

# **Environment and Migration, Purulia, West Bengal**

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Studies on labor migration in colonial India are numerous. Earlier studies laid emphasis on different 'push factors' to explain labor migration<sup>1</sup>. Some of them considered the background of labor migration in agrarian context. P. P. Mohapatra observed that 'the phenomenon of migration in Chotanagpur was both spatially and temporarily variegated'. From some areas laborers went to Assam permanently while from some other areas they migrated seasonally to the coalfields. A large number of agricultural laborers or landless and small peasants migrated to the coalfields. However, the migration to Assam was associated with the peasant household. Mohapatra explains that emigration from Hazaribagh or Palamou was possibly due to lack of expansion of cultivable land by the prevailing institutional arrangements. Emigration from Ranchi, Manbhum and Singhbhum took place because in those regions further expansion of arable land was no more possible. Under these circumstances, a number of peasants on marginal lands with limited or no irrigation facilities came under the mercy of an erratic monsoon and thus their food supply was under severe strain<sup>2</sup>.

Researches have been done on the economic factors determining why people migrate for work. Labor migration from Purulia in colonial and post-colonial times has been least discussed from the ecological point of view. However, some recent studies<sup>3</sup> from different parts of India show that deforestation has exacerbated migration of both men and women. The present paper seeks to argue that environmental crises in indigenous belts of habitation create difficulties in survival and ultimately force people to migrate.

## **Environmental Change in Purulia**

A brief overview of the ecological setting of any particular region may be regarded as the *sine qua non* of history and culture. The district of Manbhum (presently Purulia district of West Bengal, India) is the first step of the gradual descent from the elevated plateau of Chotanagpur proper to the plains of lower Bengal and also a part of the Ranchi peneplain. The hills and valleys made up most part of the district bordered in the north by Hazaribagh and Santhal Parganas, to the east by Burdwan, Bankura and Midnapore, to the south by Singhbhum and in the west by Ranchi and Hazaribagh<sup>4</sup>.

The natural vegetation of pre-colonial Manbhum was essentially arboreal. Actually, it was a part of the Jungle Mahals, a land of moist tropical deciduous forests characterized by tall trees rising up to 40 meters to form the top canopy, a lower second storey of many species with some evergreens, then a mantle of shrubs entangled by a network of climbers<sup>5</sup>. The environment

was capable of supporting many plants and animals. Moist deciduous forest of pre-colonial Purulia supported a wide variety of herbivores and carnivores, intimately linked to their habitat<sup>6</sup>. There was close relationship between the nature and the *adivasi* (indigenous and tribal people of India) people.

With the colonial intervention, from the late eighteenth century onwards a process of transformation started in Purulia. Ecological intervention was the prime factor of this transformation. The British idea of development and progress was based on agricultural advancement. They tried to imbricate their idea in Purulia also. For the agrarian intervention<sup>7</sup> the *bandhs* (tanks/ ponds/reservoirs) were utilized. The colonial rulers encouraged the construction of *bandhs* to increase the area under irrigation<sup>8</sup>. In this respect, the facilitating role of the colonial administration in water management maintained a continuity rather than disjuncture. Similar incident occurred in the case of water management (*kuhls*) in Kangra as Mark Backer has shown<sup>9</sup>. But there was a significant disjuncture in the natural, social and cultural values of the ponds fostered by the *adivasis*. The *adivasi* people not only considered the ponds as their honorable social relatives with different ecological, economic and spiritual qualities but also personified them with much more familial values. This automatically brought in the daily life of society different conservational approaches towards the pond related ecosystems. But, the colonial masters saw the water bodies merely as holes in the ground storing water. They exploited the water resources for irrigation and fishery without any consideration for the biodiversity and the underground water table. They laid emphasis only on the economic gain from such water bodies but the ecological dimension received scant attention. This mentality continues even in post-colonial India.

The British agrarian invasion led to different types of land tenure systems (i.e. rented tenure, rent free tenure, maintenance tenure and service tenure) which extended the horizontal stratification. The estate holder or old Raja (*zamindar*) held the highest stratum in the hierarchy. The tenure holders were placed second in the hierarchy. They had to pay rent to the estate holder. The under tenure holders collected rent from one or more villages and paid rent to the tenure holders<sup>10</sup>. The chiefs or *rajas* of Purulia were transformed into *zamindars* as also new intermediaries ‘...emerged from among the holders of jungle clearing tenures in the nineteenth century’.<sup>11</sup> During the time sub-infeudation also occurred<sup>12</sup>.

