

REEL OF RELIGIOUS MIGRATION IN THE SAARC COUNTRIES PORTRAYED BY LEADING SOUTH ASIAN ENGLISH DAILIES

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DOI No. – 08.2020-25662434

Abstract

South Asia widely known as sub – continent consists of eight countries prominently Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Srilanka. South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) has also formed with these states where Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism and Christianity are the leading spiritual identity to the said region. The study investigates intra- South Asian religious migration portrayed by the leading South Asian news media. Using content analysis method, the study reveals the religious migration scenario in the news treatment over the SAARC countries and the printed news that navigated specific policy directions. To the end, Hindu and Sikh migrants are largest numbers to change the living location rather than other South Asian religious communities. Afghan, Bangladeshi and Pakistani are noticeable to enrich the intra-South Asian religious migration trend.

Keywords: Migration, Religion, News Paper, Content Analysis and Migration

INTRODUCTION

South Asia consists of eight countries that have bonded under the umbrella of SAARC (South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation). It is the paradise of religious community like Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Christian and Sikh. It is also known as sub-continent that has counted as one of the most crowded of the earth. Religious diversity threatens the South Asian unity and inspires intra religious migration within the region. The majority of South Asian practice Hinduism, Islam is the second most following religion, Sikhism practices in India, Pakistan and Afghanistan only, Buddhism and Christianity also popular in many South Asian countries. The religion story of South Asia is full of Sufis, Saints and Holy Men. Media is the knowledge hub to disseminate these stories to the mass people worldwide. New York Times pioneered to popular the word “Migrant”, “Refugee” and “Exile” among the American and Europeans (King & Wood, 2013). The Times of India, the Dawn of Pakistan, the Daily Star of Bangladesh, the Daily Mirror of Sri-Lanka, the Maldives Times, the Daily Outlook of Afghanistan, the Kuensel of Bhutan and the Himalayan Times of Nepal are also publishing the relocation stories of South Asian inhabitants. Usually, migration is a permanent move to a new location. It also defines as permanent or semi permanent residential changes. European scholars Christiane Harzig and Dirk Hoerder have raveled the charming theme of migration. They coined that the term migration implies in multiple terms like “mobility” “flows” and “waves” (Harzig & Hoerder, 2013). Migrants are also one kind of travelers but they do not return their birthplace again. They dream a possible future and change in residence (O'Reilly & Benson, 2016). Migration within South Asia has created new dimension in the global migration atmosphere. Hinduism is the majority in India whereas it is minority in the neighboring countries

Pakistan and Bangladesh. As a result, large numbers of Hindus migrant to India from all around South Asian nations even Nepal and Bhutan. By the last quarter of this century about 9 (nine) million South Asians especially from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh have migrated their home countries or birth in a migrant families ([Brown & Foot, 2016](#)). According to the theory of human migration 1885, generally people migrate for 3 (three) special reasons such as (a) economic, (b) short distance, and (c) cultural. South Asian migrants also relocate their residents within South Asian region for employment and reunification with families. India is the hotspot of intra South Asian migration system. It has common border, cultural and religious connectivity with Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Maldives and Sri-Lanka. Hindu migrants from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan shifted to India whereas Indian Muslims did not migrant to other South Asian part after the partition of 1947 and the year of 1965. Continuously, Sri-Lankan Tamil (Buddhist) and Afghan minorities (Hindus & Sikhs) also migrate to India as a continuous process. Interestingly, according to the published news of the Dawn and the daily Star, some Pakistani Sikh & Hindu and Bangladeshi Hindu migrants returned to their homeland again. There was no evidence of migrants relevant to Christianity within the study area. The popular South Asian spiritual sketches are as below;

Table 1: Popular South Asian religious rhyme

Religion	Holy Location	Symbol	Holy Book	Important Figure
Hinduism	Gongas River India	The Vedas	Bhagavad Gita	Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva.
Islam	Mecca Saudi Arabia	Crescent Moon	Al-Quran	Hazrat Muhammad (SM)
Buddhism	India & All around Asia	Buddha	Tripitaka	Siddhartha Gautama
Sikhism	Lahore Pakistan	Shored	The Guru Granth Sahib	Guru Nanak
Christianity	Jerusalem Palestine	Cross	Bible	Jesus

Source: Google and own elaboration, 2019

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Considering the South Asian religion portfolio and religious migrants that has portrayed by the leading national English dailies, the study tried to find out the answer of the following research questions;

- 1) How did the South Asian leading English Dailies (one from each country) portrait religious migration within SAARC nations?
- 2) What migration policies did focus in their news treatment?

