Early contacts with S.E. Asia started with trade relations between two regions. The advent of Islam to S.E. Asia led to the decline of Hindu-Buddhist religious ideas and an increase in the dominance of Muslim merchants. The dominance of English East India Company disrupted the dominance of Muslim merchants.

Establishment of British rule prompted South Indians to migrate as indentured and later on Kangani labourers to Malaysia and Singapore. Later on professional and commercial migrants arrived from India.

Indian Migration to South East Asia
CHAPTER-II

INDIA AND SOUTH EAST ASIA

I

India’s contacts with South East Asia go back to pre-historic times. References to early Indian settlements in South East Asia appear in Indian literature as early as the sixth century B.C. Various studies indicate that the knowledge of the islands in the South East Asian region traced back in Puranic texts. These islands reflect the spread of the trade and most sought after commodities for example, “gold from Suvarnadvipa (Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula) and Suvarnabhumi (Burma), camphor from Karpuradvipa (Borneo), cardamom from Takkola (present day Phuket)”. Studies indicate that lord Sugriva, ordered his clansmen to search for various places including Yavadvipa and Suvarnadvipa for Sitā in the Kishkindha Kandam of the Ramayana. There is also the mention of a tribe named Kālamukha in Mahābhārata and Rāmāyaṇa which seemed to have identified with a country placed on the coast of Arakan.

In the third century B.C., Emperor Ashoka sent the Buddhist missionaries to Suvarnabhumi (present lower Burma). His son Mahindra and daughter Sangmitra travelled to Ceylon where she establish the Order of Priestesses or Nuns, which later on spread to other areas. There are references of voyages to Suvaṇṇabhūmi in the Jātakas also. They give the detailed description of sea journeys and commerce across the sea. Niddesa, Buddhist literature refers the difficulty faced by sailor during his sailing in high seas mention the number of areas like (i) Suvaṇṇabhūmi, (ii) Takkola, (iii)Kālamukha, (iv) Tambapaṇi and (v) Java which seems to be identified with Malay Peninsula, Arakan Coast and Ceylon. Milindapañha also mention the various places of overseas trade and seaport towns like Suvaṇṇabhūmi, Takkola and Cīna.

The countries of lower Burma, Malay Peninsula and all the other islands were known as the lands of gold to the people of east coast of India. Indian traders were sailing to these lands and further through these islands in search of gold and other valuable items. There are references to sea voyages and sea borne trade with Southeast Asian region in Ceylonese and Javanese chronicles. Indian literature also gives a
number of stories regarding rulers and adventurers who sailed to Suvarṇabhūmi in ship for wealth. *Bṛhatkathā-śloka-saṅgraha* and *Kathākośa* mentions the stories of Kings Sānudāsa and Nāgadatta.  

R.C. Majumdar further mentioned another Indian literature *Kathāsarit-sāgara* which contains the various stories regarding the voyages made to Suvarṇabhūmi by ambitious merchants for the trading purposes and exchanges the goods in return. Besides this, various other Indian literature mentions the connection between India and Southeast Asia.  

References related to Suvarṇabhūmi and Suvarṇadvīpa also found in Greek, Latin, Arabic and Chinese writings. Among Latin writers, Pomponius Mela was the first geographer who mentioned the gold island in his work *De Chorographia* by referring to the island of Chryse (gold) as Suvarnadvīpa; many other writers, for example, in *Periplus of the Erythraen Sea*, later by Pliny; Greek mathematician Claudius Ptolemy and Dionysium Periegetes mentioned this island in their work. Most of the writers also mentioned the trade products exchanged between these two regions.  

Alberuni mentioned the word “Island of the Zābaj” for Suvarṇadvīpa which means the gold island, many other writers mentioned the word Zābaj in their writings. Chinese writer I-tsing twice mentioned “Gold Island in his famous memoirs on the pilgrimage of monks who visited the western countries in search of law”.  

The continuous interaction led to the formation of states that were influenced by Indian cultural ideas and values. These states were Champa, Khmer, Srivijaya and Funan and were known as Indianized states as they spread “organized culture that was founded upon the Indian conception of royalty, was characterized by Hinduist or Buddhist cults, the mythology of the Puranas, and the observance of the Dharamasastras, and expressed itself in the Sanskrit language”. These states prospered and played important role in the trade and maritime activities of the Malay Peninsula. Kernal Singh Sandhu defines the age of these states as the highest point of Indian influence in Malaya, while Sinnappah Arasaratnam mentions that these states influenced the cultures of societies around them. Indian influence further strengthened with the matrimonial alliances between these Indian rulers of states and local rulers of Malaya. Various researches shows that the Indian rulers were in contact with the
dynasties of these Indianized states for trade purposes. These contacts can be proved on the basis of various inscriptions and archaeological evidences.

With the rise of Islam, many Arabs and Central Asian merchants and religious leaders came in India. These merchants tried their best to settle by establishing matrimonial relations with the local women. Their communities grew rapidly. They settled in main port cities in Bengal, Golconda and Gujarat and established trade relations with South East Asian countries. Along with them, many Ulemas traveled to Southeast Asian region from the thirteenth century onwards and contributed towards the spread of Islam just the way Buddhist and Brahmanas did earlier towards Buddhist and Hindu religion.

With the rise of Malacca in early fifteenth century, these merchants played a significant role in its rise as a big market as well as the port city of the South East Asian region. They tried to gain the confidence of the newly formed Islamic state through matrimonial alliances and construction of mosques. By doing this they gained high positions in Malay courts. Gradually they became prominent in the maritime activities of the Malay port. Studies indicate that many Hindu merchants sank into poverty due to the gradual loss of their wealth. On the other hand, members of the Muslim merchants who were involved in the trade activities with Malacca prospered continuously.

India gained heavy profits from this maritime trade with Malay Archipelago. Studies show the estimates about the volume and value of trade between India and Malay Archipelago calculated by famous Portuguese traveler Tom Pires. He estimated that the Indian cloth imported by Malacca from Gujarat was worth of five lakh cruzados (gold coin of Portugal) every year; fifty six thousand cruzados worth of cloth from Malabar coast every year; one lakh cruzados worth of cloth from both Pulicat and Bengal respectively while Anthony Reid estimated the annual import of cloth to Malacca was four lakh sixty thousand cruzados.

However, this economic linkages and mercantile fortunes disrupted with arrival of Europeans particularly the Portuguese in the last decades of fifteenth century. After realizing the profits in the spice trade linked to the exports of textiles from India to Malay Archipelago, they tried to control and monopolize the trade by putting various
restrictions on Indian traders dealing with textile and spice trade. Cartez system was one such restriction introduced by them according to which every Indian merchant forced to take permission from the officials to carry out trade in Indian Ocean. In addition to this, Goa served as their toll booth where all ships going to port Malacca had to pay tolls. Problems for Indian traders further aggravated with the establishment of Portuguese control over Malacca in the early decades of sixteenth century. They reserved the trade route between Pulicat to Malacca, which led to the exclusion of Indian merchants. Parallel to this other European companies also began to take interest in controlling this trade.

After establishing their first factory at Surat in 1613, English East India Company soon became most powerful in Indian subcontinent. Company established their control on this textile trade by acquiring Madras in 1639, Bombay in 1665 and Cuddalore (Fort St. David) in 1690. East India Company used political force to pursue their goals in India. All these events led to the decline in volume of trade between India and Malay Peninsula. Position of Indians became insignificant and they act as agents for company’s economic interests.

It was however necessary to establish a base colony in the Indian Ocean to further strengthen their hold in Indian maritime trade and also from there to keep an eye on the activities of French and Dutch fleets. After considering several choices, like Andaman Islands, Acheh (Sumatra) and Phuket, British authorities finalized Penang on the recommendation of the then agent-in-charge of Kedah (currently a state of Malaysia) Francis light, due to its setting of only one week through ship from the Coromandal coast. By capturing Penang (main coast of Kedah), British could also control the activities of Dutch company who was at that time in the possession of all important ports of Straits of Malacca except three areas named Acheh, Phuket and Kedah.