In the early part of the nineteenth century forest was primarily regarded as a ‘resource’. The colonial policy of extension of cultivable land at the expense of forest tracts resulted in large scale deforestation. This also involved killing of wild and ferocious animals<sup>13</sup>. H. Coupland records that ‘...rewards were paid for the destruction of three tigers and seventy nine leopards’<sup>14</sup>.

Due to the growing demand of the railway system which required immense quantities of *sal* trees to be felled and logged to provide sleepers for rail floors or lay-out, pressure mounted on the forests of *Jungle Mahal*<sup>15</sup>. By the first decade of twentieth century, Purulia was connected with Asansol, Sini, Chakradharpur, Kharagpur, Gomo, Jharia and Katras. In 1908 a narrow gauge rail line of 2’-6’ was constructed linking Purulia with Ranchi. Coupland writes that ‘...this line affords an outlet for the grain and jungle products of the western portion of the district’<sup>16</sup>. Timbers were also required for ship building<sup>17</sup>. The opening of the main line of Bengal Nagpur Railway through Kharagpur, Jhargram (1898) had a profound impact upon the forests of the region. Interior places became more accessible with the introduction of railways. As the forest products could be transported to distant places by the railway there was a sudden increase of commoditization<sup>18</sup>.

Moreover, as a result of agrarian invasion there was large scale deforestation in colonial time. This caused the denudation which decreased soil moisture as well as rainfall. Average annual and daily temperatures also increased and desertification was invited which ultimately devoured the whole region. The agrarian invasion and destruction of forests caused environmental degradation. Vinita Damodaran writes that ‘...in the case of Chotanagpur the story of environmental degradation can not be so easily challenged’<sup>19</sup>. It can be viewed from different aspects.

To combat deforestation, colonial forest officials prescribed the Brandis' principle of forest reservation. But the district officials were always interested in collecting more revenue than the previous year without giving any heed to the forest preservation principles<sup>20</sup>. During the colonial period when the forest was devastated and resource scarcity appeared, the indigenous people were deprived of different food supplements. In pre-colonial period the *horopathists* (*adivasi* medicine men) had a knowledge system that included the curative use of different plants and animal species available. Following the depletion of biological resources these were slowly erased from the indigenous knowledge system also. Thus, they were finding it difficult to procure medicine from plants and animals. They were compelled to take the path of exorcism. Evil eye (witchcraft) was created.

Due to environmental degradation and disruption of hydrological management system of the *adivasis*, the capacity to protect crops was lost. Draught became a common phenomenon since the end of the nineteenth century. This resulted in failure of crops. The colonial forest policy deprived the *adivasis* from forest food. Nutritional crises and diseases became common phenomena. The debt bondage added further miseries.

Thus, in Purulia, the hunter-gatherer indigenous peoples like the Savars and Birhors became ‘ecological refugees’ due to the destruction of forest ecology. The agricultural *adivasi* society also plunged into crises. Owing to environmental degradation water management was dislocated. People were deprived from forest food due to the destruction of forest ecology. Diseases born out of nutritional crises became common and people were increasingly marginalized. They had no alternative but to migrate. The sustainable economy of the indigenous people was permanently extinguished. Thus, the tribal landscape looked more like a graveyard. A *jhumur* song characterizes it:

‘*i bhuma rudha rudha, chhatni dubi gela*’

[It implies that the land became dry and unkind so our chest had been sinking.]<sup>21</sup>

The district had been suffering from chronic famine for years together (1866,1874,1892,1897,1903,1904-05,1906-1907,1939-45,1953,1958)<sup>22</sup>. Ultimately, these marginalized people were forced to migrate into Assam or other adjoining regions that could provide opportunities for occupation.

### **Forced Migration in the Colonial Period**

The indigenous people migrated principally to Assam and the neighboring coalfields. Bradley Birt notes ‘...Manbhum is the land of the cultivators, collie, and the Bhumij Kol – the cultivator pursuing the dull round of daily life and fighting with each recurring season the battle of existence’<sup>23</sup>. He also writes that many people migrated to the tea gardens of Assam and Bengal in

‘...hope of better wages, or by difficulties or scarcity at home, or perhaps the victims of the threats, promises, or persuasions of a recruiter who was not to be denied’. People migrated as laborers as soon as one crop of paddy failed. Scarcity at home was one of the variables responsible for the fluctuation in migration. In the year 1900, the year of scarcity (famine like situation due to failure of crops), the total migrants from this district was 65,190 but in the normal year (when people could survive with their crops they produced) of 1901 total migrants were 30,777<sup>24</sup>.

