

**CHAPTER -II**

**IMMIGRATION OF THE BENGALIS FROM  
BENGAL TO BURMA**

Burma one of the closest neighbour of India particularly Bengal attracted Indians as well as Bengalis to migrate to the country. Though the history of the migration took a definite shape during the colonial period but there was inflow of the Bengalis also in the ancient and medieval times. Burma or Myanmar is geographically located between 10 and 28 degrees North latitude. It is bordered on the north-east; India and Bangladesh on the north-west; Thailand and Laos on the east. In the south it is surrounded by the Bay of Bengal and in the south-west by the Andaman Sea<sup>1</sup>. Burma occupies approximately 261,552 square miles, longer than it's wide. With main mountain chains , the Arakan , the Pegu , and the Shan Hills , lying north to south, and its major rivers, the Irrawaddy and Salween, running parallel to these, Burma is divided into long , large plains , areas easily accessible in the north-south movement but difficult when moving east-west<sup>2</sup>. The country's geography has played a significant role in shaping its history.

## I

Historically, Burma and India had a close relation ever since the growth of the civilization. In fact, not only Burma but the entire South -East Asia was very closely tied to India. The region was influenced by the Indian culture, religion and language. During the closing years of B.C. and the early centuries of A.D. India carried to three countries particularly Laos, Vietnam, Malaya, Indonesia, Burma, etc their religion, language, literature and arts. The entire region was highly influenced by the Indian culture<sup>3</sup>. Indians had established colonies in South East Asia including Burma particularly in localities known as Tagaung, Pagan, Thaton, Prome, Pegu, Rangoon, etc. Burmese chronicles speak of the foundation of the Tagaung and Prome kingdom in the 9<sup>th</sup> century B.C<sup>4</sup>. Trade relations between India and Burma had existed during the ancient period. Burma has been referred as Suvarnabhumi or Sonapranta in Pali i.e. the golden country. According to Suvarnabhumi , or the gold land which was a concept primarily used as a vague general designation of an extensive region.....used to denote Sumatra and also portion of Burma<sup>5</sup>. It is also believed that Buddhism was propagated to Burma from India

during the time of Asoka (273-232B.C.) by two missionaries Sona and Uttara, who were sent by the Mauryan emperor himself<sup>6</sup>. The truth of the fact is unknown but Buddhism had certainly arrived in Burma in the early centuries A.D. with the rise of the centres at Sri Ksetra and along the coast. The coastal areas as they were exposed to travel and trade from the south of India they were influenced by the Buddhists learning centres like Amravati and Narjunikonda on the Krishna River. The interior parts of the country including the pagan were influenced by the overland contacts with Bengal, Tibet and Yunan. These areas were later the strongholds of the Tantric Buddhism and Mahayana, with the University of Nalanda in Bengal being the most prominent of the all contemporary centres of the Buddhist learning<sup>7</sup>.

Moreover, the colonization of Burma is proved by the fact that "the conquest of the part of Burmah by Rajendra I is accepted, as it must now be, this would only mean that Rajendra Kulottunga distinguished himself as a prince in the eastern exploits of his grandfather, either during Rajendra Cola's reign or under Virarajendra. He reconquered Burmah which is being referred as Kadaram<sup>8</sup>. The conquest led to some serious impact on the culture of the country which led to the development of some common concept of hierarchy in the Government; the acceptance of royalty or kingship; the divine origin and status of the king; ministrations of the Brahman priests at the palace; royal patronage of the Buddhists religion; the King, supporter of the religion; acceptance of the traditional Hindu family system; social and religious ceremonies of many kinds; e.g. celebration of births; casting of horoscopes of the new-born; domestic rituals of womenfolk; Shinbyu ceremonies (initiation into Buddhist faith) for boys; ear-piercing ceremonies for girls<sup>9</sup>. The Burmese birth customs are identical with that of the Indians. There is also a system of consulting the horoscope prepared by the Phongyi—the religious priest. Similar to the southern part of India when the Burmese migrate to distant lands or tracts and found new hamlets there, they often bear the name of the village whence the colony was planted<sup>10</sup>.

There always existed a trade relation with Burma in the ancient times. Trade between Burma and India existed as early as first century A.D. This is proved by the statement in Periplus that ships from India regularly sailed to Chryse and there was a brisk trade between the two Chryse according to this authority, has the same connotation as the Trans -Gangetic India of Ptolemy included Burma, Indo-China and Malaya archipelago<sup>11</sup>. The interest of developing the trade relation further increased during the British period who wanted to create Burma a buffer state. But the migration from India to Burma started in the earliest times. The Bengali community like any other community of India had migrated to Burma and settled in that country for different purpose.

## II

The history of the Bengalis settling in Burma can be traced back to four hundred years ago. The Burmese kings especially from the Pagan period promoted Buddhism and there was a respect for the Bengali learned men and knowledge, it was that the Burmese society needed the expertise from India to conduct court rituals and other obligations<sup>13</sup>. Manipur and Arakan were the area which the Brahmins went to Burma. The Bengali Brahmins mostly immigrated from Navadwipa, which was the centre of Sanskrit learning<sup>14</sup>. The Bengali Brahmins came to Burma through Arakan and settled in Mandalay. The immigrant Bengali and the Manipur Brahmins gradually led to the growth of a community which were referred by the Burmese as Ponna. They wore sacred thread like any other Bengali Brahmins and performed religious duties<sup>15</sup>. Many of the Ponna Brahmins were brought from Manipur and western Bengal as astrologers. They had settled in Mandalay and had expanded their profession<sup>16</sup>. It has to be noted that there was the spread of Bengali Vaishnavism in Manipur throughout the nineteenth century and its influence was present among the Brahmins who migrated to Arakan or Burma. The Ponna were an important part of the Burmese religious and cultural life. The word Ponna actually derived from the Burmese word Pyinnya-shi, meaning possessors of knowledge. Again the word Pyinnya-shi is very close to the Pali word Pundit<sup>17</sup>. The cultural contact



with Bengal and the functions of the Bengali origin Brahmins were maintained down to the end of the Burman dynasty in the times of King Theebaw. In a letter of King of Burma to the Governor of Bengal mentioned that, "In my service are Pundits learned in sastra.....have come just across the Arakans"<sup>18</sup>. The spread of Islam in Chittagong was the probable reason to the immigration of the Brahmins from Bengal to the neighbouring areas mainly Arakan and Lower Burma.

