Chapter 2
'Master Coolie' Conditions in India, Unjust Justice and Abuses of Indenture in South Africa

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Abstract

During the 19th and early 20th centuries, a combination of factors coerced the indigenous peasantry in India to migrate to the mainly British tropical colonies across the world, with the hidden hope of a better life. They decided to forsake their Janmabhumi (Motherland) and obtain 'Girmit identity' (Paranjape 2009), becoming subjected to a new life full of formalism and officialdom. The Indus Valley World Civilisation dates back to 3500 B.C. 'Four influences predominated the thousands of years of intellectualism and physical fusions that have resulted in the creation of the Indian Nation viz. Dravidian, Aryan, Islamic and British.' (Meer 1980:1). Superstitious beliefs from Medieval times became akin to indigenous religious traditions and practices. However, India conceded to the rise of Indentured labour and on 7 August 1860, the Legislative Council of India gave consent for the emigration of labourers to the colony of the then Natal in a system that had become popularly known as 'Indenture' (Du Bois 2012). By that stage, indentured workers were already going to places like Mauritius, Trinidad and British Guiana. The traditional methodology of conventional research, which includes intense and extensive reading, analysing various accomplished accredited works and thereafter compiling this narrative was utilised by the author.

Keywords: Coolie, Girmit, Indenture, Kala Pani, Slaves

1 Introduction

This paper entitled 'Master Coolie' Conditions in India, Unjust Justice and Abuses of the Indentured in South Africa is a tribute the Legend of the Indentured Labourer – our Forebears. The aim of this study is to chronicle the conditions in India that hastened migration of the rural community to the different colonies of the British Empire. The reason for this traditional methodology approach in writing up this paper is to highlight the unjust justice and abuses that the Indian indentured labourers suffered at the brutal hands of the colonial planters. Conditions in India certainly hastened migration. The East India Company was established during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I and was granted permission to trade in India by Emperor Jahangir. By the first century of its presence in India, the Company had its armies in India, as people like Robert Clive were more interested in establishing a new colony and less in trade. At this point in time, India had experienced the role of inefficient, greedy kings, endless inter-kingdom wars and next the effects of colonisation and subjugation. If the old order was ruthless, then the new masters would prove to be even more ruthless (Bowen 2003).

2 Factors that Hastened Emigration

There are many factors that hastened emigration to unknown and distant British Colonies. They travelled over the 'Kala Pani' (Dark Waters) and 'Pagla Samoondar' (Mad Sea).

2.1 The Industrial Revolution and its Impact on a Conquered India

The Industrial Revolution in England transformed the economy of Britain and had devastating effects on a conquered India, particularly the textile weavers, but which found a ready market for the British textile industry. Textiles produced in India became very expensive, as the weavers had to buy raw cotton at high prices and their textiles were highly taxed. 'Prior to this, India had the world's largest textile industry' (Gupta 2008:xiv), but now thousands of ruined weavers migrated to the cities to live in slums and work as daily wage labourers, as no-one in the country – the Nawabs, Rajahs, the Company, or the wealthy – gave any thought to the peasantry of the rural villages or the weavers dying in the hellish slums of the cities.

The system of traditional land tenures, Zamindari, and land revenue were slowly but surely stifled, resulting in the displacement of thousands of agricultural workers and peasant small farmers facing increasing debts. Deeply religious and sentimental, the Indian would do anything to fend for his family, even cross the Kala Pani[1] to earn an honest living, thus giving rise to the Emigrant Coolie, although he did not have a migratory mindset.

2.2 Inefficient and Greedy Rajahs (Kings)

During the 18th and early 19th centuries, India experienced the impact of inefficient and greedy kings and endless inter-kingdom wars. There was no peace, no rule of law, and very little economic prosperity.

From early in the 19th century, the British, initially much earlier through the East India Company, began conquering a large part of India and would eventually build the 'biggest colony of the British Empire' *(*Marshall 1998). India felt the negative effects of colonisation and subjugation.