With the occupation of Penang on August 11, 1786, East India Company decided to adopt drastic measures to eradicate the Indian influence (which may only left a little) from Malay courts. Access was being denied to Indian traders and merchants to have relations with Malay Peninsula as well as with India itself. Duties, tariff policies
were levied on the traditional textile business. Leading textile markets were taken under control by company. In the words of Kernial Singh Sandhu “not only did the Indians lose their former positions but steps were taken to prevent any return to these positions in the future. The subservience of the Malay courts meant that the Indians lost a significant avenue of investment, income and prestige.”27

II

Nineteenth century witnessed profound changes in traditional agrarian structure and indigenous industries with the establishment of British rule in India. British authorities needed raw materials to cater to the demand of their factories back home and sell their manufactured products in Indian markets at cheap rates. Keeping these motives in mind, the British administrators used exploitative measures to curb the Indian indigenous industry from flourishing. Agriculturists were encouraged to grow commercial crops like raw cotton, opium, indigo, black pepper instead of staple crops. They were left with only handful of their agricultural production. In words of Bipin Chandra that “increase in the cultivated area under food crops had been very meagre compared with the increase in area under commercial crops”.28 In addition to this, India repeatedly suffered disastrous famines by the end of nineteenth century for example 1871-1881, 1898, 1908 and in 1918. This led to scarcity of food and poverty in India.

British governments increased the tariff and excise duties on the various export goods and lower the import duties on the British manufactured goods. In the words of Romesh Dutt, “East India Company and the British Parliament following the selfish commercial policy…..discouraged Indian manufacturers……….in order to encourage the rising manufactures of England….. was to make the Indians subservient to the industries of Great Britain and to make the Indian people grow raw produce only, in order to supply material for the looms. English goods were admitted into India free of duty or on payment of a nominal duty”.29 Indian handicrafts industry was solely depend on the cotton as a raw material. With the advent of British rule, there was always shortage of cotton. Earlier, Indian handicraft industry was the main exporter of textile manufacturing. Millions of Indians were dependent on this industry. This process is best explained in the words of Bipin Chandra, “under pressure from British traders and
cotton manufacturers, a process of tariff reform and reduction, particularly on cotton products, was soon set in motion……..The duty on the cotton yarn and twist was reduced to 5% in 1861 and to 3½ in 1862.”30 This was done to protect the interests of British cotton mills. Cotton weavers and Indigo cultivators suffered the most.31 Bipin Chandra mentioned in his work regarding the disastrous effect of British rule on handicrafts, “one of the most momentous ultimate consequences of the establishment of British supremacy in India was the disruption of the centuries’ old ‘union between agriculture and manufacturing industry’, as a result of the progressive decline and destruction of Indian town handicrafts and village artisan industries.”32 Decline of handicrafts industry increased pressure on agriculture. Majority of them became agricultural labourers at very low wage average between 4s and 6s per month which could not match up with the cost of living.33 These circumstances forced them to search for an outlet for their survival which they find in travelling other British colonies.

III

Factors responsible for the movement of Indians to South East Asian colonies like Burma, Hong Kong, Malaya, and Ceylon started showing in the beginning of the nineteenth century under British colonial interests. Earlier status and wealth acquired by Indians now totally seconded by the colonial interests in these colonies. The nature of modern migration was totally different from the earlier migration and the circumstances in which they were to migrate were also different. In the words of Chenchala Kondapi,

“Early Indian emigration was largely cultural and commercial. The emigrants were the ambassadors of a great civilization and religion or traders in rare commodities. The emigration of modern times presents a strictly contrast. The modern emigrant is an unlettered labourer striking out to sweat and live on an alien’s estate”.

The earliest arrival of Indians during the colonial period started with the foundation of Penang in 1786. But the continuous flow of Indians only started with the consolidation of British power in Malaya in the mid-nineteenth century. This migration was mainly comprised of uneducated labourers who arrived in Malaya to work on sugarcane plantations and rubber estates unlike the earlier migrants which were traders and
merchants. Early contacts with Malaya were instigated by the Indians for their own interests, however movement in the modern period was prompted to serve the British colonial interests. With time professional and skilled workers also arrived in this region in search for jobs.

East India Company took control over province Wellesley (also known as Seberang Perai) in 1800 and Malacca in the year 1824 for their commercial purposes. With the commercialization and industrialization, many rubber estates were established. Large numbers of labourers were required to work here. Earlier, this requirement was fulfilled by the convicts and slaves who were here from India to the crown colonies named Malacca, Penang and Singapore. Later on, with the abolition of slavery in August 1833 there was the shortage of labourers. In order to overcome this, Government first diverted their attention to the locals. But soon, they realized that local Malays are not suitable for this job. Local Malays were satisfied with their farms and fishing business and were reluctant to work hard in the fields for hours. Neelakandha Aiyer described the reluctance of Malay in this way: “they always shunned the plantations and mines and wisely escaped from the enslavement by capitalistic enterprises”. British authorities then turned to India for cheap labour force which was satisfied by the labour migrants from India. Indians were suitable for this job and were very hard working. They were willing to work under low wages. Emigration proceeding of year 1871 mentions the migration of Indians to Malay Peninsula in this way:

“poorness of soil of Malay Peninsula calls for the cheap labourers, that; the Malay will not work as field labourer and the Chinese immigrants finds out other more profitable employment; immigration from India is therefore of vital importance.”

Studies indicate that there were two kind of migration from India to South East Asia: assisted and non-assisted migration. First was sponsored by the government and second was when migrants arrived in the colonies at their own will and on their own. Assisted migration was further classified into indentured and kangani labour system. Non assisted migration constituted commercial migrants, clerks and free laborers who came on their own.
Sinnappah Arasaratnam mentions that, “under the indenture system, a prospective employer of labour placed an order with a recruiting agent based in India for the supply of stipulated number of labourers. The recruiting agent thereupon sent his subordinate contact men into the villages, and picked the required number of men. These men, on signing a contract, were said to be under ‘indenture’ to the employer for a period of five years.” Emigration proceeding of the 1871 further mentions this recruiting process as:

“A ship owning merchant advances money to a head maistry who employs under him several subordinate maistries. These maistries have to go about the villages and persuade coolies (labourers) to emigrate. This they do by representing in bright colour prospects of enrichment and advances. The ignorant coolies (labourers) believe easily, and while some volunteer to go to try their fortune, many are persuaded. The maistries, get rupees 10 per head for every adult coolie they bring, all contingent expenses being paid. A less price is given for boys, who are not in such demand and a somewhat higher rate for young good looking women. The coolies thus obtained are kept in godowns (or depots) in Negapatam until a sufficient number is collected. They are then shipped on the ship owner vessel, and accompanied by the head maistry to the port of destination. There they are sold under contract to serve for certain periods. Each man fetches about five pounds, and all expenses of maintenance, passage money are discharged by the purchaser. The shipper and the head maistry divide the profits. The coolies, after their teams of service have expired, continue to work on their own account, and manage to save small sum of money, with which they return to India.”