It is difficult to trace the exact date from which the migration of the Bengalis have begun in Burma. It is stated that the Bengali Muslims had started to come to Burma during the time of Alauddin Khalji. During the 16<sup>th</sup> and the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries there was immigration of the Muslim population from Bengal to Burma<sup>19</sup>. It could be so that the Buddhist Arakanese kings had patronized the coming of the Muslims. The King Min Saw Mon, the founder of the Mrauk -U dynasty (1430-1784) with the assistance of the armies of the Sultan of Bengal, after living in exile for twenty-four years, his Bengali retinues were allowed to settle down in the outskirts of Mrauk -U where they built a mosque called Santikan mosque. They were the earliest Muslim settlers in Arakan. In the middle of the seventeenth century the number of the Bengali Muslims increased because of the assignment of the Bengali slaves in various workforces of the country. The Arakanese raids of Bengal of loots and captives who were mostly Muslims which had began continuing since the sixteenth century onwards. Furthermore, there seemed to a small group of Muslim gentry in the court of Arakan who helped the king with Bengali, Arabic and Persian writings. Though the Mrauk -U kings were Buddhists but they adopted some of the style and fashion of the Sultan of Bengal<sup>20</sup>. Burma during the medieval period had many instances of the Muslim dominant villages with Bengali Muslim migrants as prominent in number. The Muslims had settled in Syriam, Pegu, Dela and other places in the coastal area of Burma. Actually, Burma is situated on the way of Mecca and Malacca; therefore, many of the Muslims gave a stop at the lower ports of Burma. Many of the Muslims settled permanently by marrying Burmese women<sup>21</sup>. There was a growth of a community called *zerbadis* who were the off springs of a Muslim of the foreign origin and of the Burmese origin. *Zerbadi* is a corruption of the Persian zir-bad or 'below the winds' a reference to South -East Asia<sup>22</sup>. Nikitin, the Russian traveler of the 15<sup>th</sup> century

speaks of the Muslim Indian dervishes in Pegu<sup>23</sup>. The Muslim migrating population mainly consisted of businessmen and traders particularly the horse and elephant traders who entered Burma by the land route of Manipur traveling through the Kohima pass. It can be roughly estimated that the Bengali Hindus started to migrate to Burma in 1025 A.D. and it persisted throughout the medieval period till the rule of Akbar<sup>24</sup>.

Though the migration of the Bengalis into Burma had existed from the pre colonial days but there was no significant inflow of the Bengalis in Burma before the establishment of the British rule and the three successive wars of 1824-26, 1852 and 1885-1886. The development of British administration increased the inflow of the Bengali to Burma abruptly.

The first contact of the Burmese and the English had been with the coming of the Christian missionaries as early as 1807. The English Baptists had established a Mission in Rangoon under Charter and Mardon<sup>25</sup>. But the significant impact was made by the First Anglo Burmese War of 1824-26. The Burmese had attacked the island of Shahpuri in 1823 which was a small island near Chittagong and commenced the war. The British under the Governor-Generalship of Lord Amherst declared war in 1824. The war had continued for two years and in 1826 the Treaty of Yandaboo was signed, in which the Burmese King agreed to pay the English Company the province of Arakan and Tenassarim. Burmese forces were withdrawn from Assam and Cachar. They also agreed to take a British Resident at their capital and pay a war indemnity of one million pounds<sup>26</sup>.

When Arakan and Tenassarim were ceded to the English after the First Anglo- Burmese War they were found to be almost depopulated. A census was taken in Arakan in 1829 with the population to the number of 121,288 and the number in 1832 increased to 195,107. This increase of 60.86 percent was due to an influx from Pegu and to the return from Chittagong and other places further west of numbers who had fled thither on the conquest by the Burmans in 1784 and subsequently<sup>27</sup>.

In 1829 the country stretching from the Thoung-yeng to the Pakchan contained a population estimated at a little over 70000 souls. From this time until the annexation of Pegu the increase was extraordinarily and increasingly rapid. In 1835 the number had risen to 85,000 or by 21 per cent; in 1845 to 127,455, or by 50 per cent in the decade; and in 1855 to 213,629 or by 69 per cent in the decade. It is, however, difficult to calculate the increase was due to the growth of the birth rate but it was definitely due the immigration which swelled the numbers. Immigration was from India to Moulmein and the district generally from Pegu where Burman governors still ruled. In Moulmein there was huge influx of the population and so rapid was the influx that the commissioner had difficulty in obtaining sufficient supply of rice and had to send to Tavoy to Re for grain<sup>28</sup>.

After the Treaty of Yandaboo in 1826, a large number of British merchants had settled on the southern coast of Burma and Rangoon. But these merchants often complained of ill-treatment at the hands of the Governor of Rangoon. The British merchants had a petition to the Governor-General Lord Dalhousie who was an ambitious imperialist and declared war on Burma in order to maintain British prestige and dignity at all costs. We ensured in which the Burmese were defeated. Dalhousie who had already made up his mind to annex Lower Burma an account of threatening the advance of America and France in Eastern Seas. He issued a proclamation on December 20, 1852 annexing Pegu<sup>29</sup>.

After the Second Anglo Burmese War the British started establishing administration in Burma. Although the trade and cultural relations with Burma and India had developed from ancient and medieval times and though the migration of the Bengalis had been there in the pre colonial days yet the beginning of the migration on an appreciable scale dated from 1852 onwards i.e. the annexation of Lower Burma by the British. The acquisition of Lower Burma by the British as a result of the war of 1852 led to the development of Rangoon, as a port for the exportation of rice and teak –timber. In a few years there were erection of mills for the husking and cleaning rice, later the petroleum refining industry has added to the importance of Rangoon. The extension of railways northward has brought it into the touch with ever widening markets, and by 1920s it is the chief port of the province, with a trade that expands as cultivation increases Rangoon became one of

the main camp in which the Bengalis, the members of the other community also in filtered into Burma and started to occupy a large portion of the economy<sup>30</sup>.

### III

The movement of the Indians including the Bengalis had its origin in the fundamental change in the economic life of Burma in the wake of the Burmese rice being valued, under a new economic system, as a commercial food –crop, demanded much in foreign markets in the second half of the nineteenth century. This needed the vast cultivable waste lands of Burma being brought under the cultivation for the production of large quantity of rice sufficient to meet the demands of foreign export. The indigenous labour in Burma was neither adequate nor capable and therefore, the government had decided to import labour from India to Burma, since Burma was constituent province of India there<sup>31</sup>. The British wanted to promote migrations because they wanted to balance the population transfer of Indian population from the most densely populated districts to Burma which required population. They also wanted to introduce along with the population new crops and new methods of cultivation. The government not only required labour for the cultivation but also for the clearing of jungles, swamps, building of roads and railways and for the teak trade<sup>32</sup>. With such intention in mind the British Government passed in 1870 a Labour Act under which a Recruiting Agent was appointed in India and subsidies were given to the shipping companies to transport Indian immigrants to Burma. The condition in India and opportunities in Burma influenced the great influx of Indian immigrants into Delta area of Lower Burma. Most of the Indians were from the province of Madras and Bengal<sup>33</sup>.

