CHAPTER-III

PUNJABI MIGRATION TO SOUTH EAST ASIA

Migrations from Punjab to South East Asian countries were conditioned by several factors. Punjab was annexed into the British Empire in 1849. Establishment of the new administrative set up backed up by new economic and agrarian policies ushered in a new era of social change in the Punjab. Changes, though were slow, had profound impact on every section of Punjabi society. Migration to other continents including South East Asian countries was one manifestation of such changes.

I

“The agrarian society received the immediate attention of the British administrators.”¹ After realizing the potential of the newly annexed province, new methods were adopted to reap the maximum profits from agriculture. Cultivators were encouraged to cultivate cash crops like cotton, oil seeds, sugarcane and wheat for the purpose of sales in markets. New irrigation projects were also constructed to include the vast uncultivated land under cultivation.² Upper Bari Doab canal was one such canal construction which started immediately after the annexation. Later on, many other projects were started to colonize the uncultivated areas of various doabs of Punjab named as Chaj, Rachna and Bari Doabs.³ As a result of these projects, there was the general increase in the total area under cultivation in Punjab.⁴

At the same time, new means of transport and communications stimulated the commercialization of agriculture. With the expansion of railways, it was now easier to export the cash crops to trading ports like Karachi and Bombay and import manufactured goods. Cultivators now sell their produce in markets for cash. With the increased importance of markets and “expansion of cash nexus, villages no longer remained the relatively isolated economic units”.⁵ The interaction between rural and urban areas resulted into the penetration of factory made goods into villages which directly affect the regular income of village artisans.⁶ Easy availability of agricultural implements (plough, earthen pots and wooden implements) from the markets prompted
the cultivators to reduce their dependency on artisans for these products. Their services were now sought during the repair of the manufactured goods bought from the market. They were being paid on basis of work done by them with the bargaining on the wages in form of cash. Customary obligations and cooperative relations were now replaced by market and competitive trends. They were being forced to search for other source of livelihood suitable for their skills outside the villages.

At the same time, inelastic land revenue settlements were negotiated. In the words of Radha Sharma, “replacement of actual produce as the basis of determining the share of the state by cash rates fixed for a unit area of cultivation did not leave any scope for adjustment in fluctuations in production. The assessment was not done on the basis of current prices and it ignored the character of the harvest altogether.” With the payment of revenue in cash, cultivators now had to part with the larger share of the agricultural produce than ever before. For instance, cultivators now had to sell 88 seers of wheat for one rupee as compare to 65 seers per rupee earlier. They had to bear the fluctuations in cash rates of grains in market based on the theory of demand and supply. This situation forced them to fall back on sahukars for credit to pay revenue in stipulated amount of time. Sahukars advanced credit at very high rates of interest which resulted into the problem of rural indebtedness in Punjab. Eventually cultivators were forced to alienate their lands to sahukars. Study of various documents indicate that estimated 3 lakh 9 thousand acres of land transferred in 1876-77 through sales and mortgages which increased to 9 lakh acres annually in the 1890's. Cultivators became agricultural labourers in their own land.

Problems for cultivators were further aggravated with the subsequent scarcity of land and fragmentation of existing land holdings in some districts of province. As noted earlier various irrigation projects were constructed to increase cultivable land for cultivation. However, this increase was not uniformly distributed over all the areas of Punjab. Study of various district settlement reports indicates that the increase in the cultivated areas was mostly on the barani lands and on the hilly terrains of Punjab while some districts had already exhausted the cultivable area. Scarcity of land resulted to more and more subdivision of their ancestral holdings. Cultivators now tried to seek avenues of employment outside the village. Lack of remunerative jobs available to
agricultural and non-agricultural classes, rural indebtedness and little land left for cultivation were the push factors which prompted them to move out of traditional set up and seek employment opportunities outside. These changes in traditional set up led to the general mobility among Punjabis.

II

Factors that facilitated the movement of Punjabis beyond Punjab started building up during the initial years of British rule in the Punjab. Lord Dalhousie, the Governor General soon realized the need for the Punjabis to provide security to the newly annexed vast border. Ultimately, it was decided to recruit Punjabis from the disbanded army and form Punjab Frontier Force. By 1851, army authorities also authorized their recruitment in Bengal army. However, many British officials were not confident to include the Punjabis in the Bengal army due to the memories of Anglo Sikh war of 1848-1849. But somehow they managed to get recruited into the regular force of Bengal army serving in Punjab. Until 1857, Punjabis remained on the periphery of the colonial armed forces. This equation changed with the uprising of 1857 when British colonial government faced problems in almost all parts of Northern India. Under the commandership of John Lawrence, Punjabi soldiers of Punjab Frontiers Force and Bengal army were sent to reinforce British authority. "Punjabis who came to the side of the British during the crisis were rewarded by employment in the colonial army." In the last decades of the nineteenth century, Punjabis constituted a significant position in the regiment of colonial army. Many recruiting depots were established in main recruiting areas like Amritsar (for Sikhs), Jalandhar (Dogras), Peshawar (for Pathans) and Rawalpindi (for Punjabi Muslims) etc. These races were regarded best suitable for the army and providing security (internal as well as external). Soon, they were called upon to join services in other British colonies like Hong Kong, Shanghai, Malaya, Strait Settlements and Burma etc. British authorities were now in favor of importing these races to other colonies. In the words of Arunajeet Kaur:

“It was common for British officers to serve in different parts of the empire during their career bringing along with them their acquired experience and established contacts with other officers who continued to serve in the previous colonies. This formed a colonial network that loosely maintained homogeneity in the manner of
thinking and executing administrative tasks within the colonial empire. This is adequately demonstrated in the concept and the need to search for ‘Martial Classes’ in the British Army not being restricted in India. 17

With the non-availability of suitable men for the job, British authorities recruit from other colonies. Tony Ballantyne termed this as the intercolonial exchange which formed the basis of colonial empire. 18 Under this colonial exchange, Punjabis first came to serve in the police forces of Hong Kong, Shanghai and later on Malaya (Malay States Guides and Strait Settlement police forces). Studies indicate the deputation of Sikhs under Ludhiana Regiment was sent to Shanghai to suppress the Taiping rebellion in 1851 19 and the presence of Sikhs in the Hong Kong Armed Constabulary section as early as 1867. 20

It was the Hong Kong and Shanghai Sikhs in services that played the dominant role in producing the hopes of golden opportunities and economic prosperity among their fellow villagers that accelerated the process of their desire for exploration to these areas for employment opportunities. 21 Punjabis who were in need of regular income, security and status in society came to know about these opportunities through their fellow villagers, relatives to a larger extent and from government agencies to smaller extent. Employment opportunities were opening up in the later half of the nineteenth century which attracted the substantial number of Punjabis to migrate there.