METHOD AND MATERIALS

Being a qualitative study, it has employed content analysis method for data collection. Qualitative content analysis purely popular to analyze contextual environment ([Mayring, 2004](#)). We have considered 4 years (2015 to 2018) published news, article and feature stories in the 8 South Asian English dailies (1 from each SAARC countries) to observe religion migration scenario within South

Asian region in their published news treatment and tried to reveal their policy portrait in this issue through content analysis method **table 2** is the used news papers). The result has recapitulated by coding, sorting, tabulating, jerking and prepared compared psychiatry of religious migration around the SAARC nations with policy directions.

Table 2: Selected English dailies from SAARC countries

SL	English Daily	Established Year	Head Quarter	Editor/ Editor in Chief
1	The Daily Outlook	2004	Kabul, Afghanistan	Moh. Reza Huwalda
2	The Daily Star	1991	Dhaka, Bangladesh	Mahfuz Anam
3	The Kuensel	1967	Thimphu, Bhutan	Sonam Pelden
4	Times of India	1838	New Delhi, India	Jaideep Bose
5	The Himalayan Times	2001	Kathmandu, Nepal	Prakash Rimal
6	The Maldives Times	1999	Male, Maldives	Zaheena Rasheed
7	The Dawn	1941	Karachi, Pakistan	Zaffar Abbas
8	The Daily Mirror	1999	Colombo, Sri Lanka	Kesara Abeywardana

Source: Researcher elaboration, 2019

LITERATURE REVIEW

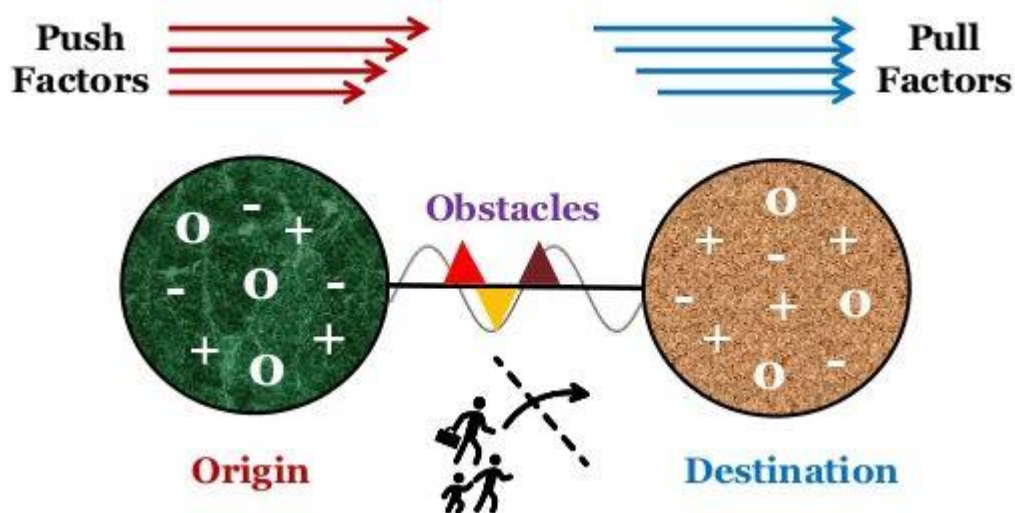
Migration within SAARC countries is not a new trend. It has started from the ancient time. Earlier migration happened due to shortage of food and climatic degradation. Today, the migration practice spread out not only in the South Asia but also beyond of SAARC Countries ([Barbora, Thieme, Siegmann, Menon, & Gurung, 2008](#)). Rural and backward with spiritual South Asian People are where majority are living under poverty line have observed in many South Asian countries. According to a United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) report published in 2009, India has listed in 9th position for projecting 2.5 percent of all international migrants. India has a common border with 4 (four) SAARC countries like Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and Pakistan. The report revealed that a huge migrants came to India from its bordering countries ([Sharma, Saraswati, Das, & Sarna, 2015](#)). India is the prime choice for South Asian Hindu migrants as a country of dominated by Hindu spirituals. Mobility trend of South Asian people has started from the starting of mankind. The calculative migration time frame mostly divided into three major period such as (a) before British colonial era, (b) after the end of British regime and (c) during the time of globalization ([Peach, 1994](#)). Migration in all nexus like social, political, cultural, environmental and religious happened during the current era. On the other hand, the destination countries also developed enough to attract migrants by offering several opportunities. For example, India offered warm welcome and citizenship to the Hindu migrants from Bangladesh and Pakistan. Now days, migration and refugees are a global problem, principally, skilled migration to developed countries, semi and unskilled labor migration to developing states. Moreover, forced migration of women and children are also happening worldwide. It is notable that first two categories centered on economic and they are willingly ready but last one happened forcefully as a human trafficking