Emigration to the Strait Settlements was not under any rules and regulations which could protect the rights of labourers. Emigration proceeding for the year of 1871 gives the detailed account on this:
“A memorial from certain inhabitants of the Prince of Wales Island (Penang) and province Wellesley representing that for years, a voluntary emigration had been going on from Madras to the East coast of Bay, unregulated till 1857, when a law was passed to prevent overcrowding, that the price of passage being thus raised, it became necessary for the employers of labour in the Straits to send agents to Madras, to assist emigrants with advances of money and otherwise; that these agents worked with the knowledge and consent of the Madras government; that no contacts were formed with the coolies previous to their reaching Penang.”45

 Despite of the enactment of various laws regarding the regulation for Indian labourers, the situation remained the same. Later on, with lots of complaints and abuses regarding recruitment system and transportation of Indian labour, the migration was prohibited by the Parliament, but this step was not effectively implemented. Strait Settlements became a crown colony in 1867 which made the emigration of Indian labourer to Strait Settlement illegal. However with the Indian Act V of 1877, there was the controlled Indian migration to the Straits Settlements until 1884.46

 Indentured labour system mainly caters the need of sugar plantations. This plantation demands steady and regular supply of labour. A commission was appointed in order to meet the requirement of labour. Emigration proceeding of year 1918 mentions that,

 “Under the secretary to the Government of India, Mr. E.C. Buck and Colonel Bowness Fischer were deputed, to visit Malaya and as a result of their report, the Strait Settlement Government passed an Indian Immigration Ordinance 1884, and the Government of India repealed Act V of 1877 in 1885. Recruitment in India was under the new arrangement freed from legal restrictions, but, under executive rules recruiters sent over by persons in the Straits to recruit labourers in India were registered and granted licenses by the Strait Immigration agent, such license did not, however, confer on the
recruiter any legal powers or rights whatever. Persons engaged under these rules were also registered and on arrival in the Straits came under the provisions of the Indian Immigration Ordinance 1884; and all persons who had received advances as defined in the ordinances were bound to execute three year contracts on arrival at the Strait or to repay the advances received. No recruiter was to receive any commission for any labourer not registered as emigrating under advances”.

This labour system was defective in many aspects. Sir William Hunter named this system as slavery, while many nationalist leaders Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Mahatma Gandhi criticized this system by designated it as semi-slavery; Kingsley Davis rated the system as in-between free labour and slavery. Agents responsible to recruit these indentures were usually paid by the commission. More the recruit, more the commission they could get. They didn’t respect the moral high ground during the recruitment process. They provided the colourful pictures of working environment conditions, medical facilities, living conditions and the possible stability and security from the job. By doing so, they were able to attract large number of needy Indians willing to work in these plantations. Labourers on the other hand decided to migrate, left India without proper knowledge of the nature of the work, possible hardships and employment contract. In the words of N. Gangulee’s:

“How could a contract be something real when one party was entirely ignorant of the nature of the work and of the environment in which he would have to live.”

Further, this system was also defective because of the fixed duration of the contract. Even after the completion of the contract, many employers of these labourers tried their best to keep the labourers with them, by posing serious financial problems; or sometimes trying to sign the fresh contract. Labourers, who were already in miserable conditions, sometimes fell into the web of these recruiters and continue to suffer. In addition to this, criminal charges could be imposed on the labourers if they try to break the contract.
Friend of India dated 14 April 1870 commented on this system:

“An organised system of kidnapping men and children of both sexes has been discovered and broken up in the Tanjore. The captives were shipped from Negapatam for Penang and other countries, where the males were employed as coolies and females sold to a life of prostitution.”

C. Kondapi further mentioned the idea of Sir Thomas Hyslop regarding Indian labourers.

“We want Indians as indentured labourers but not as free men.”

This system was abolished in the wake of abuses criticism in 1910. Indentured labourers to South East Asian region were of South Indians as the main constituents. Following is the statistical data of indentured labourers available from 1887 to 1910 till its abolition.

Table shows the Indentured labourers in Malaya from 1887 to 1910 up to its abolition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Indentured Labourers</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Indentured Labourers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1887</td>
<td>4736</td>
<td>1899</td>
<td>4677</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1888</td>
<td>4634</td>
<td>1900</td>
<td>7615</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889</td>
<td>2747</td>
<td>1901</td>
<td>2785</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>2960</td>
<td>1902</td>
<td>2430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>3443</td>
<td>1903</td>
<td>572</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>1628</td>
<td>1904</td>
<td>2670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1893</td>
<td>2106</td>
<td>1905</td>
<td>4823</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td>1688</td>
<td>1906</td>
<td>3674</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>1549</td>
<td>1907</td>
<td>5499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>2652</td>
<td>1908</td>
<td>5456</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897</td>
<td>2599</td>
<td>1909</td>
<td>4139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898</td>
<td>2989</td>
<td>1910</td>
<td>2516</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources:
1. For 1887-1894, Revenue & Agriculture, National Archives of India, Emigration, File No. 60/97, Serial No. 3, May 1897, part B.
2. For year 1897 to 1898, Revenue & Agriculture, National Archives of India, Emigration, File No. 50, June A, Proceeding No. 10 to 12, 1899.
3. For year 1896 to 1905, Revenue & Agriculture, National Archives of India, Emigration, File No. 23, May, A Proceeding No. 5 to 10, 1900; Commerce & Industry, National Archives of India, File no. 80, 1905, Appendix E for 1896-1901; Commerce & Industry, National Archives of India. File no. 24 of 1906, March A, Proceeding 29-33.
4. For year 1906, Commerce & Industry, National Archives of India, Emigration, File No. 61 of 1906, July, Proceeding A No. 27-29.
5. For year 1907 to 1910, Commerce & Industry, National Archives of India, Emigration, Proceeding No. 35 and 36, January, 1918, Statement of arrival and departure between Madras Presidency and Malaya.
GRAPH INDICATES THE FLOW OF INDENTURED MIGRANTS FROM INDIA TO MALAYA (1887-1910)
Graph indicates the fluctuation in the number of the indentured labourers. Beginning with just few, their number reached up to seven thousands with some minor ups and down. However, the graph and table only shows the number of indentured labourers worked there for sometimes rather than the arrival of these labourers under *indenture system*. Actual arrival of labourers under *indenture* might be many more but few of them return back to India. Graph shows the steep decline and fluctuation from the year 1889 to 1891 and later on upward movement from 1895 to the year 1899 and record breaking year 1900 with the highest number of indenture migrants. These fluctuations may be explained by the enactment of various laws prohibiting the flow of labourers to some extent. Demand for these labourers increased every year as they were required to work for government projects, plantations and estates etc. Highest number of labourers in 1900 can be explained with shortage of food due to bad harvest in India. They left with no choice but search for jobs elsewhere. Next year their number again shows downward movement and decline to the lowest of 572 in the year 1903. This decline can be explained due to the development of industries back in India which increased the demand of labourers back home. However, demand for labourers in Malaya again increases due to the increase in the prices of rubber. In 1910, the indentured system was abolished and majority of Indian labourers recruited in another labouring system named as *Kangani* system.

Parallel to *Indenture* system, new method of recruiting labour was started in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. “This was the method of recruiting through a *kangany*, a person who was himself an immigrant working on the plantation as a foreman, or even as a labourer of some influence and standing.” Emigration proceeding of year 1918, further clarify that the labourers were recruited by *Kanganis* or gang headmen chosen by estate managers and sent over to India to recruit labourers under licenses issued by the superintendent of immigrants. These village headmen or *Kanganis* were asked to recruit from their own village so that they can give some kind of assurance or security to the labourers regarding the prospects and future in Malaya. Further labourers were believed to feel more comfortable with the Kanganis due to their ethnic bond.

Emigration proceeding of year 1918 further gives the information on processing of this labour system.
“The labourers recruited received free passage tickets but did not enter into any indenture on arrival in Malaya. They were expected to pay back the advances, they had received; but the complaint was that they were enticed away by other employers before they had paid back their advances.”

This labour system was more successful and secure than the indenture system as recruiting was done by a person who was familiar to them and to their community. Labourers trusted them and showed interests to migrate for work. Earlier, under indenture system, only males were allowed to migrate but with the Kangani system, migration of families now seemed to be a possibility. Moreover, this system was much cheaper than the earlier recruiting system, in the words of Kernial Sandhu, “commissions paid to kanganis probably varied less directly with the demand for labour.”