III

With British control over Malaya in the first half of the nineteenth century, the problem of providing an adequate internal security to the newly included colony was the first priority of the British authorities. The population of Malaya was very complex, consisted of many ethnic groups like Chinese, Malay, Jawi Pekans, Filipino, South Indians and Europeans. 22 Other than the problem of different racial groups, Chinese societies (group of Chinese known for their revoltive nature) were regarded as the threat to the colonial government to the extent that possibility of they might take possession of the country or sided with the local Malay chieftains who were dispossessed and collectively could be act against the British rule. In these circumstances, colonial
government decided to take the appropriate measure to combat the situation by "organizing and maintaining of a modern efficient military and police force for internal law and order."  

While testing for every racial group for the services, each one of them was found unsuitable for one or other reasons. Some of them regarded as untrustworthy, in case of Malays due to their ethnicity which raised the question their loyalty at the time of crisis. Others were discarded on the basis of their inability to handle the trouble creator Chinese. Jawi Pekans and South Indians were among them. Lastly Chinese were also rejected on the basis of further collusion between them and secret societies.

It was in these circumstances, colonial government turned to Northern Indian particularly Punjabis. Their effective service in the surveillances and control of Chinese in Hong Kong caught the attention of the British authorities. As already noted the colonial exchange of goods and services from one colony to other, Punjabis were sought to get enlisted all branches of the security force like paramilitary and armed police forces. Punjabis, on other hand were attracted with the promises of the regular pay, other perks and foreign service bhatta to get recruited in these forces. This trend of joining the police force was further strengthened with the Punjabi folk-songs which mention the necessity of joining force for the want of money. One such example is where wife requests his husband to get a job in army.

*Bharti ho ja vey  
Aithey khaweynga wey suikki roti  
Othey khaweynga biscoot  
Bharthi ho ja wey  
Ithe paweynga khaddar dey leerey  
Othe paweynga soot patola*

These were the pull in attractions under which Punjabis encouraged to migrate to Malaya and Southeast Asian region.

Studies indicate that migration to Malaya started in the 1870's. Those who migrated were the Punjabi Jats and other Non-Jat Sikh castes. Out of all the early
migrants, nearly seventy percent were Jat Sikhs, rest of them belong to other castes like sunars, chhimbas, nais, sainis, kambhos, kumhars (potters), aroras, jhiwars (Water carries) chamars and tarkhans. Following diagram given us the clear representation of proportion of each of these castes migrated to Malaya.

Diagram indicates that Punjabi Jats Sikhs were the major constituent of the early migration to Malaya. Study conducted on the region wise distribution of these migrants indicates that seventy three per cent were from Malwa districts of Punjab, eighteen per cent were from Majha districts, and seven per cent were from Doaba districts while two per cent were from current Haryana area. Below is the cylindrical presentation of areas they belong from Punjab.
Nearly thirty nine per cent of migrants gave the economic reasons to migrate; twenty two per cent either had inadequate agricultural holdings or had unirrigated land back home; seven per cent of them migrate to find the better way of living; while rest of them presented with other family crisis as reasons for the migration.\textsuperscript{33}

In the year of 1873, Captain Tristam Speedy, former British official, who later on came under the service of Malay ruler Mentri Ngah Ibrahim of Larut (1840-1895) enlisted 110 discharged sepoys including Punjabis to combat against the Chinese.\textsuperscript{34} This established the year of arrival of the voluntary migration of Punjabis. However, Malkiat Lopo Dhaliwal provides ample evidence of the presence of Punjabis in 1871 working for British administration and took part in the shelling of the fort of Kuala Selangor by HMS Rinaldo.\textsuperscript{35}

The voluntary migration of Punjabis became regular with the British intervention of Malay States like Perak, Selangor, Pahang and Negri Sembilan. British authorities appointed Captain Tristam Speedy as Assistant Resident and instructed him to recruit all sepoys (110 men) as Resident’s Guard which later on became Perak police.\textsuperscript{36} Recruitment was done either through the private agents or with the help of Indian government but later on through their own officers usually non-commissioned Sikhs on leave in India.\textsuperscript{37} On hearing the availability of opportunities, Punjabis accompanied them to Malaya. Some of them went on their own. A study indicates that four per cent were recruited directly from India; sixty three per cent went through relatives/villagers; thirty one on their own and two per cent through police recruitment teams from India.\textsuperscript{38}
With the last quarter of the nineteenth century, substantial number of Punjabis came to Malaya to join armed force as well as paramilitary force as constables. Perak Armed Police force (1877-1884) was one example of this. In 1878, their number was 220 as against 247 Malays which later on increased with the formation of Perak Police force into First Battalion Perak Sikhs in 1884 for both military as well as police duties. By the last decade of nineteenth century Punjabis were seventy nine per cent of the total First Battalion Perak Sikh police. In the year 1895 their number reached up to 774 as compared to only 266 Malays.

By last decade of nineteenth century, every state of Malay Peninsula had recruited Punjabis in their police force. For instance British intervention of Selangor in 1874, paved the way for recruitment of Punjabis in police force starts from 1887. However several Punjabis were already under services of local Malay chieftains. Their number constituted twenty six per cent of total Selangor police force in 1890. Negri Sembilan recruited Punjabis in the year 1883 having a Sikh contingent consisted of
three sergeants, one corporal, fourteen lance corporal and fifty-seven privates which was twenty nine per cent of total Negri Sembilan police force in 1890.\(^\text{43}\) Punjabis became the essential part of Pahang Police force with its intervention in 1888. By 1890, they were forty two per cent of total Pahang police force.\(^\text{44}\)

Pie graphical chart indicates proportion of Punjabis in four Malay states police forces after their intervention for the year of 1890.

