

LABOUR MIGRATION IN COLONIAL ODISHA: A LARGER HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION

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Abstract: E.G. Ravenstine's law of migration says that "Migrant moves from areas of low opportunities to area of high opportunity. The choice of destination is regulated by distance, with migrants from the rural areas often showing a tendency to move first forwards nearby town, and then towards large cities. And also migration accelerates with growth in the means of transport and communication and expansion of trade and industries".¹ But the history of Odisha labor migration says a different narrative. It was the 1866 famine or Na'annka Durviky that happened during the 9th regional years of Raja Divya Singha Deva, which responsible for a larger migration. In this larger historical narrative, larger migration happened from the districts like Puri, Cuttack and Balasore. Other side the labor migrated to Eastern part of the subcontinent and served as the industrial labor, factory labor, plantation labor, women as domestic workers and as a wage labors, coolies, and Darwans. The present paper also highlights on the issues like, the gender and caste migration, identity formation, consequence of the migration and its impact on colonial Odisha economy.

Keywords: E.G. Ravenstine, Na'annka Durviky, Raja Divya Singha Deva, Darawans.

Introduction: The present study is discussing some aspects of labor mobility in Colonial Odisha to the eastern part of the subcontinent. The word 'Migration' derives from the Latin word 'migrate' which means to change one's residence. In a simple manner the word migration can be a shift in physical space or change of residence by a person or group of people. According to Throdore 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 shifts of one kind or another. The principle directions of migration are illustrated by more or less continuous movements from rural areas towards the city, from areas of stable population towards center of cities to their suburbs."² But the greater historical interpretation in the context of colonial Odisha labor migration says a different narrative. The history of 1866 was a devastating event in Odisha history, other way it responsible for the larger migration. The construction of railways, canals, roads and the transportation not only complete the colonizing process but also it forced the labor to migration. If the job opportunity and the city life style pulled the people for migration another side scarcity, diseases ,land shortages and poverty pushed the labor .So both the push and pull factor can't be isolate. Apart from that establishment of the different factories, industries and specially the plantation industries create opportunity and became a major factor for the larger movement of labor from the colonial Odisha. I tried to find out different patterns of the labor migration in the time period between middle of the 19th century to the early part of the 20th century. In such a larger historical narrative I want to investigate the formation of regional identities and their life style and the consequence of the migration and its impact on colonial Odisha

economy. Also demonstrated the different caste who are migrated and worked as a labor in different mills and factories, also highlighted the questions like, the participation of the women in this migration narratives, and the question of gender.

The major districts like Cuttack, Balasore and Puri were highly damaged by the great famine of 1866 and the consequence was the larger migration. Cuttack district was badly affected by the great famine .Its development was retarded to some extent in the next decade by the terrible cyclone of 1885AD. There would probably have been a similar growth of population during the decade ending in 1901AD, had not been for succession of bad agricultural seasons leading to a large increase of migration.³ Owing to floods in 1900AD and to drought in 1901AD, the two opening years of the decade were short crops. Other side Jajpur and the Kendrapara was highly affected by Cholera disease. ⁴During the scarcity and the epidemic people were migrated to Bengal and working in the various factories and industries. Also railway opens a new door to the migrants for better opportunities in Bengal including cotton industries, jute industries, cool mines and the textiles industries.. The annual estimation that reflected, there were eleven percent of workers working in Bengal. In 1908AD the sub divisional officer of Jajpur took a rough census and found that 50,000 persons from that subdivision alone had left their houses under the pressure of scarcity and high price.

Another side Balasore district was also highly affected by the famine. Two epidemics of Cholera had occurred in these three year the first breaking out in 1907AD and being responsible for 1,000 deaths, while the second which broke out next year, was a terrible devastation which carried off 28,000 people.⁵ Also the winter rice over a large part of Thanas Dhamnagar

and Chandbali was again damage by floods, while scanty rainfall in October, when the crop was in the year, seriously affected the outturn over a great part of the district.⁶ The damage caused by the alternating floods and drought in these successive years. The distress of the poorer classes is, however, relieved by migration which has been facilitated by the construction of the Bengal-Nagpur Railway in 1899AD and the Mayurbhanj State Railway in 1904AD, third railway connecting Balasore with the capital of the Nilagiri State has also been opened recently, but there is as yet practically no passenger traffic. As per as the census report data's are concern are there were a slight migration from Jalesore and Balipal compare to other part of the Balasore district. Labor came in to Balipal from the adjoining subdivision of Contai the Midnapore districts to reclaim waste land and jungle, while Santals and other aboriginals come to Jalesore from the Mayurbhanj state in search of work.. Where Chakarverti Rethinking...pointed out that, Balasore sent highest volume of Odia labor to Bengal jute industries.⁷

