CHAPTER IX

REHABILITATION PROGRAMME IN INDIA: AN ASSESSMENT
The critical issue with regard to the settlement of the stateless problem was not merely of the conferment of Indian nationality on the stateless Indian Tamils and their repatriation to India, but also their proper rehabilitation there. This has been the "burden" which the 1964 Pact imposed on the Indian government. Unlike the process of repatriation which was the joint responsibility of the Governments of India and Sri Lanka, the rehabilitation of the repatriates under the 1964 Pact has been the concern of the former alone.

Two provisions of the 1964 Agreement were relevant to the process of rehabilitation of the repatriates: first, Clause 6 of the Pact stated that the process of repatriation would be phased over a period of 15 years. This was primarily to avoid any serious social and economic dislocations in India by a sudden influx of a large number of repatriates. Second, under Clause 8 of the Agreement, the repatriates were permitted to bring across assets worth of Rs. 4,000. It facilitated, unlike the repatriates from Burma and Uganda, most of the repatriates to arrive in India not as destitutes, but at least with a little money to maintain themselves in the initial days in India without the governmental assistance.

In tune with its moral obligations towards the Sri Lankan repatriates, the Indian government considered their rehabilitation as a matter of 'national responsibility' devolving primarily on the Centre. After the conclusion of the Sirimavo-Shastri Pact, the Indian High Commission in Sri Lanka launched a publicity campaign in the plantation sector and

1. Prime Minister Shastri's letter to Mrs. Bandaranaike dated 22 November 1964 on the separate electoral register emphasised this point. Refer to Part I of Chapter VI.

2. This was equally an important provision for Sri Lanka as well. A sudden withdrawal of a large number of workers would have affected severely the plantation economy of Sri Lanka.

distributed glossy booklets to the Indian Tamils which held out the promise of a decent and secure life for them in India.

Did the Indian government fulfil its promise? The present chapter attempts to answer this question by assessing the rehabilitation programme undertaken by the government for the Sri Lankan repatriates in India.

II

INDIA’S EXPERIENCE IN REHABILITATION OF DISPLACED PEOPLE

India has rich experience in the rehabilitation of displaced persons—refugees and repatriates. The exercise began with the resettlement of nine million Hindus from Pakistan who poured into India following its partition in 1947. Following it was the huge exodus of refugees numbering around 11.14 lakhs who emigrated from the erstwhile East Pakistan during 1964-1972. India provided them relief and undertook a special economic assistance programme for their resettlement. Besides their rehabilitation in Dandakaranya project and Andaman and Nicobar islands, schemes for their rehabilitation both in agricultural and non-agricultural occupations were drawn up in consultation with various State governments.

India’s decision to grant asylum to the Tibetan refugees cast upon the government the responsibility to provide them with relief and


5. LSD, fifth series, vol.13, no.28, 20 April 1972, col.54. The post-1964 refugees were termed as "new migrants". Those persons who emigrated from erstwhile East Pakistan before March 1958 were called as "old migrants". Their number was about 41.17 lakhs. *Ibid.* fourth series, vol.26, no.23, 20 March 1969, col.103.

6. The Dandakaranya project was set up in September 1958 for the rehabilitation of displaced persons from the erstwhile Pakistan in the Dandakaranya region and for the integrated development of the area, with particular emphasis on the interests of the local Adivasi population. The project area, comprising the districts of Koraput (Orissa) and Bastar (Madhya Pradesh) covered about 78,000 square kilometers. *India, Ministry of Supply and Rehabilitation, Department of Rehabilitation, Performance Budget 1975-76* (New Delhi, 1975), p.13.

7. For details on various rehabilitation schemes see *Ibid*, pp. 5-11.
rehabilitation assistance. By 1974, around 56,000 Tibetans were rehabilitated in agricultural settlements, handicraft centres and small scale industries. Another large scale exodus for which India undertook relief and rehabilitation measures was from Burma. Consequent upon the nationalisation of trade and business in Burma, there were about 206,800 Indian nationals who arrived in India during 1963-1974. The Indian government provided them with business loans, housing loans, educational concessions and age relaxation for government employment.

As a result of expulsion of the Asians from Uganda, about 10,000 people arrived in India up to 1974. Half of them were Indian nationals; the rest included British passport holders, Ugandan passport holders and stateless persons. Most of them were rehabilitated under small trade and business schemes.

Also, in the sixties around 2300 repatriates from Mozambique came to India. They were granted financial assistance, business loans, priority in the allocation of agricultural land and educational concessions for the repatriate children.

**Exodus from Sri Lanka**

Sri Lanka is the latest addition to the list of countries from where displaced persons emigrated to India. It is noteworthy that India received

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11. *Performance Budget*, n.6, p.34.
from Sri Lanka both the refugees as well as the repatriates. The former fled the island in the wake of ethnic violence since July 1983 and took refuge in Tamil Nadu. At present, their number is nearly 2.10 lakhs. 14

Consequent upon the Nehru-Kotelawala Pact of 1954, a large scale repatriation was set in motion since 1954. There were about 95,000 Indian nationals repatriated to India in batches between 1954 and September 1963. 15 At that time, the Government of Tamil Nadu undertook relief and rehabilitation measures for the repatriates and the Central government's share in the rehabilitation programme was confined to setting up a spinning mill in the State. 16 No other Central assistance was available because the Union government considered them neither homeless nor destitute. It, however, granted customs concessions to the repatriates in respect of the transfer of their assets from Sri Lanka. 17

The repatriates under the 1964 Pact represented the second phase of the Indian Tamil exodus from Sri Lanka. The process of their repatriation began in 1968 18 and by 1984, about 115,400 families covering 459,000 persons, as is shown in Table 9.1, were repatriated to India. The number of families repatriated up to January 1989 was 116,000.

Since India treated the rehabilitation of Sri Lankan repatriates as a matter of national concern, the Union government performed the tasks of


18. This subject has been discussed in Chapter VIII.
### TABLE 9.1

ANNUAL ARRIVAL OF SRI LANKAN REPATRIATES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Families</th>
<th>Cumulative Families</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
<th>Cumulative Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>1597</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9361</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>1431</td>
<td>3028</td>
<td>5756</td>
<td>15117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>2398</td>
<td>5426</td>
<td>9487</td>
<td>24604</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>5945</td>
<td>11371</td>
<td>23129</td>
<td>47733</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>7618</td>
<td>18989</td>
<td>32668</td>
<td>80401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>9531</td>
<td>28520</td>
<td>40973</td>
<td>12134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>10643</td>
<td>39163</td>
<td>44903</td>
<td>166277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>5889</td>
<td>45052</td>
<td>24392</td>
<td>190669</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>11062</td>
<td>56114</td>
<td>45754</td>
<td>236423</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>10037</td>
<td>66151</td>
<td>39768</td>
<td>276191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>7604</td>
<td>73755</td>
<td>29385</td>
<td>305576</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>6350</td>
<td>80105</td>
<td>23765</td>
<td>329341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>5047</td>
<td>85152</td>
<td>18831</td>
<td>348172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>7335</td>
<td>92487</td>
<td>26081</td>
<td>374253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>7926</td>
<td>100413</td>
<td>29120</td>
<td>403373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>106304</td>
<td>32526</td>
<td>435899</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>8143</td>
<td>115400</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>459000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968-89</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>116000</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Up to January)

**Note:** Table 8.1 gives the number of accounted persons who were repatriated to India. Figures given in the present table included both the accounted persons and their natural increase. This is to emphasise that number involved in the whole process of repatriation and rehabilitation was not merely the stipulated six lakhs persons under the 1964 and 1974 Agreements but also several thousands of their natural increase.

**Source:** Compiled from data supplied by the Department of Rehabilitation, reproduced in R.R. Sivalingam, The Directory of Rehabilitation of Repatriates from Sri Lanka (Madras, 1989), p.22; Tamil Nadu, Policy Note on Miscellaneous Relief and Rehabilitation of Indian Overseas and Refugees and Evacuees, Demand No. 43, 1989, p.2.

