



**Research Article**

**REHABILITATION AS NATION BUILDING: INTEGRATION OF TAMIL REPATRIATES INTO INDIAN ECONOMY, c.1940s-80s**

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**ABSTRACT**

This paper engages with the problem of the rehabilitation of the repatriates of Sri Lanka in India and the efforts of the Madras Government to settle them. It explores the similarities, continuities, differences and limitations of these rehabilitation projects in relation to other rehabilitation projects of the time in India, and looks at the way repatriates were sought to be absorbed within the Indian economy and society. The paper reveals the care and protection of Indian state towards refugees, repatriates and unwanted people who were coming from other countries and the way they entered into a regular life through the resettlement programmes.

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**INTRODUCTION**

The introduction of the plantation economy in Sri Lanka generated large scale labour migration from South India to Sri Lanka during the nineteenth century. A settled labour population become inevitable for the expansion of the plantation industry and the colonial administration in Sri Lanka took various measures to ensure a steady inflow of labour. Of the settled Indian community in the island, numbering 7 lakhs in the 1930s, the majority were plantation labours and only a minority was engaged in semi-skilled works at ports or municipal council, domestic works and business. The estate Tamils were spread over all 9 provinces of the island and were mainly located in the districts of Nuvara Eliya, Kandy, Matale, Badulla, Ratnapura, Kegalle, Gulle and Mattale. The expansion of voting rights in Sri Lanka in the 1930s enabled the plantation Tamils to ensure their political participation but it created apprehensions among the Sinhalese politicians because they feared that this would affect the political interests of Sinhalese. The permanent interests of plantation Tamils on the country were questioned, they were said to see India as their real home, and visiting Tamilnadu periodically. The new citizenship acts of independent Sri Lanka in 1948 turned the Indian community – whose number had now risen to 8 lakhs – into non-nationals. Subsequent political changes in Sri Lanka worked to turn them into a category classified as ‘stateless’, and Sri Lankan Government pressed for their repatriation to India.

The Indo-Sri Lankan accord of 1964 signed by Sirimavo Bandaranayake and Lal Bahadur Shastri, the then Prime Ministers of Sri Lanka and India, defined the political status of 10 lakhs stateless estate Tamils as Indian nationals and Sri Lankan nationals and also cleared the way for the repatriation of 3,42,976 estate Tamils to India between 1964 and 1987<sup>1</sup>.

**Treating Rehabilitation as a National Problem**

The rehabilitation of displaced people in India had certain moral and ethical aspects. This was visible in the policy towards people who were rehabilitated in post partition India. The State treated them as new comers, destitute, rootless or shelter seeking people who needed assistance. The idea of care was explicitly stated in the Report of the Ministry of Rehabilitation in 1958.<sup>2</sup>It emphasized that ‘it was no longer possible to place the entire burden on refugees alone. The state must step in to create the field in which the displaced person can develop his own efforts’. Here, there were two sides to state care, what RanabirSamadar has described as ‘exercising power in order to take care and to limit care’.<sup>3</sup> The rehabilitation of Tamil repatriate also reflects some of these concerns.

The rehabilitation of Tamil repatriates received much attention in India. The Government of India (GOI) identified it as a ‘national problem’ immediately after the repatriation

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<sup>1</sup> These repatriates were resettled in South Indian states in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Andaman Nicobar islands.

<sup>2</sup> Report of the Ministry of Rehabilitation (here after ARMR), Government of India (GOI), New Delhi, 1958, p.3.