2.3 Agricultural Restrictions

The growth of food was discouraged and the production of indigo, tea and opium were encouraged and exported to China, earning a great deal of revenue for the British, while Indians suffered, not being able to produce food.

2.4 Major Famines

Famines were a regular phenomenon. There were twelve major ones and several minor famines between 1770 and 1850. All surplus food was exported by the Company and during such natural disasters there was no reserve supply, resulting in starvation and disease. Floods further aggravated the situation.

2.5 Lagaan and Confiscation of Properties

In spite of the abject poverty of the bulk of the peasantry, the Company

[1] Kala Pani (Black Water): When used in the diaspora, ***Kala Pani*** refers to the large-scale migration out of India in the 1830s when hundreds of thousands of Indians left the subcontinent to work in the sugar colonies as indentured labourers, or 'bound coolies'.

ruthlessly subjected them to heavy taxes: *Lagaan*[2]. The Company usurped the property of tax defaulters, properties of religious institutions like the temples of the Hindus and mosques of the Muslims were also confiscated in the effort to destroy their respective religions.

Properties were looted, allegedly on the grounds of improper titles. For centuries, the Rajahs had given their subjects traditional rights to live in their kingdoms, but no legal procedures were followed for such rights and no legal documents were available to claim legal rights over these properties. Between 1852 and 1857, over 20 000 estates were confiscated and gradually the Company was displacing the old Indian aristocracy. Another dirty trick played by the British was to get Hindus and Muslims serving in the army to bite the cartridges of the new rifles as the paper covering had to be bitten off before loading, and which were greased with fat from cows and pigs: this was taboo to both groups, respectively.

> Christian missionaries were allowed to preach to the soldiers in the army, openly criticising (indigenous) religions and offering to convert them (Gupta 2008:xvii).

Full of revulsion, many soldiers deserted the army and roamed the country without employment.

2.6 The Indian Mutiny

In 1857, the Native Bengal Army revolted against the Company: The Indian Mutiny, and the spirit of nationalism spread to many areas. When the mutiny was finally suppressed in 1858 and the 'Fires of the revolt' were finally quenched, India woke up to discover that 'she had a queen' (Gupta 2008:10) in Victoria, and was 'officially the Jewel in the Crown' (Gupta 2008:10).

Control of India now passed from the English East India Company to the British Imperial Government. This followed mass executions, confiscation of properties and thousands being imprisoned without trial, compelling many Indians to flee their homeland with the grim truth that 'nothing could be worse than the situation at home' (Gupta 2008:10). The world now saw the reality of

[2] *Lagaan* – Tribute, as in the payment to a feudal lord of a portion of a serf's harvest.

British Imperialism in India: clearly it was not a benevolent or moral rule at all.

2.7 The Zondi Zulu Clan Rebellion

Locally, in South Africa, there was a war against British imperialism (1879) in which the Zulu were subdued, and a short uprising by the dissident Zondi Zulu clan, against the imposition of a one pound tax promulgated by the Natal authorities in 1905 to push more Africans into wage labour. Led by the Zondi Chief, they were routed by the Natal army in 1906 and like in India, the leaders, Bambatha and Dinizulu were soon subdued. 'Bambatha was beheaded and his head was displayed as a trophy as an ominous warning to other would be rebels' (South African History Online 2021a).

2.8 Abolition of Slavery

In 1833, slavery was abolished in the British colonies, giving rise to a labour crisis. At this time, sugar dictated a large share of the world's economy. J.R. Saunders stated in the *Natal Mercury*, 'For our sugar growing prospects, the Indians are indispensable.' On 7 August 1860, the authorities in India gave consent for the emigration of labourers to the colony of the then Natal.

