

## Indian women migration under indenture during 1830's-1930's

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### Abstract

This paper presents a picture of migration of women with in India and outside India under Indentured system. It discusses the pitiable condition of women under Indenture. Next it attempts to analyze push and pull factors leading to migration and whether migration really improved their condition.

**Keywords:** Assam plantation; indentured system; Malaya; migration; Surinam

### 1. Introduction

Migration is often taken to be a modern concept, but it has been prevalent since ages. People have chosen to migrate sometimes to escape hunger and poverty, sometimes in search of employment and new economic opportunities, other times they migrate in connection with trade; also they choose to migrate to escape political oppression, war, conflict, environmental problems and to seek freedom. Here in this paper we focus on the migration which started during the first half of 19<sup>th</sup> century and lasted till mid-20<sup>th</sup> century under indentured system. Indentured labour system was a system of recruitment based on contract lasting for three to five years often enforced by penal code. Institutional changes like abolishment of slavery during 19<sup>th</sup> century paved the need for an alternative source of cheap labour (for instance sugar plantation). Hence this contract based system for recruitment came up. Lots of fraud, deception, kidnapping prevailed in the recruitment process which was carried under *Sardari* system, *Arkatti* system (Assam), *Kangini* system (Ceylon) etc. The labour form was coercive in nature; required to do hard manual work in plantation (tea, rubber, coffee, sugar and tobacco), mining, textile etc. This made indentured system prefer man, as they would be more suited to such jobs. Life on plantation was quite harsh as social, economic and personal all aspects of life got regulated by the planters. Workers were offered below subsistence wages that too depended on piece rate often. This made them indebted most of the times and had to re-indenture.

There was negligible provision for hygiene, leave, medical assistance etc. They had to live in barracks (communal) which was under surveillance. All this made the recruitment process difficult; women were even more difficult to be recruited. Those who were migrating had to appear before the magistrate and sign the contract "voluntarily". In nut shell indentured system was a capitalist system with its foundation yet resting on old socio-economic relation. Going through the existing set of literature, it is evident that the women were the worst victims of indenture system. Whether she migrated or not she was the one who suffered the most. When her male partner migrated she was left alone in her village struggling to support her family and herself; and when she migrated; became the

scarce resource to fulfil the manly sexual desires and hence was forced to have multiple partners and in a way prostitution became their destiny (if she managed to survive). Even that was not enough; it was only she who was held responsible for all forms of crime pertaining to sexual jealousy. Sexual jealousy, prostitution and sexually transmitted diseases epitomized women's presence during indenture. This paper is an attempt to look inside the indenture system focusing particularly on the women therein. It includes the analysis of three case studies from three different sources dealing with the factors behind women's migration, process of recruitment, life during indenture finally what all were the consequences of planters policies of recruitment. Samita Sen (2004) <sup>[8]</sup> deals with the first issue that why the women migrated and what all types of migration they undertook. PC Emmer (1987) <sup>[2]</sup> had revisionist view and he describes Indian women's migration as 'emancipation' from hunger starvation and oppression back at home. There is a paper by Lenore Manderson (1997) <sup>[7]</sup> that deals with the colonial government's policies to limit women migration. Women were 'immobile' initially; this was because of both receiving and supplying end's policies. At the supplying end like that in India immobility could be attributed to 'culture'. Culture here meant that respectable women did not migrate. Migration of men with their wives was considered as losing their status at home. '*Pardah*' system along with the patriarchal society meant that women had to be within the boundaries of her house and meant to do the household stuffs along with the child bearing and child rearing. Now the receiving end required immense physical labour able to survive harsh working conditions. Women were physically weaker than man; not found suitable for it. Also child bearing and child rearing and menstruation would reduce efficiency of women. Since the capitalists (planters) focused on cost minimization; they preferred single man migration and discouraged family. Hence factors at both receiving and supplying end made women 'immobile'. Besides this, Surinam (Caribbean colony under Dutch) wanted only 'respectable' women to migrate which was difficult to find and hence supported immobility argument. (Emmer, 1987) <sup>[2]</sup>. Overseas migration provided the women an opportunity to escape