The contemporary periodical, *Mukti*, reports that the condition of the villages kept deteriorating continually with the passing of the days. Poor people, under starved condition migrated elsewhere in each and every year<sup>25</sup>. Chotare Desmaji wrote ‘*Dekoko then nalhalko calak kana... ona iate Jom bante onte note rengec jalate onte noteko chir chaturak kana*’<sup>26</sup>. [There is no food at home; people have to go in search of a job... Due to excessive impoverishment people are to migrate].

On the verge of starvation, construction of railway networks and roads opened a way out of the distressed situation<sup>27</sup>. Thus, Purulia became the ‘best known gateway of Chotanagpur for the travelers, the push-push (*arkati* or agent) and the coolie’<sup>28</sup>. Through Ranchi-Purulia road many of the coolies came to the tea gardens of Assam and Bengal. They emigrated in the hope of more wages, or to escape the difficulties and scarcities at home or being victims under threats<sup>29</sup>. A tribal song<sup>30</sup> reflected the phenomenon-

*‘hasi hasi prem fasi  
Mahajane paralo, patutular nam kare  
Asamete chalalo’*

[The money lender cheated us and sent to the tea gardens in Assam in the name of employment. Certainly those money lenders were benefited by sending poor people to Assam earning commission].

A steady stream of emigrants flew out from the district mostly to tea gardens of Sylhet, Cachar and Assam on the one side and Darjeeling and the Duars on the other. Those who went to the former place were bounded for a term of year. Those who went to the latter place were all free laborers. A large number of Kols and Oraons emigrated to Calcutta and Sundarbans where they settled permanently<sup>31</sup>.

The supply of coolies fluctuated under various circumstance. The following table shows the fluctuation in emigration (Table1).

**Table 1: The Fluctuation in Emigration**

Year	Emigrants
1900	65,190
1901	30,777
1909	15,492

Source: *Bengal District Gazetteers: Manbhum, Statistics by H. Coupland, 1911*

The enormous decrease was due to opening of coalfields at hand in Gobindapur and Giridi on the one hand and railway lines on the other<sup>32</sup>.

## Gender Dimension in Migration

Shashanka Sinha has shown that ‘...the migration had a significant gender dimension’<sup>33</sup>. In 1891, 5,500 men and 12,000 women emigrated from Manbhum<sup>34</sup>. Large number of female emigrated not only for economic determinism but also for their crumbling position in the patriarchal family<sup>35</sup>: Women also felt insecure in their own land. They had to migrate. This also gave birth to another kind of exploitation which was perceived by the victims themselves. We can quote a *jhumur* song of a contemporary poet Dina Tanti<sup>36</sup>:

*‘chatichuti diye more samkoralo dipughare  
Lekhala hamar sat puruser nam  
Hayre lampota Shyam fanki diye badhu chalali Assam’*

[The *thikadars* (contractors) misguided me by his clever, cunning, and deceptive advice putting me in a dark room. They had noted down seven generations. This debauch had compelled me to go to Assam].

Another song reflects the disillusionment of the lady<sup>37</sup>:

*‘mane chhila Assam jaba jara pankha tangaba  
Sahib dila amar kadaleri kam’*

[I had that desire to go to Assam. / I would be the owner of two decorated fans. / But the Sahib gave me the work of digging.].

A third song runs as follows<sup>38</sup>:

*‘amra duti ma biti dine rate cha kuti  
Kutite kutite bahe gham  
Adham dinanath bhane je jabe Assam bane  
Ar na firibe nija dhame’*

[We are mother and daughter two in number. / We work in the tea plantation / While working we are sweating. / The poor Dina Tanti tells / The man who would go to Assam / Would never return to his native land.].



**Pic 1: Adivasi Women on their way to Assam Tea Garden**

Source: Bradley Birt, F. B.1910. Chotanagpur: A Little Known Province of the Empire, London,Smith, Elder& Co.,p-174.

## Abuses in Emigration and the Emigration Act

Thus, different types of abuses had shot up in the labor recruiting system. It has been reflected not only in the official accounts but also in the indigenous songs. The Act of VI of 1901 was passed in order to check the abuses of recruiting system. In order to supply coolies many recruiters and their agents used their force and fraud. In this way, many unfortunate laborers had been taken off to Assam against their will<sup>39</sup>. As Purulia was the headquarters of the district in Chotanagpur (easily accessible by rail from Assam and the junction through which practically all coolies recruited in the Division and the Native States adjoining had to pass), the control of emigration to the Tea Gardens played an important factor in the administration here. According to the Act, the Deputy Commissioner and Senior Deputy Magistrate became the Ex-officio Superintendents of Emigration for both the districts of Manbhum and Singhbhum. Recruitments through licensed contractors and recruiters known as *arkati* were supervised mainly under Chapter IV of Act VI of 1901. In 1908-1909 five contractors and sixty four recruiters held license. In the same year, 1,532 coolies with 389 dependants were registered and put under contract<sup>40</sup>.