Figures indicate that Perak and Pahang were two Malay states in which the enlistment of Punjabis was higher. One possible reason was that the Perak was the ground for robbers/looters and accommodated large numbers of Chinese immigrations which was sufficient reason to deploy Punjabis there. Other possible reason was the presence of tin mines which required high security. Pahang also had the sound proportion of Punjabis in police forces. One reason for this could be the friction between British officials and local Malays there. The police forces of other two states Selangor and Negri Sembilan had comparatively less number of Punjabis. Selangor’s Inspector of Police named Syers was in the favor of employing Malays due to their knowledge of local language and customs. Punjabis on the other hand could not be performed well on civil grounds because of their lack of knowledge of local language. Negri Sembilan was the federation of 9 other territories, out of which only one territory named Sungei Ujong had Punjabis in their police force. One possible reason of their
deployment was the worth of this territory due to tin production which required protection from insurgent elements.⁴⁵

Police forces of these four Malay states later on amalgamated into one named Federated Malay State police force. The nature of this newly created force was different from earlier police forces. This force was now assigned the duty of detection of local crimes, maintaining law and order and other civil duties. Malays formed the major part of this force due to their proficiency in local language. Substantial number of Punjabis were withdrawn from all the four Malay states and recruited for newly formed quasi-military force named Malay States Guides in the year 1896.⁴⁶

Despite of the employment opportunities available for local Malays in Federated Malay police force, they were reluctant to join and considered this service as, in words of Arunajeet Kaur, "for the Malays, the policeman were seen as the anjing company, which is translated as the running dog of the government".⁴⁷ Malays regarded this service as the last resort available and willing to join only at the time of economic crisis. Lack of interest by them ultimately prompted British to cover the shortage by recruiting Punjabis which they were able to retain employment till 1941.

In addition to the employment in Federated Malay States, Punjabis were also absorbed in the forces of Unfederated Malay States (Perlis, Kelantan, Kedah, Johore and Trenggannu). With the transfer of these states to British authorities; Kedah recruited Punjabis directly from Punjab in the 1880's, Perlis in 1909 and Johore in 1920. Recruitment was mainly done through the recruiting agents. Dal Singh was one example of such recruiting agents who was sent to Punjab for recruiting purposes.⁴⁸ British were acted as advisors to local Sultans in these areas. Preference was therefore always given to Malays in these forces. Requirement of Punjabis in these states police forces was mainly according to the need of local sultans.

**Malay States Guides:** Substantial number of Punjabi Sikhs, Hindus, Pathans and Muslims got enlisted in the Malay States Guides. As noted earlier, this force was formed in 1896 for the security of colonial empire and performed military operations. Pay was usually high as compare to the other police forces at that time. There was also the provision of pension when one reached at the age of 45.⁴⁹ In the wake of these
incentives, Punjabis dominated in this force. According to the supplement to the report of the Malay States Guides for the year of 1913, the organization of the regiment contained “Battery – one section Sikhs, one section Muhammadans; Infantry consisted of one Double Company of Majha Sikhs, one Double Company of Malwa Sikhs and one Double company of Punjabi Muhammadans and Pathans”. Various competitions were held for the betterment of their area of expertise. Warren Shield competition, Roberts Cup was such examples. Report on Malay States Guides mention the name of few Punjabi winners – Subedar Sham Singh who won the Musketry Shield and Subedar Pall Singh won the Company Challenge Shield.

Before participating in the active services during the 1st World War, Malay States Guides officers played important role in the foundation of Selangor Volunteers and Perak Rifle association. They also did quarantine duty during the Cholera outbreak in Perak in 1911. Two years before the First World War, they were sent to suppress the possible Chinese riots in Kuala Lumpur. The strength of this force prior to First World War was 584 Punjabi Sikhs, 102 Punjabi Muhammadans, 200 Pathans, 3 Hindus and 1 Malay.

Regiments of Malay States Guides Police force were assembled and left to Singapore to fight up front when the Allied powers (England, France and Russia) declared war (1914) on Germany. Soon the series of events during the war led to the disbandment of this force. First possible reason seemed to be the question of loyalty among Muslims (Punjabi Muhammadans) due to the war with Turkey (one of the central power against Allied power in First World War) and the Khilafat movement. As a result, troops of states guides refused to take any action on front. Not only this, responding to the Ghadar Movement, there was an outbreak in the Muslim unit of 5th light infantry on 15 Feb 1915. Troops of the infantry besieged the British garrison, and forty four persons including eight senior British officials were killed in this incident. In addition to this, activities of nationalist leaders were at peak due to the Rowlatt Act and the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy. Punjab at that time became the theatre for anti-British movements. This created doubt on the loyalty of Punjabis in force in Malay States Guides. With these possible fears taken in mind, Malay States Guides was disbanded in December 1919. Entry of Punjabi Sikhs in Strait Settlement Police Force was done on
the recommendation of Enquiry Commission of 1878.\textsuperscript{58} On the basis of which Punjabis were recruited in a battalion in 1881. However serving till 1946 this police force was also disbanded due to various reasons.

In addition to these government military and police forces, substantial numbers of Punjabis were recruited in “other allied law enforcement”\textsuperscript{59} institutional bodies. They worked as railway policemen, provided security in the government building, in treasuries and palaces and tin mining areas under government undertaking. They also worked as security guards in private companies like “Tin smelting works of the Straits Trading Company Ltd and Shell Company’s oil storage tanks.\textsuperscript{60} In addition to this, they also worked as guards in the warehouses and homes of the wealthy Chinese businessmen. Punjabis were also engaged in stone quarries business. Gurdit Singh and Hamir Singh were two famous names in this business.\textsuperscript{61}

\section*{IV}

It was, however, not easy to enter into the security forces and military services. Limited number of opportunities in this sector or strict selection procedure seemed to have been the reason. Those who were not suitable for the job after entering in Malaya got themselves absorbed into other available jobs. After entering into Malaya, seventeen per cent of Punjabis were enlisted in police services as constables; eighteen per cent of them took up the job as labourers in mines; thirteen per cent became watchmen; seven per cent became salesmen and the same number joined clerical jobs; four per cent became lorry attendants and bullock cart drivers each; three per cent became tailors; while rest of them became either teacher or found themselves in unidentified jobs.\textsuperscript{62} Later on, with some experiences, acquiring some wealth and social standing, they tended to move upward to better occupations.
Unlike the earlier migrants, commercial migrants hailed from urban areas of undivided Punjab namely Lahore, Jalandhar, Amritsar and Rawalpindi etc. They seemed to have been there prior to the First World War mostly engaged in small scale ventures as hawkers, peddlers and vendors. However, the strength of this migration gained momentum from the late 1920’s. After realizing the limited opportunities in government jobs, these Punjabis were absorbed in any job or started their business like travelling salesmen (fehri business) started selling cloths and cosmetics with whatever help they could get from their friends. With time, they acquired sufficient wealth to open shops.