2.9 Role of Arkatis (Touts): First Contact, Commission, Enticements and Role of Recruiter

Williams Collins, the Postmaster-General of Natal, was appointed as the Coolie Immigration Agent and he was sent to India to make preliminary arrangements for immigrants to come to Natal. He appointed emigrant agents in Calcutta and Madras to represent the colony of Natal. India appointed a protector of emigrants who was tasked with the responsibility and control of all indentured emigration. Subagents were appointed as assistants who appointed recruiters. These recruiters appointed unlicensed touts called Arkatis to canvas would-be-emigrants. Whilst there were reasons to emigrate, the Arkatis played a crucial role in the system. The touts earned commissions for each person they recruited. The Arkatis, in order, to establish contacts, frequented markets, stations, bazaars, melas, etc. The would-be emigrants had to be males aged 35 years and females aged 30 years to qualify for selection. Once the contact was established,

the Arkatis handed his find to the recruiter, who in turn took them to the depot. The chief depot in Calcutta was near the Hoogly River, one of the mouths of the sacred and mighty Ganges River. The West India depot was situated in Garden Reach on the south bank of the same river. Those in South India were sent to Madras.

The Arkatis established the first contact with the would-be emigrants by using their local knowledge to determine:

- who was in desperate need of financial assistance;
- who was in debt;
- who owed lagaan (tax);
- who had experienced disgrace in family or community;
- who had fallen foul of the law;
- who was credulous enough to take for granted the false promises made by the touts;
- widows seeking emancipation;
- who was unable to afford a dowry;
- who was unable to pay back money advanced to them;
- who was promised of greater earnings and opportunities;
- the threats made to the doubters and the reluctant;
- the child labourer: Sanichari: 49 660; and
- the adventure seekers: Mehi Sahu Mahilall 29 953.

2.10 Enticements By Arkatis

2.10.1 Natal (South Africa)

> The streets are lined with gold – chili trees bore gold ... land of the *devas* (Gods) (De Verteuil 1989:1).

2.10.2 Trinidad

> Hugh mounds – veritable mountains of sugar – simply to sift the sugar' for which they will be well paid 'and carry a broad canvas belt to store the gold he would earn at the rate of one shilling a day (De Verteuil 1989).

2.10.3 Mauritius

Stoop to collect gold under rocks (De Verteuil 1989:1).

De Verteuil (1989:1) concludes that the prospect of high wages, freedom from starvation and war, from possible reprisal by the British or the money lender, the recruiters promises of easy money, and social upliftment in a foreign land where money was no problem, enticed many an emigrant.

3 Promises made to Emigrants by the Colonialists

Some promises made to the Indentured Labourers:

- Free passage to the then Colony of Natal and return to India after indenture: Optional;
- Medical attention to be provided to them in the depots, ships and place of indenture;
- Free accommodation and food rations;
- Wages were 10 shillings per month rising by one shilling per month after every year;
- Ten-year indentured period (three years at first and later increased to five years);
- They would work six days per week; and
- They were allowed half an hour for breakfast and one hour for lunch every day.

4 Arrival: Life in the Depots

On arrival, the new recruit had to take a bath, was issued with new clothes, submit to a medical inspection to establish that they were fit to handle farming implements and fit for a three-month voyage on a ship. According to Hindu etiquette, a lady must not talk to a stranger without a medium[3], nor must they be

[3] Sri Ramacharitamanasa, the Ramayana of Goswami Tulsidas (1986:619): According to Hindu etiquette, a lady must not talk to a male stranger without a medium.

subjected to a medical inspection. This was against the grain of customary laws in India. There were stringent measures to segregate single men and women.

The immigrants were then placed in temporary barracks (wooden lazarettes) and tents on the Bluff as the wood and iron barracks were not ready. The walls were high to prevent anyone from escaping. Their quarters were cramped and congested and they were exposed to diseases in the unhealthy living conditions. They remained in these barracks for almost three months before being allocated to the owners of the different estates.