## Migration Process in Post-Colonial Period

The process of migration continued even in the post-colonial period. People from Purulia continued to move out to more fertile regions like Bardhaman expecting assured work. Very soon their hopes too were belied. The introduction of Damodar Valley Corporation canal system in the 1960s along with its slow expansion denuded such opportunities. From the early 1970s irrigated *boro* (a type of high yielding paddy which is cultivated in summer) crop was introduced. After assuming power in 1977, the Left Front Government adopted agrarian reforms energetically in its early years, in particular the registration of share-croppers, the redistribution of land held over the ceiling and *panchayati raj*<sup>41</sup>. During this period, small land holding cultivators were beginning to consolidate their positions. Many of them were actively involved in the politics within the Left Front coalition. When they gained profits from agriculture, they began to invest in groundwater irrigation. It was more attractive in the somewhat less conflict-prone rural environment. In the early 1980s the *boro* cultivation was rapidly expanding due to new cultivation technologies of the last two decades. In Bardhaman district, as a result of these changes, huge numbers of manual workers were required for the transplanting and harvesting of paddy<sup>42</sup>.

Many (though by no means all) seasonal migrant workers were employed in harvesting and transplanting paddy in West Bengal. Ben Rogaly has shown that seasonal migration in West Bengal is not simply an inevitable part of the cycle of indebtedness. Workers from the border regions of Bihar and West Bengal and from elsewhere in West Bengal have a long history of converging on the south-central part of the state for seasonal agricultural work. With the increase in rice production in West Bengal in the 1980s and early 1990s, employment opportunities were created for potential migrants in transplanting and harvesting for a season which would be continuous (i.e. a month to six weeks for the same employer) rather than sporadic. It would also be significantly better paid than working for employers in migrants' home areas. At the end of the season, migrants would be paid a combination of a daily allowance of rice, accommodation and fuel, plus a lump sum of cash. It had become common for migrants to return home with a lump

sum of several hundred rupees<sup>43</sup>. Purulia district, due to lack of irrigation facilities, relied on a single rice crop. This required very few paid and permanent workers. For the transplanting (the exact timing of which depended on the beginning of the monsoon and was therefore relatively unpredictable) and for harvesting, all the local labor supply was sufficient. Thus, employment opportunities in Purulia varied from periods when labor was urgently needed to periods when one just only had to sit back and wait for the next round of labor requirement. The two busy periods, transplanting in June-August and harvesting in October-December, coincided with increasing migration possibilities for local workers and there was no seasonal in-migration to the district. During harvest season, daily wages would be a maximum of 12 rupees per day<sup>44</sup>.

Most studies of migration in the region (like that of Rogaly) deal with the economic aspect of migration but environmental concerns have been least discussed. The environmental degradation was not addressed even after the British left and independence was achieved. The soil, lateritic and infertile, tends to deteriorate rapidly and immense care needs to be invested for profitable cultivation. Due to continuous exploitation without the basic care needed, the soil lost its ability to absorb moisture from rainfall. On the other hand, rains also are insufficient. Each year nearly 50% of the different tracts of land get dangerously eroded and become unfit for agriculture<sup>45</sup>. The proportion of waste land is very high on the one hand, while current fallow and yield of cultivated land is very low on the other hand. Thus, the cost of operation is very inevitably very high<sup>46</sup>. Low agricultural productivity and deforestation resulted nutritional crisis which had its roots in the colonial period. This affected the migratory trends in Purulia. West Bengal District Gazetteer mentioned that the 'Prospect of agriculture being such, it failed largely to attract any sizeable immigration. On the contrary, it caused a more or less equal volume of emigration, thus offsetting the effects of emigration'<sup>47</sup>.

Nitya Rao and Kumar Rana in their study<sup>48</sup> argue that deforestation has exacerbated migration of both men and women. Due to the modern developmental policies, whether the building of big dams, taking over of forest and agricultural lands for industrial enterprises, or restrictions on the local population regarding the use of forests and common property resources, local women and men lose control over their basic resources. As a result of deforestation, women have to walk longer distances for fuel, non-availability of food items to supplement the diet, such as greens, berries, mushrooms, etc, and to have access to opportunities of earning a little extra by selling forest by-products like tooth twigs, leaf plates, green mangoes and so on. Cultivation of a single rain fed crop can survive from three to four months. Even if rainfall occurs abundantly sometimes, rain water cannot be stored due to the absence of such facilities. So it is hard to facilitate double cropping. Thus, it made survival difficult and they were forced to enter the labor market, whether locally or as migrants<sup>49</sup>. Thus there is a clear similarity between the condition of the Dumka region and Purulia.

