the old forms of life, e.g. under feudalism. Internal migration, Marx argued, fulfilled rapidly expanding industrial capitalism's rising labour needs. In addition, migrants created a consumer's market for industrial products through the destruction of self-reliant rural industries. They also stabilized depressed wages, and consequently generated social surpluses through their participation in the economic system based on producing exchange values. Ironically, accelerating industrial capitalism was later accompanied by increasing unemployment and poverty. Consequently, migration to colonies and colonial settlements became necessary, and the colonies emerged as the logical solution for both (a) satisfying European resources and market demands, and (b) meeting the growing problems of unemployment and poverty by turning domestic supplicants for welfare policies into international imperial guards. Thus rural to the urban migration greatly contributed to European urban industrial development and accelerated the feudal economy's breakdown, while promoting agricultural capitalism¹⁴. These trends in the Andhra region were also present to some extent, and thus promoted the geographic mobility of labour. The demand for factory workers strengthened local labour markets and weakened traditional production relationships. Much of the labour demand was male; in Colonial Andhra, they could be indentured labour or mill-hands, or workers in public government. This meant the disruption of traditional family units. The result was the creation of a population that was socially and economically uprooted and prone to migration.¹⁵ Even though Marx had specifically addressed the colonial economy and its effect on colonization, this intellectual trend was part of the later intellectual effort during imperial rule.

Migration as the manifestation of economic and social factors was being researched and theorized in England by late 19th century. One such pioneering study was put forward by E.G. Ravenstein, a statistician who believed that numbers and a general numerical methodology should be employed to study migration. In two lengthy papers to the Royal Statistical Society in 1885 and 1889 demonstrating the patterns of

¹⁴ Robert, Cohen (ed.), *Theories of Migration*, Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, 1966, p. 333.

¹⁵ Charles, H., Philip, K., Joseph D. Wind (eds.), *The Hand Book of International Migration: The American Experience*, Russell Sage Publications, 1990, pp. 35-47.

migration, Ravenstein set out the “laws of migration”. These are regarded as the starting point of migration theories¹⁶.

Lee E.S. developed “a general schema in which a variety of spatial movements can be placed”. Lee argued that the factors which influenced the decision to migrate and the process of migration may be summarized under four headings: 1) factors associated with the area of origin; 2) factors associated with the area of destination; 3) intervening obstacles; and 4) personal factors. The forces associated with the area of origins and areas of destination are in their own way governed by personal factors, which affect individual thresholds and felicitate or retard migrations. Lee’s theory was reflected in a broad range of studies that dealt with the migrants selectivity and choice and also with the “Push-Pull” factors¹⁷. I use the first two factors to understand the geographical locations of the regions I have chosen in this study. For example, Ravenstein’s and Everett S. Lee’s theories produced scholarship on migration as a phenomenon, but it is important to note that these studies did not deal with the conditions leading to migration in a colonial economy. They explained only the general factors of migration, but left specific historical contexts out of the picture. Throughout the second half of the 19th century and the first half of 20th century, a debate has gone on between the two opposing schools of economists and economic historians on the nature of the economic processes India had undergone under British rule. The imperialist school of thought represented by John Stuart Mill and Morris D. Morris believed that India was growing more prosperous and was also undergoing economic development as a byproduct of *Pax Britannica* (the myth said that *Pax Britannica* had ended a period of long anarchy); law and order had fallen into place and an efficient administration ran an honest and efficient bureaucracy – the best in the world – and had taken backwards India towards progress. The development of irrigation, railways, growing commerce and an increase in the area of cultivation – all these indicated economic prosperity.

The plunder of India was carried out in taxation. In order to maximize the revenue collections, the English carried out “Agrarian Revolution”, subverting the existing property relationships. They created various forms of private property in land – “the great desideratum of Asiatic Society”. But the real purpose was, by these means, to sustain or increase the tax

¹⁶ Ravenstein, E.G., “The Laws of Migration”, *The Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, LII (June 1889), pp. 241-301.

¹⁷ Robert, Cohen (ed.), *Theories of Migration*, Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, 1966, p. 78.

paying capacity of the country¹⁸. Quite often, the British administrators put the blame for poverty on the size of the population by using nineteenth century economic theories perfected by Malthus and Ricardo. The Indian leadership rejected this connection in its entirety. They refuted the accusation that India was over populated or that the size and growth of its population were responsible for its poverty. They countered further with the fact that most of the European countries were more thickly populated than India, and yet were more wealthy. Unplanned and destructive economic policies had reduced the Indian people to poverty.¹⁹ Nationalist economists like Dadabhai Naoroji, M.G. Ranade, G.V. Joshi, G.S. Iyer and R.C. Dutt had made economic analysis their field of activity. These scholars described the “development” of India as a transition from traditional or feudal patterns, from pre-modern backwardness to colonial backwardness, where the limited modern economic development, especially in the fields of trade and transport, transformed the country into a raw material producing and processing economy, to the detriment of its traditional crafts and industries. It was also a capital absorbing country, leading to backward agriculture, repressed industry and foreign domination in economic life. The early Indian economists tried to frame this phenomenon within a colonial structure. Though they did not mention migration specifically, they examined economic consequences leading to the factors that can be understood as a migration²⁰.