(Bhardwaj, 2015). Refugees and illegal migrants are a alarming issue in South Asian territories. Before the Rohingya crisis in 2017, refugees crisis were also burden in SAARC countries. According to the UNHCR report 2013, a total of 255, 570 refugees counted in South Asian region (Ho, Madokoro, & Peterson, 2015). Recently, this number has increased with Muslim Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. Unfortunately, majority of women and children refugees found in India came from around South Asian nations. Illegal Muslim refugees are basically Pakistani and Bangladeshi (Ganguly-Scrase, 2005). There is no unique policy framework to settle intra religious refugee or migrants among the SAARC countries. Though, India is the largest secular country in South Asia, majorities are Hindu followers whereas Pakistan and Bangladesh are Muslim dominated states. As a result, migrants flow between these countries are mostly religious oriented (Leonard, 2016). Media represent a vital role in any particular issue while the society is trying to solve any special case (Torres, Lindblom, & Nordberg, 2014). South Asian region is also notable place to address religious migration within the countries of SAARC umbrella. Published news on special topic is important here too. Newspaper data is also popular to study migration issue in a broader perspective (Mügge, 2016). There is other scholarly paper that had showed special relation between media and migration (King & Wood, 2013). They tried to point out that media take pivotal role in migrant's behavior and their decision making process. Ultimately, published news always show the directive policy navigation to the policy making process in any platform.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study tried to elaborate the theoretical part in terms of Push-Pull migration theory that has conceptualized by the Pennsylvania University scholar Everett S. Lee in 1966. It has also re-discussed in 1969 (Lee) and 1978 (Bhende and Kanitker). Though, it is very old but significant to the present studies related to migration. Lee summarized four special factors in his last addition as (1) Factors associated with areas of origin (2) Factors associated with the areas of destination (3) Intervening obstacles and (4) Personal Factors (Lee, 1966). The following graph illustrates at a glance of Lee's Push-Pull theory.