The various districts of Burma had seen a huge increase in its population. Some of the districts in which the Indians particularly the Bengalis settled were Akyab, Bassein, Kyouk-hpyoo, Maulmein, Mergui, Prome, Thayet, Rangoon, and Henzada. The British Burma Gazetteer mentions that, "A large influx of population took place from Chittagong, Ramoo and Cox Bazar in the Chittagong division of Bengal and from

Mrohung to the town of Akyab rapidly increased in wealth and its importance. There was want of labourers with the increasing size of population and the work of metalling of roads, digging ditches and tanks and filling up swamps and planting trees had to be carried on almost entirely on convict labour. There was migration from Bengal for such work particularly after 1852 as encouraged by the British Government. The population of the district which was 15, 536 in 1868 had increased to 19, 230<sup>34</sup>. In 1831, the district included the Hill Tracts and a part of Myaiboon township of Kyukhyoo, the inhabitants numbered 95,098 souls, following the year the number had risen to 109,645 and thence forward till 1854 the increase was rapid<sup>35</sup>. There was a huge increase in population in the district of Akyab which was one of the districts where the Bengalis mainly migrated.

**TABLE-2.1****GROWTH OF POPULATION IN THE DISTRICT OF AKYAB(1832-1876)**

YEARS	POPULATION
1832	109,645
1842	130,034
1852	201,677
1862	227,231
1872	271,099
1875	283,160
1876	284,119

Source: British Gazetteer of Burma, Volume -II, p-15

A special census was taken in 1872 which shows the population of 276, 671 and includes the floating population particularly from India, neighbouring Chittagong district for labour and agriculture. There was a large incoming of Bengali labours which is evident from the fact that, "In 1836 the shops of Akyab district were well supplied with the

different varieties of grain which are in use amongst the inhabitants of Bengal, from whence they are imported and the British cloths consisting of price goods, muslins, and broad cloths, cutlery, crockery, glass-ware and native manufacture were exposed for sale<sup>36</sup>. R.B. Smart, the Deputy Assistant Commissioner of the district of Akyab mentions about the flood of the immigrants from Chittagong district. He categorically stated that since 1879, there was a constant flow of the immigrants from the Chittagong to Akyab. Maungdaw Township was over by the Chittagonians. Buthidaung was not far behind with the men of this race. At first most of the Chittagonians arrived as seasonal labourers but gradually they settled themselves<sup>37</sup>. R.B. Smart reported that twenty-five thousand of the Chittagonians came as seasonal labourers in the harvest season alone. He mentioned that about the same number came for the work in the plows, trade and in the mills. Annually it comes to the number of fifty thousand which probably changed the population structure of the district. The hunger for land was the main motive behind such immigration<sup>38</sup>. The colonial masters considered the Bengalis as amenable subjects while they considered the Arakanese as much defiant rising in revolt twice in 1830s. During the colonial rule the Chittagong immigrants became numerically a dominant ethnic group in the Arakan district. The table below shows the various races in the year 1871, 1901 and 1911 as assessed by the Census authorities of the Government of India.

**TABLE -2.2**  
**ASSESSMENT OF THE RACES IN THE DISTRICT OF AKYAB,**  
**(1871, 1901, 1911)**

RACES	1871	1901	1911
MOHAMMADEN	58,255	154,887	178,647
BURMESE	4,632	35,751	92,185
ARAKANESE	171,612	230,649	209,432
SHAN	334	80	59
HILL TRIBES	38,577	35,489	34,020
OTHERS	606	1,355	1,146
TOTAL	276,671	481,666	529,943

SOURCE: (i) the data for the year 1871 is taken from the Gazetteer of Burma, Volume -II, p- 307

(ii) The data for the year 1901 and 1911 is taken from the Census of India, Burma Volume, 1901 and 1911

It should be noted that all the Muslims including the Mohammedans of the Chittagong and the Mohammedans of the other district and province has been classified under the same group. There was an increase of the proportion of the Muslim population of the district. In the course of time this change in the demographic pattern and composition has led the growth of communal problems and the Rohingya issue in Burma in the post independent period.

The population structure in the district of Bassein had also changed due to the influx of the Bengali population particularly the Chittagonians. The Census of 1876 stated a huge difference in the sex ratio of the district. The Census recorded that there were 157,142 males and 144,715 females in the district in 1876. The ratio materially affected the town and it was largely due to the immigration of the Chittagonians, inhabitants of Bengal, and Madrasis who did not bring their women with them<sup>39</sup>.

The district of Kyouk-hpyoo in 1872 was found with 144,177 populations as recorded in the census. In 1873-1874 it had risen to 145,665 and in 1876-77 to 149,035. Many of the inhabitants of the district had flocked to Akyab which had cultivable lands. Apart from this emigration from the district there was huge immigration into the district from India as a result of which the number of inhabitants increased from year to year. In 1832 the population numbered 66,712 souls, ten years later in 1842 it was 80,072, in 1852 it was 107,785, in 1862, 122,273 and in 1872 it was 144,177 giving an average of 33.46 per square<sup>40</sup>.

The district of Moulmein also recorded the increase in population in the census of 1872 and 1878 as well as it also depicted the increase in the number of the natives of India in the census records. Bengalis were an important section in the increasing population of the district. The Indians recorded 18,635 in the year 1872 out of 46,478 of the total population while the Burmese were only 11,115. In 1878 the Indians decreased to 11,562 and the Burmese to 9,607 out of 54,336 of the total population. In the district of Mergui the population had increased though not as much as in the other important districts. Yet in 1863-74 it was 10,200 and in 1876-1877 it was 10,731. The population was composed of the mixed races, namely Talaing, Burmese, Malays, Bengalis, Madrasis, Siamese and many Chinese<sup>41</sup>. The nationality in 1873 in Mergui was as given in the table below:-

**TABLE-2.3**  
**CLASSIFICATION OF RACES OF THE POPULATION IN THE DISTRICT OF**  
**MERGUL, 1873**

NATIONALITY	TOWN OF MERGUL	DISTRICT	TOTAL
EUROPEANS	35	7	42
BURMESE	7380	20,930	28,310
CHINESE	1091	1,294	2385
KARENG	-	8328	8328

Immigration of the Bengalis from Bengal to Burma

MADRASIS	23	2	25
BENGALIS	95	-	95
MOHAMMEDANS	1393	1063	2462
SELUNG	-	463	463

Source: Gazetteer of Burma, Volume -II, p-406

The Bengali population also included the Mohammedans who were mostly from the Chittagong district of Bengal.