Scholars like Richard Temple, Grant Duff, John Strachey and John Stuart Mill put forward the theory of comparative costs and the consequent international divisions of labour under the conditions of free trade, and thus said that foreign trade was enabling India to maximize the use of economic resources by producing and exporting goods, namely agricultural products, for which it was best suited. India, it was said, had plenty of land, water, other natural resources, and human resources (cheap labour), but it lacked capital, which was, however, to be found in plenty in Britain. Once British capital was invested in India on large scale, India’s development would be assured. This was perhaps because of their belief

¹⁸ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *On Colonialism*, Progressive Publishers, Moscow, 1981, pp. 175-180.

¹⁹ Bipin Chandra, *Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India*, Peoples Publishing House, New Delhi, 1982, pp. 41-42.

²⁰ Dadabhai Naoroji, *Poverty and British Rule in India*, Low Price Publications, Delhi, 1991, pp. 55-61. Ranade M.G., *Essays on Indian Economics*, Bombay, 1898. Ramesh Dutt, *Economic History of India*, vol. II, CIE Publications Division New Delhi, 1989, p. 346. Joshi G.V., *Writings and Speeches*, 1912, Poona, Iyer, G. Subramaniya, *Some Economic Aspects of British Rule in India*, 1903, Madras.

that India should develop primarily as an agricultural country, as part of the international division of labour promoted by free trade.²¹ G.V. Joshi counterposed the theory of international division of labour: “India was being shifted from higher to lower form of economic activity, from thriving industry to ‘less remunerative agriculture’, rendering its labour less productive” by compulsory transfer from “fields of skilled labour to fields of unskilled labour” and consequently, undergoing “enormous losses in wages and profits”.²² Dadabhai Naoroji further argued that foreign capital appropriated everything arising from additional wealth. The foreigners monopolized nearly all of the high salaried posts in the construction and operation of foreign enterprises. The only gain for Indians was in terms of some additional employment opportunities as coolies and unskilled labourers. But most of the coolies were paid abysmally low wages. This virtually amounted to Indians being reduced to the status of “slaves”, the drawers of water and hewers of wood to the British and foreign capitalists, “a race of coolies under white masters”.²³ Most of the nineteenth century nationalists agreed that existing social institutions, such as the caste system, were hampered the mobility of labour and capital²⁴.

Labour Migrations of Andhra

This study presents an analysis of some aspects of labour mobility in the Colonial Andhra region in the Madras Presidency, and especially of internal migrations in Andhra which are basically rural to rural and rural to urban, as I will demonstrate with data in this manuscript. There has always been migration in the sub-continent throughout history, but in the colonial period, these migrations were recorded as statistical data that the colonial state generated as part of its administrative strategy; certainly not as a help to future historians in their attempts to locate migratory groups in Colonial India. However, through these records, contemporary scholars do get a clearer and more detailed view of the migratory communities who have remained largely invisible in other kinds of historical sources. The data reveals large groups of people moving from one district to another in search of seasonal employment or occupations which would enable them to earn their livelihoods. These internal migrations were mostly to the

²¹ Bipan Chandra, *Essays on Colonialism*, Orient Longman, 1999, pp. 170-174.

²² Joshi, p. 611, 645, 651, 682.

²³ Naoroji, 398, 614.

²⁴ Bipin Chandra, *Essays on Colonialism*, 177.

contiguous districts of the same province and the contiguous parts of other provinces as well, while migrations towards the non-contiguous parts of other provinces were very low. The main concern of the colonial state was to maintain the supply and flow of labour, at low wages. Even when its exploitative character was not directly and obviously visible to the migrants, it maintained the conditions of work and migration and also extracted funds from agriculture. The Colonial Government was interested in agriculture, as it was the site from which the maximum revenue came. The pattern of migrations in late 19th century colonial Andhra can be seen at four levels. These levels were correlated with the regional specificities of Andhra. We can divide the Andhra region into four sub regions, viz. (a) south coastal Andhra; (b) north coastal Andhra; (c) Madras Deccan (Ceded); and (d) Agency. Coastal Andhra consisted of two plain sub regions, viz. the agriculturally vibrant southern part, and the relatively backward northern part. There was also the un-surveyed Agency of Hill area²⁵. (See Map 1.)

Firstly, the Colonial Government in the Andhra region undertook many public works, chiefly major irrigational works like the Godavari Anicut, the Krishna Anicut, and the Cuddapah-Kurnool Canal for maximizing their revenues from these deltaic regions of high productivity²⁶. These projects drew the rural masses in search of work to these rich regions²⁷. These projects geographically come under the south coastal Andhra region. This region is very well situated and has very fertile land. It is agriculturally vibrant, with good irrigation sources. An interesting factor of note is that in the tract of country between the mouths of the Kistna and the Godavari, there was an illustration of the growth of the Delta lands marked by certain characteristic features. About half-way between the two rivers, there was a low swampy tract which, under the name of the Colair Lake, occupied the boundary region between the two Deltas. It represented the work which still remained to be done by the two rivers before the alluvial plain could be regarded as “perfect”. The total failure of the rains of 1833 affected the whole region. The district was very badly prepared for such a catastrophe as the total failure of the rains. The destruction of life as a result of the failure was frightful; it was estimated

²⁵ Chittibabu, Kali, Migrations in Colonial Andhra, 1881-1911, Unpublished MPhil Dissertation submitted to the University of Hyderabad, 2005.