19. The Department of Rehabilitation at the Centre has been entrusted with these responsibilities. India set up a separate ministry called "Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation" in September 1947 to look after repatriates and refugees. Later, the subject of relief was deleted and emphasis was given to rehabilitation. As such, the name of the Ministry was changed to "Ministry of Rehabilitation" in 1948. In the sixties, the Ministry had been reduced to a Department of Rehabilitation and placed under the Ministry of Supply and Rehabilitation. Later, it came under the Ministry of Labour, and now placed under the Ministry of Home Affairs.
Southern states to implement the rehabilitation programme. It spent around Rs. 86.65 crores on the rehabilitation of Sri Lankan repatriates up to July 1985. During 1986-87, the rehabilitation programme incurred Rs. 444.34 lakhs and a sum of Rs. 201.76 lakhs had been spent during the financial year 1987-88. The government allocated Rs. 516.82 lakhs for their rehabilitation during 1988-89.

To sum up, while comparing India's rehabilitation programmes for the displaced people from Pakistan or the millions of refugees who fled East Pakistan in 1971, rehabilitation of the Sri Lankan repatriates seemed to be a small matter. Around five lakhs repatriates were to be helped to find new homes to start a fresh life in India. As such, the task which the Indian government faced was complex.

III

SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF THE SRI LANKAN REPATRIATES

The socio-economic profile of the Indian Tamils of Sri Lanka has been discussed in Chapter IV. In this section we highlight in brief certain characteristic features of the repatriates which impinge in one way or other on the process of their rehabilitation. This would also facilitate our assessment of the rehabilitation programme in proper perspective.

The broad occupational pattern of the repatriates was that about 90 per cent of them were plantation workers. Small traders accounted for 3 per cent and mercantile employees constituted 1.4 per cent. Other categories such as urban labourers and government employees accounted for 5.6 per cent.

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20. For details on the role of bureaucracy in the execution of schemes in Tamil Nadu see Part VI of the present chapter.


per cent. It shows that the majority of the repatriates' preference was for employment in the plantations.

As regards the assets of repatriates, about 98.5 per cent of the families brought less than Rs. 10,000. Only 1.5 per cent had more than Rs. 10,000. As such, rehabilitation assistance was necessary for the majority of the repatriate families.

The level of education of repatriates is given in the table below:

**TABLE 9.2**

EDUCATIONAL LEVELS OF REPATRIATES IN TAMIL NADU

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Level</th>
<th>No. of Persons</th>
<th>Percentage to Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>809</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Schooling</td>
<td>2639</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary School</td>
<td>3136</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>1098</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Secondary</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Skills</td>
<td>41</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>7956</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Total persons selected for the Survey was 7956 from 1700 families.


It is evident from the table that only 3 per cent of the repatriates were eligible for government jobs. Majority of them therefore had to be absorbed only in unskilled manual occupation.

The CRNIEO Survey found that the average size of the family of repatriates was 5 members. But, as observed in Chapter VIII, only one

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24. See for details Chapter VIII.

Family Card is issued for the whole family irrespective of the size of the family. Since only one rehabilitation assistance is recommended per family, the large size families required additional assistance.

The distribution of repatriates according to age group is given in Table 9.3 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>No. of Persons</th>
<th>Percentage to Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - 5</td>
<td>809</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 - 16</td>
<td>1974</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17- 60</td>
<td>4831</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 60</td>
<td>344</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7958</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Total persons selected for the Survey was 7958 from 1700 families.

Source: CRNEIO, n.25, p.16.

The finding of the CRNEIO Survey states that 25 per cent of the repatriates were in the age group of 6-16. They required proper educational facilities. The repatriates in the age group of 17-60 formed the labour force for whom employment had to be arranged.

With regard to caste structure, the CRNEIO Survey found that 58 per cent of the repatriates were Scheduled Castes. Rest of them mostly belonged to Backward Classes. But the Family Cards issued to the repatriates made no mention of their castes. As such, it was difficult for them to get various concessions from the government in employment and education.

In sum, the vast majority of the repatriates were workers from the Sri Lankan plantations. The assets brought by them were meagre. They had

large families and consequently more members in the working age group. Most of them belonged to Scheduled Castes and other depressed classes. As majority of the repatriates were unskilled and not educated and as such, relied more on government rehabilitation assistance, the resettlement process was a difficult task.

IV

DISTRIBUTION OF THE SRI LANKAN REPATRIATES

As mentioned in Chapter VIII, rehabilitation is planned on a family basis. It means that the family is taken as a unit for the disbursement of rehabilitation assistance. Out of 1,16,000 families who were repatriated up to 31 January 1989, 91,192 families were resettled in various schemes in Tamil Nadu and the number rehabilitated in Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Andaman and Nicobar islands was about 5031 families. And around 19,777 families, which accounted for 17 per cent of the total repatriates, were not given any rehabilitation assistance by the end of January 1989.27 Thus, of the total families rehabilitated by January 1989, 90.4 per cent of them were resettled in Tamil Nadu and only 5.2 per cent of them were absorbed by other states. In Tamil Nadu, the repatriates were spread in almost all the districts. This is evident from the Table 9.4.

It is evident from the table that the districts with the hill regions accounted for the highest concentration of repatriates. About 75 per cent of the total repatriates in the State were rehabilitated in Nilgiris, Coimbatore, Salem and Madurai. This however does not mean that all such hill districts provided high employment opportunities for the repatriates in the plantations. A study conducted in 198728 shows that most of the

27. Tamil Nadu, Policy Note on Miscellaneous Relief and Rehabilitation in Indian Overseas and Refugees and Evacuees, Demand No. 43, 1989, p.2.

### TABLE 9.4

**DISTRICT-WISE DISTRIBUTION OF REPATRIATES IN TAMIL NADU**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>No. of families (in '000s)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nilgiris</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>40.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trichy</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coimbatore</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pudukottai</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salem</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madurai</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thanjavur</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramnad</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Periyar</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Arcot and North Arcot</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madras and Chingleput</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dharmapuri</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>107</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The data related to mid-1984. It should be noted that between 1984 and 1986 Madurai district has been bifurcated as Madurai and Anna districts, Ramnad district has been trifurcated as Pasumpon Muthuramalingam, Ramnad and Kamarajar districts, and Tirunelveli district has been divided into Chidambaranar and Nellai Kattabomman districts.

Source: M. Vamadevan, *Sri Lankan Repatriates in Tamil Nadu, Rehabilitation and Integration* (Madras, 1989), Table 1.1, p.7.

Repatriates in Salem, Madurai and Thanjavur districts were given credit based assistance; Coimbatore, North and South Arcot, Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari districts accounted for higher proportion of repatriates who were rehabilitated under Employment Scheme. Most of the repatriates under Land Colonisation Scheme were found in Trichy, Pudukottai, Salem, Madurai, Ramnad and Tirunelveli districts.²⁹

In Andhra Pradesh the rehabilitation centres of the Sri Lankan repatriates are Nellore, Guntur, Guntakkal and Rajamundhry. Punaloor and Idduky accounted for most of the repatriates who were rehabilitated in

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²⁹. For details about various schemes see the following pages.
Kerala. In Karnataka the repatriates were rehabilitated in Hassan and Raichur.

V

REHABILITATION SCHEMES

The Indian government’s rehabilitation assistance schemes for the Sri Lankan repatriates comprise two parts -- primary assistance and supplementary assistance. The former includes a loan scheme, employment scheme and a land colonisation scheme, besides housing loans for all the eligible repatriates. Under the subsidiary assistance scheme, provisions are made for educational concessions and training for the repatriate children, age relaxation for the government appointments etc. Before we discuss various schemes in detail, the mode of selection of beneficiaries and distribution of repatriates under each primary scheme will be highlighted.