This course of journey was almost similar for every migrant who started his own business in Malaya. At one point of time; they even seemed to replace other commercial migrants of Bengali, Parsis and Gujarati origin. They established prominent position in the textile business and having trading contacts with Hong Kong, Jakarta and Bombay. Many Punjabis set up the companies of joint venture private ownership with Malay or Chinese. Tajmahal Store Agent and Co, K.S. Gill Limited and Jaswant Singh and Co Ltd were such examples.
These Punjabis were also engaged in moneylending business to supplement their income. Even many security guards and retired policemen indulged in these businesses. Notable example of watchman indulged in this business was the Jewa Singh who worked in a British firm of Paterson Simons and Company. With the interest rate ranging from "ten to twenty per cent per month", they catered to the needs of labourers, clerks and petty shop keepers. They were known for advancing unsecured loans. As a result of the nature and working of this business, many Punjabis were killed by their customers and even relatives. Jewa Singh and Sunder Singh were among those who were killed for this risky business. However, the domination of Punjabi moneylenders was restricted with the money lending ordinance of 1951 and moneylending licensing Act of 1952, which “fixed the standard rate of interest, made it obligatory for every moneylender to obtain a license and further stipulated that only transactions made under the terms of the Act could be enforced in a court.” In the early 1950’s, there were estimated ten thousand Punjabi Sikh moneylenders in Malaya. Manjit Singh Sidhu’s article on the occupational profile of Punjabi Sikhs indicates that in 1975 there were 321 licenced Punjabi Sikhs moneylenders in Malaysia.

Early decades of twentieth century also witnessed the arrival of skilled workmen and educated Punjabis as engineers and technicians in various departments of Malaysian Government i.e., in Sentul Railway workshop mainly as maintenance men, firemen, signalmen in traffic and in locomotive division. Substantial number of Punjabis also employed in clerical jobs in government sector. As noted earlier that thirteen per cent became clerks upon arrival. They get recruited back home by the Government and supported by their employers to migrate. Emigration report of commerce and industry of the year 1917 implies that 7574 and 985 skilled artisans went to Federated Malay States and Strait Settlements from Central Punjab in 1911 respectively.

The domination of these commercial and professional Punjabi businessmen, textile traders and clerks substantially kept on strengthening till the Japanese occupation of Malaya in 1942. After the Second World War (1946); subsequent Independence of India from Britain and partition of Punjab (1947) created lot of disturbances, turmoil and killing of innocent people. Many Punjabis lost their home, wealth and business. These were the years, when maximum number of Punjabis arrived in Malaya, Singapore
and other South East Asian countries. Number of arrivals further increased with the increase in trade caused by the Korean War (1952-1953).

Series of events restricted the entry of Indian and the Punjabi migrants in Malaya. First hurdle was the Immigration Ordinance (No. 68 of 1952) which came into operation on 1 August 1953, according to which in the words of K.S. Sandhu “right of entry was limited to British subjects born or naturalized in Malaya, subjects of the ruler of a Malay state, federal citizens, British subjects ordinarily resident in Malaya, aliens who were holders of Residents’ Certificates, and the wives and children under eighteen years of all these persons.” Fresh migrations was limited to those who had professional or special qualification on the condition without creating any problem for those who already in this professions. Malaya’s Independence from British rule in 1957 resulted in more restriction for the Indian migrants hoping to emigrate. Newly formed government of Malaysia followed the favorable policy towards local Malays (Bhumiputra – Son of Soil). This is evidenced with the passing of 1959 Immigration Act according to which, “every new immigrant entering Malaya for the purpose of employment was now required to furnish proof that he was ‘entitled to a salary of not less than twelve hundred Malaysian dollars a month’.” Even if the job seeker qualify this condition, the last decision of granting the permission was still made by the government. In this way, any new migration was limited to few Punjabis return to Punjab for personal reasons to pay visit to their holy shrines or sent for wives and children of those who already settled in Malaya. Today, most of them are Malaysian born and brought up and are in second or third generation. Though they occasionally visit Punjab but they show less interest in settling in Punjab. Recent migrants from Punjab to Malaysia however mostly on the basis of employment contract for two or three years and they are engaged into variety of occupations ranging from skilled, semi-skilled to professional jobs like cooks, tailors, pujaris, waiters, receptionists, construction workers, domestic helpers, granthis and IT professionals. There are estimated one lakh Punjabis in Malaysia today.

V

The route of Punjabi migration to Singapore was same as Malaya because Singapore was the part of Malaya till 1965. However first Punjabis arrived there were not security personnel but political prisoners. Popular as the dumping ground of British empire
prisoners besides Andaman and Bencoolen, studies indicate the year of earliest arrival of Punjabis was as early as 1850's after the second Anglo-Sikh war when two political prisoners named Bhai Maharaj Singh and his attendant Kharak Singh were deported to Singapore which was the penal (convict) colony at that time. A riot in Singapore jail in between two Punjabi subcastes group namely Rawdasees and Majhabi Sikhs was recorded by Major Mac Nair, superintendent of the Singapore Jail proved the presence of Punjabi prisoners there. Soon other prisoners were sent to exile in Singapore. It is a possibility that some of these convicts later on settled here after the end of their terms. The nature of this migration was involuntary. However this flow was altered in the 1860's with the objection raised by local European residents against the use of Singapore as the dumping ground.

Later on, Singapore became place for recruitment of Punjabi police personnel like Malaya. Strait Settlement Police Force was one such example.

**Strait Settlement Police Force**: Strait Settlement was formed with the amalgamation of Penang, Malacca and Singapore in 1826. Located in the way of Chinese trade route and situated in central part of Malay Archipelago, this region was commercially beneficial to British authorities and was the ideal destination for settlements, commerce and industry. It was thus necessary to provide security and maintain law and order due to its commercial value.