<sup>3</sup> RanabirSamadar, “Power and care: Building the new Indian state”, in RanabirSamadar (ed.) Refugees and the State: Practices of asylum and care in India, 1947-2000, ed. Ranabir Samadar ( New Delhi, Sage Publications, 2003) p.23.

agreement of 1964. Worried that the repatriates would prefer Tamil Nadu for resettlement because of familiarity with language, customs and habits, the Madras Government urged the GOI to introduce projects to rehabilitate repatriates in various states. It pointed out that it was unable to undertake the rehabilitation of the entire repatriate population as it had limited lands, a high density of population and a substantial landless population. In addition it was also dealing with the repatriates from Burma in the state.<sup>4</sup>

In 1967, a conference of Chief Ministers was held in Madras under the chairmanship of JayasuthalHaithi, the then Minister of Labour, Employment and Rehabilitation (MLER). In this meeting, MLER decided to rehabilitate repatriates in different South Indian states and in the Andaman Nicobar Islands.<sup>5</sup> This approach was adopted on the grounds that since the returnees were of South Indian origin, the region would provide psychological and cultural attachment to the repatriates in their initial stages. The other South Indian states supported this idea and revealed the number of the families that they would be able to rehabilitate in their states. Andrapredesh agreed to rehabilitate 800 families and Karnataka was for 2000 families and 1275 by Kerala. This was planned to attain for fifteen years.<sup>6</sup> The South Indian states got involved since the problem was identified as a national one and also because of the grant of funds by the GOI for resettlement. But MLER identified that the participation of other South Indian States were not encouraging, and the question of resettlement was a problem. Thus, the rehabilitation of repatriates became mainly the problem of Tamil Nadu Government. The GOI gave the required fund as loans and grants to reduce the initial strain on participating governments.

The Government of Madras was already engaged in the rehabilitation of the refugees from East Pakistan and the repatriates from Burma.<sup>7</sup> In 1964, a new refugee influx started from East Pakistan due to ethnic violence against the minority communities. The GOI categorised these refugees as 'new migrants' arguing that the nation had finished with the resettlement of 41 lakhs persons in 1959. West Bengal that had already rehabilitated 29 lakhs refugees said that the state had reached a saturation point. The Madras state then opened transit camps for East Pakistan Refugees and accommodated two batches of above 262 families in Salem and Coimbatore.<sup>8</sup> But the state closed these camps after five months of refugee desertion to other places due to language issues and also of the denial of agricultural land for rehabilitation.

The repatriates from Burma began to arrive in 1942, during the war.<sup>9</sup> There was another influx in 1947 due to the Citizenship Act and the land reform policy of Government of Burma. Later in the 1950s, Indians were expelled from various governmental departments due to the nationalisation of public services in Burma. A final phase was in 1963 when Burma extended its nationalisation policy to trade and petty business also. This was implemented by refusing re-entry permits and visas and

the non renewal of different trade licenses.<sup>10</sup> 1, 35,636 persons arrived from Burma in between 1963 and 1966. Farmers, petty traders, agricultural labourers, unskilled workers and business men were among them.<sup>11</sup> Of them, the Government of Madras accommodated 90,000 repatriates in 1966. The repatriation of estate Tamils of Sri Lanka took place in this background. The resettlement of 'estate Tamils' in India was an organised state project which took place for a period of 23 years.

There were some common features in the packages worked for these three groups. The GOI issued rehabilitation assistance through different legal documents. For the East Pakistan Refugees, the state offered relief assistance only those who had relief eligibility certificates from the Ministry of Rehabilitation. In the camps, the authorities questioned the family members separately and created a document called migrant family card which assured relief facilities to them.<sup>12</sup> The Indian embassy in Burma distributed identity cards to the returnees. The Madras State also assisted those who possessed the travel documents, identity cards or letters from the Burmese Indian Congress.<sup>13</sup> Later, in 1967 the Ministry of Rehabilitation introduced family cards for the Burmese repatriates in India.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, the GOI distributed family identity cards to the repatriates of Sri Lanka before the major repatriation. The card worked as a medium between state and the returnees in the country.