There were now multiple agencies for the supply of labour i.e. through indenture, kangani and free labour recruited by proprietors which caused the great confusion. Need for the common platform for recruiting organization was felt. For this, Indian Immigration Committee was formed in 1907 and later on Indian Immigration Fund to safeguard the interests of Indian labourers.

Emigration proceeding of commerce and industry for the year 1918 gives the detailed description on the Indian Immigration Committee and working of kangani system from Madras (recruiting depot) to Malaya.

“In the interest of the development of the country, Strait Settlement took up the question of the labour supply. The control and supervision of immigration was in 1907 vested in an Immigration committee consisting of the superintendent of Immigrants (now controller of labour) as chairman, the principal Medical officer of Federated Malay States, the director of Public works of the Federated Malay States, and four or five non official gentlemen, member of firms of estate agents or managers of estates. Indian Immigration Committee recommended that the cost of importation of labourers should be distributed amongst all those who employed them, and the Indian Immigration Fund Enactment was subsequently passed. Under this enactment, an
assessment on the amount of work done by their labourers levied upon all employers of labourers native to the Madras Presidency and the proceeds are paid into a fund called the Immigration Fund. Further, when an estate manager or other employers wishes to recruit Indian labour, he selects his own recruiters from amongst the labour force and applies to the Indian Immigration Committee at Penang for a license. License to recruit labourers in the Madras Presidency are then issued to these persons (kangani so called) on the authority of the Chairman of Immigration Committee and are provided free of charge. Blank licenses forms are sent to any employer on application to any of the labour offices and when the required details have been filled in the licenses should be sent to the Deputy Controller of labour, Penang for registration and signature.

At Madras and Negapatam, emigration offices have been established by the colonial government under the charge of their officers. There were also 14 recruiting inspectors stationed at various places. With the Madras presidency, whose duty is to assist kanganis, help in forwarding their recruits and to pay their train fares. The Kangani on receipt of his license proceeds to Madras or Negapatam and had his license registered in the office of the emigration agent. License is valid for six months only, but the emigration agent may renew it for further period of 3 months at a time if he satisfied that ‘the Kangany is likely to recruit the number specified in his license. After this license has been registered, the Kangany has to go either ‘Messers Binny & Co, Madras; or Messrs – the Madras Company Negapatam. These are the agents of British India Steam Navigation Company who also act as financial agents in India for employers in the Strait Settlements. These financial agents as per orders from employers make advances to the kanganis and pay commission for each labourer actually produced by the kanganis and shipped. By this
system, risk is avoided of giving to the Kangany large advances in cash in Malaya which he might very likely squander.

After receiving with advance (usually Rs. 20), Kangany proceeds to find labourers wiling to emigrate. When he has succeeded in getting together as many as he thinks it practicable to obtain at the time, the Kangany takes them to the nearby railway stations and thence to the Straits govern camps or depots at Avadi (Near Madras) or Negapatam, where the intending emigrants are accommodated and fed with shipment. They were examined medically before embarkation.

These emigrants are carried by the British Steam Navigation Company’s steamers weekly. The company has contracted to run a weekly service from Madras and Negapatam. The rate charged per emigrant is Rs. 12 from Madras and Rs. 10 from Negapatam. 2103 inspectors (Indian) are employed by the Immigrant Fund Committee to look after the health and comfort of the emigrants during the voyage and to deal with all complaints.

All immigrant labourers are quarantined, usually for a week, on arrival at Penang and Port Swettenham (Now port Klang-main gateway by sea into Malaysia). The quarantine camps have been built and are maintained at Government expenses but the cost of feeding the immigrants in quarantine is borne by the fund. After the quarantine, immigrants are removed to two large depots at Penang and Port Swettenham, and from thence removed by the employers or his agents to their place of employment.57

As mentioned already, Kangani labour system was quite popular in Malayan labour market, but like indentured labour system, this system also had some drawbacks which became the center of criticism among nationalist leaders and they raised the questions regarding the working conditions of labourers in Malaya.

In response to the criticism, Indian Government from the invitation of Malaya Government send a deputation under the supervision of Mr. Srinivasa Sastri to obtain the first hand information on the condition of Indian labour in Malaya.58
In his report, he elaborated on the working conditions of labourers, their wages, working of Indian Immigration Committee and assisted migration. On the basis of his tour in Malaya, he suggested that Kangani system should be abolished. In his words…

“I am not in favor of the Kangany system either in theory or in practice. I believe that little real hardship, if any, would be caused by its abolition.”

Most of the kangani recruiters were from South India like indentured labourers. Statistical analysis reveals that estimated eleven lakh eighty-one thousand Kangani recruits landed in Malaya from 1898 to 1938.

Table showing the number of Kangani recruiting labourers from 1898 and graph shows the upward, downward movement of the same. Again, the figures of these labourers are those who were chose to stay here for some time. However, the arrival of these labourers was higher than those departed to India. Following is the table and graph.

**Total numbers of Kangani recruits from 1898 to 1938.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of Kangani Labourers</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of Kangani labourers</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of Kangani labourers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1898</td>
<td>435</td>
<td>1912</td>
<td>73733</td>
<td>1926</td>
<td>102,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1899</td>
<td>2217</td>
<td>1913</td>
<td>83859</td>
<td>1927</td>
<td>75,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>7052</td>
<td>1914</td>
<td>34735</td>
<td>1928</td>
<td>13,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>3476</td>
<td>1915</td>
<td>52572</td>
<td>1929</td>
<td>44,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902</td>
<td>1595</td>
<td>1916</td>
<td>65173</td>
<td>1930</td>
<td>21200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>1917</td>
<td>65260</td>
<td>1931</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904</td>
<td>3527</td>
<td>1918</td>
<td>42658</td>
<td>1932</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>7686</td>
<td>1919</td>
<td>67247</td>
<td>1933</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>20215</td>
<td>1920</td>
<td>61889</td>
<td>1934</td>
<td>1,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907</td>
<td>24882</td>
<td>1921</td>
<td>12651</td>
<td>1935</td>
<td>1,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>17157</td>
<td>1922</td>
<td>30966</td>
<td>1936</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909</td>
<td>17687</td>
<td>1923</td>
<td>20011</td>
<td>1937</td>
<td>5300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>48068</td>
<td>1924</td>
<td>28363</td>
<td>1938</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>78376</td>
<td>1925</td>
<td>43021</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source:* 1) Kangani migrants from year 1898 to 1899 adapted from K.S. Sandhu, 1969, p. 308
2) Year 1900 to year 1904; figures are taken from Commerce & Industry, *National Achieves of India;* Emigration Proceedings No. 6 -8, October, File no. 80 to 1905.
4) Year 1906 Commerce& Industry, *National Archives of India;* Emigration proceedings July 1, Proceedings No. 27-29, File No. 61, 1906.
6) Year 1917 to 1925 figures are taken from Kernial Singh Sandhu, *Indians in Malaya,* 1969, p. 309.
GRAPH INDICATES THE FLOW OF KANGANI MIGRANTS FROM INDIA TO MALAYA (1898-1938).
Table and graph indicates the increasing number of *kangani* recruits every year from 1903 to 1930. There was an upward trend right from the beginning except for 1901 and 1902. The proportion of Kangani labourers among the assisted migration was ten per cent in the beginning which increases to eighty two per cent in 1906. This upward movement rises continuously up to 1913 with some fluctuations during World War I. After the War, the trend of recruiting *kangani* labourers again gained momentum. The lowest point of *kangani* recruiters was in the year of 1921, one possible reason seemed to be the recession after the war. With some upward and low trend, this migration reached at its peak in the year 1926 which recorded nearly 1 lakh twenty two hundred *kangani* labourers. After this year this migration never reached at the level. Their movement continuously decline due to the possible reason of Great Depression of 1928 and by 1930’s the flow of *kangani* labourers declined. Other possible reason was the shutting down of tin and rubber plantation estates and tin industries. Later on, Colonial Government imposed ban on the unskilled labour migration which ultimately led to the abolition of *Kangani* labour system in 1938.