As in other district of Odisha, the census of 1881AD brought out a large increase of population in Puri amounting to 15.4 per cent. But the year 1891AD witnessed a crop failure floods and cyclone, there was scarcity in 1897AD. But the percentage of migrant from Puri was not further like Balasore and Cuttack.⁸ But the census report shows that there were 3% Odia labors working⁹ in jute mill of the early 20th century. But other side the opening up the railway stations that helps to Puri, become the center of immigration. There were, first, the railways: the East Indian Railway, the North West Railway and the Bengal-Nagpur Railway. The eastern Bengal state railway operating from Sealdah ran parallel to the river and traversed what was to become by the run of century the great heartland of jute industry. These become significant after the 1890AD when the railways connect men from villages of United Province, Bihar, Odisha and Central Provinces. In other language railways fill the gap between the village and towns In addition to the railways, rivers, canals, and roads carried raw materials to different industries of Calcutta and Assam.

In the writings of Samita Sen "the issues of gender have not evoked any response from Indian labor historians who have sustained their arguments about 'caste' by narrowly focusing on 'organized' industrial workers. Science industrial workers are primarily men and usually 'single' migrants, it has been assumed that 'working-class women' have no specific relevance to class.¹⁰ It has not even been asked why or how the industrial working class became overwhelmingly male." So the history of migration centrally argued about the men how they worked in

the different industries and the and served as a workers. Other sides the marginalization's of the women in the industrial sector tell a very different story about their efficiency and their strength.¹¹ Especially the women were treated as the domestic worker, care giving worker.¹² The categorization of the work like heavy machinery work cannot done by the women in the factory the frequency would very lower compare to the male.¹³ Other side they work as a lenient work as the care giving worker and the house hold worker. If we see the statistics of Puri on the 1901AD and 1911AD that gives clear date about the women were largely migrated compared to the male. The statistics of the 1901AD highlights the amount of the worker in industry was 2to three percent and that was rise up to 6 to 7 percent in the 1911AD .¹⁴ The Odia women labor worked in various industries of the Bengal including jute cotton and the textile industries. More than that largely they work in on tea industries in Assam.¹⁵

Apart from the women migration the question of the caste migration is also important. Like the Brahmin and the khstriya like the dominated caste were not leave their places. The enjoys the high portion of land and leading a aristocracy and the priestly life. The people who are migrated were from the lower castes. There were 26 major dominated Hindu castes who were migrant. Among them Chamara, Dhoba, Dom, Hari, Kamara, Kaiberta, Chasa, Goudaand Teli's are important.¹⁶ Another bigger question was, their life style in the newly established colonial city and dose the city lifestyle erase the caste barriers from the society¹⁷. The wages and the living condition were not so good that reflected when Kamala, an Odia women employed by Howarh jute mill said "two people cannot live".¹⁸ Even the 'mill lines' crowded with migrant laborers, bad housing conditions, particularly in the private bastis, small houses with little ventilation and light, open drains, public bathing places.¹⁹

Different regional literature gives a final touch to the paper. The various story and the narratives that indulge in this study .Example like, at the beginning of this century, raja Radha Krishna Patra the youngest son of a small land holder came out from his village on a religious tour with his two wives.²⁰ They came to Titagarh, the women started working in the mill a Radha was asked to bring workers for the mill when he returned to his village, and in three batches encountered problems with the heads of the village, but once this pattern requested him to take them to Titagarh. When Radha came back to the village, people requested him to take them to Titagarh.²¹ All his four sons came to work in the mill, and seventeen grandsons. From Gurundi there are a larger extend of Oriya family. Like that other literature gives a different scenario for the colonial migration history.²²

Conclusion: Odisha was a part of the Bengal presidency till the impending of the twentieth century. So the paper presents a different history of labor migration both undivided and the divided Odisha provinces'. The larger historical narrative starts with the devastating famine of Na'anka Durvikya. Why, it was significant because of its causes and the consequences. The statistics and the census report says that the great famine responsible death of the one fourth of the total population. So the people were forced to migrate and served as laborers and workers in the different industries of Bengal and the tea industries of Assam. ²³The paper also talks about the major district were badly effected of the famine and sent a large amount of population who served as laborers. The living condition was not so good ,but the end of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth century opened a path for the Labor Welfare association and the Working

Organization, helps the power of labors in different factories and the industries. Not only the hegemony of the male domination the study also demonstrated the women who served as the house worker and caregiving worker also find a significance place in this larger interpretation. Also from Puri districts the women were largely migrated and most of them were working on tea industries of Assam. Apart from the social identities, caste identities, another identity was existed, regional identities, which refer the streets divided in to various line that known as the Odia line and the Madrasis lines. ²⁴The census report was the prevalent example of that. The report shows, different caste who were the worker in various mills, and factories. The people who migrated from rural village from Odisha they maintain a hierarchical distance in private life. So this is the larger interpretation or the history of the colonial Odisha's labor migration.

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