

PANEL 1

ऐतिहासिक सिंहावलोकन Historical Overview

Object of the note.

WHEN I returned from leave in 1871, I found that several cases connected with the emigration of labor from India of much interest and importance were either under consideration or likely soon to press for decision. The most prominent were the questions of the condition of emigrants in Réunion and in British Guiana. Under these circumstances it appeared to me that it would be useful to compile a general history of the facts of emigration and of the policy pursued by the Government of India in regulating or controlling the flow of labor across the sea. I therefore began to have papers collected in May 1871; the task has, however, proved somewhat heavier than I expected, and this note has taken nearly two years to finish. Imperfect as it is, it has involved a good deal of labor, for I have had to read a great mass of papers, which, when examined, yielded little of interest in comparison with their bulk. Indeed, in some cases I may be thought to have retained too much detail. In getting materials for the second part I have been much helped by Dr. Grant, the Protector of Emigrants at Calcutta. Indeed, without his kind assistance, that portion of the note would have been very meagre indeed.

History of labour migration in India 'A note on Emigration from India' by J. Geoghegan, Under Secretary to the Government of India, 1873

Earlier emigration from south of India; to the Malayan Peninsula; to Tenasserim; and to Ceylon.

The earliest emigration seems to have taken place from the southern portion of the continent. A Tamil exodus to the Straits Settlements had begun before the end of the last century. And soon after the conquest of the Tenasserim Provinces labor began to flow thither from the other side of the Bay of Bengal. The emigrants to the Straits Settlements were employed both as domestic servants and as agricultural laborers. In Burma the sphere of employment was confined to that of domestic service and the miscellaneous labor of mercantile ports. It is probable that Ceylon, too, from the date of its European colonization, attracted labor from the south of India. But emigration across the Bay has hitherto been uncontrolled, while, as regards Ceylon, no sooner was the fact of the flow of labor thither ascertained, than emigration was, under certain guarantees on the part of the Colonial Government, freed from the prohibition to which it had for eight years been, in point of law, liable, but which had never been enforced. There is, therefore, no exact record of the number of natives of India who have emigrated in these directions; but it is very considerable, especially in the case of Ceylon. Recent papers shew that for the 10 years ending 1869 an average number of 65,000 persons (of whom nearly 50,000 were adult males) emigrated annually from Madras to Ceylon. The average number returning in each year was upwards of 48,000. According to the latest accounts from Penang, there were in that settlement 25,000 natives of India out of a population of 150,000.

Migration from Southern India to Straits Settlements (group of British Colonies comprising Penang, Singapore), Tenasserim (now in Myanmar), and Ceylon (now Sri Lanka)

In 1873, J. Geoghegan, Under Secretary to the Government of India, presented a "Note on Emigration from India" that arose from his return to work in 1871. The note explores the significant issues surrounding Indian labor migration, particularly to Réunion and British Guiana. Geoghegan took on the monumental task of compiling a comprehensive history of emigration, as well as the policies enacted by the Indian government to regulate the flow of labor across the sea. It took him nearly 2 years to compile it with the invaluable assistance of Dr. Grant, the Protector of Emigrants.

In the late 19th century, significant emigration from southern India began to the Straits Settlements (a group of British Colonies comprising Penang, Singapore, Malacca, Dindings, and Labuan), Tenasserim (now in Myanmar), and Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), driven by economic opportunities in agriculture, domestic service, and port labour. Tamil workers played a crucial role, particularly in the Straits Settlements, where labour was in high demand. By the time of European colonization, Ceylon had also become a major destination, with emigration reaching an average of 65,000 people annually by the 1860s. While records remain sparse, it is clear that migration from southern India profoundly impacted the region's labour markets, shaping both their economy and cultural fabric.

Emigration to Bourbon in 1830.

The first instance I have traced belongs to the year 1830,* when a French merchant, by name Joseph Argand, carried some 130 artisans to Bourbon, the Government of India having, on view of the ordinances in force and the contracts made with the emigrants, permitted the departure of the latter, conditionally on each man appearing before one of the Magistrates of Calcutta and acknowledging that he went voluntarily. The contracts, which were for a term of five years, looked liberal enough on paper, Rupees 8, in addition to an ample dietary, being fixed as the minimum monthly wage.

Emigration of 130 artisans to Bourbon facilitated by French merchant Joseph Argand, 1830

The first recorded instance of emigration to Bourbon occurred in 1830, when Joseph Argand, a French merchant, arranged for the departure of around 130 artisans from India. The Government of India allowed this migration under specific conditions, including each emigrant acknowledging voluntary departure before a Magistrate in Calcutta. The contracts, which were set for five years, appeared generous, offering a minimum wage of Rupees 8 per month along with ample food provisions. This early migration reflects both the growing demand for labour in overseas colonies and the complexities of migration during the colonial era.

Facts of emigration under Acts V and XXXII, 1837.