The district of Prome also attracted Bengalis as well as other Indians. There was increase in the population as in 1864, the population was 22, 243, in the next ten years it increased to 25,959 and in 1877 it was 26,826. In the district of Thayet the number of Indians was higher as 3,458 and the Burman were 137,016 out of the total 156,816 of the population as recorded in the census of 1872<sup>42</sup>.

The district of Rangoon had developed to a large extent after the British possession of Burma. In 1785 there were 5000 houses registered and allowing population would have numbered 25,000 souls. In 1812 there were only 1500 registered houses, which would give a population of 7500. The First Anglo-Burmese war was to give impetus to trade and as a natural result the town increased more rapidly than was expected. Before the coming of the British Rangoon was the asylum of insolvent debtors and of foreigners from of Rangoon's demographic structure consisted of Burmans , Talaing , Englishmen, Portuguese, Madrasis, Bengalis who mingled together and there engaged in various broacher of trade and commerce<sup>43</sup>. The 1872 census recorded the nationality and races of the population in the district of Rangoon.

TABLE 2.4

## CLASSIFICATION OF THE POPULATION OF RANGOON IN RACES, 1872

RACES	POPULATION
EUROPEANS	3786
HINDOOS	15,216
TALAIING	7451
MUHAMMADENS	416
KARENGS	525
SHAN	1,217
CHINESE	3181
BURMESE	56,918

Source: Gazetteer of Burma, Volume -II, p-578

The Bengali population included in the large Hindu and Mohammedan population. The data clearly indicates that there was a huge inflow and outflow from the district including the seasonal workers from Bengal and Madras and the outflow included the seasonal workers and peasants who did not settle permanently in the district. The amount of Bengalis in the district is difficult to estimate in 1872 because it included both the Hindus and the Muslim population of the Eastern Bengal while the Census of 1872 did not make a specified classification of the races.

By 1881 the Indians were 66,000 in number in Rangoon, i.e., approximately 44 per cent of the city's population at that time. In 1901 this number had increased to 130,000 i.e., half of the population of the city. In addition to this, thousands of the Indians passed through the town of Rangoon which was a major port of entry and exit. Thus from 1852 to 1900, Rangoon developed into a town with 2, 50,000 persons were Indians. It became the main base from which the Indians were spread in all over Burma<sup>44</sup>. The Bengali population also contributed to this rise in the population of the district as they immigrated to Burma as agricultural labours and also as white-collared men.

**TABLE- 2.5**  
**GROWTH OF THE POPULATION IN RANGOON (1863-1878)**

YEAR	POPULATION
1863	61,138
1864	63,256
1865	66,577
1866	69,866
1867	71,186
1868	72,675
1869	96,942
1870	93,163
1871	100,000
1872	77,777
1873	80,096
1874	81,244
1875	80,491
1876	83,222
1877	91,458
1878	110,700

SOURCE: Gazetteer of Burma, Volume -II, p-578

In Henzada district of Burma there was a huge increase in population as recorded by the census authorities. In 1855 the population of the district was 171,601 and in the next year 1856 it increased to 204,747. It was recorded as 246,862 in 1860, as 313,999 in 1864, 347,615 in 1865, 380,505 in 1867, 423,998 in 1869, and 460,020 in 1872. The number of the population had kept on increasing and in 1876 it was 501,213. The rapidity of increase in the early years was undoubtedly due to the immigration consequent on the gradual settlement of the country. The attraction of the fertility of the soil, with the proximity to a ready market and the construction of the dams along the Irrawaddy led to the huge inflow of population in the district <sup>45</sup>. The balance of the immigration over the emigration during the last ten years has been recorded in the census as given below:

**TABLE-2.6**  
**IMMIGRATION AND EMIGRATION IN THE DISTRICT OF HENZADA**  
**(1867-76)**

YEAR	EMIGRANTS	IMMIGRANTS	DIFFERENCE IN FAVOUR OF THE DISTRICT
1867	13,274	20,179	6905
1868	14,572	24,324	9,755
1869	17,843	31,510	13,667
1870	18,812	25,868	7156
1871	19,043	26,215	7172
1872	22,968	30,596	7628
1873	19,948	30,969	11,021
1874	18,285	31,989	13,704
1875	19,871	31,620	11,291
1876	5,420	7718	2,498

Source: Gazetteer of Burma, Volume -II, p-578

The year 1886 further encouraged migration as the famine Commission of India reviewed the position and recommended that Indians from the congested areas in India should be encouraged to migrate to Burma for development of waste and unproductive lands. The year 1886 was also significant in more than one reason as it marked the annexation of Upper Burma by Lord Dufferin after the Third Anglo-Burmese (1885) War the Burmese king Theebaw was deported to India and it confirmed the British rule over whole of Burma. In 1886 Burma became politically and administratively a part of India. Its inevitable result was that the standardization of the Burma's administration according to the Indian model. Up to 1862, Lower Burma consisted of three Commissionerships of Pegu, Tenassarim and Arakan. In 1862 the three regions were combined with head

quarters in Rangoon. After the annexation of Upper Burma and Central Burma in 1886, the entire country was placed under the Chief Commissioner<sup>46</sup>.

The British made conscious and concerted attempts to encourage Indian emigration to Burma while pursuing the goals of expanding and consolidating the empire in this region during the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Skilled and Unskilled labours of the Indian origin were taken to Burma for the work of construction projects of roads, railways and public works. In Burma, Indians were taken to work on the rice cultivators and also to occupy positions in expanding bureaucratic and commercial establishments. Businessmen and capitalists also went to Burma along with middle class and labourers under British encouragement. Under such situation in the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the number of the Bengalis who migrated to Burma was 30 per cent in 1881 to 25 per cent in 1901. Among the Bengalis 40 per cent were from Chittagong who migrated as cultivators and labourers. Till 1886 most of the migrants were seasonal labours or came as temporary workers in Burma. After the establishment of separate linguistic or vernacular schools for the Indians in 1878 there was a growth of permanent residents of Bengalis in Burma. More after 1886 the British completed their colonial ambition in Burma and the establishment of British rule saw the influx of huge population in Burma<sup>47</sup>.

