

Nature and Pattern of Migration in Medieval Bihar: An Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The process of migration had influenced the socio-economic and cultural life of the origin and destination over different periods of time. The recognition and fame of the state of Bihar had a significant linkage with that of migration and their settlements in the region since ancient times. The beginning of the migration process and glory associated with the region of Bihar can be traced back in the later Vedic period when Aryans migrated towards eastern India and Bihar region as well. In ancient Bihar, permanent out-migration was rare and only for commercial purposes temporary out-migration can be seen. In-migration was much more prominent and outsiders get attracted towards region because of its geographical location, fertile soil, historical and methodological importance. But this trend of migration gradually changed in medieval period because of the shifting of center of power towards northern India. Outsiders were still attracted towards the region but we see some distressed and forced out-migration too started from Bihar in medieval period which changed the demographic and socio-economic status of Bihar to a large extent. This paper attempts to examine the changing pattern and nature of migration of people in medieval Bihar.

1. Introduction

With the change in socio-political structure of society in Bihar, the stream of relocation expanded in the area during medieval period. The majority of these mass movements were associated with contention over the area which made this milieu a dynamic site of battles among contending outside rulers for power and authority. The accomplishment of military battles in Bihar depended in large part in securing access to grains and other supplies from the area. Notwithstanding, a few people entered Bihar area as evacuees from middle Asia escaping Mongol attacks. With the establishment and consolidation of Turks magnificent power in northern India, the methods for transport and communication enhanced and India's streets were more permanently integrated which can be useful in commercial purposes as well as territory expansion. With Delhi as the center of political authority, spread its impact towards east too and influenced the society not only politically but socially too. So, the migrations in medieval period in Bihar region was at a node of complex military, business and religious systems.

2. Early Muslim Rule and Migration

The medieval history of Magadh (Bihar) was the darkest age as the center of power moved towards north India and from that time the position of Magadha deteriorated to a large extent. It is noticeable in this context that Magadha had a glorious past because of the extraordinary center of learning in Nalanda and Vikramashila that pulled in a number of students, scholars and travelers from abroad and inside. Earlier Ashoka conversion to Buddhism made the land of Bihar a great center for Buddhist culture, Buddhist literature and philosophy. All these circumstances attracted outsiders to settle in Magadh. So, we can say that in-migration was dominant phenomenon at that time but after Ashoka there was no powerful ruler who could protect the empire of incredible Magadh (Bihar). With the passage of time Magadha came to be assaulted by Islamic

intruders from middle east. The region was assaulted by Muhammad Ghori a few times and wrecked a great deal of Buddhist cloisters and killed numerous innocent people for the sake of religion. While Muhammad Bin Bakhtiyar Khalji demolished Nalanda and Vikramshila Vihara later and established the first Muslim rule in Bihar in 1195. All these brought about some out-movement of individuals from Magadha and confined in-relocation for learning and exchanging purposes. In-migration was limited to coming of Muslim populace and their settlements and Hindus started migrating outside. This was the beginning of out-migration from Bihar, however it was limited and cannot be seen frequently.

The in-migration of Muslim population more likely appears to have been expanded in Bihar just as India after the Mongol victory of central Asia in 1220 A.D. The migrants normally carried their home culture with them unblemished and unaltered which influenced the socio-political strata of Bihar region. Notwithstanding, some Shaikh played a key role in the early Islamic history of Bihar, serving as administrators for the Delhi sultanate and later Mughal rulers. Some of these Sheikhs were from modern Pakistan or north western India and these were the Muslims converted by Sufi saints of middle east and central Asia. Early in the medieval period some Shaikh families settled in Bihar Sharif, the center of early Muslim rule in the locale and were granted jagirs to the settlers. These Sheikhs started converting local people into Islam and with the passage of time the population of Muslim community increased in the region. The area now became as one of the centers of growing Muslim population and culture which, in turn, attracted more and more Muslims to migrate and settle in Bihar.

