



SECOND WORLD WAR AND THE INFLUX OF BURMA TO TAMIL NADU

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ABSTRACT

Burma being a neighbor of India there was a flow of population from the later to the former in the past. The first Indian settlers went to Burma by the first century of the Christian era. Indian immigration began an economic and political consequence in Burma.

KEYWORDS: economic and political consequence , East India company.

INTRODUCTION :

The modern emigration started from 1824 due to wars of East India company with the Burmese Kings. Legally, emigration was permitted to Burma since 1837. From 1834 to 1859 there were more than a million Indians left for Burma. The latter group were mostly from the poor and crowded districts of Madras Presidency. In Burma the Tamil influx led to an enormous increase in the Hindu elements. Thousands of Tamil people from Tanjore, Ramnad, Devakottai and Virudhachalam went and settled there in Mingaladon, Mandalay and Commaid.

On the out break of Second World War and the entry of Japan into it, the Indians in Burma, especially the Tamils were put to lot of hardship. There was incessant bombing, looting and other outrages and there was no security of life or property for a large number of Indians who abandoned all their possession fled to India as evacuees by land, sea or whatever other means were available.

In the year 1941 when the Second World war was going on, they had to undergo a lot of hardship. Most of them left off their property in the hands of small agents and trekked back through Assam and Bengal to their home land. The lands of some had to lie fallow. So most of their investments have been completely destroyed. The condition of those people may be very well imagined in the Chettinad area. People lost every thing and were selling away their properties even their houses were mortgaged .

It is estimated that 4,00,000 people, the majority of them Indians reached India from Burma by sea, air or overland upto the end of May 1941. When Japan entered into the second world war the Royal Air Force attacked group of Japanese occupied buildings , Aerodromes, Railway Stations. Japanese occupied villages in many part of the Burma particularly Rangoon, Kalemaya, Pakokku, Mingaladon, Toungoo, Mandalay and Meiktila. There was incessant bombing, looting and other outrages. There was no security of life or property for a large number of Indians in Burma.

The most obvious and immediate problem confronting returnees is that of physical insecurity. Irrespective of the level of violence returnee situations are frequently characterized by high levels of Social tension and psychological insecurity. A less evident but equally important form of insecurity experienced by returnees arises from their legal status and access to judicial procedures. Three issues are of particularly rights importance in this respect, citizenship, documentation and property rights.

One of the more immediate results of the termination of hostilities with Japan so far as Madras was concerned was the return of prisoners of war and civilian internees from the Far East. They began to arrive in Madras gradually.

In all upto 21 December 1941, 45 ships arrived in Madras bringing approximately 27,000 released allied prisoners of war and internees of these more than 1,200 were civilian internees and a further 1,500 were Indian evacuees mostly police men and their families. The Red Cross organized an enquiry bureau to help repatriates and their families.

The total number of evacuees who came direct by steamer from all countries was 17,281 including 15,808 from Burma out of which 8,951 evacuees were destitutes and government gave relief to them. After the third week of February 1942 the influx of evacuees into the Presidency was mainly by train. The evacuees came from Burma via Assam and Bengal and due to their long track, they were generally in a poor state of health. A clearance camp was opened in Madras on 19th February 1942. The evacuees arriving by train were received at the station by the staff of the protectorates offices. The more seriously sick among them were sent to hospitals and the destitutes were taken to the camp, where food, clothes, medical relief etc., were provided. Those bound for places beyond Madras were provided with railway tickets and money for their incidental expenses on the journey.

The batches of people arrived in June 1942, were the most sickly and number of deaths among them was high. Several of them were suffering from cerebral malaria, typhoid, small pox, measles etc. Additional hospital arrangements were made. A hospital of the type known as the "Detention Mat Hospital" was opened. The total number of evacuees who arrived in Madras both by steamer and by the train was about 60,000 of whom about 50,000 were destitutes and were assisted by government. The Indian evacuees from Burma were also assisted to return to their respective country upto the end of February 1948 under the scheme of aided repatriation of the government of India. At that time the number of persons enumerated in Madras but born elsewhere was only 2,10,000.

RECEPTION AND DISPERSAL OF REFUGEES FROM BURMA IN 1950

Indians who have been rendered destitute in Burma were being repatriated to India at the cost of the government of India. These refugees were received on arrival and dispersed to their villages by this office under the orders of the government of India. 203 persons from Burma were repatriated to the state during the year 1950-52. 8,478 at the Port of Madras. During the year 1958-59 unskilled workers already settled in Burma were permitted to return to their country after short visit to India, wives and minor children of unskilled workers in the territory were permitted to join their bread winners under the general orders of relaxation of the ban imposed on the departure of unskilled workers for purpose of unskilled work.

The repatriates mainly consisted of two categories those who had some stake in the mother country left and those who had no such background. But had to depend upon the succour offered by the government. The first category of people stayed for one or two days in Madras city before availing themselves of railway concessions to get to their native villages. The second category waited for rehabilitation. For the second category government proposed urgently to establish a transit camp at Sholavaram Tank on high level ground for the purpose of building huts for about 5,00 families.

Thus many of the Burmese, who originally the inhabitants of Madras Presidency and other parts of India returned to their original home place after the second world war, when Japan started to attack Burma. In their home country, they were not treated as equal citizens but refugees. But after the formation of United Nations High Commission for Refugees in 1951 which took initial steps for the rehabilitation of refugees all over the world including India and Tamil Nadu and following in the foot steps of the UNHCR, the Government of Tamil Nadu and India took efforts to rehabilitate the Burmese Indians, who returned to India from Burma as refugees.

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