#### IV

The first phase of British administration in Burma in 1898-1899 invited the coming to more cultivators and labourers and also the middle class educated migrants for the white collared jobs. The economic activities of the British in Burma such as construction of roads, railway lines, mines, oil fields, etc demanded a huge labour force. The non enterprising Burmese people could not meet the rising demand for the labourers for the much extension of cultivation. This paved the way for the import of labourers from so close to Burma. The economic change of Burma was a stimulating factor in the process of immigration. The main lots of labourers were supplied by the Indian provinces of

Madras and Bengal. Numerous workers moved from Bengal to Burma from Chittagong, Comilla and Dacca chiefly for harvesting rice and rice milling and other jobs in Rangoon. Under the British patronage the middle class intellectuals and professionals like engineers, doctors, lawyers, teachers, clerks, etc also migrated into Burma. They filled in vacancies in bureaucracy and the expanding social services and professions. In bureaucracy and legal professions the Indian community's prior acquaintances in English language, rules, procedures and practices proved to be of an added advantage. The British could rely upon them and the local Burmese could not compete with. As a result, they soon started dominating in their host societies<sup>48</sup>.

Besides the cultivators and professionals there were also the existence of Bengalis as construction workers, scavengers, rickshaw pullers, domestic servants and others. There was also the migration of Bengali businessmen of timber and teak, rice mills, money lenders, cloth merchants, spices, etc. There were various reasons which led to the immigration of the Bengali skilled, unskilled and white collared job men to Burma<sup>49</sup>. The Report of Philip Nolan, to the Government of Bengal in 1888, placed the high wages in Burma as the reason for the migration and in comparison to the wages the prices of the food commodities for the daily consumption were much less. Philip Nolan was deputed by the Government to study the factors for the huge immigration into Burma from Bengal. In this Report he stated that the wages which were offered in Burma were higher than the wages provided in India for a labourers or a cultivator. The wages as provided in different places of Burma are given in the following table-

**TABLE-2.7**  
**WAGES OF CULTIVATOR OR LABOURER AS IN 1887**

PLACE	RATE OF WAGES
Chittagong	Between Rs. 9-12
Akyab	Rs. 15-20
Prome	Rs 15
Bassein	Rs.15
Moulmein	Rs.15
Amherst	Rs.25
Toungu	Rs.15
Mandalay	Rs.15
Rangoon	Rs.30

Source: Report on the emigration from Bengal to Burma and how to promote it by Philip Nolan

Though the wage was much higher but the cost of the daily consumable commodities was higher in Burma than in Chittagong in 1887. Philip Nolan has sighted the following prices of the commodities:-

**TABLE-2.8**  
**PRICES OF COMMODITIES AS PER PHILIP NOLAN'S REPORT**  
 (No of seers per rupee)

PLACES	RICE	MAIZE	SALT
Chittagong	17.97	-	9.50
Akyab	14.31	-	32.14
Rangoon	13.06	-	24.35
Prome	14.51	34.42	19.05
Bassein	14.67	-	23.63
Moulmein	-	-	-

## Immigration of the Bengalis from Bengal to Burma

Amherst	-	-	25.84
Toungu	15.34	-	17.89

Source: Report on emigration from Bengal to Burma and how to promote it by Philip Nolan

From the above table it is clear that though the price of the commodities was higher in Burma yet the agricultural population had preferred to shift to Burma than to stay in Chittagong. Philip Nolan does not analyze the reasons for the migration though the prices were high of the food materials. He refers to the migration of Chittagonian cultivators and labourers due to the "difference between the wages current in their own districts and the Burma rates means an appreciable in comfort". Probably the balance of high wages to the higher cost of living was not much understood by the cultivators but the attraction had remained for the higher wages which all used them to settle in a land unknown to them<sup>50</sup>.

There was also the prospect of acquiring land in Burma as he could save from his own salary for few years and could buy a land which would give him a relief from rent though moderately charged on the cultivators. The economic development of Burma was necessary after the acquisition of lower Burma which attracted labourers from Bengal. Rice cultivation was not possible without the supply of labourers from India. Rice cultivation was not possible without the supply of labourers from India. The labourers were also required for the reclamation of the wastelands which formed 82% of the total area of the country<sup>51</sup>.

The British was interested in raising the revenue in Burma and therefore, the government-encouraged migration. It was decided that a person whether married or bachelor after five years of stay in Burma was required to pay a capitation tax, bachelors was charged at the rate of Rs. 2 – 8 and the married men at the rate of Rs. 5 per head. This tax according to Nolan was a huge source of income for the Burmese Exchequer. Immigration was thus favourable as well as profitable to the government. Nolan also sighted his analysis by a factor that the British wanted to provide a relief to the congested and over populated

districts of India particularly the provinces of Bengal and therefore there was a huge inflow of population into Burma<sup>52</sup>.

The Company encouraged the population to migrate from 1838 through the Labour Act and in 1874 formed the Famine Commission to introduce a scheme of importing men in Burma from the famine hit areas as a relief to the pressure of the population. Thus in 1875 under this scheme which provided a fund of 5 Lakh of Rupees which sought to promote the emigration and by the end of 1875 in December, only 7,392 emigrants had reached Burma from India, out of which only 5,683 were from Bengal particularly from Chittagong, Comilla and Dacca<sup>53</sup>. Though the State Emigration Scheme did not continue after 1875 but the movement of the Bengalis to Burma continued thereafter and their numbers kept on increasing. In 1881, 102861 persons who were born in Bengal were found in Burma. The emigrants from Bengal were the seasonal workers to Arakan for fieldwork in the rice fields or as labourers who came back by the time of summer<sup>54</sup>. The number of immigrants into Burma in the year 1882 – 1883 from Bengal came to 72,000. In 1884 – 85 it was 83,000 out of which only 43,000 settled in Burma and the rest were seasonal workers<sup>55</sup>. From the report of W. T. Hall a table could be formed for the year 1885, 1886 and 1887:-

**TABLE – 2.9**  
**NUMBER OF MIGRANTS TO BURMA FROM BENGAL (1885-1887)**

YEAR	NO. OF MIGRANTS TO BURMA	TOTAL
1885	Male – 15,729 Female – 803 Children – 466	16,998
1886	Male – 29,576 Female – 979 Children – 429	29,576
1887	Male – 29,912 Female – 1075 Children – 569	31,556

Source:-W.T.Hall's "Report on the methods which may be adopted with a view to facilitating the migration of the cultivators from the crowded districts of Bengal to Burma. dated 3September 1888"