The GOI introduced various rehabilitation schemes under different circumstances. In 1965, the Ministry of Rehabilitation felt that it had taken on new responsibilities in concerning itself with the resettlement of the displaced people of Burma, Sri Lanka and Mozambique.<sup>15</sup> It completed the resettlement of partitioned refugees from West Pakistan in 1954 and was continuing the resettlement of refugees from East Pakistan. The rehabilitation of the West Pakistan refugee was a progressive one and it was finished earlier because the Ministry of rehabilitation was able to settle them on agricultural land. Ministry of Rehabilitation allotted agricultural lands to the post-partition refugees as it believed that the people were coming from an agricultural background. In different states, the GOI allotted 29, 07, 018 acres of evacuee agricultural lands/cultural lands for 5.68 lakhs West Pakistan refugees.<sup>16</sup>

The refugee arrival from East Pakistan in contrast was a continuous process from 1947. The potential land was more limited in eastern region especially in West Bengal and neighbouring states. So the paucity of land made the issue of resettlement a difficult one, and slowed the dispersal of people from the relief camps. The Ministry of Rehabilitation was able to settle 2.31 lakhs East Pakistan refugee families in 1956 through the land reclamation programme in different states.<sup>17</sup> However a fresh influx of refugees from East Pakistan in 1964, adding to the inflow from Burma, Sri Lanka and Mozambique created new problems. There was a shift in the rehabilitation

<sup>10</sup> GO 3117, 7.10.1970, Revenue Department, Government of Madras (here after Madras, Revenue), TNSA.

<sup>11</sup> GO 40, 5.1.1966, Madras, Home, TNSA.

<sup>12</sup> GO 3082, 29.9.1964, Madras, Home, TNSA.

<sup>13</sup> GO 1227, 13.4.1967, Madras, Home, TNSA.

<sup>14</sup> GO 1127, 13.4.1967, Madras, Home, TNSA.

<sup>15</sup> RMLER, GOI, New Delhi, 1965-66, p.2. There were 2,500 Indian origins that come from the Portuguese territory of Mozambique in 1964 and were resettled in Gujarat.

<sup>16</sup> RMLER, GOI, New Delhi, 1954-55, p.50.

<sup>17</sup> RMLER, GOI, New Delhi, 1956-57, p.49.

<sup>4</sup>GO 3486, 12.10.1966, Home Department, Government of Madras (here after Madras, Home), Tamil Nadu State Archives (here after TNSA).

<sup>5</sup>GO1127, 13.4.1967, Madras, Home, TNSA.

<sup>6</sup>GO 5486, 12.10.1966, Madras, Home, TNSA.

<sup>7</sup>Report of the Ministry of Labour and Employment and Rehabilitation (here after RMLER), GOI, New Delhi, 1965-1966, p.1. GOI

<sup>8</sup>Go 2754, 31.8.1964, Madras, Home, TNSA.

<sup>9</sup>http://www.wikiwand.com/en/Burmese\_Indians.

practices of the Ministry of Rehabilitation. It began to focus on labour in industries and self assisted opportunities even as it continued with schemes for land reclamation throughout the country.

To introduce new schemes in labour and employment, the Ministry of Rehabilitation incorporated into the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Rehabilitation in 1966.<sup>18</sup> Further the GOI introduced Board of Rehabilitation in 1968 to begin new schemes in trade and industry. The major aim of the board was the creation of more opportunities in non-agricultural fields including private and public sector enterprises. The GOI emphasised the idea that the rehabilitation of repatriates/refugees should be implemented by the use of national resources.

### **Relief and Rehabilitation under Different Schemes**

The rehabilitation scheme in India played an important role in shaping the interests of the estate Tamil who preferred repatriation. The High Commissioner of India (HCI) in Sri Lanka, Y.K. Puri, in 1970 anticipated that the initial years' rehabilitation was important because it would decide the flow of further movement. Both MLER and HCI in Sri Lanka suspected that if the early repatriates were not properly rehabilitated, the other estate Tamils would not prefer repatriation.<sup>19</sup>

From 1966 to 1970, the GOI formulated different resettlement programmes and arrangements. This was made possible by various administrative organs like the Board of Rehabilitation, rehabilitation cell, opening of transit camps, repatriate's cooperative bank and district level activities of collectors.<sup>20</sup>

The GOI set up a rehabilitation cell in the HCI in Colombo to help the MLER to the dispersal of repatriates and their resettlement to different states. The cell was to record the basic details of the family like occupation, educational background, family composition.<sup>21</sup> The inflow of the Burmese repatriates into the country was also a reason behind the creation of the cell.<sup>22</sup> From July 1964 to 16th April of 1966, 57 sailings were taken place from Rangoon to Madras and a sudden influx of repatriates occurred in the state. This sudden influx raised the cost of accommodation in the transit camps and created difficulties in accommodating all people. MLER formed cell in Sri Lanka to avoid such kind of problems among the repatriates.