In his anthropological study Dikshit Sinha<sup>50</sup> has shown that the Kherias of Kulabahal village in Purulia district named 139 items of food from which their sustenance came. But later the food items were attenuated and the supply became infrequent<sup>51</sup>. During my field study at Sidhatairn village of the Kherias, an old Kheria man Kalipada Savar commented that most of the victuals which were generally consumed by his family during the childhood of his father are no more available now<sup>52</sup>. Such agony of nutritional crisis has been reflected in a song of the Birhors<sup>53</sup>:



*'ban badar hare lila, sikarbakar furanjela,  
Pakpakhur pawa haila day  
Pet ache pit ache, meya ache chhela ache  
Bal eder kemane bachay'*

[Forest had been captured, so there is no root for food and medicine. / It is too tough to get animal species. / I have body and stomach. / I have wife, sons and daughters. / How could we live on? ]

Thus the district suffered from chronic scarcity for a long time even in the post colonial period. During the food scarcity of 1953, the *adivasi* people generally tended to depend on the forest and forest products. But fruits and roots from the forest were dried up soon due to excessive heat and water crisis. Many people migrated to the eastern districts in search of work. Some people returned not getting any work in the east as well. The distressing condition has been described in a periodical as:

*“Manbhume e batsar byapakbhabe khadyer anatan o kajer nitanta abhab haiyachhe-tanmadhye katakguli thanar katakguli anchale bhayabaha durbhikshyer rup prakatita haiyachhe. anahare sthane sthane lok mara jaite arambha kariyachhe;-grame grame niratisay khadyabhaber janya lok akhadya kukhadya khaiya kono rakame jiban dharan koriteche; bahu lok anner leshmatra paitechhe na; keha ba dinante ba saptahante marjol khaite paitechhe. e batsar nidarun grismer dahane roudrer agun barshitechhe. e samayer falmul pata sukaiya binashta haiyachhe;- kaj nai, mahajaner kachh haite karja nai. Jibikar anyanya adhar –jaha manbhume thake, e batsar tahao nai. dale dale lok gram chhariya Bangladeshe kajer sandhane chaliya giyachhe”<sup>54</sup>*

[This year, there has been severe food crisis and lack of employment opportunity in Manbhum. The situation is equal to famine in some areas under some police stations. There have been death due to hunger in some places; in many villages, people are having whatever they can lay their hands upon, things which otherwise do not qualify as food; many have not tasted rice in a long time; others are eating only starch water once a day. The heat is scorching. The usual forest food products like fruits or roots have already gone dry; there is no work, nor any possibility of getting a loan from the village moneylender. The other scopes of earning a living, which are normally available in Manbhum, are not there this year. Large groups are leaving their villages for Bangladesh in search of work (i.e. eastern districts of West Bengal)].

Similar conditions emerged once again in the year of 1958. People died in this scarcity due to starvation and malnutrition. According the survey of Lok Sevak Sangha (A political organization) some people died in Manbazar, Barabazar, and Baghmundi police station due to starvation.<sup>55</sup>

Scarcity and starvation caused by environmental degradation were the main reasons for people's migration. Apart from periodical reports, this situation has also been described in indigenous songs as well as in Bengali literature. In his novel *Sindure Kajale*, Saikat Rakshit<sup>56</sup> has shown that many girls who belong to Kamar-Kumor-Baouri-Kurmi group left their home and took up the work of laborers in mines, tea gardens and agricultural lands in the Eastern region. He writes, “*Manbhum-Puruilar koto koto kamaar-kumor-bauri-kurmi bitichhyala gharchaara hoye bhindeshe khete khaoar swadhin jeebon khunje niyeche. Khonite, cha-bagangulite kimba poober nabal jomite ksheter kaaj niye shedikei theke geche.*”<sup>57</sup>

He also attracts our attention to a popular folk love song of a bonded laborer Srikanta and Kurmi lady Bhadari. They fell in love and left their village to go to Magra in the Hooghly district in order to get a job in a brick factory as a *reja* and *khedia* (male laborers who prepare brick is known as *khadia* and female laborers are known as *reja*). He writes, “*bochhor bochhor khoray shara puruila jelaar koto koto graam er manushke graamchhara hote hoy. Peter daaye. Taader adhikangsho tokhon ei dikei paari dey. Ei nabal krishikshetrogulite santhal-ativasi-sabar-kurmi-kumar-sunri-baurira kamin munish khate.*” [Every year people have to leave their home due to scarcity and famine. Most of them move to this side (Burdwan/Hooghly). Here the people belonged to Santal-Adivasi-Savar-Kurmi-Kumar-Sundi-Bauri work as labourer in the agricultural fields]<sup>58</sup>.