Again, like every police force, many options were experimented for police force but they were not found as suitable as their Punjabi counterparts. In the words of Kernial S. Sandhu, “Strait Settlement received their first batch of Sikh policemen in 1881”. Annual Report of the Strait Settlements of the year 1882 mentions that total of 165 Punjabi recruits were arrived in 1881. They not only performed military duties but they were also instructed to do street duty (civil). Earlier they were recruited by government. Later on, when the news spread of the available opportunities, more and more Punjabis arrived on their own. There were 10,812 Punjabi Sikhs in Strait Settlement Police force from 1895 to 1938. Table and graph shows the number of Punjabis in Strait Settlement police force from the year 1895 to 1936 (data after that is not available to the researcher).
Tabular presentation of Punjabi (Sikhs) and Malays in the Strait Settlement Police Force.

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<td>1936</td>
<td>527</td>
<td>2784</td>
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**Source:** Compiled from *Annual Federated Malay States Police Reports and Strait Settlement Annual Reports*, National Archives of Singapore, quoted in Arunajeet Kaur, *Sikhs in the policing of British Malaya and Strait Settlements (1874-1957)*, 2003, pp 150-151.
Above table, elaborates the proportion of Punjabis in the Strait Settlement police force. Their number continued to increase except some ups and downs from year 1895 to 1899 and again in 1920’s. Possible reason seemed to be constant competition among various British colonies for the demand of Punjabis in their forces right from the year 1895. Later on, many Punjabis Sikhs were attracted to other forces due to their dissatisfaction regarding wages and other bonus. Annual Strait Settlement report of the year 1897 mentions that Punjabis from Strait Settlement police force tended to compare their wages and other facilities with the other colonial forces like Shanghai, Burma and Hong Kong police. This situation was later on solved with the increment for the same. The flow of Punjabis in the forces again resumed to its normal level. But again this recruitment tended to fall due to the increase in demand of Punjabis in home front due to the First World War (1914-1918). Their strength continues to fall till 1926. British authorities felt that these Punjabis once entered in services could possibly help the revolutionaries with arms and weapons back in India. In addition to this, India was going through the anti-British struggle. As already noted the ongoing Ghadar movement, British were now in fear of possible collaboration of these Punjabis in services (overseas) with the Gadarites.

In addition to this, there were now other areas of destinations which attracted these Punjabi to migrate. Further by the 1930’s there was the increase in other type of migration which was totally different in nature. These were the commercial migrants from the urban areas and professional migrants who came here to join clerical and technical jobs.

The process of Punjabis being engaged in police services tended to slow after the 1930’s. We don’t have any data during the war period but many studies show that Punjabis worked as policemen and constables under Japanese during their occupation of Malaya (1942). With the surrender of Japanese in Second World War and reinstatement of British rule in Malaya, the policy to recruit Punjabis was severely affected. They were then suspected of their support for Indian National Army. British authorities considered this association of Punjabis with INA as a security risk. Gurkhas (Martial class) were now their most favorites for the police and military services. With all these reasons, Strait Settlement Sikh Contingent was disbanded in 1946.
In addition to this, some of them also engaged in entrepreneurial ventures. This type of migration flourished till Second World War. With the separation of Singapore from Malaya in 1965, this country became more favorable as most of Punjabis preferred to settle there with families. Most of them opted for Singaporean citizenship. There are more than twenty five thousand Punjabis today in Singapore. They indulged in variety of occupations ranging from professional occupations like doctors, engineers to skilled workers like shipping industry, clerks, sculptors and unskilled workers like maids, guards, waiters and many more.

VI

Punjabi migration to Thailand started with the arrival of Sehajdhari Sikh Kirparam Madan of Bhadewal village of Sialkot in 1884. On his second visit to Thailand he decided to settle here. His wife’s brothers were already in Siam working for a British firm in Phurat (Bangkok). Ultimately they accumulate enough wealth to start their own business named Messrs L.S Bhagwan Singh &Co in 1890. Soon others arrived in Thailand for green pastures. Most of these early migrants were from undivided Punjab Gujranwala, Mianwali, and Sheikupura with Arora and Khatri castes having subcastes of Bawas, Pawas, Sethis, Chawlas, Malhotra, Bajajs, Pathelas and Sachdevas settled in Chiang Mai, Phuket, Bangkok, and Pattaya etc. A study indicate that upon arrival fifty six per cent of the Punjabis became salesmen and peddlers collectively, six per cent became shopkeeper and storekeeper, ten per cent became typists, clerks, teacher, and insurance agents collectively, ten per cent became cooks, transporter, caretakers and welders collectively, two per cent were partners in textile firm, two per cent became priests, four per cent indulged in Indian National army while ten per cent were dependents. Following is the pie-graphical presentation of the same.
Above pie graph clearly shows that sixty two percent of Punjabis arrived in Thailand for business prospects while rest came to work in skilled and semiskilled ranging from educational sector, work in government sector as clerks and typists, welders and priest. Besides these occupations, Punjabi Sikhs were also enrolled in Siamese Police Force which was confirmed by De Busen, the British consul in Siam. However this decision was not supported by their French counterparts and later on withdrew by the British administrators.

Process of integration of Punjabis into Thai society was started during King Vajiravudh’s reign (1910) and these arrivals gained momentum in the 1920’s and the 1930’s with the introduction of representative government on December 10, 1932 putting an end to the absolute monarchy in Thailand. Since, Bangkok became the hub of trade and commercial activities, more and more Punjabis arrived, to explore their luck. During these decades, many Punjabi firms were established in Bangkok. To name a few were, “Mukandlal Gurudas, Thakur Singh, Nadhan Singh, Nand Singh, Gian Singh, Boor Singh Inder Singh, K.R Inder Singh and Ladha Singh Bhagwan Singh”. Punjabis who arrived in Thailand started their careers as vendors and hawkers by taking credit from the Sindhi firms and Punjabi firms already there. After acquiring sufficient money for starting their own small textile shops, they traded with the European textiles. Later on with the second Sino Japanese War
(1937-1941) they became prosperous with dealings in Japanese textiles with the local Thai firms.

During Second World War, Bangkok became the centre of activities of Indian freedom struggle for independence against British rule. Substantial number of Punjabis working in Thai railways under German engineers enthusiastically helped the Indian revolutionaries fighting for the India’s freedom struggle. Prominent among these revolutionaries were Indra Singh, Arya Singh, Balar Singh, Ram Singh, Ishwar Singh, Giani Pritam Singh and Amar Singh. According to the available studies Pritam Singh arrived in Bangkok in 1933 and contacted the Japanese embassy; he was appointed to broadcast the Japanese propaganda among the British Indian troops. Nearly two thousand Indians including Punjabis were working directly for the Indian National Army. Even the Punjabi children were recruited in Balak Sena, a children branch of Indian Independence League for instance upon interviewing Rakesh Matta, current president of Hindu Samaj (Bangkok) mentioned about the participation of his father Krishan Lal Matta in Balak Sena.