Graph-1: Lee's Migration Theory

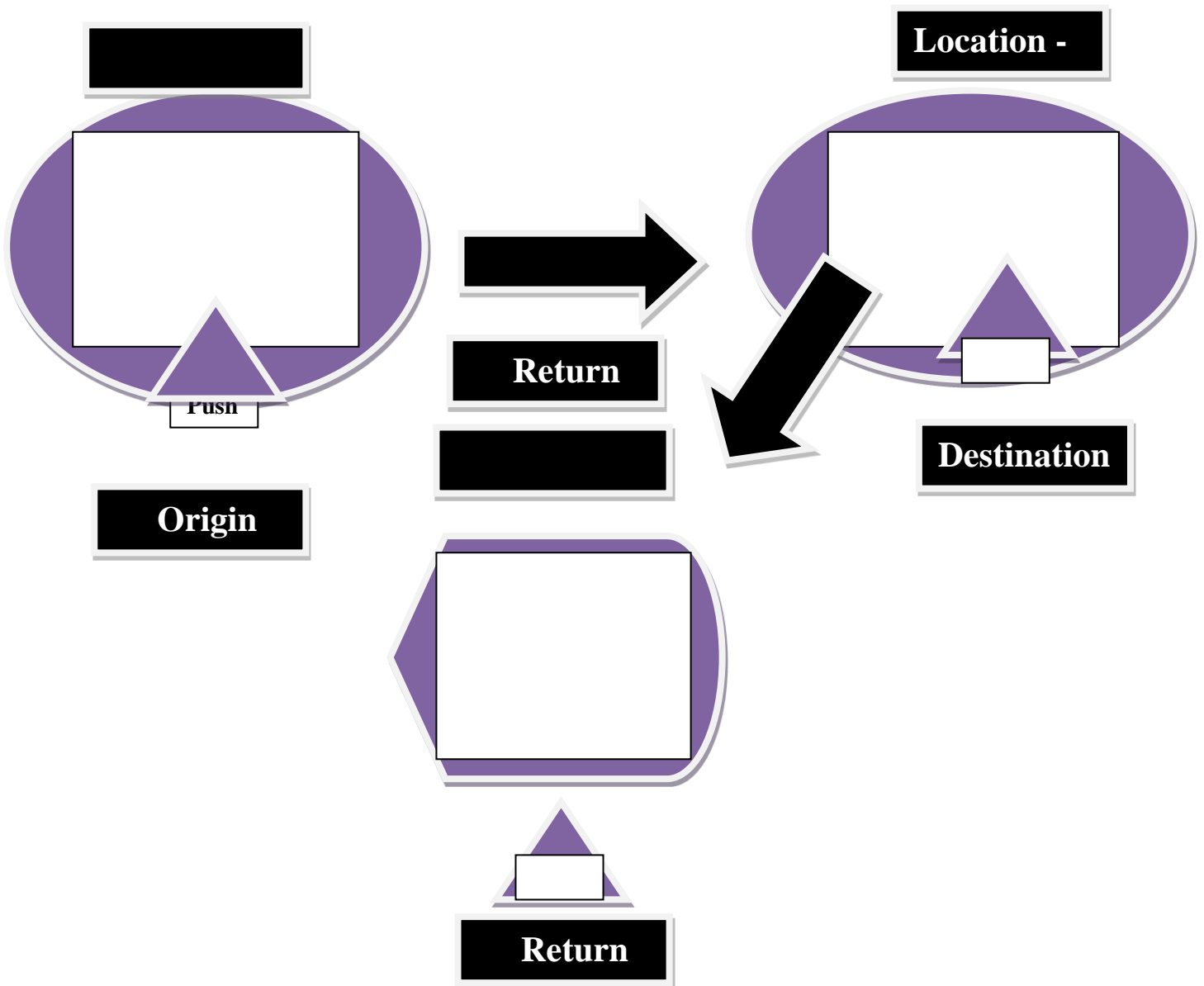


Source: Google image, 2019

Everett S. Lee has used some mathematical characters as -, + and 0. These signs narrate the message of negative (-), Positive (+) and Neutral (0). It means, if the factors of destination are more positive

and cumulative enough than origin location, then migration happen. Usually, the factors can be identified as economic, political, cultural, and environmental. It depends on the migration situation. According to the published migration news, features and articles, we have found 6+6 push and pull factors in the context of South Asian religion migration among the SAARC countries. Based on our findings, we have proposed 3rd “P” to our conceptual framework. The following graph describes it clearly.

Graph-2: Proposed conceptual framework by adding 3rd “P”



Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Nepali and Bhutanese usually migrate to India for several opportunities. After a certain stages Pakistani Sikhs and Bangladeshi Hindus reversed their mind in various reasons. Finally, they decided to return their origin again. We called it “Press” means return back to the origin.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Not surprisingly, South Asia is divided into two special blocks. India and Pakistan are leading position and trying to make other small countries in South Asia as their followers. For example Indian influence is visible to Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal whereas Pakistani pressure noticeable in Afghanistan and Maldives. Sri Lanka tried to minimize both of the power states. The study find total number Of 48 religious migration news published categorized as (a) straight reports, (b) articles and (c) features in the selected news media. The following **table -3 and figure -1** revealed it in details.

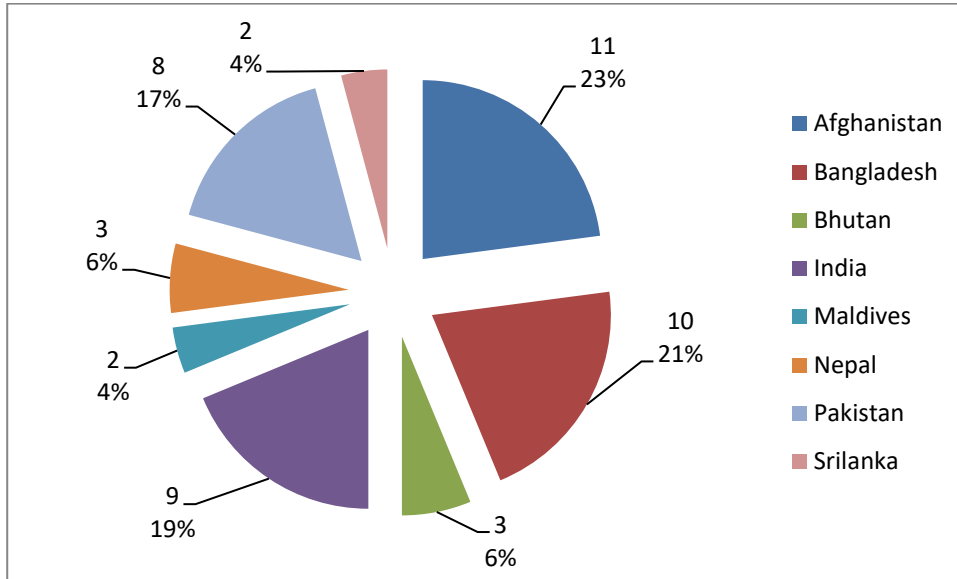
Table 3: Published religious migration news in the selected South Asian Media