The MLER opened transit camps for the accommodation of repatriates in India till their final dispersal to rehabilitation sites. In 1965, the GOI acquired a sprawling estate spreading over 120 acres near Rameswaram which had been used as a quarantine camp for Tamil labourers going to Sri Lanka in the Colonial era. The MLER also used the relief camps of Burmese repatriates in Tiruchi and Cheengalpattu for the accommodation of the repatriates of Sri Lanka.<sup>23</sup>

MLER introduced these camps mainly for the 'rootless' people from Sri Lanka.<sup>24</sup> The rootless people were identified as those who did not have lands, houses or any living ties in any part of

the country. The main aim of the state was to not allow the repatriate to stay in the camp for a long period so that space was made available for coming batches. A repatriate family was able to stay for 90 days in the camp and the maximum period was 120 days.

The Repatriates' co-operative Bank was introduced for providing currency conversion facilities to repatriates immediately arriving upon India.<sup>25</sup> Later the Ministry developed the Bank to give financial assistance to the repatriates and also to other agencies, companies, industries which were meant to give employment to repatriates in India. These arrangements and institutions controlled the sudden influx of repatriates to India and ensured that the process was a phased one.

According to the repatriation agreement, repatriate families were allowed to bring savings up to Rs. 15,000 including their personal jewellery. The amount of assets held by the Tamil was an important factor in determining the extent of relief and rehabilitation provided to a family in India. The state classified four groups: those with savings in between Rs. 10,000 and 15,000; those with assets below Rs. 10, 000; those coming with limited money but owning a few acres of lands and houses in India and finally rootless people coming with assets below Rs. 5000 and without any connections in India.<sup>26</sup>

The Madras Government also classified repatriates into four categories.<sup>27</sup> These were: the people who kept continuous touch with their native village; the people who had their houses and lands but did not keep touch with their villages; the people who were unable to identify the properties of their grandparents in Tamil Nadu which had been occupied by strangers and the group whose grandparents did not possess lands or houses in Tamil Nadu and went as coolies in plantations. Among the four categories, 70 percent of the repatriates were identified as descendants of the people who went as coolies in Sri Lanka without possessing lands or houses in India.

The MLER did not provide immediate assistance to repatriates of Sri Lanka but it offered this to East Pakistan refugees and repatriates from Burma.<sup>28</sup> The facility were included like free travel facilities from port to destinations, free portage, free meals, accommodation in transit camp and also cash doles. The Ministry granted this assistance because it identified them as destitute, rootless and penniless people. The Burmese Government did not permit Indians to transfer their savings over Rs. 50 even though many had savings and immovable property in Burma. The East Pakistan Refugees also fled from their country abandoning their lands and properties. MLER viewed that the repatriates of Sri Lanka were allowed to bring their assets. The Government of Madras argued with MLER that it would create issues in their absorption in the society as they were coming to India in an uprooted condition. Later, MLER extended immediate relief assistance to repatriates of Sri Lanka too.

In the case of accommodation in the Transit camp and giving cash doles, the MLER kept a distinction between Burmese

<sup>18</sup> GO 474, 23.2.1968, Madras, Home, TNSA.

<sup>19</sup>GO 2998, 25.9.1970, Madras, Revenue, TNSA.

<sup>20</sup> GO 2998, 25.9.1970, Madras, Revenue, TNSA.

<sup>21</sup>GO 4432, 29.12.1966, Madras, Home, TNSA.