According to Nolan, these figures do not include the number of persons who travelled by the land route, crossing the Arakan but of those only who were the sea-passengers. There was a huge influx of Chittagonians into Burma in pursuit of agricultural professions by the land route<sup>57</sup>. The Burma Gazetteer writes that, "Burma receives every year after 1878 a huge number of immigrants of whom more than half are coolies from Upper Burma, the remainder being from Madras and Chittagong and it rarely happens that they bring their women with them; of these immigrants many return to their own homes at the end of the busy season. But at least 20,000 yearly become permanent or they stay for some years. There is also a steady increase in the proportion of males to females in the population due to the immigration of male in large numbers than female into Burma in 1826 in Moulmein"<sup>58</sup>. The number of immigrants particularly in 1873 – 74 had increased in Moulmein to 53,873 owing to the influx of Hindus from the famine stricken districts in Bengal and in 1875 – 76 the population was 57,719 souls. Moulmein was a small fishing village prior to the British occupation in 1826. But the discovery of teak-forests in the interior led to increase of the town as well as its importance<sup>59</sup>.

In 1891, 1, 12,084 persons had migrated to Burma from Bengal. After 1891, there was further development in the flow of Bengali labourers and agriculturists from Chittagong to Arakan<sup>60</sup>. After the annexation of Arakan which was an independent principality to Burma in 1784 many of the Arakanese used to escape to the neighbouring district of Chittagong. The Mugs who were the inhabitants of Arakan had often raided the South Eastern parts of Bengal which were almost an annual feature during the Mughal period. They would suddenly land in the coastal areas and carry away everything including men and women. The Mughal government in order to prevent such raids had constructed chains of forts and one such fort existed very close to the town of Chittagong<sup>61</sup>. According to O'Malley after the annexation of Arakan by the Burmese about 30 to 40,000 of Mugs had migrated into Chittagong between 1797 and 1800. The Company's Chief Governing Officer of Chittagong, Mr. Bateman encouraged the Arakan hill-men to migrate to Chittagong. Captain Cox was appointed in 1798 to look after the settlement of the Mugs as the inflow of the Arakanese in Chittagong had increased in huge numbers. The Arakanese mostly settled in Cox Bazar and Harbang and as supervised by Mr. Ker,

the Registrar of Dacca in 1798, and 10000 Arakanese were rehabilitated in Chittagong. But after the British occupation of Arakan, there was migration towards Arakan particularly in Akyab. The emigrants were mostly Bengali Muslim agriculturists and labours who moved in to the district of Arakan division for a few months to earn higher wages. The passengers from Chittagong to Akyab and from Akyab to Chittagong during the period of 1867-68 to 1874-1875 on the ships of the British India steam Navigation Company shows that large number of migrants moved into Arakan and also moved out from Arakan into Chittagong<sup>62</sup>. The statistics has been put forth by W. W. Hunter in his Statistical Account of Bengal (as given in the Table No: 2.10) indicates the population which traveled through sea-route to Arakan but there were also a huge number of agricultural populations which travelled through land route. Thus the figures show only a part of the portion of the migrants into Burma or Arakan from Chittagong. The rate of the passage by the steamer is Rs. 5 or Rs. 10per head. But during the months of the March and April there was a competition between the two lines of the steamers operating and the fares were much reduced. The British India Steam Navigation Company from Akyab to Chittagong in the year 1875 March and April carried 5,428 passengers and there was also similar rush of the labourers towards Akyab from Chittagong during the months of January, December and February which was rice harvest season in Arakan. The number of returning passengers was more than the outward passengers; it could have been that the men who saved the money out of their toils preferred to come back by steamers than by land route. Another reason might have been that the seasonal labours after a little savings preferred to return back home from Arakan. The Annual general Report of the Chittagong Division for 1878-79 mentions that the large number of male agricultural labourers migrated to Arakan to work on temporary basis. There were also families who migrated from Central and Southern Chittagong into Arakan on permanent basis. These numbered to 1,130 during 1878-1879. The reasons for migration both seasonally and permanently by the agricultural labourers was to escape paying land rents. It was when a ryot was asked for rent he fled from his land to Arakan temporarily. The seasonal migration particularly in the harvest season was made by the agricultural labourers from Chittagong, Dacca, Noakhali and Comilla. The report also puts that the industrious and

hardworking Bengali workers were pushing the Mugs out of their own country. The prospect of earning high wages for few months lured them towards Arakan and Burma<sup>63</sup>.

**TABLE-2.10**  
**MOVEMENT OF POPULATION BETWEEN AKYAB AND CHITTAGONG BY**  
**SEA ROUTE (1867-1875)**

YEARS	PASSENGERS TO AKYAB FROM CHITTAGONG	PASSENGERS FROM AKYAB TO CHITTAGONG
1867-68	2,918	5,298
1872-73	7,498	9,845
1873-74	7,564	8,680
1874-75	8,914	11,109

Source: W.W.Hunter, A Statistical Account of Bengal, Volume-VI, P-144

The District Magistrate of Chittagong has out forth that annually 10,000 labourers moved into Akyab by sea-route and Commission of Akyab; Col. Sladen mentioned that more than 1, 00,000 migrants moved to Arakan by sea as well as land. They were paid Rs. 12 per month as wages and many of the agricultural labourers returned home even less than Rs. 20. Col. Sladen gives a calculation that these labourers which numbered to 1,00,000 came back home with the savings of Rs. 50 lakhs of Rupees but if each of them saved Rs. 20 on an average rate as he mentioned earlier than the savings would have been 20 lakhs of rupees. However, the migrant labourers from Chittagong moved into Arakan in November – December for the harvesting crops and returned in January and February. This fact is revealed from a letter written by the Collector of Chittagong in August 1885 to Hunter. The letter further mentions of a scheme called 'Mount Joy Scheme' introduced

in Arakan to provide permanent lease of land at a low rate of rent to the agriculturists. This scheme was started to attract the Chittagong labourers to migrate to Arakan<sup>64</sup>.