²⁶ Chittibabu, Kali, Patterns of Labour Migrations in Colonial Andhra, 1845-1930, Unpublished PhD Thesis submitted to the University of Hyderabad, 2013.

²⁷ Jan Breman, Labour Migration and Rural Transformation in Colonial Asia, Free University Press, Amsterdam, 1990, p. 12.

from the statistical returns – which, though by no means free from critical observations, were still approximately correct – that no fewer than 200,000 people perished either from hunger, or as a result of the virulent fever that followed in the wake of the famine. At this particular juncture, the population of Guntur had not recovered from the effects of the Black Year. However, the government revenues also suffered a setback at the same time; a matter of concern for the colonial administration. The loss of revenue to the state was fairly calculated at a gross total of upwards of 90 lakhs of rupees, or £900,000. When the much greater losses sustained by the community were added to this amount, it seemed to government that a sum of 2½ crores of rupees, or the same number of millions of pounds sterling, would not be an exaggerated estimate of the aggregate loss of property due this deplorable calamity. It was to prevent the recurrences of such a sacrifice of life – and the means of life, on the part of the native community, and of revenue on the side of the state – that the works on the river Kistna was designed. The effects of the famine of 1833-34 were felt with great severity throughout the districts of Rajahmundry and Masulipatman, which were traversed by the Godavari. The few irrigation works existing in that period were wholly inadequate for the prevention of suffering. That, anyway, was never the aim of the dam, but only to mitigate the scale of suffering a little²⁸. In 1830, land had little or no value throughout the greater portion of the presidency. In the rich deltas of Kistna and Godavari, transfers of land by sale appeared to have been almost unknown till about 1850. In 1853, Sir Walter Elliott, the commissioner of Northern Circars, reported that in the Kistna district, land was generally unsalable and that in the only instances which had come to his notice, the area sold was 15 acres of dry and 56½ acres of wet land, the price obtained being Rs 203. Again, the same officer reported in 1854 that the only case of sale of assessed lands occurred in Guntur, where ten acres of dry and two acres of wet land, yielding a gross outturn of Rs 55 and bearing an assessment of Rs 34, fetched a price of Rs 78. Only in the Deltas of Kistna and Godavari, lands which were unsalable had during the last 30 years acquired a high value, thus making these an exception.²⁹ In the District of Guntur on the other hand, all irrigational works were utterly

²⁸ Baird Smith, R., *The Cauvery, Kistnah and Godavary Being a Report on the Works Constructed on these Rivers for the Irrigation of Province of Tanjore, Guntoor, Musulipatanam and Rajamundry, in the Province of Madras*, London, 1856, pp. 53-55, and pp. 84-85.

²⁹ Srinivas Raghavaiyangar, *Memorandum on the Progress of Madras Presidency During Last Forty Year*, Printed by Superintendent Press, Madras, 1903, pp. 109-110.

neglected, and in one year, a famine occurred which swept away 250,000 out of 500,000 people and caused a loss of revenue of eighty lakhs over the next ten or twelve years; while not an acre of land could be sold³⁰.

“Do you think England could pay revenue of fifty millions, if she had no public works or Machinery, no Roads, Canals, railways, Ports, Steam and Water Power, and nothing that enables the human power of the community to accomplish a hundred times as much though it could not pay a tenth of it without those aids?” to this question, was posed the answer “She certainly could not pay a tenth of it, without those things³¹”.

Instances occurred of common roads, canals, irrigation works, etc., producing an annual return to the country of more than 100% of the outlay; and as any amount of money, for making every sort of improvement in India, could be obtained at 5 percent, the practicability of these essential works was undeniable³². It was still a complete mistake to suppose that its officers had nothing to do but to collect revenue, and that the people, with or without any aid, could procure the means of paying the taxes. If only a thousandth part of the time and labour expended on adjusting and collecting the revenue were bestowed on the means to best calculate and enable the people to easily pay it, the government would be rolling in money³³. There was a simple assumption behind this. These were all “Englishmen” who knew that England’s national prosperity and strength were the result of the enormous economy of human labour by means of public works. Because of this, whereby only a few were actually employed in providing the mere necessities of life (food, clothing, and shelter), this left a large number of the people at liberty to promote learning and the arts, which had contributed to the British economic growth³⁴. One of the first and most fundamental things to do, by means of public works in India, was to increase the income of the country. The government felt that this was entirely within its reach, since any amount of money could be obtained from other services, for the execution of improvements which would pay ten or twenty times the interest of the capital outlay.³⁵ The question was asked,

³⁰ Sir Arthur Cotton, *Public Works in India*, p. 25.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 33.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 47.