3. Cultural Assimilation

Bihar has dependably been tolerant towards culture gatherings, and accordingly the Muslim migrants were permitted to sort out their own little culture gatherings. Bihar

had a rich culture and heritage and it is homeland to countless native art forms which was greatly influenced by the settlements of outsiders having different religion, languages and culture. The Muslims exchanged with one another and with the Hindus, and they most likely brought into the area, enterprises that were not known, exceptionally the overwhelming armament and other heavy industries. In the production of woolen material additionally the Muslims had a great deal to contribute. The accessibility of Chinese silk, for example, Qasab, Diba, Shir and Khuz is portrayed in craft by Islam. Besides these Sufi saints started stimulating a process of cultural and linguistic fusion who migrated from different parts to Bihar region where they preached to people. When they came to Bihar, they began mixing or assimilating the local idiom in their use of Hindi both writing and speech. So, the movement and settlement of Sufi in the region had influenced the socio-cultural development of this region and Bihar, as one of the spots for Sufi culture had attracted a large number of Muslims as well as other religions to settle here for its mystic and spiritual interpretations.

It was because of migration; the city of Patna was holding a huge Muslim population in its periphery in medieval period. The teachings of Sufis and their movement in Bihar equally have an incredible effect. Arrival of Hazrat Momin Rif and Imam Taj Faqih in Bihar region and their contention with the nearby ruler are well known today itself. Bihar remained a popular center for the Sufis where a liberal and tolerant perspectives were advanced by them. They adopted Indian culture and practices with the passage of time which led to the cultural assimilation of two different religions in Bihar. During the period of Sher Shah, Shaikh Budh was a prominent Sufi in Bihar and his teachings had earned a wide reaction and pulled in a large number of adherents in Bihar region.

4. Migration in Sur Dynasty and Mughals

Medieval Bihar saw a golden period during the reign of Sher shah Suri, who belonged to Sasaram, a city of Bihar. Sher shah himself was a child of an afghan migrant and amid his reign a substantial number of Afghans settled in Bihar. Sher shah built the new city of Patna in medieval period and fortified it, on the forgotten site of Ashoka's capital. The economic reforms and reorganizations carried out by Suri, such as the introduction of the rupee and custom duties, are still used in the republic of India. The efforts made by him for the welfare of mankind pushed up the development of state and it became one of the better places to live. The prosperity gained during his reign stopped the process of out-migration to a large extent and people started to migrate towards the state again. The establishment and emergence of Afghan kingdom and migration in Bihar was the result of a long process of their settlement and the fulfilment of ambition which their ever-growing numbers, position and the existing political settings has provoked. It is quite noticeable that a large number of Afghans declined to serve the Mughals and migrated the kingdom of Sher shah in Bihar region. These migrants were granted jagirs in Hajipur and Darbhanga regions of north Bihar where they settled down with their families and relatives. In later Mughal period too Shah Jehan and Aurangzeb encouraged Afghan settlements in the Gangetic area for specific purposes. These Afghan migrants assumed an

apparent job in controlling the refractory elements and brought the scattered situation in control which gave prosperity to the people and regular payment of the revenues to the royal treasury. Earlier Lodi sultans had also stimulated and encouraged Afghan migration to India and that the tribesmen of Afghanistan began to conceive of migration to India as a safety valve for their excess population and a land opportunity for Afghans.

During the period of Akbar, after realizing the rich mineral source in Chhotanagpur he captured this region along with Hajipur in 1574. Akbar appointed Munim Khan as the governor of Bihar and from that time Patna again became the capital city. With the appointment of Aurangzeb's grandson Azim-uz-Shah, as the representative in 1697, Patna entered on a period of prosperity and splendor. For a period, the city "Patna" was called "Azimabad" after him and a number of the Delhi nobles migrated and settled in Patna.

5. Forced out-migration

There are some confirmations of forced out-migration from Bihar region in Medieval period. This constrained out relocation was as "slave trade". After the establishment of Muslim rule, the slaves from this region were used by Muslim nobles in the subcontinent and others were exported to fulfil the demands in worldwide markets. The revenue system of the Delhi sultanate produced a considerable proportion of the Indian slave population as these rulers and their subordinates *Iqtadars* in Subas or *Shiqdars* at local ordered their armies to about large numbers of locals as a means extracting revenue. Besides these a large number of the slaves were military slaves and not workers or domestics. To finance their warfare and expand their empire, a much more prominent number of individuals were enslaved for this purpose. In this context, tradition of keeping up a blended armed force containing both Indian officers and Turk's slave troopers from central Asia, were upset by the ascent of the Mongol realm decreasing the inflow of mamluks. For this reason, the local rulers started recruiting both military and local slaves to fulfil their local needs. It is evident that the khajji's sold thousands of captured Mongol soldiers within India, Khurasan, China, Persia and Turkistan were sources of male and female slaves sold to Tughlaq India.