<sup>22</sup> GO 2242, 8.7.1966, Madras, Home, TNSA.

<sup>23</sup> GO 83, 12.1.1968, Madras, Home, TNSA.

<sup>24</sup>Go.2389, 26.8.1967, Madras, Home, TNSA.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> G O 999, 6.4.1968, Madras, Home, TNSA.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> GO 999, 6.4.1968, Madras, Home, TNSA.

repatriates and repatriates of Sri Lanka.<sup>29</sup> The rate of cash dole was like this: One member family got Rs. 30 for one month and Rs. 40 for two members, 50 for three members, 57 for four members, 65 for five members, 70 for six members and 75 for a family which had more than six members. Repatriates from Sri Lanka got one month housing facility with cash doles in the camp. But, MLER granted housing facility to Burmese repatriates for seven months and offered cash doles to meet the needs of the family in the camp. Further, a maintenance allowance was given to them for three months while leaving the camp. MLER adopted this because they were identified as rootless people. In 1970, the Government of Madras requested MLER to discontinue this practice since it felt that the repatriates of Burma had an excessive period in the camp while the people of Sri Lanka had a short period, thereby creating distinctions between these two groups. But MLER argued that it was giving rehabilitation facilities to the people according to the nature of their movement.<sup>30</sup> Ultimately, the main objective of Tamil Nadu was to see the rehabilitation of both groups in the state without partiality.

The state rehabilitated majority of rootless people from 1971 to 1987 through three major schemes: land, labour and employment. It ensured labour, housing, health and education to repatriates in India. MLER and Government of Tamil Nadu attempted to absorb repatriates into various public organs including in public sector industries, Co-operative societies and various governmental departments. Thus rehabilitation scheme worked as a platform to absorb repatriates into the Indian economy and formed them into various occupational groups in India. The state intended to create small villages and groups to integrate repatriates into mainstream society.<sup>31</sup> The people who arrived in India in the initial years had their lands and houses. They were identified as rooted people and the GOI encouraged their self assisted rehabilitation in India. There were 6,500 repatriates arrived into India in the period between November 1964 and December 1968 and the Ministry of Rehabilitation offered its assistances only for 262 persons. From 1968 to 1970, of the 13,500 repatriates from Sri Lanka majority went to their old villages.<sup>32</sup> The MLER extended loans to those repatriates whose savings and value of land did not exceed Rs. 10, 000.<sup>33</sup> Likewise, the MLER extended legal support to the repatriates, as for instance those who were finding it difficult to claim houses and properties from relatives.<sup>34</sup>

The first rehabilitation scheme was resettlement on land either by simply handing over of land or through officially sponsored schemes of land colonisation. There were three groups in the state who needed lands: the landless population, the repatriates from Burma and the repatriates of Sri Lanka. A few families were rehabilitated through the land colonisation programme; but the state declared that it did not have enough land to give to the repatriates.

At first the Madras Government decided to wait till the repatriates were settled through other schemes, and in different states. But subsequently the then Chief Minister of Madras,

C.N. Annadurai decided to take a stronger initiative. Four districts, Madurai, Ramanathapuram, Tiruchirappally and Tirunelveli were targeted.<sup>35</sup> The view was that the forefathers of the repatriates had largely migrated from these districts and that land was remained as uninhabited due to this migration. Large areas of these districts were identified as suburbs, forests and uninhabited places.<sup>36</sup> The MLER gave loans of Rs. 5,000 to buy lands and other agricultural equipments and the loanee was to repay the amount from the fifth year onwards. The Madras state introduced 33 land schemes and rehabilitated 2161 families from 1967 to 1982.<sup>37</sup>