It must be emphasised that the selection of the beneficiaries for each scheme is done at the Rehabilitation Cell of the office of the Assistant High Commissioner for India in Kandy on the basis of an interview between the head of the repatriate family and the official of the Cell. Although the cell did not spell out the criterion adopted for deciding the resettlement assistance, it could be discerned that the larger repatriate families were generally recommended for land colonies. Alternatively, i.e., for smaller families, the business loan was the popular scheme. 30 Also, if the families intend to repatriate assets, as mentioned in Chapter VIII, worth more than Rs. 10,000, they were not entitled to avail the rehabilitation assistance. The families are also not eligible for relief assistance on their arrival in India if their assets exceed Rs. 5,000.

Most of the repatriates in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Kerala were rehabilitated in the organised sector — rubber and cardamom plantations, spinning mills and sugar mills.

**TABLE 9.5**

**DISTRIBUTION OF FAMILIES IN VARIOUS REHABILITATION SCHEMES IN TAMIL NADU (Up to January 1989)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schemes</th>
<th>No. of families</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. <strong>Loan Scheme</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Loan</td>
<td>75858</td>
<td>83.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Employment</td>
<td>526</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. <strong>Employment Scheme</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tea Plantation</td>
<td>2325</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubber Plantation</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cinchona Plantation</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Farm Corporation</td>
<td>791</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spinning Mills</td>
<td>3880</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through Repatriate Bank Scheme</td>
<td>4918</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. <strong>Land Colonisation Scheme</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase of Private Agricultural Land Scheme</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Scheme</td>
<td>2181</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kookal Scheme</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>91192</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Policy Note on ........n. 27, pp.5-6.

In Tamil Nadu, business loan is a popular form of assistance. It covered 83.2 per cent of the total repatriates rehabilitated in the State. Only around 13.6 per cent of the repatriates were rehabilitated under the Employment Scheme and 2.8 per cent of them were given resettlement assistance under the Land Colonisation Scheme. 31

**Loan Scheme**

The business loan scheme has been the popular resettlement scheme ever since the inauguration of the rehabilitation programme for the Sri Lankan

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31. The detailed discussion of various rehabilitation schemes in the following pages is based on several Government Orders which were issued from time to time. For the text of such orders see R.R. Sivalingam, *The Directory of Rehabilitation of Repatriates from Sri Lanka* (Madras, 1989), pp. 82-122.
repatriates. It must be noted that the government gave thrust to the credit based scheme as was evident from the number of repatriates who had received business loans which registered a steep increase since 1973. The proportion of families who were rehabilitated under this scheme in 1973 was about 60 per cent. In 1976 around 80 per cent of the repatriate families received assistance for resettlement in business.\textsuperscript{32} There was a slight decline in the number of beneficiaries under business loan scheme in 1980: Out of 54,701 families who had received rehabilitation assistance in Tamil Nadu, about 39,350 families were given business loans. It worked out to 72 per cent.\textsuperscript{33} However, the number increased to about 83.2 per cent in 1989 and only a minuscule proportion (0.6 per cent) of the repatriate families were provided with loans to find self-employment.\textsuperscript{34}

In the beginning, the government made provision for the sanction of Rs. 5,000 as loan. But the amount was increased to Rs. 7,500 from June 1985. The loan is released in two instalments of Rs. 5,000 and Rs. 2,500. Generally, the second instalment is released only if the repatriate utilised the first instalment properly.\textsuperscript{35}

Besides, the government made available loans at the rate of Rs. 1,000 in the urban areas and Rs. 200 in the rural areas for the construction of business premises. Furthermore, the repatriate families who obtained initial business loans and moved to the place of business were also eligible for a maintenance allowance for a period of three months from the


\textsuperscript{33} CRNIED, n.25, p. 22.

\textsuperscript{34} See Table 9.5.

\textsuperscript{35} The repatriates who gained regular employment are not eligible for business loans. However, the temporary employees and casual labourers, unattached women and women repatriates whose husband are not covered by the 1964 Agreement are entitled to avail themselves of loans under this scheme.
date of disbursement of the loan. The allowance rate is as follows:

**TABLE 9.6**
MAINTENANCE ALLOWANCE RATE FOR BUSINESS LOAN BENEFICIARIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size of the Family</th>
<th>Amount Paid (Rs.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family with 1 member</td>
<td>40.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family with 2 members</td>
<td>60.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family with 3 members</td>
<td>80.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family with 4 members</td>
<td>97.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family with 5 members</td>
<td>115.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family with 6 members</td>
<td>132.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family with 7 members</td>
<td>150.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All large sized families having more than 7 members are given an extra amount of Rs. 5 per head per month.


The business loan is not interest free. It bears a simple interest fixed from time to time. The principal and interest are to be recovered in 15 years in 12 annual equal instalments commencing from the fourth anniversary of its drawing. In the first three years only the interest is recovered. Also, the loan granted for construction of business premises is recovered in 22 annual instalments, with interest on the outstanding balance of the principal commencing from the fourth anniversary of the date of payment of the loan.

There is no difference between the business loan scheme and self-employment scheme except the distinction in their administration. Under the self-employment scheme, the loan amount is credited to the beneficiary as a fixed deposit in a national bank which would advance the money for the specified purpose. The deposit will become the asset of the repatriate when the loan is repaid in seven years. As regards a business loan, the payment is being made through bank draft scheme or post office saving bank account.
Employment Scheme

Under this scheme, the repatriates are provided employment in tea, rubber and cinchona plantations, State Farm Corporation, spinning mills and industries sponsored by Repatriates Cooperative Bank.

After the conclusion of the 1964 Pact, the Indian government had drawn up several schemes to set up plantations in the Southern states with a view to generate employment opportunities for the repatriates. In the sixties it sanctioned Rs. 1385.84 lakhs for setting up six rubber and tea plantations to provide employment to 4850 families or 9,700 workers.36 Up to March 1981, eight new plantation schemes were sanctioned to absorb the repatriates and several existing plantations were extended to create more employment. Only 3 per cent of the total repatriates rehabilitated in Tamil Nadu were provided employment in the plantations (see Table 9.5).

Generally, two members of the eligible repatriate family are entitled to get employment in the plantations.

The State Farm Corporation absorbed around one per cent of the total repatriates who were rehabilitated in Tamil Nadu. Under this scheme, the repatriates were initially employed as wage labourers and then made as owners of land. Two members from each beneficiary family were given employment in one of the Corporation's units in South Arcot, Chingleput, or Pudukottai districts.

Around 30 spinning mills, mostly in the cooperative sector in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh were given loans by the Department of Rehabilitation with a view to find employment for the Sri Lankan repatriates. It sanctioned Rs. 6.67 crores as loan to these mills up to March 1981.37

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36. RSD, n.23.
37. Sivalingam, n.31, p.17.
absorbed by the spinning mills at the rate of one male member from each beneficiary family. Unlike in the plantations, employment in the spinning mills was restricted to the male members of the repatriate family.

Also, the Repatriates Cooperative Finance and Development Bank (RCFDB) sponsors employment for the Sri Lankan repatriates through the existing industrial units. It was set up by the Indian government in 1968 on the recommendation of the Board of Rehabilitation. The capital of the bank was contributed by the Indian government, four State governments (Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Karnataka) and the individual repatriates.38

Initially, the bank granted loans to the individual repatriates to set up their own business. Now it gives soft loans to those public, private, cooperative and private sector industrial units, both medium and large scale, which sponsor repatriates' employment. In respect of each repatriate employed, the bank provides Rs.25,000 as loan at very concessional terms to the employing units. The period of loan is restricted to 10 years inclusive of moratorium and the interest rate charged for the loans ranged from 11 per cent to 12 per cent.39 The main objective of this scheme is to assure the repatriates a regular monthly income and enable them to acquire skills in the industrial units. The minimum salary to be paid by the industrial units were fixed by the bank from time to time and this had steadily increased from Rs. 150 to Rs. 400 per month. Besides, the repatriate workers are given hutting grant, House Rent Allowance and pre-employment loans at the initial stage.40 In Tamil Nadu, about 5.4 per cent of the repatriates were rehabilitated under this scheme (see Table 9.5).

38. For details see Ibid, pp. 46-50.
39. Ibid., p.50.
40. Ibid.
Agricultural and Land Colonisation Schemes

There are four sub-schemes under the Agricultural and Land Colonisation schemes:

i) Land colonies scheme

ii) Assignment of waste lands and surplus lands available under Tamil Nadu Land Reforms Rules

iii) Purchase of private agriculture lands

iv) Cultivation of own lands.