hunger, starvation and deprivation back at home. According to some scholars migration eased the life of women as they enjoyed better living standard, earned wage income, owned food plots when they migrated (Surinam). They went on stating that although migration was not an end of their problems but 'something is better than nothing' (Emmer, 1987) [2]. In spite of this the sex ratio remained skewed. This women 'deprived' world along with the sexual desires of man which was 'natural' paved the way for prostitution and related enterprises of opium and gambling (Manderson, 1997) [7]. This made the colonial government later realize the stabilizing role played by women in the society. By 1872 the British government in a treaty with the Dutch government on migration to Surinam decided that 100 men should be accompanied by 50 women. Likewise 40 women for 100 men in case of Fiji was agreed upon (Brijlal, 1985) [5]. But still the women population remained marginal within indenture. Men's sexual instincts were considered natural whereas women didn't have a choice at all. Men were the subjects and women were the objects of sexual institution within indenture (Manderson, 1997) [7].

## 2. Case Studies

### 2.1. Migration within India

We begin our analysis with India which was a British colony. Cultural restrictions meant migration was a 'manly' thing. Women here migrated internally when she was married and with her family when the situation demanded (flood, drought etc.). Basically the women in colonial rule was broadly pulled in two directions; firstly by her family that demanded her unpaid labour to look after the house hold and sexual reproduction; secondly by plantation, textile and jute industry to do the feminine job that needed less physical strength. For the planters women provided cheap labour and acted as cushion in case of high labour demand. Back at home, the risk of tax burden on household had to be borne by the women too as she was supposed to support her family. Existing class of land lords also demanded cheap women labour. Marriage of the women acted as a way to exercise better control over women labour by her family (marriage at tender age led to emotional weakness). Women of lower class travelled between her natal home and her husband's home during the peak season to work in the fields and home. Short term migration was frequent in that sense. So here '*pardah*' system of remaining inside four walls of house is dependent on class too. As stated earlier, woman's migration was seen as loss of their social status at home. But the wives of *Sardars* and other good earners accompanied them. This again suggests that caste and gender were interlinked. We had four types of migration in India namely urban industrial migration, coal mines migration, migration to Assam tea plantation and finally overseas migration. We deal with each case one by one. Urban industrial migration implied migration primarily to Calcutta and Bombay that were the centre of jute industry and cotton textile respectively and were port cities too. These industries mainly employed man. But in early 1920's women's proportion increased and was 1/4<sup>th</sup> in Bombay and 1/5<sup>th</sup> in Calcutta. Most of the women workers were migrants; small proportions of local women were employed. There were internal push factors (droughts, famines, landlessness etc.) at play that made these women work in these industries. Housing

and employment constraints (lighter work) made the women less productive in urban location and hence deterred their entry (Nirmala Banerjee). Capitalist's policy of favouring man's recruitment was formed as a response to cultural forces that restricted women's migration (Ranjit Das Gupta). They concluded women could act as stabilizing later forces back at home. Interview conducted by the commission in 1891 showed that most of the women working in mills were widows. So basically push factor was at play on account of family (widowhood, barren lady, oppressive marriages) and economic conditions (droughts, loss of male partners leading to destitution, famine) women working in mills were stereotyped. For instance Bengali women working in mills were thought to be prostitute. Women who migrated lost self-respect and could not even return back.