Selected Media	Four Years Religious Migration News (2015 = A, 2016 = B, 2017= C and 2018 = D)											
	Straight Report				Article				Feature			
	A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D
The Daily Outlook, Afghanistan http://outlookafghanistan.net/	03	02	-	05	-	-	-	01	-	-	-	-
The Daily Star Bangladesh https://www.thedailystar.net/	01	04	-	-	-	-	-	05	-	-	-	-
The Kuensel Bhutan http://www.kuenselonline.com/	-	-	-	-	-	01	-	-	01	-	-	01
The Times of India https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/	01	01	01	04	-	-	-	01	-	-	-	01
The Maldives Times https://maldivestimes.com/	-	-	01	-	-	-	01	-	-	-	-	-
The Himalayan Times, Nepal https://thehimalayantimes.com/	01	-	01	01	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
The Dawn Pakistan https://www.dawn.com/	03	01	02	-	-	01	-	-	01	-	-	-
The Daily Mirror Sri Lanka http://www.dailymirror.lk/	01	-	-	-	01	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	33				11				04			

Source: studied news media

The above table described the whole scenario of published religious migration news in the South Asian leading English dailies. It is strongly acknowledged that migration news not connected with South Asian territory and leading religion such as Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism and Christianity did not consider to the study.

Graph-2: News treatment on religious migration in the SAARC region



Source: Studied news media

Above figure described the country wise cumulative news treatment in the selected media where Afghanistan and Bangladesh have given highest priorities whereas Maldives and Srilanka have shown less interest in this issue. India and Pakistan were very close to publish the religious migration news within SAARC countries. Surprisingly, Bhutan and Nepal were also equivalent to emphasize the said news.

More interestingly, Afghanistan and Maldives did not publish any policy related news but rest of the countries has printed policy navigated news by targeting topic and counterpart. India has given highest priorities to address policy oriented news on religious migration among the neighboring countries. The following **table - 4** showed in details of policy concern news in the reported media

Table 4: Selected English dailies from SAARC countries

Reported Media & Country	News Example	Published Date	Emphasized Policy Topic	Targeted Country
Times of India	Pakistani migrants to get residential plots in Rajasthan	May 17, 2018	Legal Ownership	Pakistan
	Citizenship bill will stop immigration in Assam: BJP	October 31, 2018	Illegal Entrance	Bangladesh
	Don't want to migrate to India: Afghan Sikhs	July 6, 2018	Welcome to India	Afghanistan
	Nepalese Gorkhas aren't illegal migrants: Centre	October 11, 2018	Legal Entrance	Nepal
The Dawn, Pakistan	<u>4,300 Hindus, Sikhs from Pakistan, Afghanistan get Indian citizenship</u>	June 15, 2015	Complain	India
The Daily Star Bangladesh	How Assam's citizenship test disowns its own people	August 17, 2018	Concern	India
The Daily Mirror Srilanka	Sri Lanka's forgotten links with Kerala	October 30, 2018	Positive Image	India

The Himalayan Times, Nepal	<u>Eight Tibetans being sent to India</u>	July 27, 2018	Illegal Entrance	India
The Kuensel, Bhutan	Can Hindus in Bhutan do better?	November 2, 2017	Establishing Right	India

Source: Studied media

Above table has noticed the important and valuable messages to the stakeholders related to the religious migration in the South Asian region. India published highest numbers of policy indicating news targeting to Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Nepal. Published news addressed the topic of legal – illegal entrance to the Pakistani, Nepali and Bangladeshi migrants whereas welcoming tone to the Sikh migrants from Afghanistan. On the other hand, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan, and Srilanka have published news related to their own interest. In addition, only India was the target country of these five to point out their religious migrated news.

CONCLUSION

As noted earlier, Global migration is a common trend of achieving economic and better living condition but intra - South Asian migration happened in the mixing venture of political and religious point of view ([Brown & Foot, 2016](#)). India is the main religious migration point. Pakistani Hindus & Sikhs, Afghanistan Sikhs and Bangladeshi Hindus preferred migrate to India for religious freedom and better living condition. It was a traditional trend but now a day, some migrated Sikhs and Hindus have returned to their home country Pakistan and Bangladesh respectively. Besides, only low income families were migrated to their target destination ([Weiner, 2015](#)). Finally, the Hindu and Sikhs migrated frequently within South Asia whereas others religious people were less in numbers.

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