The land colonisation scheme was considered to be a popular scheme in the initial phase of the rehabilitation process because, several repatriates who did not get an opportunity to own land in Sri Lanka, appeared to be attracted by the provision of allotment of land. The Indian government established 44 land colonies in Tamil Nadu.

Generally, a repatriate family with two able bodied persons is considered eligible for the land colonisation scheme. Each family is given 3 acres of land for cultivation and 5 cents of land for construction of house. Lands selected for the colonisation programme are generally waste lands, known as purampokku, usually located in the outskirts of the villages.

Under this scheme, the repatriate families are entitled to get financial assistance up to the maximum of Rs. 5650. In some cases the State government increased the scale of financial assistance. Provisions are also made under this scheme to dig drinking water wells to cater to the needs of at least 20 repatriate families in the housing colonies set up in the land colonisation scheme. The entire expenditure up to Rs. 6000 in this

41. The detailed discussion of these schemes is based on the Government of India's Order No. 22(13)77, Department of Rehabilitation, dated 29 July 1978, reproduced in ibid., pp. 110-22.

42. Ibid., p. 111.
regard is incurred by the Tamil Nadu government. Also, the government, at the first stage, paid Rs. 250 per family for the construction of a temporary shelter at the resettlement site. Later, the settler families were granted loan-cum-grant amounting to Rs. 3000 for the construction of permanent houses.

In order to enable the repatriates to maintain themselves during the initial period of their settlement under this scheme, each family is granted maintenance allowance ranging from Rs. 40 to Rs. 150 per month depending upon the size of the family for a period of 21 months. For the first nine months the allowance is treated as subsidy, and half of the amount would be considered as loan for the next one year. Besides, the settler families are supplied with rations at subsidised rates. All these loans are to be repaid in eight annual equal instalments with the first instalment commencing from third anniversary of the date on which the loan was last drawn.

Under the assignment of waste land and surplus land scheme, the repatriate families are allotted government waste lands for cultivation. They are also eligible for loan for agricultural and other purposes on par with the families resettled in agriculture under land colonisation scheme.

The repatriate families are granted loans for purchasing private agricultural land up to a ceiling of 3 acres per family at the rate of not more than Rs. 2,000 per acre. In other words, each family is entitled for a maximum loan of Rs. 6,000. Under the purchase of private agricultural land scheme, the government made available loans of Rs. 5650 per family for carrying out agricultural operations on the land purchased, besides maintenance allowance and loans for subsidiary occupation and construction of house, as in the case of settlers in the land colonies.

Under the scheme for the cultivation of their own lands, agricultural loans are given to those families who own lands in India. The amount is
same as in the case of repatriates settled in agriculture under the land colonisation scheme. They are also eligible for housing facilities, maintenance allowance etc.

On the similar line of land colonisation schemes, the Non-Governmental Organisations set up several economic projects in order to facilitate the process of resettlement of the repatriates. One of such projects was the Agricultural Scheme in Kookal village in Kodaikanal. Under this scheme, each repatriate was given 2 acres of land. All other infrastructural facilities were developed and managed by MYRADA, an agency, till it became a cooperative venture. As mentioned in Table 9.5, only 0.2 per cent of the total repatriates resettled in Tamil Nadu were rehabilitated under the Kookal scheme.

**Housing Loan**

The Housing loan is a part of the rehabilitation package. The Indian government adopted the following housing schemes:

i) Construction of houses or provision of funds for house construction for repatriates

ii) Grant of housing loan to heads of families

iii) Grants to purchase housing sites

iv) Loans to purchase ready-built houses

Initially, each family was granted a loan of Rs.4,100 in the urban sector and Rs.2,050 in the rural sector for purchasing homestead plots, development of land and construction of a house. Since April 1985, the amounts were increased to Rs.10,000 and Rs.6,000 respectively. The application for housing loan are expected to be made by the repatriates in the first year of their arrival in India. As per the Government Order, the

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44. See Government of India's Orders relating to the housing schemes in Sivalingam, n. 31, pp. 54-62.
entire process of construction of a house required to be completed within a period of 18 months after the release of first instalment of the loan. Also, the government allowed the repatriates to purchase old houses from private owners. The repayment period of the loan is 25 years. It would be repayable in 22 annual equal instalments of principal together with interest on the outstanding balance of the principal commencing from fourth anniversary of the date of release of the loan.

The following categories of repatriates are not eligible for housing loan:

i) single member repatriate

ii) those who are already in possession of homestead or plots or houses or business premises.

iii) all those repatriates who had deserted the sponsored rehabilitation scheme to which they were originally selected.

iv) all those who failed to avail themselves of rehabilitation assistance within the prescribed time limit. However, those repatriates who were permitted to change the assistance, are entitled for the grant of housing loan.

Concessions for Education, Training and Employment

The supplementary rehabilitation assistance is in terms of concessions for education, training and employment. Under the educational assistance scheme, the repatriate students are given financial assistance to pursue studies. The amount ranges between Rs.15 to a primary school student and Rs.150 to a college student per annum. The repatriate students who stay in hostels or private lodges are entitled to a stipend of Rs.60 to Rs.90 per month. Students who travel long distance beyond 5 kms to schools or colleges are paid transport charges of Rs. 15 per month. Only those repatriate children of parents' whose income is below Rs.400 per mensem are entitled for this financial assistance. Also, the repatriate children who

45. See the Government Orders in ibid., pp. 65-73.
were born after their parents' arrival in India are not eligible for the grant of any such educational assistance.

Besides, the government reserved seats for the repatriate students in educational institutions. There are two reserved seats for them in State Medical Colleges, one seat in the Engineering College and one seat each in Madras Law College and Madurai Law College. Reservations are also available in Veterinary Science College (one seat), Arts College (two seats), Polytechnics (three seats) and Industrial Training Institutes (5 per cent of the total admissions).

The government established a special residential school for the repatriate children in Pudukottai district. Besides, a training centre was set up near Madras to train the repatriates as drivers and mechanics. Certain concessions such as relaxations in terms of age and qualification and exemption from application and examination fees are given to those repatriates who appear for public examinations for recruitment to State and Central services. The repatriates are given priority in appointment through employment exchanges.

In sum, the main thrust of rehabilitation was based on credit schemes, followed by employment and land colonisation. All these rehabilitation schemes were designed to convert the predominantly plantation workforce into a community of business, farming and industrial workers. It may also be observed in this context that the government planning for rehabilitation of the Sri Lankan repatriates did not take into account of their aptitude and previous occupational background.

VI

EXECUTION OF THE SCHEMES

There was no specialised agency involved in the formulation and execution of the rehabilitation schemes. Rather, the Department of Rehabilitation at the Centre performed the function of planning and
resource mobilization and allocation, while the State governments were solely responsible for the execution of the rehabilitation schemes.

For the purpose of implementation of the rehabilitation programme, the Government of Tamil Nadu, where majority of the repatriates were settled, has established a Department of Rehabilitation under the Ministry of Revenue. It coordinates with its officials at the district level i.e. Collectors, Divisional Revenue Officers and Tashildars. There are two Divisional Revenue Officers (Rehabilitation) in Trichy and Ramanad districts where transit camps are located and Special Deputy Collectors, Tashildars and Special Tashildars are posted in districts with heavy concentration of repatriates.46

The absence of a specialised agency made the State bureaucracy to predominantly perform the administrative functions -- disbursement of the rehabilitation assistance, monitoring the working of the rehabilitation programme, investigation of problems of the repatriates and make recommendations to the State government about the steps to be taken to improve further the working of the rehabilitation programme. As such, the success of the rehabilitation programme was by and large dependent upon the effective discharge of duty by the revenue officials.