Migration to coal mines by women was confined to Raniganj-Jharia belt of Bengal and Bihar that produced 90% of India's coal. Recruitment was conducted in gangs (Ex- *Zamindari* system). So the women here formed 37.5% of total work force. Most of the workers including women came from low castes. Man dug and cut the coal women and children carried it. Women were forbidden from underground work and hence became marginal. Tea plantation was the major source of revenue for the colonial government of India. Tea plantation began in 1830's in Assam. Soaring world tea prices in 1860's led to expansion of tea industry and therefore lot of companies got registered. Colonial government in order to boost plantation provided land and capital on favourable terms to companies; so land and capital was not any problem. Since Assam was sparsely populated and workers there were stereotyped as lazy; labour mobilization became problematic. So this lack of labour market in Assam demanded alternative source of labour to be looked for. The recruits then came from Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh and Orissa and were recruited through *Sardari* system or *Arkatti* system. Lot of fraud, deception, kidnapping and other illegal practices continued to prevail in recruitment. Workers were controlled by the penal code (1865 Act) contracts were long term punitive, low wages (Rs. 5 for men and Rs. 4 for women, 1865 Act, Bengal council) which further was combined with piece rate. Life on plantation was quite harsh and working conditions unhygienic and hence mortality rate was high. All these made plantation attractive to only those women who wanted to escape or hide.

Recruitment became increasingly difficult as it was difficult to mobilize people. This increased the cost of recruitment upto Rs. 120 based on the class of coolies supplied termed as 'high cost of cheap labour (Behal and Mohapatra, 1992) [1]. Problems got multiplied in case of women; for instance married women migrating alone was considered defiance of her family but immoral practices of recruitment yet prevailed which alarmed the male workers at the ease with which women would disappear to Assam plantation. Besides this women's recruitment was opposed by local land owning elites for whom it meant depletion of their cheap labour reservoir. During 1870's debate was going on surrounding women's migration and her freedom. If women migrated it meant leaving behind her family and children; also this would mean greater choice to escape from oppression (family) and 'free' wage earning. During 1870's women were kidnapped from their shelter without their consent in Chotanagpur. This led to huge outcry against plantation recruitment. Rape, molestation, kidnapping, elicit marriages all were involved in the

recruitment; hence was highly resented. So the discussion was whether married women's choice could be voluntary. The answer was a big 'NO' the reasons were mainly three reasons -they were not aware of the actual forms of the contract, they were not given the right to leave their husband and children and finally migration could lead to dissolution of marriage and exercise of alternative sexual partners. The recruiters tried to lure the women with ornaments, presents and clothes. Laws were framed to deal with provisions of women marriage and her freedom (e.g. monogamy). In 1882, 'free' immigration law was passed to suit the needs to planters, did not require registration before migration. This provided a path to escape away from oppressive husbands. This act led to the disappearance of wives and children without any trace. For example in 1883, 69 cases of kidnapping got registered but only 3 got solved. This disappearance of women had far reaching consequences; for that matter, those who went into wrong hands i.e. Prostitutes ended up being prostitute themselves. Example -Bimala who got kidnapped for 24 hours in a prostitute's house was not accepted by her family and hence ended up becoming prostitute herself. Girls in their teens were the major targets. It was suggested to prohibit licensing of married women without her husband's consent to deal with the migration of married women (Sen, 2004) [8]. By 1880's, nationalist press all around India started raising the issue of the method of recruitment and the sexual exploitation of women in Assam plantation. The situation was so much worse that if a married woman wished to migrate it meant she wanted to desert her husband. Women thought of using their 'wage, income' to inflict mental harm on her husband when she broke up with her him (Sen, 2004) [8]. The irony was that the migration that was undertaken to reduce the sufferings actually increased it. 1901, Assam labour emigration Act brought new restriction on 'free' emigration and a clause was introduced to deal with the migration of women separately where a woman could not be recruited without the consent of her father her husband. Hence the issue of voluntary migration was settled against her and was denied the right of 'consent' in labour market.