Rehabilitation by business loan: MLER introduced business loan for the repatriates to start small trade and business in the state. The MLER introduced this scheme at first among Burmese repatriates and extended it to the estate Tamil repatriates too. MLER found that attempts at business made by Burmese repatriates had failed and introduced new methods to make it successful. In this scheme, a loanee had the right to select the location and nature of business. The state provided Rs. 2,000 as a loan, paid in two instalments. Later, MLER increased the amount to Rs. 5,000. This was because very few business attempts succeeded and many people used the amount for their personal needs or were unable to continue their trade without further money. Business conditions of the Burmese repatriates was noticed by MLER in 1967 which stated, so far a loan of Rs.1, 73, 13,980 (1.7crores) has been granted to the repatriates from Burma for carrying on business. We have reached a saturation point where petty traders will not be able to make a living out of their trades. It is observed that many repatriates who have taken a loan have utilised the amount for their day to day existence and are now virtually on the streets, asking for employment assistance.<sup>38</sup>

It was in these conditions in 1967, that the MLER planned to introduce business loans for the estate Tamils who lacked previous experience in business and trade. The family had to repay the amount as 12 instalments in the fourth year.<sup>39</sup> 76,049 families (3,12,629 repatriates) arrived from Sri Lanka from 1964 to 1979. Among these families, 35,842 families, means around half of the repatriated families were rehabilitated in business and trade in various districts of Tamil Nadu.<sup>40</sup>

The distribution of loans also created different problems.<sup>41</sup> The loan ensured economic activity for one person in a family and it created unemployment among other members. The parents treated their married sons and daughters as separate families and these people were not able to find economic benefits in the rehabilitation assistance. So the Government of Madras proposed to the MLER to extend loan provision to all adult members of a family and to provide Rs. 500 to each adult.

In this situation, the MLER defined the concept of natural family within the rehabilitation scheme.<sup>42</sup> Here, natural family meant 'the family which is actually registered at the time of arrival in India and should include all the members of the

<sup>29</sup> GO 3117, 7.10.1970, Madras, Revenue, TNSA.

<sup>30</sup> Secretary, MLER to Madras Home, 5.8.1769.

<sup>31</sup> *The Times of India*, 12.8.1983.

<sup>32</sup> *RMLER*, GOI, New Delhi, 1970-71, p.77.

<sup>33</sup> GO 1724, 4.6.1970, Madras, Revenue, TNSA.

<sup>34</sup> GO 3399, 15.12.1967, Madras, Home, TNSA.

<sup>35</sup> GO 3486, 12.10.1966, Madras, Home, TNSA.

<sup>36</sup> GO 863, 26.3.1968, Madras, Home, TNSA.

<sup>37</sup> *Tamil Nadu State Administrative Report*, (Here after TNSAR) Madras, Government Press, 1982, p.469

<sup>38</sup> GO 1127, 13.4.1967, Madras, Home, TNSA.

<sup>39</sup> Minister's Conference, relief, rehabilitation of Ceylon Repatriates in India, Delhi, 9.8.1966.

<sup>40</sup> *TNSAR*, Madras, Government Press, 1979-80, p.389.

<sup>41</sup> GO 1365, 15.5.1967, Madras, Home, TNSA.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*.

family including those members who stay back in Burma/Ceylon at the time of registration but would be arriving later'. Thus, families which had evolved after repatriation were absorbed within the concept of natural family. The MLER also defined as new families like widows, unmarried women, unmarried men who worked and lived separately in Burma or Sri Lanka. The MLER extended them rehabilitation assistance in business or in labour and they were known as single member families/ one member families in India. Through this concept, state limited the rehabilitation assistance to one member and the unit of assistance was to be a patriarchal family. The head of the household was given the help, other were denied assistance.

Rehabilitation by Employment: Plantation labour and labour in cooperative industries was introduced for the repatriates. The MLER ensured a long term employment in labour schemes and two members of a family were eligible for labour. Those who took business loans and the families who lived in agricultural settlement had to repay the loans to the state but the state did not impose any obligation on those who were rehabilitated by labour.