Besides, the role of voluntary organisations in the rehabilitation programme has been significant. Apart from the evaluation of rehabilitation schemes independently, they rendered liaison service to the repatriates to solve their problems and undertook several welfare programmes to benefit them.47

46. For details on the rehabilitation authorities in Tamil Nadu see Sivalingam, n.31, pp. 42-46.

47. There are more than twenty five voluntary agencies involved in the task of promoting the welfare of the repatriates. See their names in Ibid, pp. 123-46.
VII

ASSESSMENT OF THE REHABILITATION PROGRAMME

Did the rehabilitation schemes benefit the repatriates? A critical evaluation of each of these schemes would be made in the following pages to assess the rehabilitation programme in India.

Loan Scheme

Several studies undertaken by various non-governmental organisations and individuals on the rehabilitation schemes for the Sri Lankan repatriates proved that the credit based scheme has been a miserable failure. Before assessing this scheme with facts and figures, we may identify three different business ventures of the repatriates under the loan scheme: i) production and sales—dairy farming, tea stalls and food stalls; ii) Retail trade—grocery shops, petty business, and dry fish, cloth and vegetable shops; iii) service category—bullock carts, barber shops, cycle shops, tailoring and laundry.

The ITES Survey conducted in 1976 found that the average monthly income of a household belonging to production and sales units ranged from Rs. 180 to Rs.30, and the annual per capita income was between Rs.312 and Rs.120. As regards the retail trade household, their average monthly income was between Rs.250 and Rs.40 and the annual per capita income ranged from Rs.408 to Rs.96. In the case of the service trade category, the average monthly income ranged from Rs.225 to Rs.100 and the annual per capita income was between Rs.437 and Rs.278. The Survey findings also illustrated that although the ratio of gross and net profit to sales was normal, the absolute income from the business was marginal. Of the 160 households studied, only 6 households or 3.76 per cent escaped the poverty cellar. The business loan beneficiaries' position was even worse in 1980

48. ITES, n. 32, p. 1234.
49. Ibid., p. 1235.
as the CRNIEO Survey concluded that almost all the families were below the poverty line. 50 Also, about 88 per cent of the families who availed themselves of the business loan failed miserably in business ventures and were languishing in Tamil Nadu. 51

Most of the repatriates failed in their business in the beginning itself. This was evident from the fact that only about 6 per cent of the repatriates availed the second instalment of the business loan after successfully utilising the first instalment in 1980. 52 The number registered a slight increase in 1986 as around 20 per cent of the repatriates made use of the entire amount earmarked for business loans. 53 This however did not mean that they increased significantly their average monthly income and annual per capita income. In this context, the comments of *the Exodus*, a monthly journal of the Repatriates Rehabilitation Research and Information Centre, Coimbatore (until recently in Madras) are relevant:

The majority of repatriates have been fobbed off with the first instalment of a business loan, and speeded on their way to "pauperisation". Rehabilitation has become synonymous with pauperisation in the case of more than 85 per cent of the Sri Lankan repatriates. 54

Several reasons are attributed to the failure of the business loan scheme: First, the recipients were totally unfit for the proper utilisation of the loan as nearly 90 per cent of the repatriates, as mentioned earlier, were plantation labourers in Sri Lanka. As such, they did not

50. CRNIEO, n. 25, p. 24.
51. Ibid., p. 23.
52. Ibid.
possess a business aptitude. Second, the repatriates were not only new to the occupation, but also strangers to the place where they started their new ventures. In the absence of any strong or dependable roots, they failed to get settled in one place.\footnote{Vasudevan, n.53, p. 31.} Third, a large number of advances for the same type of business was made to a number of families in a single village without considering the viability of the enterprise.\footnote{ITES, n. 32, p. 1235.} Before sanctioning loans, the rehabilitation officials hardly made a proper assessment of the proposed geographical location for the business venture, population of the area, number of existing shops etc. As a result, the operational efficiency of the firms was hurt by the limited local market, weak capital structure, stagnant village economy etc.\footnote{Ibid., p. 1231.} Fourth, the business loan was a lump sum cash grant which came to the repatriates unasked. Since they brought only few assets from Sri Lanka, the repatriates were tempted to spend the loan for their consumption instead of investing it for production. Their natural inclination to spend whatever they earned indicated their inability to distinguish productive capital from consumption money.\footnote{CRNIEO, n.25, pp. 24-25.} Fifth, the government did not seem to be concerned about the loan utilisation. In several cases, the rehabilitation officials deducted the housing loan from the second instalment of the business loan. As such, the repatriates considered the business loan as gratis.\footnote{Ibid, p.25.}

Although the credit based schemes were subjected to severe criticisms by several voluntary organisations working for the repatriates, the government continued to consider it as a popular rehabilitation scheme for
one of the following reasons: First, the government seemed to have found the granting of a business loan as the simplest, easiest and quickest way of achieving rehabilitation of several lakhs of repatriates, when other schemes needed heavy investment. By and large, the credit based schemes did not require any large-scale planning. What was necessary in this regard was a huge financial allocation. Second, the government might have felt that small business as an avenue of effective absorption was quite promising. In this regard, the successful working experience of the business loan with regard to the Burmese repatriates might have encouraged the Indian government to impose the same scheme on the Sri Lankan repatriates. We may state that the Burmese repatriates benefitted under the credit based schemes because majority of them belonged to the urban business class.

To conclude, the credit based schemes generated nothing but human misery. A multitude of business loan receivers had run through the loan money in a matter of months and found themselves destitute wanderers in the hill regions of Tamil Nadu where, as discussed in the following pages, their life was most unenviable. As such, this scheme, according to The Exodus was nothing more than "getting rid of repatriate families with a throw away amount of Rs. 3000 as the first instalment and for all practical purposes, the final instalment of the business loan". 61

Employment in Plantations

The resettlement of repatriates in the plantation sector under the employment scheme was well suited to their past living style and habituation in Sri Lanka. This scheme proved to be the most successful one as it provided the repatriates a regular salaried income. As an attractive scheme, an overwhelming majority of the repatriates' choice was for the plantation employment. However, only a minuscule percentage of them, as

shown in Table 9.5, were absorbed as workers in tea, rubber and cinchona plantations.

    The daily wage rate in the tea estate in 1989 was Rs.15 and the rubber estate and cinchona plantation workers received Rs.20 and Rs.10 per day respectively.\textsuperscript{62} The tea estate workers were offered work about 300 days in a year\textsuperscript{63} and their average annual income rose from Rs.3000 in 1976\textsuperscript{64} to 4000 in 1980.\textsuperscript{65} Their per capita income of Rs. 600 in 1976 was higher than both the poverty level per capita income of Rs. .480 and most other occupational categories of repatriates.\textsuperscript{66}

    As regards the rubber estate workers who were settled in Tamil Nadu, they worked nearly 240 days in a year. At the same time, those repatriates who were employed in estates in Karnataka and Kerala got work for 312 days and 310 days respectively per year. The annual earning of a rubber estate worker in Tamil Nadu was Rs.3,840, whereas the same worker in Karnataka earned Rs.4,390 per annum. The average annual income (Rs.6,113) of a repatriate family in Kerala's rubber estates was much higher than the other two states.\textsuperscript{67}

    The rehabilitation of repatriates in the cinchona plantations was also a successful venture. Each worker was provided about 250 days work in a year. The annual average income of a family was Rs.3,350.\textsuperscript{68}

    Besides, the plantation workers were entitled for rent free houses, medical facilities and free educational facilities for their children.\textsuperscript{69}

\textsuperscript{62.} Vamadevan, n.43, p.125.
\textsuperscript{63.} CRNIEO, n.25, p.35.
\textsuperscript{64.} ITES, n.32, p.1241.
\textsuperscript{65.} CRNIEO, n.25, p.35.
\textsuperscript{66.} ITES, n.32, p.1241.
\textsuperscript{67.} CRNIEO, n.25, pp.36-38.
\textsuperscript{68.} Ibid., p.38.
some estates the additional members of the repatriate families were also given employment.