## 2.2. Overseas Migration

Overseas migration included migration to Fiji, Caribbean, Mauritius, Ceylon, Malaya and Natal to work as indentured labour during early 19th and late 20th century basically to work on plantations, mining, public work i.e. railways, roadways etc. The overseas migration during colonial period was under close scrutiny because of contractual nature of the recruitment, women for that matter were recruited as independent labour unit earning wage. This independent recruitment of women unlike industrial and coal mine recruitment where she was domesticated wife or dependent was widely opposed. Abolition of slavery was the main force that led to the export of indentured labour, single man migration was encouraged in order to minimize cost and maximize productivity. Export of labour remained controversial from both the ends; firstly when they migrated, the plight of families left behind who had to face destitution and pauperization back at home. Among those who migrated it was difficult to complete the contract and come back because of debt led re-indenture. So returning took years and sometimes they could not even return back. Near absence of women in the plantation caused social instability which was

represented by wide spread prostitution, wife murder, high suicide rates etc. All those women who migrated were exploited multi-dimensionally that is on accounts of sex, race and class (Hoeft, 1987) [4]. Firstly women were exploited because of the harsh penal system with below subsistence wages which made their survival difficult. Secondly their physical exploitation to satisfy the sexual desires of men forced them to have multiple partners and hence their lives became hell. And the final blow came when only she is blamed for the immoral activities inflicted on them, where in most of the cases she is forcefully pushed in. This led to 'wife chopping' by their counterpart who justified it on grounds of her low morals. We look at women's overseas recruitment from the basics to know why she was the one held responsible for all sins inflicted on her. Migration treated women as independent 'wage' earning unit which symbolized freedom. Hence in many cases women took it as an opportunity to escape all her problems which could be economically induced or oppression on account of her family. Some of the scholars have described migration as 'emancipation' from their sufferings. Emancipation was in relative terms as migration at least relieved them from sheer starvation. For example- the depot at Calcutta provided free lunch to the hungry families, which made the worker feel something was better than nothing. Also this emphasized difference between survival and death (Emmer, 1987) [2].

In spite of all this recruitment was not easy. In case of Surinam, a Caribbean colony under Dutch, the recruiters wanted that migrant women should be 'honest' and of 'decent' moral character and they should be willing to do so. So here the recruitment was free of frauds and deception. Likewise in case of Surinam, It was argued that working condition was much better than in India. They had certain provisions for women like if 240 days employment was not provided in a year, she could complain. But still women's wage was lower as compared to men as she was engaged with feminine work that needed less physical strength. This hypothesis does not go well with the fact that the higher paid jobs for which no greater physical strength was needed too did not have significant proportion of women. Wage did not suffice the survival requirements which had to be met by additional income from garden plots. Also in case of Surinam, the author keeps on arguing women were better off and her exploitation sexually was measured through the number of children born out of mixed parentage. Further the author (Emmer, 1987) [2] says that crimes related to women was no less in India itself. 'Freedom' on the plantation in Surinam also meant that the women had the option of to go back home given free passage or could continue there. Figures suggested that 13.75% of women preferred re-indenture that means life was better as compared to India. Here in Surinam she could earn either in cash or in kind by working in households, cultivating garden plots and huckstering. The mortality rate too is compared for women that was 24 per 1000 women in Surinam, which was quite low as compared to India. All this was supplemented with the fact that higher proportion of women preferred to remain in Surinam after the completion of her contract (Emmer, 1987) [2].

But this above story of being better off does not hold true in all the cases and in fact it is contradictory for Surinam too. So we look at the case from Malaya which was a British Colony required indentured labour for carrying out the public work of