**TABLE-2.11**  
**RACIAL COMPOSITION OF INDIANS IN ARAKAN IN 1931**

RACES	TOTAL POPULATION		
	MALES	FEMALES	TOTAL
CHITTAGONGIAN	104,769	81,558	186,327
BENGALIS	10,998	4,588	15,586
HINDU	2,955	632	3,587
ORİYAS	3,809	10	3,819

Source: James Baxter on Indian Immigration, 1941, Government of Burma, department of Commerce, p-49

The labourers from Chittagong, Noakhali and Comilla though mainly served as agriculturists but they also worked in the rice-mills, labourers in the port of Akyab, traders, shoe-makers, cart drivers and others. There was a huge migration from Chittagong to Akyab. The year 1891 recorded that 54,734 persons from Chittagong migrated to Akyab while only 6,421 were from the rest of India. There were 61,155 persons in Akyab who were emigrants of British India<sup>65</sup>. About 97 per cent of the Indian population in Arakan in 1931 was concentrated in Akyab. The total population in Arakan was 1,008, 538 and there were 217,801 Indians<sup>66</sup>. The racial composition in Akyab district in 1931 is provided by the James Baxter's Report on Indian Immigration, 1941 as given in Table No: 2.11.

**TABLE-2.12**  
**POPULATION SPEAKING INDIAN LANGUAGES IN BURMA IN 1901**

LANGUAGE S	NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS
ENGLISH	18,500
HINDUSTHAN	95,122
BENGALI	204,973
HINDI	28,689
PUNJABI	15,803
TAMIL	99,576
TELEGU	96,601

Source: The Imperial Gazetteer, Volume-IX, P-139

The story of migration from Bengal to Burma reached to a considerable height by 1901 and it is visible in the figures of the Census of 1901 that 1, 57,034 persons had moved into Burma from Bengal. But many of these migrants were seasonal labours. Most of these migrants were from Comilla, Dacca and Chittagong<sup>67</sup>. In the study of population and area made the Gazetteer, it is stated that in 1891 – 1901 the area in square miles in Burma was 236,738 and the population was 7,722,053 while in 1901 was 10,490,624 which was + 35. 8% of increase which was largely owing to the immigration into Burma<sup>68</sup>. The Census of 1901 shows that among the Indian languages spoken in Burma Bengali language was spoken in a large amount. The table (2.12) clearly indicates that the Bengalis were present as the highest number of the Indian immigrants present in Burma.

The Census of India, 1911 records that 1, 34, 985 persons had migrated from Bengal into Burma. Among these huge immigrants the population mainly consisted of the seasonal labourers. The Bengalis from Chittagong numbered to 73,968 and out of this number 64,000 had immigrated to Akyab<sup>69</sup>. However, the Census of India, 1911, Volume –II,

provides the details of the places the Bengalis of Chittagong had immigrated to Burma. Some of the selected towns where they have settled in 1911 are given below:-

**TABLE-2.13**  
**DISTRIBUTION OF THE CHITTAGONIANS IN BURMA, 1911**

PLACES IN BURMA	NUMBER OF POPULATION
AKYAB	30,521
RANGOON	14,721
HANTHAWADDY	3,760
PEGU	891
BASSEIN	1,927
MYAUNGMYA	1,173
MA-UBIN	1,130
PYAPON	1,510
AMHERST	2,794
MANDALAY	425

Source: Census of India, 1911, Volume -IX, Burma, Part-II, P-123

The Census of 1921 states that 1, 46,087 persons had migrated from Bengal to Burma out of which 26,932 had been to Rangoon and 3584 to Mandalay. The Burma Census mentions the names of places where the people from Bengal had settled in the year 1921<sup>70</sup>. The influx was largely from the Chittagong areas mostly Muslims as paddy field workers either temporary or permanent particularly in the district of Akyab. There was rapid commercialization of rice cultivation in Akyab which led to the development of a well-flourishing port of Burma. This attracted a large number of Bengali Muslims into the area. Though there were Hindu migrants also from other parts of India yet the Muslims came from Noakhali, Dacca and Chittagong as cultivators, labourers and skilled workers were predominant<sup>71</sup>. The Collector of the district of Noakhali has mentioned in

his Annual Report for 1874-75, that a considerable number of people from Sandwip, Hatia and Amirgaon emigrate to Arakan, Rangoon and other parts of British Burma and to Calcutta, to serve as boatmen and lascars<sup>72</sup>. The Census of India, Burma Volume 1921 has given the number of emigrants from Calcutta, Chittagong, Dacca and Noakhali migrated as a whole, as given below:-

**TABLE-2.14**  
**DISTRIBUTION OF BENGALI POPULATION IN BURMA IN 1921**

BORN IN	ENUMERATED IN BURMA
CALCUTTA	11,254
CHITTAGONG	88,345
DACCA	2,720
NOAKHALI	3,977
BENGAL PROVINCE	1,46,058

SOURCE: Census of India, 1921, Volume-X, Burma, Part-II, p-150

The census of 1921 also cited the various places of Burma where the Bengali speaking persons exactly migrated to and it also revealed the importance of the town in Burma in respect of migration. The table below gives the clear outline of the Bengali settlement throughout the various districts of Burma:-

**TABLE-2.15**  
**IMMIGRATION FROM BENGAL TO THE VARIOUS DISTRICTS OF BURMA**  
**(1921)**

BORN IN	IMMIGRATED IN							
	AKYAB	RANGOON	INSEIN	HANTHAWADDY	AMHERST	MANDALAY	BASSEIN	PEGU
BENGAL PROVINCE	42,903	26,932	4,127	7,866	4,461	5,122	5,253	6,167
CALCUTTA	227	3,583	698	356	294	449	466	562
CHITTAGONG	39,816	16,665	765	5,080	3,316	1,141	2,679	2,040
DACCA	113	1,138	76	3	106	154	138	42
NOAKHALI	381	1,910	—	50	296	8	195	—

Source: Census of India, 1921, Volume—X, Burma, Part—II, P-150

Thus by 1921, the Census provides that the total persons who migrated in Burma were 1, 46,058. In the Census of 1931, there was further growth of Bengali speaking persons in Burma which numbered to 2, 42,415 males and 1, 34,579 females which comes to the total of 3, 76,994<sup>73</sup>. The migration mostly remained on the temporary basis because there were mainly seasonal labours for the purpose of agriculture and reclamation of waste lands. There was also migration of persons with non-agricultural professions. The agricultural professionals or farmers mostly settled in Akyab, Prome, Bessein, Pegu, Myaungmya, Pyapan, etc. places where agricultural lands were available<sup>74</sup>.