It is impossible to reconcile accurately the various accounts; but the emigration of this period from Calcutta, according to what seems the most trustworthy statement, was as follows from the passing of Act V, 1837, to August 1838 :—

- To *Mauritius*, 7,239 men, 100 women, and 72 children, total 7,411 souls.
- To *British Guiana*, 407 men, 7 women, and 10 children, total 424 souls.
- To *Bourbon*, 60 men.
- To *Australia*, 89 men, the first and last *direct* emigration to Australia.
- To *Batavia*, 4 men.

Under Acts V & XXXII of 1837, emigration from Calcutta reached notable numbers between 1837 and 1838. The most reliable records show that a total of 7,411 people, including 7,239 men, 100 women, and 72 children, were sent to Mauritius. Smaller groups of emigrants left for British Guiana (424 people), Bourbon (60 men), and Batavia (4 men). A noteworthy and first-time emigration was to Australia, with 89 men making the journey. These movements highlight the broader trend of migration during the colonial period, often driven by labour needs and colonial policies.

Emigration from Calcutta under Acts V & XXXII of 1837

Emigration to Seychelles. Act XXII of 1862.

In 1862, on the representation of the Government of Mauritius, an Act was passed (XXII of that year) placing emigration to the "British Colonial dependency of Seychelles" in the position of emigration to Mauritius (or nearly so, for some of the Acts modifying Act XV of 1842 on minor matters seem to have been overlooked). A section is added allowing emigrants for Seychelles to be taken to undergo quarantine at Mauritius, and in such case the emigrants are allowed to contract for service in that island. The Act also contains the usual proviso that it shall only take effect when the Governor General in Council should notify that the necessary measures had been taken at the place of destination for the protection of emigrants and in respect of their return to India. I have had careful search

In 1862, Act XXII was introduced following a request from the Government of Mauritius to regulate emigration to Seychelles, a British colonial dependency. The new legislation aligned emigration policies for Seychelles with those for Mauritius, although some minor provisions from earlier Acts, like Act XV of 1842, were overlooked. The Act included a provision for emigrants to undergo quarantine in Mauritius before being transported to Seychelles, and it allowed for the possibility of emigrants contracting for service in Mauritius. It also stipulated that the Act would only take effect once the Governor General in Council confirmed that adequate measures for emigrant protection, including their safe return to India, were in place at the destination.

Act XXII of 1862 to regulate emigration to Seychelles

History of emigration to French colonies.

The climate of Bourbon or Réunion, though highly favorable to Europeans, seems to be prejudicial to Negroes, and the supply of labor was a chronic difficulty in that colony. We have seen that it began to draw on India for labor even before Mauritius. In 1843, a large area had fallen out of cultivation for want of hands to till it, and the colonists addressed the French Government. But the monarchy does not seem to have helped them out of their difficulties. In 1848, the emancipation of the slaves brought matters to a crisis, and the result was the establishment of an emigration from the French Settlements on the Coromandel Coast, which degenerated into the system of kidnapping and decoying British subjects already noticed, and brought about the passing of Act XXIV of 1852.

Réunion, or Bourbon, struggled with chronic labour shortages due to its climate, which, though favourable to Europeans, proved harsh for the local African population. The colony began importing labour from India as early as Mauritius, but by 1843, vast tracts of land in Réunion were left uncultivated due to a lack of workers. In response, the colonists appealed to the French government, but little help was provided. The 1848 abolition of slavery exacerbated the problem, prompting the French to establish organized emigration from India. Unfortunately, this system descended into kidnapping and deception, targeting British subjects, leading to the passage of Act XXIV of 1852 to curb the exploitation of emigrants.

Act XXIV in 1852 to prevent forced labour and exploitations of India

FORM No. 21.
FORM OF NOMINAL ROLL (LIST) OF EMBARKED EMIGRANTS.

Descriptive particulars of Emigrants embarked in the Steam Ship "UMZINTO" for Natal on the 15th day of September 1909.

Serial No.	Particulars of Registration.			Name.	Father's Name.	Age.	Sex.	Caste.	Residence.			If died on voyage, date of death.	Remarks.
	Place.	Date.	Number in Month Register.						Town.	Village.	Village.		
1	Widdow	18 th June	115	Mr. Sivanayya Sa.	S. Sivanayya Sa.	22	M.	Tamil	W. West	Solar	Kolliyal		vaccinated
2	Swaminathan	13 th "	3	Swaminathan Sa.	Swaminathan Sa.	27	M.	Tamil	W. West	Kanigai	Kanigai		-
3	W. S. Sivanayya	18 th "	217	S. Sivanayya Sa.	S. Sivanayya Sa.	24	M.	Tamil	W. West	Solar	Kanigai		-
4	Swaminathan	20 th "	222	Swaminathan Sa.	Swaminathan Sa.	24	M.	Tamil	W. West	Solar	Kanigai		-

I do hereby certify that the above-mentioned persons who have been examined and passed by me are free from all bodily diseases that they have either small pox or have been vaccinated and that they are fit subjects for emigration.

Form of Nominal Roll (List) of Embarked Emigrants, data of emigrants travelled through the Steam ship named 'Umzinto' to Natal containing the details of emigrants like place, date/ month, name of emigrant, father's name, age, gender, caste etc., dated 15th September 1909.

Emigration Register: Nominal Roll (List) and medical certificate of Emigrants to Natal, 1909