Another form of recruiting system known as non-recruited assisted migration was introduced to eradicate the corruption and exploitation that arose from the *Kangani* labour system. According to this system, labourers willing to migrate could present themselves at Negapatam (Nagapattinam, a town of Tamil Nadu) or Avadi (Chennai) emigration depots where, emigration commissioner who then made sure that there was no possibility of illegality regarding the migration and satisfied himself that the applicants are bonafide labourers. These qualified labourers were given financial assistance to enter Malaya by Indian Immigration Fund. Upon arrival in Malaya, they were free to join any suitable job.

With the establishment of colonial government in Malaya, the demand for the English educated skilled workers such as clerks, teachers, and administrators increased. Colonial government once again encouraged the recruitment from India due to the non-availability of English educated locals. Indians became the natural choice for this kind of services among the government and private employers in Malaya. Job security,
stability and pensions were the possible reasons that South Indians were attracted to migrate there and willing to work on low wages (higher than India). They were engaged in public, private sectors and worked as technical assistants and clerks etc.

Parallel to this, newly acquired colonies of South East Asia needed brave men to protect from rebellious elements from both inside and outside powers and to maintain law and order. For these purposes, British colonial government encouraged North Indians particularly Punjabis to get recruited in Hong Kong and Shanghai police services and later on in the Federated and Un–Federated Malay States police services. They were willing to work there for long periods so that they could earn little money for their families back home and pay off their debts. They also recruited in Malay States Guides (1896-1919) and Strait Settlement Police Force (1881). This type of migration continued till the Japanese occupation of Malaya (1942). They were able to sustain in their position in the Strait Settlement Police services till its disbandment in 1946. However after the Second World War, British government no longer encouraged them to get enlisted with the possible reason of their association with the revolutionaries of Indian freedom struggle against British rule.

Besides this, another type of migration gained momentum termed as the commercial migrants, entrepreneurs, petty traders and moneylenders in the early 1920’s. They were mainly Parsis and Marwaris from Gujarat and Sindh. They were mainly engaged in textile manufacturing and retail business. However with the arrival of Punjabi Sikhs, their dominance tended to decline.

Commercial migrants also indulged in moneylending activities. Chettiares from South India and Punjabi Aroras and Khatris were the main money lending communities. Studies reveal that Chettiares worked under the regulatory system, gave loans to Government and civil servants, besides Malay rural folks and Chinese traders and shopkeepers. Punjabis on the other hand lent money without any proper documentation hence were at greater risks. Their activities were severely affected with the implementation of Moneylending Licensing Act of 1952.
Besides this, many migrants engaged themselves in businesses. They opened small stores selling items of daily consumption like packaged foods, confectionaries and tobacco. Many South Indians also opened shops for selling sarees. While many of them built restaurants catering to the needs of their own brethren. They were also engaged in jewelry business. Commercially active migrants also owned private companies. To name a few, were Tajmahal Store Agent Company owned by a Punjabi, Chotirmall & Co, a Sindhi Enterprise; C.J. Doshi & Co owned by a Gujarati etc.61

However, the flow of commercial and professional migrants declined with the Japanese occupation of Malaya (1942) followed by the Immigration Act of 1952 and 1959 and subsequent independence of Malaysia (1957). Studies indicate that, fresh migration was restricted except the immediate families of already settled male migrants. Statistical data reveals that eighty two percent Indians were engaged in skilled and professional jobs while eighteen per cent were engaged in semiskilled and business ventures in 1957.

The estimated number of Indian immigrants in Malaya was 761 in 1678 and increased up to 1,520 in 1750. Their number further increased to 2,986 in 1817. This was during the pre-British period. At the time of first population census, their number was approximately 3,389. Following table shows the estimated number of Indians in Malaya up to 1957 and after that in Malaysia. These are only the estimated population as there is lot of confusion regarding the actual number of them. Following is the tabular and graphical representation of the fluctuations in the number of Indians in Malaya.
Total population of Indians in Malaya from 1678 to 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population of Indians</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population of Indians</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1678</td>
<td>761</td>
<td>1937</td>
<td>754849</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1750</td>
<td>1520</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>748829</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1766</td>
<td>1023</td>
<td>1947</td>
<td>599616</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1817</td>
<td>2986</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>820270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1831</td>
<td>15073</td>
<td>1965</td>
<td>1063000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>33389</td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>932629</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>44000</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>1093112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>76000</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>1313588</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>119000</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>1665000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>268269(267159)</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>1800000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>470180(471628)</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>2050000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>621847(624009)</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>2131000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCES:


6. Ministry of Overseas Indian affairs, Estimated Number of Overseas Indian Govt. of India, 2012


9. However there is a lot of differences in the number of Indians in all the source, for instance, Neelakandha Aiyer gave the population growth of Indians in 1901 as 11536, 267159 in 1911, in 1921 is 471628 and 624009 in 1931; while Usha Mahajani and Kernial Singh Sandhu gave the slightly different number such as 119000 in 1901, 268269 in 1911, 470180 in 1921 and 621847 in 1931.
GRAPH INDICATES THE FLOW OF INDIANS TO MALAYA FROM 1678-2015.
Graph indicates the ever increasing upward movement in number of Indians right from the beginning. The labourers on the government plantations and in government building projects were mainly from India due to their hardworking and willingness to work at low wages. This led to the further fresh immigration in the 1880s and 1890s.

Statistical data\textsuperscript{62} shows that the proportion of Indian community was five per cent out of the total population of Malaya in 1891 which increased to seven per cent at the turn of century. It was mainly on account of development of rubber estates and oil palm industry. Rise in the rubber prices in 1906 led the increase in demand of Indian labourers. The population of Indians was highest during the year 1911 and was ten per cent of the total population. Further increase in Indian population was witnessed during 1911-1931. However during World War I many plantation estates and mines were shut down due to which many labourers were thrown out of employment. Flow of the Indians arrival in Malaya again gained momentum after the war. This flow was again halted with the financial crisis in rubber industry which led to decline in employment of Indian labourers. Great Depression of 1928 and the Indian Government ban on emigration caused the further decline in population. The proportion of Indian community was fourteen per cent in the total population in 1931. World War-II and the Japanese occupation of Malaya in 1942 influenced the growth of population significantly. Indians were ten per cent out of the total population of Malaya in 1947. Able bodied Indian labourers were forced to work on Siamese Death Railway which caused approximately sixty thousand deaths.\textsuperscript{63} In 1957, Indians were eleven per cent out of the total population of Malaya.

Indians were the most neglected ethnic community of Malaysia in the 1970’s. Statistical data indicates that, in 1970, twenty per cent Indians were engaged in professional and skilled jobs while fifty nine per cent were in semiskilled and ten per cent in business ventures and eleven per cent were engaged in unidentified jobs.\textsuperscript{64} Estimated sixty thousand Indians returned to India due to the 13\textsuperscript{th} May 1969 racial riots causing the proportion settled to eleven per cent out of the total.\textsuperscript{65} However demand for Indian professionals IT workers and skilled labourers increased with the ongoing development of Malaysia’s economic infrastructure since 1980’s. Their proportion was 7.3\% in 2010 of the total population of Malaysia.\textsuperscript{66} In 2015, there were 21lakh 31 thousand Indians in Malaysia.\textsuperscript{67}
Earliest arrival of Indians to Singapore dated back to 1819, when 120 soldiers of Bengal Native Army (Infantry) including *dhobis* (washer men), *doodhwalas* (milkmen) and domestic servants accompanied the officer of East India Company, Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles. Naraina Pillai, a Hindu trader from Penang accompanied Stamford Raffles on the second trip to Singapore. Starting with the clerical job in government treasury department, he later on establish his own business of making bricks. In the meantime, several *mistris* (carpenters) also arrived in Singapore due to the growing demand of construction of houses to cater the need of increasing population. Further, with the establishment of Singapore as commercial port city, population rapidly increased with arrival of different Indian communities.