After the Second World War, Punjabis came from India to engage themselves in the already flourishing textile trade. They were engaged in tailoring, hotel and real estate businesses. Substantial number of Punjabis arrived in Thailand due to ongoing riots and disturbances caused by partition of Punjab. During field work in Bangkok researcher met many Punjabis whose parents and grandparents came to escape the after effects of partition and settled in Thailand. In 1950 Indian embassy in Bangkok however informed their nationals to obey Thai law according to which they had to obtain alien registration card and failing to do the same might resulted into their deportation. After this, fresh migration was somehow limited. There are estimated eighty thousand Punjabis today. At present besides Jats, there are a large number of Aroras, Neeldharis and Naamdharis of the subcastes of Sethis, Bajajs, Pathelas, Khanijous, Buddhirajas, Narangs, Bhatias, Chawlas and Chabras in abundant number during field work in Bangkok. Most of the Punjabis are Thai citizen today and they indulged in their traditional business of textiles, handlooms factories, and guns business. Some Punjabis are also engaged in hotel business and real estate agencies. However new generation is attracted towards new professions. In addition to this, short term migration of Punjabis from India to
Thai land is still evidenced as many arrived in search of jobs like cooks, travel agents, waiters and shopkeepers dealing with electronics goods.

VII

Punjabis came to Brunei Darussalam in the early decades of twentieth century (1906) to work as policemen and watchmen. Later on, with the discovery of oil fields in Seria and Labuan, others followed their early brethren and arrived to work here as watchmen or even labourers in these fields.\textsuperscript{102} During the Second World War, most Punjabis arrived here to work in the police outposts.\textsuperscript{103}

With the end of World War II, substantial number of Punjabis migrated from Seria and Kuala Belait to main Brunei town. Soon they indulged in sports goods business, textile manufacturing and carpet selling etc. Joginder Singh is one such example who came to Brunei in 1972 and established the sports good business in 1986.\textsuperscript{104} In addition to this, educated Punjabis also arrived to work as teachers, engineers and doctors.

Today, the occupational profile of Punjabis almost remains the same. Substantial number of Punjabis remains in business like textile, sports goods, carpets and interior decoration and sale assistant in shops operated by the Punjabi Sikhs. While another group of Punjabis are truck drivers and labourers in the oil fields.

With the strict policy of Brunei Government regarding the offering of permanent residence, only a few Punjabis with high income manage to get the same. Many Punjabis find it difficult to get the permanent residence. General trend is set to work here for some years and then migrate to other countries for jobs in Australia, New Zealand and Canada with sufficient money. There are estimated less than 500 Punjabis in Brunei today.

Punjabi migration to Indonesia started in the last decade of nineteenth century (1879) as watchmen with the opening of De Jawa sche Bank in Medan.\textsuperscript{105} Soon other followed them to work in palaces, tobacco plantation as security guards and postman in the rubber plantations and most of these early migrants were from the rural Jat peasantry of Majha (Amritsar) and Doaba (Jalandhar) region of Punjab.\textsuperscript{106} Besides working as security guards, Punjabis also engaged in daily farming to cater the urban Indian and European. In the early 1920’s, substantial number of Punjabis engaged in textile trade.
Today, most of the Punjabis in Medan (Indonesia) engaged in either in textile trade, sports goods or electronic goods. But the trend is shifting towards new professions like décor business and shipping business. In 1970’s, with the economic transformation large number of Punjabis shifted their base from Medan to Jakarta.

Punjabis mostly from peasantry class of west Punjab came to Jakarta to work as watchmen in British firms’ named Ocean Liner and General Motors. In addition to this they also indulged in moneylending in order to supplement their income. They also engaged in renting horse carts to the locals.

Substantial number of Punjabis also arrived to work here as salesman and accountants in the shops. Further rising demand for the sport goods prompted them to indulge in this business. They made fortune with this business. “Bir & Co, Nahar Sports, Hari Brothers, Rattan Sports and Seth & Co” were prominent among them. A study shows that their children are running these companies today. For instance “Sporting House started by Pratap Singh Gill, now become a regional company known as Royal Sporting House and has outlets in all major cities in Southeast Asia.”

With the Second World War and occupation of Indonesia by Japanese, substantial number of Punjabis widened their business and enjoyed the series of prosperity. Punjabis who were earlier watchmen of the busiest Indonesian port of Tanjung Priok became contractors for the Japanese Naval ships. This prosperity ends with the surrender of Japan. Their situation kept on worsening with the ongoing revolutionary movement in Indonesia for independence. In order to avoid this, substantial number of Punjabis moved either to other areas of Jakarta or head back to India. With the partition of Punjab, many Punjabis arrived in various South East Asian countries including Indonesia along with their families to protect themselves. This flow of arrival continues till 1953.

Political instability in Indonesia in the coming years created problems for Indians. However with the President Suharto’s initiation and the economic development in the 1970’s brought security, stability for all the Indians including Punjabis residing in Indonesia. Today, most of Punjabis live in Pasar Bharu area of Jakarta, Medan of North Sumatra with estimate of less than fifteen thousand collectively. Most of them are now in the way of becoming Indonesian nationals.
Punjabi Kumhars of Ghummar caste was first recruited by British authorities to work for the building of military forts and cantonments in Manila (Philippines) in early decades of twentieth century (1902). Soon others arrived to work as watchmen and sell textile and household objects (appliance) on credit to enhance their income and were popularly known as “mobile market and banks on bikes” business. They remained confined in central Luzon part of Philippines.

After the Second World War, they widened their area of business to other parts. The flow of migration was slow during the war years; however it gained momentum after the war with the Independence of Philippines on 4 July 1946. New Government adopted liberal policy regarding the immigration which resulted into allowing the arrival of 500 immigrants of each nationality including Indians. However this liberal policy was soon changed with the new immigration law of 1950 after which the further arrival of Indians discontinued.

Population of Indians was 10,000 in 1990’s out of which roughly more than half were Punjabi which increased up to 20,000 in 2007. Occupations of Punjabis today is mostly money lending, textiles manufacturing and banks on bikes.