Here the *reja khedia* sustain their lives like machines. They are involved throughout the day for brick making. At night they prepare their food and buy their drink. One night when Srikanta was drunk the *munshi* (supervisor of the brick factory) tried to seize the opportunity to abuse Bhadari<sup>59</sup>.

Sexual harassment is indeed a common phenomenon in the brick making factories and similar other small scale production units where the indigenous people from Purulia traditionally go to earn a living. Ben Rogaly writes that ‘women having to spend one or more nights at labor market-places and traveling without kin, are more likely to be harassed by employers and contractors’<sup>60</sup>.

Census reports, however, indicate the nature and trends of migration process. According to the census of 1961, 16.4% of population of Purulia migrated to other district of West Bengal and 33.03% population migrated to other states. Most of the small emigration (47,101) from Purulia occurred to the district of Bankura and Burdwan (13,984)<sup>61</sup>. The census operations generally took place at a time when harvesting of the monsoon crop had already been completed and therefore does not portray the migration trends successfully. Migration from one district to another takes place temporarily or seasonally from time to time. At the time of census operation which falls in the first March all the harvesting of the monsoon crop is over. Large scale movement took place from the districts of Purulia, Bankura and Midnapur to Burdwan. It together amounted for 50,345 of the 68,285 immigrants to the district from within the state<sup>62</sup> (Census of India, Vol XV, 1961). The following table shows streams of migration within the state carrying at least 10,000 persons in 1961.

**Table 2: Migration from Purulia to Bankura and Burdwan**

<b>Streams</b>	<b>No. Persons Involved</b>
10,000 persons or above but below 25,000 persons	
From Purulia to Bankura	18,641
From Purulia to Burdwan	13,984

Source: *Census of India 1961*, Vol-XV, WB & Sikkim, Part-I Book-I, General, J D Gupta p-332

**Table 3: Migration to Contiguous Districts, 1961**

1 District	2 Total no of emigrants to other district	3 Total no of emigrants to contiguous district in the state	Percentage of Column 3 to 2
Purulia	47,101	34,257	72.7

Source: *Census of India 1961*, Vol-XV, WB & Sikkim, Part-I Book-I, General, JD Gupta p-334

**Table 4: Inter- District Migration, West Bengal, 1961**

Migrants to Districts	Migrants from District: Purulia
Darjeeling	208
Jalpaiguri	123
Coochbihar	53
West Dinajpur	25
Malda	200
Murshidabad	245
Nadia	245
24-Parganas	3883
Calcutta	3848
Howrah	1153
Hooghly	2334
Burdwan	13984
Bankura	18641
Birbhum	527
Midnapur	1632

Source: *Census of India 1961*, Vol-XV, WB & Sikkim, Part-I Book-I, General, JD Gupta p-329

## Conclusion

From this case study in Purulia district it is apprised that ecological degradation is one the most vital causes for migration. Due to ecological degradation *adivasi* society plunged into the crises. With the dislocation of their ecological moral economy it was difficult to survive. There was nutritional crisis which affected their health also. In the post colonial period the same trend continued. Sometime Government took developmental initiatives but it did not try to recover the lost ecosystem so that the people could survive on their own. Traditional water management and mentality to conserve water was also lost. In the district, scarcity and nutritional crisis came not as a phenomenon but as a process. Thus, people were forced to migrate for their survival. The migration had a significant gender dimension. Large number of women emigrated in the colonial period not only for economic determinism but also for their crumbling position in their own

families. Women felt insecure in their own land. They had to migrate. This also generated sexual exploitation which continues till date. With the revival of some of the traditional values and customs of the *adivasis*, livelihood security can be ensured and *adivasi* migration can be checked.

## Acknowledgement

*I am extremely thankful to Dr Ranabir Samaddar, Director, CRG and CRG for facilitating this study. I am also grateful to Professor Suchibrata Sen and Sri Arnab Dutta.*

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Chottopadhaya, H. 1979. *Indians in Srilanka, A Historical Study*, Calcutta.