building roads, railways and the to work on plantation. Malaya had indentured labour both from India and China on temporary basis. The capitalists preferred Indian labour which was thought to be 'peaceful' and easily 'controlled'. Again the stereotype was at play in recruitment process. Initially traditional patriarchal society defined women's task to produce heirs and look after the household. The recruitment process of Malaya was based on *Kangini* system mainly yet there was widespread prevalence of prostitution. We find in case of Malaya that structural development can alter cultural prohibition. Example -the quota imposed by Malaya authority on single migration of men accounting for skewed sex ratio led to huge migration of Chinese women of lower class to support their families (Lee; 1989) <sup>[6]</sup>. Capitalist's policies of single man migration to maximize profit led to skewed sex ratio; this made bringing women to Malaya as sex workers a profitable enterprise. Along with this sex related industries like gambling and opium also flourished. This lust for profit made the recruitment process for indenture in Malaya very deceptive. All sorts of immoral practices to recruit women were carried out. Hence women emigration for indenture eventually resulted in prostitution. This form of sexual enterprise was the result of colonial government's policies that led to changes in local economies and demography. The sex institution stood to justify the natural desires of man which had to be satisfied. Simultaneously women were assumed to be desire less; hence subject - object kind of relationship existed between man labour class and women prostitutes. The extent of profitability can be estimated from the huge number of prostitutes i.e. around 6000 operating in the colony during 1890's. Brothels- a place which comprised of a brothel people and a number of prostitutes acted as an institute to provide sexual services. This too was organized on hierarchical lines. For example- in Singapore European women had European clientele and Chinese had Chinese clientele. Tamils visited Tamilian brothels. Japanese and Malay prostitutes were considered to be of high regard. Japanese were considered of high regard because of hygiene and British had extensive links with Malay community. Some of the officials had Malay mistress and European wives. Widespread prostitution led to STDs. Venereal diseases infected the prostitutes. This made colonial government come up with contagious diseases ordinance in 1860's that required registration and photographic record of prostitutes operating medical examination of prostitutes was also carried out. Hence these steps taken by colonial government was not to protect the women from prostitution but to prevent the spread of venereal diseases from them to men and hence capitalist way to maintain labour productivity. Tolerance of prostitution was basically undertaken on the belief that it was important to satisfy man's desires and protect the innocent women. Still the authorities did not recognize the fact that sex was important to man's physical and mental health as Japanese thought. Man's sexual appetite if not fulfilled will lead to unnatural sex which justified prostitution as natural evil. So it was for men's health, cleanliness and sanitation of brothels was emphasized. Race was interlinked to gender as evident from the hierarchy of clientele in prostitution. Migration policies to much extent determined the exploitation on account of gender and race. The colonial government in Malaya when compared the cost of immigration and public health expenditure, thought of reproduction. To meet this objective a lot of women got

rescued from prostitution and offered as wives to workers. Medical facilities to control venereal diseases were also provided. There was a decline in mortality rate too. The colonial government then signed contract to increase women migration; like- 40 women were to accompanied with 100 men to Fiji according to 1868 Act (Lal, 1985) <sup>[5]</sup> but the colonial government realized that the permanent solution would only come when the family migrated. Also they thought of letting only the decent women migrate (Surinam) would facilitate stability. In spite of all this emphasis was given on 'productive' bodies rather than reproductive which again meant the authorities did not reach the root of the problem. Legal measures to ensure the medical examination of the workers at brothels were carried out. The venereal diseases can get communicated to Europe through Europeans. Also that can spread at ports causing negative impact on trade. All this meant investment in medical facilities was justified. The prostitution industry also grew because of higher returns as compared to other manual labour in factories. So there were three kinds of prostitutes operating there- voluntarily (on their own will), sold and finally pawned who had to pay their debts through these activities (Lee, 1989) <sup>[6]</sup>. Women's condition was beyond description on account of their misery. 80-90% venereal infections came from women. Cruelty and deprivation was all that defined their status. Debt did not let them leave prostitution and many of them merged with workers therein. Prostitutes were disassociated with wives and were termed as recreational (Manderson, 1997). The provision of medical facilities by the doctor was not up to the mark as it only served their pockets. By 1920's suppression of prostitution began because of pressure from British sexual hygiene council and the traffic of women committee. By 1930's government put an end to commercial sex which finally made the women important actors in colonial urban life as participants in economic and colonial life.