Money lending is the high risk business in Philippines. There are reported cases of hate crimes against Punjabi moneylenders. Time of India 13August 2013 reported such case of one Bhola Singh from Handiya village of Barnala:-

“Kidnappings, looting and threats to life, even murders are becoming common places in many part of Philippines like Manila, Davao and other places that have higher Punjabi expatriates.”

His brother-in-law Naib Singh was killed in 2010 near Manilla who was in money lending business. Another Punjabi Hakam Singh was attacked by debtors in Philippines but now decided to return to Punjab for peaceful life.

Punjabis arrived in Burma as soldiers of the British Indian Army during Anglo Burmese wars (1852 and 1886). Majority of them were from Jat peasantry class of Punjab. Soon substantial number of Punjabis came to work as vendors, construction workers and in mines; meanwhile professional migrants also came to work as contractors, engineers and doctors.

112
Instability during Second World War and withdrawal of British authorities prompted Punjabis to leave Burma. But during the communal riots in Punjab in 1947 many migrated back to Burma to avoid the aftermath of partition. However studies indicate that the number of Indians went to India was more as compare to those migrated back to Burma. With Burma independence in 1948, autonomous government was established due to which Punjabis working in British government in technical, clerical or administrative sectors decided to leave Burma and those were engaged in business like timber, export or import business chose to stay. With the nationalization of Burma in 1963, every small and big business was over taken by Burmese Government which affected business prospects of Punjabis. As a result substantial number of Indians including Punjabis left Burma and returned to their home land or shifts their base to other countries of Southeast Asia.

Since then, the economic position of Punjabis has been deteriorating with the exception during the reign of military junta in 1988 when the economy was transformed into market oriented. Many Punjabis from Singapore expanded their business here. Today, substantial numbers of Punjabis are in trading in car tyres, milk and dairy product business while some Punjabis engaged in petty jobs for survival. There are estimated 11,000 Punjabis in Burma in 2015.

VIII

In retrospect, the late nineteenth century witnessed the changes in traditional set up of Punjab. New innovations came into witness in almost every spheres of economy which weakened the centuries old agrarian set up. Rapid extension of agriculture, increasing commercialization of agriculture supported by the development of the means of communications paved the way for integration of village into the markets. With the extension of cash nexus and fixity of land revenue demand created further problem for the cultivators. Rural indebtedness was the main outcome of this. They were unable to pay the revenue in a stipulated amount of time; they went for mortgaging their land. Land was now the market object. With the burden of tax revenue in cash and in fixed amount of time which led to the transfer their land rights to wealthy saukars. They now became agricultural labourers in their own land. Left with no choice, they seek employment outside village.
Commercialization of agriculture also disrupted the complimentarily between the cultivators and village artisans. Earlier they worked under the customary obligation in lieu of fixed share of produce. They were now getting paid in cash only according to their work done by them. With the introduction of factory manufactured agricultural goods market, cultivators now preferred to purchase the same from market for which they earlier depend upon the village tarkhans, lohars etc. By the 1920’s their relationship changed from “custom bound to market related”\textsuperscript{123}. They were now forced to accept whatever the employment opportunity available for them for little money. This directly affects the employment prospects of artisans and ultimately led them to seek the opportunities elsewhere. Substantial numbers of them absorbed in industries in urban areas and later on migrate overseas either on their own or through the government recruiting process where the opportunities were available.

All these factors pushed Punjabis out of their habitats and to avail new opportunities seek options elsewhere. One of the available options was to get recruited in army (Bengal Army) and later on the overseas police services in Hong Kong and Shanghai. Better facilities, pay and security were there was all they wanted. Later on, they get recruited for Malaya police forces. With time, more Punjabis back home became aware of the job opportunities overseas by the regular visits of their fellow brethren who were already in services. Substantial number of Punjabis arrived on their own, with their friends and relatives. However, those could not find suitable employment in Government sector absorbed into private sector and became hawkers, peddlers even bullock cart drivers.

Parallel to this, commercial and professional class of migrants arrived in Malayan peninsula. Due to rapid changing political scenario in India, more and more migrants arrived in various countries of this region to avoid the aftermath of India’s situation. Later on, the Korean War brought trade opportunities which led to more arrival of commercial and other migrants in this region. These arrivals caused many problems in these countries. With the declaration of Independence of almost every country of Southeast Asia from Britain, newly formed governments restricted fresh migrations with the introduction of immigration laws. The flow of Indian migrants was in the form except the occasional visits from the adopted habitat to Punjab for social reasons like marriage, visit to holy shrine etc. This trend of migration was
almost the same in every part of this region except in Thailand where the early Punjabi came for business ventures rather than to work as policemen.

Main goal of the early migrants was to acquire any job suitable to them, save enough wealth for construction of pucca house, or to redeem debts back home. In the words of Verne A. Dusenbery,

“A successful emigrant was one who worked hard, remitted the bulk of his earnings and eventually returned to live out his life in his natal village. While many did return, others delayed their return too long and found themselves unable or unwilling to go home.”

The latter case was the Punjabis in Burma, Indonesia, Thailand and Singapore where most of the migrants chose to stay and work hard to get absorbed in the culture and economy of their adopted habitat. While in Brunei Darussalam, most of the Punjabis tended to work for some time and later on migrate to Australia, Canada and USA.

With time, their occupational profile changed and widened according to the circumstances and opportunities available. Most Punjabis played the dominant role in the economy of these countries. They earned their status and position in almost every field of economy especially in Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand which is the subject matter of the next chapter.

NOTES AND REFERENCES


2. For instance, according to the first provincial census of 1855, the total area of Punjab was 5,224,0170 acres out of which only 1,275,161 were under cultivation and 54,60301 could be immediately brought under cultivation. To include these remaining acres of land under cultivation, many irrigation projects were constructed, *Selections from the Records of Government of India, No. 11 (Foreign Department), Report on The Census taken on 1st January 1855 of The Population of The Punjab Territories, 31.*, Quoted in Himadri Banerjee, *Agrarian Society of the Punjab (1849-1901)*, Manohar Publications, New Delhi, 1982, p. 17. F.No. 54.