In 1825, Singapore became the convict colony replacing Bencoolen and Sumatra which led to the arrival of British Indian convicts. Studies indicate that in the 1860s there were nearly 2275 Indian convicts in Singapore. Their physical strength was utilized for the construction of many buildings, for clearing forests and swamp area and building canals. Apart from this, they were being taught variety of occupational skills to survive like nurse, firemen and bridge builders. Substantial number of convicts returned back to India after the end of their term while some of them decided to settle in Singapore and indulged in variety of occupations. They worked as watchmen, milkmen and peddlers.

Like Malaya, many South Indians arrived to work in plantation estates of cloves, pineapple, and sugarcane and later on rubber estates as labourers under the *indentured* and *kangani* labour system. In addition to this substantial number of skilled and professionals arrived here to work as clerks and teachers. North Indians mainly Punjabi Sikhs were recruited in the Strait Settlement Police Force as regulars. However those who were not found suitable for these security forces absorbed in private sector as caretakers, watchmen, bullock cart drivers and security guards.

Commercially developed Singapore attracted substantial number of Indian business community in the second half of the nineteenth century. They were mainly Chettiars, Gujaratis, Bengalis, Marwaris and Parsis. They established wide networks of their financial activities throughout South East Asian region especially Singapore,
Malaya, Burma and Ceylon. By the 1920’s Punjabi commercial migrants arrived in Singapore and engaged in textile trading, manufacturing business. Besides this, two Indian communities Chettiars and Punjabis were also engaged in moneylending business. They lend money to needy Indian traders, Chinese as well as some Europeans. These communities continued to prosper until Second World War.

During Second World War, substantial number of Indians entered Singapore from Malaya and from the neighboring colonies in order to escape the oppression caused by the war. Probably a good number of Indians in Singapore supported Indian Independence League to fight against the British in India. After the war, Indian communities faced the wrath of British colonial government. For instance, Punjabi Sikhs in Strait Settlement Police Force were disbanded due to their suspected collaboration with the Japanese and their role in freedom struggle.

After the war, Indian communities particularly Punjabi Sikhs and Sindhis arrived in large number and established many textile shops. Economic development in Singapore and the Korean War (1950-53) resulted in further increase in the arrival of commercial migrants from India to Singapore. Indians entered Singapore from neighboring South East Asian region due to better facilities and economy during this time. Statistical analysis of various census reports indicates that, in 1957, thirty nine per cent Indians were engaged in professional and skilled jobs while sixty per cent were in semi-skilled and in business ventures collectively and one per cent was engaged in unidentified occupations in Singapore.

This flow was restricted with the imposition of Immigration Act of 1952 and 1959. By the 1960s, there was hardly any new migration except those of close family members of those who already settled in Singapore. With the separation from Malaysia in 1965, Singapore witnessed the establishment of Indian community in newly independent country among multi ethnic races based on one nation. They maintained their contacts with their *biradari* back in India on one hand and settled in Singapore on the other. Majority of them are in the process of becoming citizens unlike the earlier Punjabis who were here only for economic interests. In the words of Kernial Singh Sandhu, “though many Indians still retain their emotional ties with India, actual contact
with the country has been diminishing, most of the Indians seem to have decided to become Singapore citizens."\textsuperscript{73}

Following table and graph shows the estimated number of Indians in Singapore from 1821 to 2015.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>INDIAN POPULATION</th>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>INDIAN POPULATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1821</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>60300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1824</td>
<td>756</td>
<td>1947</td>
<td>68967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1830</td>
<td>1913</td>
<td>1956</td>
<td>101102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1836</td>
<td>2932</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>124084</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1840</td>
<td>3375</td>
<td>1965</td>
<td>153700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1845</td>
<td>5198</td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>145169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1849</td>
<td>6284</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>154632</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1860</td>
<td>12973</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>1,70,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>10313</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>1,94,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>12086</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>3,07,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>16009</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>3,09,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>17047</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>3,48,119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>27755</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>6,70,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>32314</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>6,50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>50811</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source:
5. Brij V Lal and others (eds.), Encyclopedia of the Indian Diaspora, National University of Singapore, Singapore, Didier Millet, 2006, p.188.
12. Again there is limited reliability regarding the statistics as different sources reveal difference in the number of Indian population; for instance 1881 there is difference in Saw See Hawk 1970 version where they numbered around 12086; 16009 in 1891; 17047 in 1901; 27755 in 1911, 32314 in 1921; 50811 in 1931 and 68967 in 1947. On the other hand Kernial Singh Sandhu gives somehow different data for instance, 12138 in 1881; 16035 in 1891; 17845 in 1901; 28454 in 1911; 32687 in 1921; 50860 in 1931 and 68978 in 1947.
GRAPH INDICATES THE FLOW OF INDIANS TO SINGAPORE FROM 1821-2015.
Above table indicates that number of Indians increased continuously right from the beginning. Statistical analysis reveals that the proportion of Indian community was three per cent out of the total population of Singapore in 1821 which increases up to seven per cent in 1824. With the introduction of sugarcane, clove and rubber plantation, there was an increase in arrival of Indians as 1871 showed twelve per cent of the total population of Singapore which decline to nine per cent in the year 1891. By 1911, Indians were nine per cent of the total population of Singapore and 10.6% of total population of Malaya. Year 1921 showed the increase in population to 32,314 but the percentage was eight per cent of total of Singapore population and in 1931 this was increased to nine per cent of total population of Singapore. Possible reason of this increase was due to the better health facilities available at that time which resulted into the natural increase in Indian population of Singapore. After the Second World War large influx of Indians arrived in Singapore from India and Malaya. Studies indicates that, forty thousand Indians moved from Federation of Malaya to Singapore due to safer conditions and better prospects in 1947-1957.

Post independent period (1960) witnessed the development in Singapore economy. Better infrastructure, peace, general security and facilities lured the migrants to settle down in Singapore. The proportion of Indians was eight per cent of the total population of Singapore in 1965 but declined to seven per cent in 1970 and six per cent in 1980s. Possible reason behind this continuous decline was the departure of Indians earlier working in British police services back to India after their retirement. Statistical data indicates that in 1970, forty four per cent Indians were engaged in professional and skilled jobs while fifty four per cent were engaged in semiskilled and business ventures collectively and two per cent had unidentified jobs. During the 1990’s, Singapore government abolished the restriction on immigration in order to promote the recruitment of Indian IT professionals in their multinational corporations. As a result, the number of Indians grew from 1, 94,000 in 1990 to 2, 93,100 in 2004. The percentage of Indians thus increased from 7 per cent (in 1990’s) to 8 per cent in 2000 and ultimately 8.4 percent in 2004. Number of Indians reported in 2012 was 6 lakh 70 thousand and 6lakh 50 thousand which is nine per cent of the total population in 2015.
Early contact of Indians with Thailand is traced back to the ancient times. Studies indicate that there are various references which indicates the presence of Indian Brahmans in third century A.D. in Thailand. These Brahmans played significant role in the administration of the Thai kings in pre-modern times. Brahmans living today in Wat Bot Phram are believed to be the descendants of early Brahams arrived from India in fifth and sixth century. There are references to the presence of Indian merchants and traders in Siam prior to Sukhothai period. These Brahmins, traders and merchants attained significant position in royal Thai court till Ayutthaya period. However, their role was disrupted with the emergence of European influence during early nineteenth century. Treaty was signed between the officials of East India Company and the rulers of Thai court which led to granting the rights to use the ports of Thailand by British ships for trade purposes in 1826. Regular flow of Indians as British subjects strengthened with Bowring treaty in 1855. Soon, South Indians Chettiar and Tamils arrived in Thailand and engaged in “cattle trade and mining of precious stones”. Steady increase in the demand of Indian labourers to work on rubber and teak plantations and mining estates started with the abolition of slavery in 1868. In addition to this, substantial numbers of Punjabis were recruited in Siamese police services. However this step was soon discouraged due to the objection raised by French counterparts in Thailand. By the end of nineteenth century Parsis, Gorakhpuriyas, Gujaratis, Punjabis, Bengalis and Tamils were main Indian communities in Thailand. They worked as peddlers, hawkers, shopkeepers, security guards, milkmen and cloth sellers.