### 3. Discussion

Going through various sources it can be concluded that basically there are two sets of views that govern women's migration during the early 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Mainstream view (Manderson, 1997; Sen, 2004) <sup>[7, 8]</sup> mainly pertains to the fact that women on migration were worse off. She fell prey to all sorts of exploitations. Migrations for indenture eventually resulted in physical, mental and economic distress. She was forced to have alternative sexual partners; became an instrument to please the high officers. In addition to that the blame on account of sexual jealousy and related crimes was again put on the migrated women. On the other hand revisionists (Emmer, 1987) <sup>[2]</sup> held the view that the women migrated for their good and were able to achieve it. Migration although was not a solution to all their worries but it made the women relatively better off as in case of Surinam. He believed that the women had better living standards and enjoyed freedom when they migrated. So to look inside, the mainstream view; we have two cases of Assam and Malaya. Assam plantations favoured male recruits on account of higher productivity. But the unbalanced sex ratio demanded the fulfilment of sexual appetite which had to be met in order to ensure stability in the plantations. The harsh life on plantation only attracted those women who wanted to escape or hide either from the family oppression or the economic destitution. Both demand and supply factor meant scarcity of woman on

plantation and those who were there became the victims of immense suffering. The scarce woman there gave rise to sexual jealousy among man and related crimes like attacking other workers, suicides, murder etc. Even the wife was murdered and justified by stating her degraded. She was even used to gain favours from the seniors and literally meant an object of recreation. The case of Malaya (Manderson, 1997)<sup>[7]</sup> pictures the extreme of this physical suffering. The demand of woman was there to meet the sexual needs and not for the production activities carried out within the indentured system. This along with lower wages compared to man forced them to prostitution as one can realize the difference between life or death on account of starvation and debt due to low wages. There was no provision of medical facilities, hygiene, sanitation, work leave etc. Obviously all these imply the fact that migration only led their distress and hence the main stream thinkers to justify their point. When we look at the case studies, put forward by revisionists (Emmer, 1987)<sup>[2]</sup>, it appears to be manipulated. In case of Surinam, as it says there was no fraud in recruitment process. True, but we need to look under what circumstances that hold. They only recruited woman who had decent moral character and willing to migrate; that simply means there is no need to fraud. (Hoeft, 1987)<sup>[4]</sup>. Now there also women were paid less as compared to man justified on account of the lesser physical strength demanding jobs. But that meant she should have significant proportion in high paid jobs that needed less physical strength. Even that was not so. There too low income forced them to work in household, food plots etc. to supplement their income. Now the revisionists often argue that living condition was better there as compared to India which too seems contradictory. Wife chopping and suicide remained high when compared to India. So what actually made the women better off on migration is the question. Also they bring forth high re-indenture rate of women to prove their point of better living standard. Here too the revisionists ignore cultural restriction that prevailed in a country like India. Those who returned from indenture or migration such women were considered to have lost her self-respect. There was no place for her in the society. This must have made the women continue to stay there. Secondly debt accumulated because of low income could have forced them to re-indenture. Besides bond could have developed with the community there and moving again by breaking the emotional ties was not that easy. Mortality for women was shown lower in Surinam as compared to India. This too was understated as this may be due to fact that many of the cases went unregistered as that happened in case of Assam. (Behal & Mohapatra; 1992)<sup>[1]</sup>. Then the authors argue that exploitation can be estimated by looking at the children born out of mixed parentage which is counter intuitive as the women who was used just to satisfy sexual desires, meant no child obviously. Hence the revisionist view does not seem to hold given the description. On the whole, women during the indenture were neither recruited for productive purpose nor for reproductive purpose initially. They were meant for recreation and to satisfy manly desires so that society remains stable and unnatural sex (like that in case of Chinese workers in Deli Plantation, Breman) could be avoided. So prostitution was considered to be a necessary evil and hence tolerated. Women were to be held responsible for their own misery. If her husband migrated and she didn't she had to face economic problems, if she migrated that meant losing social status and