The slaves were an imperative segment of the dynamic slave markets of medieval Bihar. Extreme interest for talented slaves, and India's bigger and further developed textile industry, agricultural production and tradition of architecture demonstrated to its neighbors that skilled labor was abundant in the sub-continent leading to enslavement and export of large numbers of skilled labor as slaves, following their successful invasions. All this phenomenon increased the flow of migration in Bihar.

6. Conversions and Distressed Migration

Hindus have encountered religious indictment in the form of forceful conversions, slaughters, decimation of temples, as well as the destruction of educational institutes. The demolition of temples and educational organizations, the killings of scholarly priests provoked a wide spread decrease in Hindu education. Such tyrannical policies of Muslim rule left a trail of bitterness in the regions which passed under their domination.

People of Bihar started migrating to different corners of the country like in Orissa, Assam and parts of south India as Muslims rulers unleashed a reign of terror the kind of which Bihar had never experienced before in its history. All these circumstances led to the mass out-migration of people of Bihar to different corners of country. It is evident that some of the intellectuals from Mithila region migrated to various regional Hindu kingdoms of north and south and got patronage from the kings of the respective kingdoms. It was quite natural that a large number of ambitious and adventurous people started to emigrate for better prospects. Several Mithila panditas emigrated to Nepal at the invitation of some kings of Nepal. For example, *MahanathaBhatta* was invited by *JayasthitiMalla* of Nepal along with several other Mithila and Bengali scholars of *Dharmashastra* to prepare a manual of law for the administration of justice in that country.

7. Local Economic Conditions and Natural Calamities

Apart from these the local economic conditions of Bihar had failed to satisfy the ambition of educated people in medieval period which led to a mass migration in medieval period. Just like other regions in India in later medieval period, the lack of employment or means of livelihood for Hindu scholars in the region inspired the exodus of the prominent Mithila scholars. Due to the economic ruin caused during medieval period, the social process of self-employment or free professional practices as the paying capacity of the *Yajmanas* or ecclesiastic clients diminished. Specially the lower classes and poor Brahmanas who depended only on their *Yajmanashad* to live in economic constraints. The Hindu zamindars, were facing acute economic distress and in this crisis, they could not patronize the rituals and academic activities of scholars or panditas who had to look elsewhere for support. As a result, they migrated outside of the Bihar region for better opportunities. To add to the miseries of the people came frequent floods, famines and epidemics. Floods in Kosi, Kamla and the famine of varying severity in 1555, 1573, 1630 etc. caused a large number of deaths. So, the poverty and natural calamities made the situation worst and the empire has

nothing to do with this, which in turn motivated people to migrate outside.

Besides these situations related to migration there are situation of voluntary migration with different implications for the relationship between migrant and locals. In one situation, peasants and farmers may voluntary migrate to irrigated regions, buy land for the locals and establish their camps. Since the migrant farmers will have bought the land legally from the locals, the latter do not feel alienated from their land, although they may feel jealous of the success of the migrants who have capital and the skills of organization. In another situation of agricultural colonization, the peasant farmers migrate voluntarily to areas reserved for the tribes and establish their camps and villages. Unlike the first situation, here the migrants are not legally allowed to buy or lease-inland from the tribes. Still they do it through various means resulting in land alienation and other forms of deprivation.

8. Conclusion

The study has revealed that during medieval period a considerable number of Muslims migrated and settled down in various parts of Bihar but the process of in-migration gradually decreased as the center of power shifted towards north India. The prosperity gained by ancient Bihar gradually deteriorated in medieval period which started the process of out-migration to different parts of country. The out-migration was sometimes permanent in nature and sometimes temporary. However, out-migration was limited in nature as compared to colonial period. The process of in-migration in medieval period was at the juncture of complex military, business and religious systems. A large number of Muslims settled in Bihar during warfare for expansion of empire and political upheaval or securing access to grains and other supplies from the region. Out-migration was limited and can be seen in the form of slave trade during the period. Muslim invasion and operation also motivated a large number of Hindus to migrate outside their region for the first time. In addition to these, poor economic conditions, lack of employment and natural calamities also encouraged people for out-migration in medieval period.

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