The Census of 1931 stated that total enumerated on the high seas Bengal contributed 6,806 or 54 percent. Amongst those whose returns were sent to Calcutta the percentage of persons born in Bengal were 61 and it was even higher amongst the schedules received in Rangoon where it amounted to 67 percent. Ninety percent of the persons enumerated from Bengal were Muslims and although the district of birth was not separately compiled

it is safe to assume that they came principally from Chittagong and other parts of east Bengal. In the migration table it shows that immigrants to Bengal from Burma in 1931 were 3,791 while emigration to Burma from Bengal was 1, 58,098 and 1, 46,087 in 1921. The increase in number of migrants was 11,997 <sup>75</sup>. The Census of 1931 provides the classification of the Indian races that went to Burma. The following table shows the main bulk of the Indian population in Burma and the distribution of the speakers of Indian languages in 1931:-

TABLE -2.16

## SPEAKERS IN DIFFERENT INDIAN LANGUAGES IN 1931 IN BURMA

LANGUAGES SPOKEN	NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS
BENGALI	376,994
HINDUSTHANI	192,466
TAMIL	184,104
TELEGU	160,640
ORIYA	60,682
PAHARI	41,340
GUJRATI	17,706
ASSAMESE	1,203
MARATHI	2,003
OTHERS	1,257

Source: Census of India, 1931, Volume-XI, Part-II, p-225-231

Though Chittagong was a part of Bengal and the people of Chittagong was Bengali by race, language and culture but since their huge number of influx they have been classified separately.

Along with the migration of labourers, farmers and other professionals, there was also an influx of Bengalis who came for administrative posts in Burma. The British administration wanted the Bengali English educated men to take the posts in Burma because they were available in abundant as well as they were cheaper to employ than the

British officials. Moreover, due to the spread of English education the newly educated Bengali 'babus' wanted jobs in the administrative posts which was not easily acquired in India. Thus the intellectuals flowed in huge number to fill up the posts in Burma, a virgin land with resources which could be utilized in full extent. The British also found it better to employ the Bengalis instead of the Burmese who had to be trained for such posts and the Business could also not compete with the Indians or the Bengalis who were educated in the British educational system<sup>76</sup>.

## V

Burma was included in the Census of India till 1931 but after the separation of Burma in 1937; in 1941 an independent census of Burma was held. The Census or the other data and records were lost in the debacle of the British retreat from the Japanese in 1942. The details of the study of the population were completely lost. By 1931 the exogenous migration which was encouraged by both the British Government had added more than 1 million to the population numbers in Burma<sup>77</sup>. The Census of Burma 1941 does not give the details of the races migrating in Burma but it gives the total population as a whole setting in various districts of Burma. The following table gives the population structure in 1941 in some of the places of Burma.

TABLE-2.17

## POPULATION GROWTH IN THE DISTRICTS OF BURMA, 1931-1941

PLACES IN BURMA	TOTAL POPULATION 1931	PERCENTAGE OF CHANGE IN 1931	TOTAL POPULATION 1941	PERCENTAGE OF CHANGE IN 1941
MANDALAY	371,635	0.41	408,926	0.95
KATHA AND RUBY MINES	178,244	0.78	204,168	1.35
SAGAING	355,965	0.27	387,270	1.42
LOWER CHINWIN	372,166	0.81	414,844	1.08

## Immigration of the Bengalis from Bengal to Burma

MYINGYAN AND PAGAN	555,625	0.95	632,094	1.28
PAKOKKU	499,181	0.69	559,671	1.14
MAGWE	416,505	0.12	466,899	0.84
KYAUKSE	151,320	0.58	152,506	1.14
MEIKTIL AND PYINMANA	700,819	1.33	807,214	1.41
THAYETMYO	274,177	0.70	297,434	0.81
WUNTHO STATE	47,688	0.93	111,706	1.34

Source: Judith L. Richell, *Disease and Demography in colonial Burma*, Singapore, 2006, p-37

In 1937, after a considerable debate Burma was separated from India following the Government of Burma Act 1935 and Burma started developing its own institutions and political associations. However, the influx of the Bengali migrants into Burma continued but in a limited scale. There was a slight decline in immigration after the 1930s as a result of the economic depression worldwide and also for the Burmese voice for the nationalization of Burma<sup>78</sup>. The increase in population in the above table indicates that with the administrative separation of Burma from India there was a slight decline of immigration till 1942. It is true that the Indian immigration had been effected in the period of 1930s and 1940s. The Indian immigration was regulated by the government of Burma Act, 1935 under the Section 38. Under this Act no privileges were provided to the Indians and their rights were not protected by the Government of Burma Order, 1937.

The new Constitution of Burma under its Section 36 stated that Indian interests could be protected and no bill was introduced in the legislature affecting the immigration into Burma. In the Section 44, the Government stated that, "British subjects domiciled in U. K. and in India would be exempted from any restrictions imposed by reasons by birth, race, descent, language, domicile or residence, and from any disability, liability, restriction or condition in regard to travel, residence, the acquisition, holding or disposition of property, the holding of public office or carrying on of any occupation, trade, business, or profession"<sup>79</sup>. The immigration was also effected by Indo-Burma Draft

Agreement of 22 July 1941 which was based on the principles of Burma determining her own population and Indians who had thoroughly identified themselves with the interest of Burma will enjoy the equal rights like any other permanent member of the country. It thus classified the Indians into two categories. The first category included those who could reside in Burma and the second category was those who could stay in the country only for a certain period. But the clause of determining the composition of her population gave the right to the Government of Burma to restrict the incoming into the state. It also stated that marriage with the Burmese woman, unless specifically permitted, would be grounds for cancellation of permit<sup>80</sup>. Thus the migration of the Bengalis into Burma after 1941 was discretion of the Burmese Government. A Joint Representation was made in 28 July 1941 by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, the Committee of the All Parties Meeting at Madras, and the Imperial Indian Citizenship Association who protested against the prohibition of Indian labourers into Burma in 1941. In 1945 the Burmese Government also laid rules which stated that immigration from India was too decided by the Immigration Board. With the outbreak of the Second World War and the Japanese occupation of Burma the migration of Bengali in Burma had declined and in fact, it was reversed towards India<sup>81</sup>.

But there had been a huge migration of the Bengalis into Burma during the early years of the British rule for which both push and pull factors had worked together. The growth of population, famine, decline of job opportunities pushed the Bengali immigrants towards a new area. There were opportunities, to earn a larger income, new land for agriculture; availability of forest and mineral resources attracted the Bengalis to march towards Burma both from eastern and western part of the province. The Arakanese Maghs often migrated into Chittagong before 1824 when the English captured Arakan. Now the migration was in opposite direction, i.e. to Burma. The attraction of the Bengalis towards Burma also depicted in many literatures both Bengali and English. Rajkumar the leading character of the fiction of Amitava Ghosh's *The Glass Palace* also refers "Burma is a golden land"<sup>82</sup>. The Bengalis thus migrated to Burma to try their fortune in various professions.

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