Thus, the families absorbed in the government plantation schemes were above the poverty line. Some families with additional earners and incentive wages were even placed as being on par with the average per capita income of Tamil Nadu. As such, the repatriate workers in plantations were a fortunate lot compared with 95 per cent of their compatriots who lived below the poverty line. The repatriates also shared this view. Their feelings reflected in the editorial of *The Exodus*: "the decision to settle the repatriates in government owned plantations has been the happiest instance of rehabilitation agreeable to the people and advantageous to the country".

**Employment in the State Farm Corporation**

During the initial phase of launching of the employment scheme in State Farm Corporations, several repatriate families were at least partially benefitted by their employment as agricultural labourers. The scheme enabled them to earn a monthly income ranging from Rs. 200 to Rs. 270. The reason attributed to their low income was their under-employment caused by the monsoon failure or drought conditions in Tamil Nadu.

However, the scheme ceased to be operational since 1982, as almost all the units of State Farm Corporations incurred a heavy loss. As a result, several repatriate families were unemployed. As compensation, the government paid Rs. 5000 to the repatriate families who were employed under

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70. *The Exodus*, n.54.
71. CRN1EO, n.25, pp.32-33.
the scheme. Also, it promised to allot 3 acres of cultivable land for each family. But the government neither allotted lands for their cultivation nor made alternative arrangement for their employment. Under these circumstances, the repatriate families filed cases against the government demanding the assured 3 acres of land and the Court finally directed the State government to rehabilitate them on land colonies. 73

Employment in industries

The repatriates who were rehabilitated in the mill sector and other industries through the RCFDB had achieved a better level of living than those who were resettled under the credit based schemes or employment scheme in State Farm Corporations. This was despite their difficulties in the initial phase of their life as industrial workers. Generally, all the repatriate workers were given industrial training for more than a year, and during that period, their earning was insufficient to even sustain the family.

After the training period, the spinning mill workers were offered almost 273 days work per year. Their average monthly income in 1980 was Rs. 360. The employees in the sugar mills worked for 200 days in a year, but earned Rs. 460. However, the repatriates whose employment was sponsored by the RCFDB found the work in the industries strenuous and less remunerative. For instance, the employees in the cement industries worked for 312 days per year but their average monthly income was Rs. 253. Similarly, the transport corporations provided the repatriates around 308 days work in a year and paid Rs. 348 as a monthly wage per worker. 74 The CRNIEO Survey illustrated that the workers in all the industries except the cement industry, were above the poverty line. 75

74. CRNIEO, n.25, p.41.
75. Ibid.
Since all the workers were governed by the labour laws, they were also entitled to get other benefits such as casual leave, sick leave, earned leave, subsidised consumer articles and housing facilities.

However, the repatriate workers were not without problems. For several workers, employment was not made permanent for a long time or they were denied promotions by the management. This was a device to keep their wage low and deprive them of their dues under the minimum wages law. There were many instances of the repatriate workers losing their employment in industries sponsored by the RCFDB as the management closed down the industry or terminated the repatriates after availing the loan. In such cases, the repatriates were sent to other industries.

Land Colonisation Scheme

In Sri Lanka the prospective repatriate worked under an employer for wages in the plantations. But he acquired an opportunity to become an owner of a piece of land and a producer through his own initiative, enterprise and capital under the land colonisation scheme. However, the scheme did not yield any significant result for the repatriates as it was not economically viable for several reasons.

The ITES Survey indicated that most of the colonies were in the region prone to drought. Soil poverty and lack of water were specially marked in the land colonies. As the repatriates had no previous experience in cultivation, the reclamation work done by them was haphazard. Also, they used low yield variety of seed and low level of agricultural technology. As a result, the yield was poor and the income was so insufficient that the

77. See Vamadevan, n. 43, pp. 151-55.
78. *The Exodus*, n. 73, pp. 4-5.
79. ITES, n. 32, pp. 1221-22.
cost-benefit ratios were less than unity, and "crop production was only sufficient to sustain the colonists for about 3-6 months. In 1980 the average annual income from land was Rs.605 per family.

Due to poor income, a little less than one third of the repatriates deserted the colonies in search of better employment. Around 45 per cent of the land earmarked for colonies were not utilised at all. It may also be stated that the big units of land colonies proved more beneficial to the repatriates than the smaller ones.

Thus, despite its ideal nature to resettle the repatriates, the colonisation schemes did not totally achieve their objectives. The scheme would have become economically viable had the government concentrated on irrigation to the colonies established on marginal and sub-marginal lands, extension of infrastructural facilities to the repatriates and introduction of new dry farming techniques and a more devoted agricultural extension service to the colonies. Instead, the government's role was confined to the allotment of land and distribution of loans.

Housing Loan

The housing loan was an attractive rehabilitation scheme for the repatriates who, before their repatriation, lived in overcrowded 'line rooms' owned by the plantation managements in Sri Lanka. It provided them an opportunity to become owners of houses and achieve a settled way of life in India.

However, the implementation of the scheme has been tardy. According to the statistics of the Directorate of Rehabilitation, up to March 1985,

80. Ibid., p.1222.
81. CRNIEO, n.25, p.28.
82. Vamadevan, n.43, p.129.
83. Ibid., p.130.
about 38,773 families received housing loans. This constituted only around 33.7 per cent of the total repatriates who were eligible for the housing loans. 84 Applications of nearly 2,555 families were pending before the rehabilitation authorities. 85 The government disbursed only 20.5 crores for housing loans up to March 1985. But the total financial provision for all the repatriate families should have been around 60 crores. 86

Several repatriate families could not avail themselves the housing loan because the procedure was very cumbersome. Before submitting the loan application, the repatriate family had to find a place for the permanent settlement, acquire a plot of 2 or 3 cents, then prepare the housing plans and estimates and get the approval of the Town Planning Officer or Panchayat or Municipality. There were difficulties in getting house sites in the place of their settlement. As he was a stranger who had no knowledge of building materials nor had he any reliable contacts, the ignorant and illiterate repatriate was driven from pillar to post before submitting his application. 87

Also, many families did not get housing loans as they were not aware of the time limit of one year for the submission of application or they failed to apply in time due to the difficulties in settling down. Many families could not find employment to subsist on in their first place of settlement and so they migrated to other places for labour. 88 Such repatriates were denied housing loans on the ground that they had applied for it in a

85. Quoted in Sivalingam, n.31, p.60.
86. The Exodus, n.84.
87. CRNIEO, n.25, p.47.
88. Yvonne Fries and Thomas Bibin documented interviews of several repatriates who revealed these problems. See their Undesirables: The Expatriation of the Tamil People of "Recent Indian Origin" from the Plantations in Sri Lanka to India (Calcutta, 1984), p.128.
district different from the district of their initial settlement for business or employment. 89

Also, the government treated the applications for housing loans with scant respect. The most glaring example given by the Exodus was that of the Collectorate of Nilgiris which remained unresponsive and even hostile to the repatriate community settled in the district. 90 Furthermore, there was increasingly a tendency to reject applications for housing loans on flimsy grounds. Sometimes, the applications were kept in cold storage for over five years and then rejected on the ground that the period had elapsed. 91 In this context, the Exodus noted that "every repatriate who had applied for rehabilitation assistance was carrying a load of correspondence which, if exhibited, would reveal the most heartless and the most irresponsible manner of dealing with these displaced repatriates". 92

Of all the repatriates who had received a housing loan, only around 30 per cent have been properly housed. Several housing colonies of the repatriates were fully or partially abandoned by the occupants because of non-availability of water or employment in the neighbourhood. 93 A sizable number of the repatriates did not build houses after availing themselves of the housing loan. 94 This was mainly due to land disputes and duping of the repatriates by the middlemen and contractors. In many places the contractors either completed the construction of houses with very low


91. The Exodus, n.54.

92. The Exodus, n.90.


94. A sample survey conducted in 1986 found that around 10 per cent of the repatriates belonged to this category. Vamadevan, n.53, p.41.
quality materials or abandoned them half way, for which a full amount had been paid.\textsuperscript{95} These incomplete and abandoned housing colonies, \textit{the Exodus} maintained, "remained as haunted habitations in Pudukottai, Trichy, Tirunelveli, Tanjore and the Nilgiris districts of Tamil Nadu and stood testimony to the exploitation of man by man and a colossal waste of public funds exceeding Rs.10 crores".\textsuperscript{96}

To sum up, the housing loan scheme benefitted only a section of the repatriates. Despite the provision for the granting of housing loans to every repatriate family, according to an unofficial estimate, nearly 80 per cent of the repatriate families were living in hastily assembled shanties in repatriate colonies.\textsuperscript{97} The failure of housing loan scheme induced several voluntary organisations to take up housing projects for the repatriates. The Indo-Sri Lanka Development Trust built several housing colonies which were purchased by the repatriates out of the loan amounts available under the scheme for purchase of private houses.