Plantation labour was the only one scheme which revealed the previous economic background of the repatriates. Establishment of plantation was not the part of other rehabilitation project in India.<sup>43</sup> The MLER opened this scheme departmentally. The plantation industry was identified as a heavy industry which would bring profits after seven years. The major benefit of the scheme was that it ensured the rehabilitation of many families through a single project. Unlike other plantations, these new plantations were intended to create labour opportunities rather than ensuring profitability for its owners.

The development of public sector plantation was occurring in Tamil Nadu alongside the rehabilitation of Tamil repatriates in the state.<sup>44</sup> The Madras state opened plantations on co-operative lines similar to the public sector plantations introduced by the Government of Kerala through the Kerala Plantation Corporation. At this time, the Madras government was the major producer of tea in India so it preferred tea plantations in the state. It rehabilitated 1875 families in the reclaimed forest lands at Nilgiri and resettled 750 families in a tea plantation in Gudallur.<sup>45</sup> Later, the government brought these plantations together and renamed it as the Tamil Nadu Tea Plantation Limited and became the major public sector plantation company in Tamil Nadu. The state also resettled 625 families in rubber, coconut and cinchona plantations in three different districts like Kanyakumari, Selam and Annamalai.

The MLER also could resettle a few repatriated families in the existing private plantations in Tamil Nadu with the help of United Planters Association in South India (UPASI).<sup>46</sup> The repatriates directly went to these plantations in Nilgiri, Coimbatore and Selam districts and Madras state extended tax concessions to them plantations.

A second form of labour was employment in small scale industries and in private manufacturing units. The MLER realized that heavy industries needed professionals and skilled

labourers. But repatriates were untrained, not experienced and less educated. This would create subsequent losses in industries or reduce the labour opportunities for repatriates due to the accommodation of other skilled people.<sup>47</sup> Further, the heavy industries would only bring gradual labour openings. So the Ministry wanted to open labour intensive industries which would guarantee continuous profits and steady employment. The failure of business loans was also a reason behind the introduction of semi skilled industries.

Thus, the MLER provided loans to 12 state co-operative mills to expand their working capacities and provided these labour opportunities to 1952 families.<sup>48</sup> Likewise, state offered employment for 1360 families in the State Farm Corporation and State Dairy Development Corporation and 3,238 educated repatriates were appointed as staffs in various governmental departments from 1970 to 1982.

Educational grants and housing loans were the other two schemes that the MLER introduced for the repatriates.<sup>49</sup> All these schemes show the various ways in which the government sought to integrate estate Tamils of Sri Lanka in the Indian economy and their placements in various fields. The absorption of estate Tamils into various state sectors showed that the government was bringing them into mainstream society by giving a new social status to them as public sector employees in the state.

## CONCLUSION

The rehabilitation of repatriates from Sri Lanka was taking place in the larger context of the arrival of the various displaced groups into the country. So there were similarities, continuities and differences in the rehabilitation of repatriates from Sri Lanka, Burma and the East Pakistani refugees. GOI introduced rehabilitation schemes according to the economic background of the repatriates/refugees. Some schemes failed to take off. Grant of land was important in integrating newcomers to local society, settling refugees and repatriates in the country. But the unavailability of land necessitated the introduction of a wide range of other rehabilitation schemes. The nature of the various schemes led to the repatriates being identified with different social and economic groups in the society. The rehabilitation of repatriates in Tamil Nadu did, in some ways, helped industrial development in the state and also aided in the expansion of public sector plantations. At the same time, the government expected steady revenue from these projects in future.

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<sup>43</sup> GO 1920, 29.7.1969, Madras, Home, TNSA.

<sup>44</sup> GO 3486, 12.10.1966, Madras, Home, TNSA

<sup>45</sup> TNSAR, Madras, Government Press, 1982-83, p.326

<sup>46</sup> GO 3486, 12.10.1966, Madras, Home, TNSA.

<sup>47</sup> GO 3486, 12.10.1966, Madras, Home, TNSA.

<sup>48</sup> TNSAR, Madras, Government Press, 1981-82, p.325.

<sup>49</sup> GO 1724, 4.6.1970, Madras, Revenue, TNSA

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