4. Administration report of the Public Works Department for the year of 1938-1939 reported that total area under irrigation was 23 lakh acres approximately in 1887-1888 which increased up to 88.5 lakh acres in 1901-02 according to the Board of Economic Inquiry, B.S. Saini, *The Social and Economic History of the Punjab 1901-1939 (Including Haryana and Himachal Pradesh)*, Ess Ess Publications, Delhi, 1975, pp. 216-217.


7. First regular wage survey of Punjab conducted in 1912 showed that in nearly 49 percent of villages, purely cash rates were in existence; in 48 percent partly cash and grain rates were in existence while in 3 percent of villages only grain rates were prevailing in 1909 which further changed to 58 percent, 40 percent and 2 percent respectively in 1912, Report on the First Regular Wage Survey of the Punjab, December 1912, Civil and Military Gazette Press, Lahore, 1913, 3., Quoted in Himadri Banerjee, 1982, p. 187; Fifth wages survey for the year of 1932, reported that, in 1927, in 61 percent of villages cash rates prevailed which increased to 67 percent in 1932, Harish C. Sharma, *Artisans of The Punjab*, 1996. pp. 76/77.

8. On the basis of the measurement, assessment of the nature of soil, amount of rainfall, area under cultivation and existing rates of land revenue ,“1/4th of the money value of the yield per acre for each kind of crop was fixed as the government share.”, Quote from Radha Sharma, Agrarian Society in Transition: Mid-Nineteenth Century, in Indu Banga (ed.), *Five Punjabi Centuries: Polity, Economy, Society and Culture, c.1500-1990*, Manohar Publications, New Delhi, 2000, p 311.


11. Himadri Banerjee, p. 96. F.No. 14

12. Punjab Famine report for the year of 1878-79 mentioned that in Gurdaspur, 75 % of cultivators were under the debt, Report of Muhammad Hayat Khan, JAC Gurdaspur, 11, 457., Quoted in Himadri Banerjee, 1982, p. 110 and p 132, F.no 39; in Hoshiarpur nearly 70 % of zamindars were in debt in 1879, Himadri Banerjee, 1982, p. 110.

13. Himadri Banerjee, 1982, p. 206/207; some of the districts were the worst hitters of the recorded mortgages. For instance, various revenue reports for the year of 1900 reported that,
nearly 1/4th of the land under cultivation was mortgaged in Gurdaspur and Sialkot district each; 1/5th was mortgaged in Amritsar district, *Annual Report on the Revenue Administration of Punjab for the year 1900-01*, 13., Quoted in Himadri Banerjee, 1982, p. 137. F.No. 86.

14. *Amritsar Settlement Report for the Year of 1914*, 3., Quoted in Himadri Banerjee, 1982, p. 37. F.No. 45; *Hoshiarpur Settlement Report, 1885*, 141., Quoted in Himadri Banerjee, 1892, pp 37/38, F.No. 48; *Amritsar Settlement report for the year of 1873* mentioned that only 15.9 % of land was left beyond the cultivation in the early 1860's. For the year of 1888-93 only 8 % increase was reported in the cultivated area, *Amritsar Settlement Report for the Year 1873*, 4, 6-7; and *Amritsar Assessment Report, 1892*, 6, Quoted in Himadri Banerjee, 1982, p. 37. F.No. 45; same with the case of Gurdaspur, where only 5 % increase in cultivation was reported between 1865-1891, *Gurdaspur Settlement Report, 1892*, Statement II; *Gurdaspur Settlement Report, 1912*, 3; *Gurdaspur District Gazetteer, 1914*, 94. Quoted in Himadri Banerjee, p. 38. F.No. 49.


32. According to this study, “21 migrants hailed from Faridkot, 18 from Ludhiana, 13 from Ropar, 12 from Ferozepur and Amritsar each, 6 from Bhatinda, 5 from Jalandhar, 4 from Gurdaspur, 3 from Sangrur, 1 from Kapurthala and Hoshiarpur each, 1 from Gujranwala ,Lyallpur, Hissar and Ganganagar each”, Manjit S. Sidhu, 1983, pp. 106-107.


40. Arunajeet Kaur, 2003, p. 44.

41. Amarjit Kaur, Sikh Migration and Settlement in Southeast Asia, 1870s – 1950s, 2011, p. 32.

42. Arunajeet Kaur, 2003, p 44.
43. *Ibid*, p. 43/44.
44. *Ibid*, pp. 43/44.
47. Quote from Arunajeet Kaur, 2003, p. 77.
49. Abdul K. Bagoo, p. 70.
53. Abdul K. Bagoo, p 74.
57. Satya M. Rai, p 63.
59. Quote from Amarjit Kaur, 2011, p. 34.


76. On the basis of interviews of Vice President and President of Gurudwara Tatt Khalsa Diwan, Selangor; Joshua project. (http://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/14483).


78. Malkiat Lopo Dhalwal, p 7.


82. Data Taken from Arunajeet Kaur, 2003, pp. 150/151.

84. K.S. Sandhu, Sikh Immigration into Malaya, 1976, p. 441.
85. On the basis of interviews conducted by researcher in 2015 and data from Joshua project. (http://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/14483).
88. Based on interviews conducted by researcher in Hindu Samaj, Sao Ching Cha Road, Bangkok.
98. Interview taken by researcher on 4 September 2015 at Hindu Samaj, Bangkok.
100. On the basis of interviews and surveys we came to conclude the estimate number was eighty thousand although it was impossible to reach the number of Punjabis residing there as every community gave their exaggerating number; Joshua project. (http://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/14483);
101. On the basis of survey conducted and personal interviews taken, substantial number of Punjabis engaged in these businesses.

102. A. Mani, Sikhs in Brunei Darussalam, A.B Shamsul and other (eds.), *Sikhs in Southeast Asia*, 2011, pp. 105-106.

103. *(Ibid.)* p 106.


106. A. Mani, Sikhs in Multi-ethnic Indonesia, A.B Shamsul and other (eds.), *Sikhs in Southeast Asia*, 2011, p 150.


110. Quote from A. Mani, Sikhs in Multi Ethnic Indonesia, 2011, p 148.

111. Tanjung Priok is the largest seaport of Indonesia is situated in North Jakarta; A. Mani, 2011, p 148.


120. Ibid, p. 119.

121. Ibid, p. 120

122. Joshua project.(http://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/14483)

123. Quote from Tom G. Kessinger, Vilyapur: 1848-1968: Social and Economic Change in a North Indian Village, Young Asia Publications, New Delhi, p. 168.