Twentieth century witnessed the increase in the arrival of commercial migrants from India to Thailand. They indulged in textile trading, manufacturing and in wholesale business. Majority of textile retail businesses were owned by Sindhis, Bohras or Punjabis. The Bombay store and the Karachi store were the Sindhi firms; K.R. Inder Singh and Mukundlal Gurdas were Punjabi firms while among Bohra, S.A. Malabari and A.E Nana were Bohra firms. These merchants continued to prosper till 1930’s.
During the Second World War, Thailand was centre of revolutionary activities against Britain. With the chaos and confusing atmosphere many migrants decided to send back their families to India. Studies indicates that Indian migrants in Thailand particularly Punjabis played a significant role in Indian freedom struggle and actively participated in Indian National Army. During the survey conducted by researcher, one Punjabi, named Rakesh Matta told that his father Krishan Lal Matta was the member of Balak Sena (children wing of Indian National Army). After the war, many Indian business communities prospered with the increase in the prices of goods and food. They decided to settle down permanently in Thailand and enjoyed the profits from establishing their own businesses of textiles, handlooms, tailoring and many more.

Today, Punjabis are the main constituent among the Indian communities residing in Thailand. Their forefathers arrived in last decades of nineteenth century to establish their own business. Starting with travelling salesmen, they accumulate wealth to open their own small shops. Today their descendants own their business of textiles manufacturing, showrooms, readymade cloths and tailoring shops. Recently, Punjabis are also engaged in hotel and real estate’s business. However new generations are diverting their attention towards professional occupations like legal practice, engineers and financial consultancy. Most of Indians are now denominated as Thai-Indians. They are now trying their best to absorb and fit in Thai Culture and mingle with local Thais. Following table and graph gives the estimate number of Indians in Thailand from 1850 to 2015.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Indian Population</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Indian Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td>3,000 (Bangkok)</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>65,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>20,769</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>85,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>11,189</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>80,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>1,10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>1,50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>40,000</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>1,95,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sources:

**GRAPH INDICATES THE FLOW OF INDIANS TO THAILAND FROM 1850-2015.**

There is a continuous flow of Indians from 1850 from 2015, except some fluctuations during depression and war periods. No official record exists regarding the actual number of Indians, there is controversy regarding their strength in Thailand. Their number might be exaggerating or might be less than the graph and table shows. These
are only the estimated numbers. In 1850, there was 3,000 Indians in Bangkok. According to Directory of Siam, by the 1921, their number was increased to 20,769 and further increased to 25,000 in 1967. Their estimated number was 30,000 in 1977. However “according to Statistical Handbook of Thailand the number of Indians registered as aliens was only 6,625 in 1981 and 6263 in 1987”. These are only estimated figures because many Indian migrants adopted Thai names and Thai citizens. Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs and External Affairs estimated their number as 1 lakh 50 thousand in 2012 and 1 lakh 95 thousand in 2015.

VI

In retrospect, migration from India to South East Asia has undergone many ups and downs over different stages of known history. Earlier, in ancient period, the main beneficiaries were Indians; they played the dominant role in almost every aspect of the Southeast Asian region. This is best explained in the words of Sinnappah Arasaratnam, There is “a historical continuity in the relation between these two countries, from the early centuries of the Christian era to the present day. The contact is almost unbroken century after century but alters its nature to fit changing conditions in both countries.”

It is well known that the Mauryans sent their religious missionaries to South East Asia. There was the cultural and religious mingling which gave rise to states based on Indian religious values. However, with the passage of time, this influence tended to decline with the advent of Islam through Muslim traders and Ulemas who travelled to Malay Peninsula. Muslim traders earn high status in Malay courts with matrimonial relations and by constructing mosques. Gradually they replaced Hindu traders in maritime trade between India and Malay Archipelago. Their importance was challenged with the emergence of Portuguese power in the last decade of fifteenth century. In addition to this, English East India Company established factories at Surat, Madras and with time monopolized maritime trade between India and Malay Archipelago by controlling Penang which led to decline in the role of Indian traders.
On Indian front, policies were adopted to discourage Indian indigenous industries with heavy excise and export duties while cheap British manufactured products were allowed to enter in Indian markets at nominal duty to cater the needs of British industrial capitalist’s interests. Decline in the indigenous industries directly affected the jobs of Indian artisans. They were now left with little choice but to search for jobs outside. Parallel to this, there was demand for hard working labourers in newly established British colonies of South East Asia, i.e., Malaya, Burma and Ceylon to work in rubber and sugarcane estates. South Indians were encouraged to migrate to these colonies. Parallel to this, other Indian communities also arrived in this region to work in various fields of economy for instance, in security forces; professionals working as clerks, teachers; commercial migrants like moneylenders and businessmen etc. While working there, some decided to settle there in wake of better working conditions while some returned after gathering some wealth back to India. This trend of migration was almost same in the entire South East Asian region. At present most of the migrants are trying their best to absorb in the country of their adoption. They actively participated in the economy, politics and businesses there. They have their linkages back in India to which they do visits there from time to time but they prefer to settle in their host country.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. “The Vāyu Purāṇa contains a chapter describing the various dvīpas to the south of India………..describes in particular a group of six islands named Aṅga-dvīpa, Yama-dvīpa, Malaya-dvīpa, Śaṅkha -dvīpa, Kuśa-dvīpa and Varāha -dvīpa”, Quote from Ramesh Chandra Majumdar, *Suvāṇadvīpa: Ancient Indian Colonies in the Far East*, Vol. 1 (Political History), Gian Publishing House, New Delhi, 1986 Reprint, p. 52. In addition to this, “the earliest reference of this kind, though equally vague in character, perhaps occurs in the ninefold division of Bhāratvarṣa as given in the Purāṇas………..identified one of these divisions, Indradvīpa, with Burma, and suggested that another, Kaserumat, might be Malay Peninsula”, Quote from R.C. Majumdar, p. 50; Garuḍa and Vāmana Purāṇas mentioned Kaṭāha - dvīpa which may be identify as modern day Keddah, Ibid, p 51.


4. R.C. Majumdar, p. 57.

5. Veena Sikri, p. 33.

6. The *Jātaka* mentions the adventure of a prince named Mahājanaka sailed with some merchants in a ship for Suvarṇabhūmi for trade and wealth. Evidence of another sea voyage from Bharukaccha (modern Broach in Gujarat) to Suvarṇabhūmi is mentioned in *Suppāraka-Jātaka*. R.C. Majumdar, p. 37.


8. Ibid, p. 56.

9. Researches indicate that Mahāvarīśa, a Ceylonese chronicle describe the missionary activities of Buddhist preachers named Thera Uttara and Thera Sona in Suvarṇabhūmi, *Ibid*, p. 39; Another Ceylonese chronicle Rajavaliya mentioned in Veena Sikri’s research gives a historical narrative on how the King Simhaba of Bengal sent prince Vijaya along with 700 passengers in a ship. Prince later on landed on the southern shore of Ceylon and founded the great dynasty of Ceylon. Veena Sikri, p. 9; The Ajanta cave painting confirmed the landing of Prince Vijaya in Ceylon by depicting one. On the other hand, Javanese chronicle mentions of a “ruler of Gujarat forewarned of the coming destruction of his kingdom, started his son with 5000 followers, among whom were cultivators, artisans, warriors, physicians and writers in 6 large and 100 small vessels, for Java “, Radha Kumud Mookerji, *Indian Shipping : A History of the Sea-Borne Trade and Maritime Activity of the Indians from the Earliest Times*, Kitab Mahal Pvt. Ltd., Delhi, 2nd Edition, 1962 , p 34, n 1.; Quote in Veena Sikri,p 16.