\textbf{Education, Training and Employment}

Except giving certain concessions in education and employment, the government did not give any special importance to repatriate children's education by formulating schemes or setting up an independent agency for this purpose. Since education is a State subject and the rehabilitation of the Sri Lankan repatriates is the responsibility of the Central government, there is no well defined policy adopted by the government \textit{vis-a-vis} the repatriate children's education.

The reservation of seats for the repatriate students in educational institutions was not commensurate with their numbers. It must be emphasised

\textsuperscript{95} For case studies see Fries and Bibin, \textit{n.88}, pp.116-20.

\textsuperscript{96} \textit{The Exodus}, \textit{n.93}.

\textsuperscript{97} \textit{Ibid}. 
that the Sri Lankan repatriates are twice the number of their Burmese counterparts, but the total seats reserved for the latter is more than the former. For instance, there are four seats for the Burmese repatriates in medicine and only two places for the Sri Lankan repatriates. 98 Recently, these two seats were reduced to one. 99 Even to fill up this lone seat, no repatriate candidate was selected during 1984-85 and 1985-86. 100

It must be noted that the conditions of the residential school set up by the government for the repatriates was appalling. The school lacked facilities: the class rooms were used for the purpose of conducting classes as well as lodging the students at night. 101 The financial assistance prescribed for the repatriate students was insufficient. Also, the repatriate children who were born after their parents arrival in India were arbitrarily denied educational concessions. Even the minimum educational advantage which the repatriates had enjoyed in Sri Lanka due to the introduction of compulsory education at the primary school level, has not been available in India.

Although most of the repatriates belong to the depressed castes, they have not been able to benefit from the concessions and special facilities available to such castes because the Family Cards did not refer to their caste. As such, it is difficult for them to obtain caste certificates without producing proof.

Repatriates Without Assistance

By 1989, as mentioned in part IV of this chapter, a total of 19,777 families (17 per cent of the total repatriates) did not receive any

98. Policy Note..., n.27, p.4.
99. The Exodus, n.4, p.2.
100. Ibid., pp.2 and 7.
rehabilitation assistance. This included those families who were not eligible for resettlement assistance, those who did not opt for it, those who declined to accept the assistance and those who were awaiting the rehabilitation assistance (the rehabilitation programme was affected due to the arrival of the Sri Lankan Tamil refugees since July 1983).

In 1979 the number of families who did not get any assistance under the rehabilitation schemes were much larger. They constituted 30 per cent of the total repatriate families (80,027) in India. The CRNIEO Survey classified them into two groups: those who were not assisted at all under any one of the schemes and those who were offered assistance but declined to accept it. The reasons for non-receipt of government assistance as reported by the repatriates are given in the table below:

TABLE 9.7
REASONS FOR NON-RECEIPT OF REHABILITATION ASSISTANCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>No. of repatriates</th>
<th>Percentage of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not aware of the assistance</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not stay in the camp to get the assistance</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Came to India before 1973</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not eligible for assistance</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assets over Rs. 10,000</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not registered</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not apply in time</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistance not mentioned in the Family Card</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>292</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Included delayed sanction of loans, inadequacy of the loan, mal-practices and assistance refused after sanction.

Source: CRNIEO, n.25, p.41.
Host of the repatriates who did not receive rehabilitation assistance found casual employment in the Nilgiris. In 1960 each family earned Rs. 10 per day and worked for around 200 days in a year. The average annual earning per family was Rs. 2000. All of them remained below poverty line.

### Results of the Rehabilitation Schemes

It is noteworthy that the failure of credit based schemes and colonization schemes led to the emergence of a casual labour force among the repatriates. It also gave geographical mobility for these groups of repatriates. A large number of impoverished repatriate families of this category flocked to Nilgiris and Kodaikanal in search of livelihood. They preferred these hill regions because several repatriate families who were rehabilitated under employment schemes in government owned plantations were relatively well off having permanent jobs, regular monthly income and residential and medical facilities. Other factors which attracted the repatriates were cold climatic conditions to which they were familiar in Sri Lanka and the availability of casual employment in the small private tea holdings. Their migration also indicated that their choice of rehabilitation assistance was plantation based employment and not the business loan or agricultural colonies. Besides the hill regions of Tamil Nadu, there were around 10,000 repatriates who immigrated to Karnataka as casual labour.

However, the life of the immigrant repatriates in the hill regions of Tamil Nadu was not without problems. In Nilgiris most of them found temporary employment in private tea estates owned by the

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103. Ibid., p.45.
104. Ibid.
Badaga landlords as casual labourers where a kind of semi-bonded labour system prevailed with attendant insecurity, human degradation and unimaginable humiliation. Making capital use of the helpless condition of the repatriates, the landlords hired them under various subterfuges—as casual labour for over 5 years and deprived them of provident funds, medical facilities, education and accommodation. The workers were also paid wages less than the legally prescribed minimum rate. It is around Rs.7 for females and Rs.10 for male workers per day. There is no guarantee of permanent employment and the wages are paid irregularly. In the past, the repatriate workers were evicted from their hutty tenements and subjected to violence when they demanded an increase in their daily wage rates. About their plight, the Exodus commentary stated that "they were human beings who had been abandoned by those who had brought them into the country after conferring Indian nationality on them".

Another important result of the rehabilitation programme was that it created bonded labourers among the repatriates under unscrupulous contractors in the Kodaikanal area. That some of them had survived without any hope of a future was evident from the exposure in 1986, when it was found that among those who were used by contractors as bonded labour, many


109. The Exodus, n.54.
were repatriates. 110 Their release from this inhuman condition was ordered by the Supreme Court of India when the case came up before it as a public interest litigation.

A large-scale influx of repatriates to the Nilgiris brought about a disorder in the social set up. The polarisation between the well-to-do Badaga land owners and the starving, unemployed, landless repatriates created communal disturbances. The communal tensions prevailed not only due to scarcity of employment, low wages, starvation and oppression, but more because of the alleged land encroachments. 111 This also resulted in the birth of a campaign named "Save Nilgiris" whose main thrust was to restrict the inflow of repatriates. The spokesmen of the anti-repatriate campaign alleged that the repatriates were engaged in illicit brewing, felling of trees and the encroachment of revenue lands and, therefore, their migration must be restricted. 112 In March 1987, some of the people in the Nilgiris district appealed to the Tamil Nadu government to stop forthwith the resettlement of the repatriates in the district. They stated that the district was overpopulated and the immigrants had been causing law and order problems. It was also alleged that the sudden increase in population recently had pushed up the crime rate in the district. 113 Regardless of the truth of the allegations, the point to be noted is that the local residents of the Nilgiris district developed prejudice against the repatriates. As such, they were the unwelcomed elements in India.

110. The cruel and ugly face of exploitation is discussed by R. Vidyasagar, et. al., The Human Cost of Commercial Forestry - A Study of Coupe Labourers in Kodaikanal Hills (Kodaikanal, 1986). Also see Ceylon Repatriate Association, Kodaikanal (CERAK), Engengum Anniyamakappattavargal (in Tamil) (Kodaikanal, 1986); Vamadevan, n.41, pp.143-6.

111. Fries and Bibin, n.68, p.153.


In contrast to the expectation of the repatriates who had depressed socio-economic backgrounds in Sri Lanka, the rehabilitation schemes have hardly improved their lot in India. Rather, they were led to a state of sheer penury. The CRNIEO Survey illuminated the fact that the repatriates enjoyed a better economic position in Sri Lanka than in India, as is evident from Table 9.8.