if she anyways reached plantation became the scare resource where firstly harsh life and low wages made them suffer later sexual exploitation fulfilled the remaining quota of distress. Not only this, it was the Women who were considered responsible for the suicide and murders committed on account of sexual jealousy. All these are reflective of the patriarchal society that exists even today. This was not enough; the colonial government as in case of Malaya found the increasing menace of sexually transmitted diseases came most of the times from Women. Yet the authorities came for medical support not for the Women per-se but to protect their male productive force, signifying the fact that they still could not realize the importance of Women. Later they came up with suicide and murder on account of women's infidelity since it became unbearable for the husband. Also the consequence of declining men's sexual desire was severe pushing the women to have multiple partners. Women was used as an object to pay debts, gain favour by her husband as described by sold types of prostitution. The instances of wives murder and suicides were the symptoms rather than the cause of social problems during Indenture (Lal, 1985)<sup>[5]</sup>. The abnormal sex ratio was deliberately designed in the early year later they realized the problems with skewed sex ratio. Also the issue of equality in the name of gender first came up when women migrated overseas as independent later units. This was resented. Women in most cases chose to migrate because of this economic 'equality' and 'emancipation'.

#### 4. Conclusion

Summing up, this paper basically examines the gender dynamics of migration and settlement of indentured works. This paper is an attempt to look deep inside the Indian Woman migration internally and overseas using secondary sources. Because of cultural constraints and patriarchal set up women were 'immobile'. Mobility could be seen only in the form of marriage. Also she moved along with her family under certain circumstances like droughts, floods etc. Women under colonial rule was pulled in two directions- one side by her family to do the traditional reproductive and house hold work and other side by the capitalists producing tea, jute, textile etc. So basically migration of women for work along with her husband was considered against their social status. This gender dynamics was interlinked with class set up. Women's migration for work therefore was not favoured either from demand or from supply side. It has been observed that there was four kinds of migration of Indian women. Firstly migration to urban industrial location as dependent domesticated wives mainly. Their participation of women during peak years was as high as 37.5%. They joined industrial set up because of push factors since significant number of women working in textile, industry were widows. Others come to escape out of oppressive family. Stereotype about women working in mills of being prostitutes continued. Secondly coalmines recruited workers in gangs where women's presence was there. She was not meant to do the underground work. So the proportion remained marginal. Thirdly there was migration to Assam tea plantation on large scale on account of Assam being sparsely populated and expansion of tea industry. All sorts of frauds prevailed in migration since voluntary recruitment was possible only when there was asymmetric information regarding work conditions. The harsh work conditions and below subsistence wages

magnified the problems. Capitalist demanded cost minimization and profit maximization and hence preferring male recruitment. Women although not desired, was kidnapped to work on the plantations, this is contradictory to the capitalist's preference for man. Hence something else must be at play like labour shortage that meant recruitment was demanded anyhow. Secondly they wanted cheap labour during peak seasons which women could provide. Thirdly it could be to satisfy the sexual manly appetite on the plantation. The multidimensional exploitation of women and harsh conditions was raised by Nationalist press; this restricted the free migration policy. Finally we had overseas migration of women which for the first time implied 'equality' on grounds of gender as she was recruited independently on wage labour. Need for women's migration came from the deprivation, starvation and oppression at home; but most of the times overseas migration made them worse. This fact is justified by the enterprise of prostitution flourishing in Malaya that includes European, Chinese, Malayan, Tamilian prostitutes. This prostitution industry too was organized on racial lines as described in the paper how different class of labour went to different brothels. Sexually transmitted diseases were widespread. The colonial government tried to prevent it to protect its productive male worker. The migration policy basically determined social setup in the colonies. It was the preference for male worker that sowed the seeds of prostitution. Quota on migration interfered with cultural setup as Chinese women's migration rose to support her family. Hence overall it can be concluded that, the migration of women that was set on the lines of 'equality' and 'freedom' resulted in multidimensional exploitation of woman everywhere on an average.

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