Tinker, H. 1974. *A New System of Slavery: The Export of Indian Labour Overseas, 1830-1920*, London.

There is a lot of other work on labor migration. Apart from these studies some dealt with the origin of labor migration. Most important example is:

Chakraborty, Lalita 1978. Emergence of an Industrial Labour Force in a Dual Economy: British India, 1880-1920, *The Economic and Social History Review*, Vol-X, pp—249-328.

<sup>2</sup> Mohapatra, P.P. 1985. Coolies and Colliers: A Study of the Agrarian Context of Labour migration from Chotanagpur 1880-1920, *Studies in History*, Vol-1, No.-2, p-297-98.

<sup>3</sup> Studies like Rao, Nitya and Rana, Kumar. 1997. Women's Labour and Migration: The Case of the Santhals, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 32, No. 50 (Dec. 13-19, ), pp. 3187-3189

<sup>4</sup> Coupland, H. 1911. *Bengal District Gazetteers: Manbhum*, Calcutta, p-2.

<sup>5</sup> West Bengal District Gazetteers: Purulia. 1985. Calcutta, p-11.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p-12.

<sup>7</sup> Biswamoy Pati has rightly pointed out that 'some of the complexities related to the agrarian intervention, the production process and the social stratification that emerged are not discussed for constraints of spaces'. Biswamoy Pati, 'Survival as Resistance: Tribals in Colonial Orissa', *Indian Historical Review*, 33 :1, 2006, 175-76

<sup>8</sup> Extension of cultivation and encouragement of cultivation were tacitly allowed through *nayabadi* (new tillage) and *ahrat* (embankment) and *jalsasan* or water supply. For details see W W Hunter, *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, Vol-XVII, 1887, 320-21. PDRRC, Circle note of Attestation camp, Manbazar, Session-1920-21, 17-30.

<sup>9</sup> J. Mark Backer, Colonial Influence on Property, Community, and Land Use in Kangra, Himachal Pradesh, in *Social Nature: Resources, Representation and Rule in India*, Arun Agrawal and K. Sivaramakrishnan, eds, New Delhi: OUP, 2001, 47-67.

<sup>10</sup> Purulia District Record Room Correspondence, Purulia, Circle Note of Attestation Camp, Manbazar, Session-1920-21, 55.

<sup>11</sup> *Jungle bari* tenure was a reclaiming tenure. This lease was given to a tenant in consideration of grantee clearing jungle and bringing land under cultivation. Colonial rulers used this tenure for their agrarian conquests.

<sup>12</sup> P. P. Mohapatra, 'Class conflict and agrarian regimes in Chotanagpur, 1860-1950', *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 28:1, 1991, 22.

<sup>13</sup> Damodaran, Vinita. 2002. Gender, Forests and Famine in 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Chotanagpur, *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, Vol-9, No-2, p- 142-144.

<sup>14</sup> Coupland, H. 1911. op.cit. p-21.

<sup>15</sup> Mark, Profenburger. 1999. The struggle for forest control in Jungle Mahals of West Bengal 1750-1990. In *Village Voices, Forest Choices* (eds) Profenburger, Mark and MacGean, B. OUP, New Delhi. p-137.