**TABLE 9.8**

**INCOME LEVELS OF THE REPATRIATES IN SRI LANKA AND INDIA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>No. of Persons working per family</th>
<th>Average No. of days worked in a year</th>
<th>Man days per family in a year</th>
<th>Average annual earnings per family (Rs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Industrial Worker</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>3240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plantations</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>4012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Farm Corporation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>2466</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Colonisation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>546</td>
<td>815</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other occupations (Business etc.)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>1194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment in Sri Lanka</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>7200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CRNIEO, n.25, p.20.

As the figures given in the table were collected from the repatriates during the survey, it can not be treated as accurate. Rather, it gives a broad indication of different economic position of the repatriates in India and Sri Lanka.

According to the Survey, the earnings in Sri Lanka was more than that in India because more members from each family were employed. Also, they worked for more man-days. As nearly 90 per cent of the repatriates were employed in plantations in Sri Lanka, they were receiving, in addition to their pay, gratuity, provident fund and other benefits. They were also protected by the labour laws.
In India most of the repatriates have to earn their livelihood with their own initiative, endeavour and capital which they lack. Their earnings are not even adequate to support their families. Except those repatriates who were rehabilitated under employment schemes (around 12 per cent), the rest lived below poverty line. 114

The rehabilitation schemes changed the mono-occupational characteristics of the repatriates from predominantly plantation workers into, as mentioned earlier, an industrial work force, petty businessmen, cultivators, agricultural labour, plantation workers and bonded labourers. Besides, the hitherto homogeneous and integrated group of the repatriates has been converted into a heterogeneous and disintegrated group. As such, they lost the community living which the repatriates had enjoyed in Sri Lanka.

Also, unlike in Sri Lanka where the repatriates formed a significant group from the electoral point of view and generated political pressure through their participation in the trade unions to achieve their socio-economic demands, in India they are not a political force to be reckoned within electoral politics because of their scattered distribution all over Tamil Nadu, with some pockets in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Kerala. Even though the repatriates in the Nilgiris district, 115 who were attracted by the DMK's ideology, showed their strong political allegiance to it, the party's local leadership was suspicious of their loyalty and was all out to appease the dominant community i.e., Badagas, to win their electoral support. 116 This illustrates the fact that the repatriates are a politically inconsequential group which does not hold any political 'value'...

114. CRNIEO, n.25, p.21.

115. This district accounted for about 40 per cent of the total repatriates settled in Tamil Nadu. See Table 9.4.

116. See the TECRAS Study in Rajendran, n.72, pp.53 and 60.
for any self-seeking politicians because they constitute a minority community. As such, they paid a scant attention to the repatriates' problems.

To sum up, despite the generous financial allocation for the schemes of rehabilitation, the resettlement of the Sri Lankan repatriates has been a tale of failures. It generated nothing but human misery. About 90 per cent of the repatriates are condemned to squalor, poverty and neglect. They even feel displaced and discarded by a government on whose agreements and promises they accepted the scourge of repatriation. In their motherland the repatriates found themselves unwanted, who were received with contempt and deceived of rehabilitation promises. In this context, the commentary by *The Exodus* is noteworthy:

the people come proudly as new Indian citizens only to discover to their horror that the status they have exchanged is not one of honour for humiliation or freedom for serfdom, but degradation and destitution for exploitation and discrimination.

What were the root causes of the failure of the rehabilitation schemes? First, there was no criterion adopted to select the beneficiaries for each rehabilitation assistance. The very fact that the government considered the loan scheme as a popular form of rehabilitation assistance showed its total disregard for the repatriates' aptitude and skill endowment. Although it was very difficult to find plantation based employment for all the repatriates, the main thrust of the rehabilitation programme should not have been based on credit schemes. Instead, the government could have designed other schemes such as cottage industries and vocational training for every able bodied repatriate so as to make them self-reliant. At present, "the two decade old schemes and their norms", *the Exodus* maintained, "cry for total redesigning in view of the sad and

and sorry experiences of people who are no less Indians than the administrative coterie fattening on the rehabilitation programme.  

Second, an apathetic bureaucracy of the Tamil Nadu government was also responsible for the failure of the resettlement schemes. Often, the Tashildars and Revenue Inspectors voiced anti-repatriate sentiments. A top rehabilitation official described the repatriates as 'not only good for nothing, but also ungrateful'. Supporting his criticism, a state IAS officer stated that 'the repatriates were a nuisance with their inefficiency'. Thus, their concern for the repatriates have been only symbolic and all pervasive network of corruption which characterised administration in the State had spelled the ruin of the rehabilitation schemes. In this context, the Exodus concluded:

In the dichotomy of authority and responsibility lies the root cause of the many failures of the Rehabilitation schemes. An apathetic bureaucracy has survived through window dressing exercises and fictitious reports about the rehabilitation of repatriates from Sri Lanka... cheating and bribing have been the two tall achievements of the rehabilitation programme.

It should be noted that the ignorance, illiteracy and helplessness of the repatriates also contributed to the spread and growth of corrupt practices. Today rehabilitation has become the monopoly not only of the Centre and State governments, but also of middlemen who know the art of

120. Ibid.
123. Ibid.
endearing themselves to the officials entrusted with the responsibility of implementing the rehabilitation schemes. 124

VIII
PROBLEMS OF SOCIO-CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

So far, we have dealt with the problem of rehabilitation from the economic point of view. But there is yet another dimension to the repatriates' problem i.e. their socio-cultural adjustment with the local population. 125 Only a brief mention of this aspect is given below since the main emphasis of the present chapter is only to analyse how far the Indian government discharged its obligations to the repatriates.

Although the repatriates have a greater degree of socio-cultural compatibility in terms of common language (Tamil) and religion (Hinduism) with the local people of Tamil Nadu, their deprived caste status made the process of their adaptation with the caste-ridden local social environment somewhat difficult. As mentioned earlier, 56 per cent of the repatriates belonged to the Scheduled Castes as against Tamil Nadu's overall Scheduled Caste population of 18 per cent. 126 The non-scheduled caste groups restricted their interaction with the repatriates in the villages as there were several instances to show that the former practised rigid casteism against the latter in social relationship. 127 The effect of the caste factor has been that it placed a hurdle in the process of integration of the repatriates into the host society.

124. Ibid., p.2.

125. For a full-length study on the difficulties experienced by the repatriates in the process of their resettlement in Kotagiri (Tamil Nadu) see L. Vedavalli, Socio-Economic Profile of Sri Lankan Repatriates in Kotagiri, Ph.D. Thesis, Centre for South and Southeast Asian Studies, University of Madras, 1989 (typescript).

126. Vamadevan, n.43, p.169.

Also, several repatriates, who were rehabilitated in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Kerala, found it difficult to adapt themselves with the host society because of their socio-cultural incompatibility. As mentioned in Chapter VIII, a few repatriate families abandoned their employment in the plantations of Kerala and Karnataka due to the language problem and emigrated to Tamil Nadu.

IX

CONCLUSION

The growing failure of the rehabilitation programme indicates that the Indian government has failed to discharge its obligations towards the Sri Lankan repatriates. While accepting the failure, on the one hand, and emphasizing the need to improve the effectiveness and quality of the resettlement schemes on the other, the government neither formulated alternate schemes, nor removed the ills which beleaguered the present schemes. Not even a single governmental inquiry was conducted to assess the two decades old rehabilitation programme for the Sri Lankan repatriates, for which the Indian government spent crores of rupees. Instead, the authorities appear to have gone on blindly implementing short sighted loan schemes, and then washed their hands off the whole problem. And no one in the government has, as yet, answered the question of several lakhs of Sri Lankan repatriates: Why and on what promises were they repatriated to India?

128. Arun Nehru, the Minister of State for Internal Security, told the Lok Sabha that "only about 20 per cent of the total repatriates who were rehabilitated in India were in the process of receiving full benefits of the resettlement schemes". LSD, vol.15. no.26, April 1986, col.77.

129. Ibid.