10. *Brhatkathā-śloka-saṅgraha* mentions that Sānudasā sailed to Suvarṇabhūmi with a gang of adventures and undertook a perilous journey of land after crossing the sea. On the other hand, *Kathākośa* mention the story of Nāgadatta, who went to high seas with five hundred ships in search of wealth, R.C. Majumdar, pp. 37-38.


12. To name a few are *Divyāvadāna*, early Buddhist literature; the *Jātaka-mālā* or *Bodhisattvāvadāna-mālā* written by Aryasura; *Kādambari; Kaumudimahotsava*; Ksemendras *Brhatkathāmanjari, Brhat samhita* and famous South Indian work *Manimekhalāi*, Kernial Singh Sandhu, *Early Malaysia: some observations on the nature of Indian contacts with pre-British malaya*, University Education Press, Singapore, 1973, pp. 76- 81.
13. R.C. Majumdar, pp. 39/40.
14. Ibid, p 40; Harakī, Yākūt, Sirāzī and Buzurg bin Sahriyār are the writers mentioned the term Fansur (Baros on the western side of Sumatra) as the land of gold in their writings, Ibid, p. 41.
15. Quote from Ibid, p. 41.
16. Quote from Veena Sikri, p. 49.
18. Hindu Pallava dynasty Pala dynasty of Bengal and Cholas were among them.
19. Kingdom of Champa was a coastal state in Central Vietnam (modern Annam region). Relation of this Kingdom with Indian Peninsula can be identify with the Bronze Buddha found in Dong-Duong, in the Amravati Region of Champa (Andhra Pradesh, India), Veena Sikri, India and Malaysia, 2013, p 66; Further, inscription dated C. 400 found in Borneo mention a ruler who offered cows to Brahmans which indicates Shiva worship, Monica L. Smith, “Indianization” from the Indian point of View; Trade and Cultural Contacts with Southeast Asia in the Early First Millennium CE, Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient, Vol. 42, No. 1, Brill Publications, Netherlands, 1999, p. 15; A stone slab found in HmaingMaw (located in Mandalay, Burma) written in Pyu language (Tibeto-Burmese language with Brahmi script, Ibid, p15; Sanskrit inscriptions dated 6th C.E were found in the Truong San range along the Central Coast of Vietnam, Ibid, p15; Ninth century Kalirungun Sanskrit inscription found in Kedu in Central Java mentions the posts of foreign traders residing there, Veena Sikri, India and Malaysia, p. 132.
21. One such example is the “Nachodar Giantij of Melaka, who had to have his debt cancelled because he died ‘without any estate’.” Quote from Kernial Singh Sandhu, Early Malaysia: some observations on the nature of Indian contacts with pre-British malaya, Singapore, 1973, p71.
22. Main goods of exchange were spices, opium, camphor, gold, tin, sandalwood and pearls, betelnuts, Veena Sikri, p. 139; Nordin Hussin, Network of Malay merchants and rise of Penang as a Regional Trading Centre, Southeast Asian Studies, Vol 43, No, 3, December 2005, p 230.(http://repository.kulib.kyoto-u.ac.jp/dspace/bitstream/2433/53825/1/kj00004062910.pdf.)
24. Rat race for the control of spice trade began with the entering of other European powers in the seventeenth century. Dutch began to allocate passes to Indian vessels only up to the Malacca and from there they could be allowed to travel further to other ports. They also increased import and export duties on goods coming in and out of Malacca. Further, Dutch Council of India (Batavia in present day Jakarta) barred the Indian ships from trading with Malay Peninsula, Veena Sikri, pp. 165/166.

25. Quantity of cargos of cloths reached to Acehe from Gujrat declined from three ships per annum to none at all by the end the seventeenth century , Veena Sikri, p.168.


31. “In Baramahal the company’s servants assembled the principal weavers and placed a guard over them until they entered into engagements to supply the company only. When once a weaver accepted an advance he seldom got out of his liability. A peon was placed over him to quicken his deliveries if he delayed, and he was liable to be prosecuted in the courts of justice. The sending of peon meant a fine of one anna a day on the weaver...........Fine was sometimes imposed on the weavers, and their brass utensils were seized for its recovery. The whole weaving population of villages were thus held in subjection to the company’s factories.” Quote from Romesh Dutt, 1976, pp 181/182.In addition to weavers, acts of violence were committed against Indigo cultivators to such extent that Colonial government was forced to intervene.

32. Quote from Bipin Chandra, p.55.

33. Romesh Dutt, 1976, p 178;Further in case of Punjab, average annual income of field labourer in Hoshiarpur district was 156 rupees and his total expenditure was 154 rupees which indicates that, labourers had little left for saving. Himadri Banerjee, *Agrarian Society of the Punjab (1849-1901)*, Manohar Publications, New Delhi, 1982, p 200, F.no 85.

“Manpower was required by the Colonial Power for (a) the exploitation of natural resources abundantly found in the countries of South-east Asia like Malaysia, Burma etc. and (b) to work for the cultivation and production of plantation crops like rubber, tea, coffee, coconut, sugarcane and spices.” Quote from IGNOU, Unit-3: Indians in Southeast Asia, p.25.

36. Modern Seberang Perai, formerly province Wellesley situated in Malay Peninsula.

37. These settlements formed crown colonies in 1873 and served as the convict stations first East India Company and later on under the Government of India. During 1857 revolt, more than two thousand convicts were in the Singapore jail. Public buildings i.e. Government house at Singapore were constructed by these Indian convict labourers, K.A Neelakandha Aiyer, Indian Problems in Malaya: A Brief Survey In Relation to Emigration, The Indian Office, Federated Malay States, Kuala Lumpur, 1938, p.4.

38. Quote from Neelakandha Aiyer, p 5.


41. Quote from Sinnappah Arasaratnam, p.11.

42. Maistry-Foreman or labour recruiter who was responsible for the recruiting of labourers for sugar plantations in British colonies

43. National Archives of India, Department of Revenue, Agriculture and Commerce, Emigration Proceedings, Proceedings No.1-9, September 1871.

44. Strait Settlement comprises of Penang, Malacca and Singapore.

45. National Archives of India, Department of Revenue, Agriculture and Commerce, Emigration Proceedings, Proceeding No.1-9, September 1871.


50. National Archives of India, Department of Revenue, Agriculture, and Commerce, Emigration Proceedings, No.1-9, September, 1871.

51. Quote from C. Kondapi, p.7.

52. Quote from Sinnappah Arasaratnam, p.16.


54. Ibid, 35-36, 1918.


57. Ibid, January, No.35-36, 1918.


76. Anthony R. Walker, p.22; However Rajesh Rai in his article in *Encyclopedia of the Indian Diaspora* mentioned that, in 1980, the Indians were 8.1 per cent of the total population of Singapore, 2006, p 185.


79. There was the mention of Thailand as a part of Suvarnadvipa in Valmiki Ramayana dated 1000 B.C, Zakir Hussain, *The Silent Minority: Indians in Thailand*, Social Research Institute, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand 1982, p 32.
80. “Nan-Chou I-Wu-Chih, a source from third century A.D, states that the people of southern Thailand practiced Brahmanism as propounded by the immigrant Brahmanas”, Quote from Amarjiva Lochan, Thailand, in Brij V. Lal, Peter Reeves and Rajesh Rai (eds.), The Encyclopedia of the Indian Diaspora, 2006, p.189.


82. Quote from Amarjiva Lochan, p.190.


84. Amarjiva Lochan, p190.


90. Sinnappah Arasaratnam, p.8.