- <sup>16</sup> Coupland, H.1911.op.cit.p-185.
- <sup>17</sup> West Bengal State Archives, Kolkata, Revenue Dept., File No.- 95/7/19, Govt. of Bengal, Forest Branch, May, 1919. Para-7-9.
- <sup>18</sup> Centenary Commemoration Volume, West Bengal Forests 1964, p-133.
- <sup>19</sup> Damodaran, Vinita. 2002. op. cit. p-133
- <sup>20</sup> Purulia District Record Room Correspondence, Purulia, D. O. No. 2846/22 (12), From Hardyal Singh, Divisional Forest Officer, To Sahib P. N. Mukherjee, 26 March 1943, Para-7.
- <sup>21</sup> Basu Roy, Subodh.2006. *Ramkrishna Gangulir Jhumur Padabali*, Anriju Prakashani, Cheliyama, Purulia,p-26.
- <sup>22</sup> West Bengal District Gazetteers: Purulia & Mukti,1953,1958
- <sup>23</sup> Bradley Birt, F. B.1910. Chotanagpur : A Little Known Province of the Empire London, Smith, Elder& Co.,p-159.
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid, p-177.
- <sup>25</sup> *Mukti*(a Bengali periodical of Manbhum District Congress), 1929, , Year-4<sup>th</sup>, Issue No.28. p-34
- <sup>26</sup> Chotare Deshmaji Reak Katha. *Hul Laha tek Ar Assam Guma Kolan Bandhaen Reak*, Fourth edition-1964, Published by the Northern Evangelical Lutheran Church, Benegaria, p-65. It is an original Santali text.
- <sup>27</sup> Sinha, S.S.2005. *Restless Mothers Turbulent Daughters: Situating Tribes in Gender Studies*, Stree, Kolkata, p-105.
- <sup>28</sup> Bradley Birt, F. B.1910.op.cit.p-172.
- <sup>29</sup> Ibid, p-175.
- <sup>30</sup> Mahato, P. P. and Mahato, Khirod C.2007. Collective Wisdom and excellence related to World Views on Forest, Biodiversity and Nature-Man-Spirit Complex of the indigenous people of Eastern India. In *Forest, Government and Tribe* ed. Patty, C. K., Concept, New Delhi, p-41.
- <sup>31</sup> Bradley Birt, F. B.1910.op.cit.pp-175-76.
- <sup>32</sup> Ibid. p-177.
- <sup>33</sup> Sinha, S.S.2005.op.cit.p-106.
- <sup>34</sup> Coupland, H.1911. op. cit. p-70.
- <sup>35</sup> Sinha, S.S. 2005.op.cit. p-110
- <sup>36</sup> SinghDeo, Mihirlal.2007. *Kaler Prekhapate Jhumur o Swaralipi*, Anriju Prakashani, Cheliyama, Purulia, p-29.
- <sup>37</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>38</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>39</sup> Bradley Birt, F. B.1910. op.cit.p-177.
- <sup>40</sup> Coupland, H.1911.op.cit.pp-251-252.
- <sup>41</sup> Rogaly, Ben et el. 2001.Seasonal Migration, Social Change and Migrants' Rights: Lessons from West Bengal, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 36, No. 49 (Dec. 8-14), p-4551.
- <sup>42</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>43</sup> Rogaly, Ben. 1998. Workers on the Move: Seasonal Migration and Changing Social Relations in Rural India , *Gender and Development*, Vol. 6, No. 1, (Mar.), p- 22.
- <sup>44</sup> Ibid. p 24
- <sup>45</sup> West Bengal District Gazetteers:Purulia, op.cit,p-164.
- <sup>46</sup> Ibid,p-116.
- <sup>47</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>48</sup> Rao and Rana have shown that with the erosion of traditional livelihood and few local options available, Santhals especially woman have been forced to enter the labour market as migrants.
- <sup>49</sup> Rao, Nitya and Rana, Kumar. 1997. op.cit. pp. 3187-3189.
- <sup>50</sup> Sinha has shown how the hill Kherias of Purulia became proletariat due destruction of forest ecology

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- <sup>51</sup> Sinha, Dikshit.1989. Proletarianization of a Hunting and Gathering Tribe- The case of Hill Kheria of Purulia. In *Changing land system and the tribals of eastern India in the Modern period* (ed.) Banerjee, Tarashankar. Subarnarekha, Calcutta, pp-74-75.
- <sup>52</sup> Interview with Kalipada Savar, a Savar old man of Sidhatarn Village, Purulia District.
- <sup>53</sup> Karmakar, Jaladhar.2004. Puruliar Birhor Samaj. In *Ahalya Bhumi Purulia* ed. Jana, Debaprasad, vol-2, Kolkata, p-71.
- <sup>54</sup> *Mukti*, 1953; Year 14, Issue: 22.
- <sup>55</sup> *Mukti*, 1958, Year 19, Issue: 36
- <sup>56</sup> In this novel, Rakshit has described how a woman has been exploited in the man's prison. It is an important example in what socio-economic context woman have been sexually harassed.
- <sup>57</sup> Rakshit, Saikat.2002. *Sindure Kajole*( A Bengali Novel).Muktakshar,Kolkata, P-60
- <sup>58</sup> Ibid,p-79.
- <sup>59</sup> Ibid,p-80.
- <sup>60</sup> Rogaly, Ben. 1998.op.cit.p-125.
- <sup>61</sup> *Census of India 1961*, Vol-XVI, W.B & Sikkim., Part-II C-(ii),DI to DIII, J. D. Gupta,p-332.
- <sup>62</sup> *Census of India 1961*, Vol-XV, W.B. & Sikkim, Part-I Book-I, General, J. D. Gupta,p-pp-328-29.

## Annexure



Map showing the Manbhum District (1869), made by Major

H. Sherwill & Captain D. McDonald in 1869. Photograph taken by the author from Purulia District Record Room



Map showing the Purulia District (1956 onwards), Source: [www.mapsindia.com](http://www.mapsindia.com)