5 The Estates

Labourers were housed in estates belonging to the planters. The immigrants had to construct huts made of dried cane and mealie stalks put together, wattle and daub thatched roofs and they were expected to make improvements in their own time. Huts were also made of tin packing cases or grass – full of holes allowing wind and rain to penetrate. The workers were advanced ten pounds towards the cost of these dwellings and which they had to repay during their term of indenture to the planters. Labourers were also housed in 'Coolie Lines' or rows of corrugated iron buildings divided into tiny rooms by wooden partitions. No sanitation or bathing facilities were provided; rooms were too small and congested; there were no windows for ventilation; no privacy as the partitions were lower than the ceilings; floors were lower than the outside surface and as a result water flowed inside and caused dampness. Fires were lit on the floor for cooking and there was danger of a fire breaking out during cooking. Poisonous fumes from the fire led to several deaths.

The Protector said in a report:

> *I do not know of any estate on which the horse stable is not better than the Coolie huts* (De Verteuil1989).

Similar housing conditions also prevailed in Trinidad, prompting author Anthony de Verteuil, in his study of Eight East Indian Immigrants to state,

> *At mealtimes the spicy smell of Indian cooking could tempt the appetites, while on the other hand the wind sometimes brought the odour of faeces from the nearby fields* (De Verteuil1989).

6 The Workload and Preparation of Meals

The labourers were awakened by the Sirdar at around 3:00 am on larger plantations. They prepared breakfast and lunch and walked to work in the fields, which could be up to four miles away, and then walked back to the barracks late in the evening and prepared the evening meal when they were absolutely fatigued. The working hours were from dawn to dusk, six days a week. Many employers compelled the labourers to work on Sundays and during full moon in the harvesting period.

7 Non-Payment of Wages, Withholding Ration

There was the practice of non-payment of wages and withholding food rations in contravention of their contracts. Labourers were not allowed to leave within a radius of one mile from the estates without the written permission of the employer. In the then Province of Natal they paid one shilling for permission. Trinidad attempted to lay down regulations forbidding Indian immigrants from leaving estate without the permission of the planters. However, the Imperial Government at once took alarm at such restrictions of the labourers personal freedom and disallowed what the anti-slavery group had dubbed 'the new slave code of Trinidad' (Laurence1986:23).

In Trinidad, absence from work without the planter's permission was a criminal offence carrying penalties of a fine or imprisonment,[13]and if they were found more than two miles away from their estate on weekdays without a pass, they were liable for arrest without a warrant, except that each immigrant came to be entitled to 'two seven-day passes each year' (Laurence1986:25).

8 Reynolds Bros

The Reynolds brothers owned acres upon acres of sugar plantations in the Umzinto area.

> *The problems at Reynolds were well known to the authorities and came under the purview of the Wragg Commission in the mid-1880s* (Desai & Vahed 2010:132).

Charlie Reynolds, known as the butcher of Umzinto, supervised Indians at Umzinto Estate of Reynolds Brothers. Protector Louis Mason visited the Es-

tate on 13 July 1886. He told the Wragg Commission:

> *I had the Indians mustered as usual. To the end that my conversation with them might be perfectly free and that the men might be relieved from any influence to the presence of their superiors might have, I desired Mr Reynolds and his overseers and Sidar to withdraw. He declined to do so and the Indians being asked questions in their presence did not seem inclined to speak freely on even minor matters.* (Desai & Vahed 2010).

Charlie Reynolds defended his actions on the grounds that Mason had an 'obnoxious' effect on Indians. I have more men punished within a month after one of those obnoxious visits of the Protector than for six months when he has not made a visit. Commissioners were impressed with the knowledge which Mr Reynolds possessed concerning the habits of the Indian labourers and with the sympathy which appeared to guide his arrangements for their comfort and welfare (Desai & Vahed 2010).

As far as the Commission was concerned, the Legislature did not intend to place in the hands of the Protector a power which could not but annoy employers, would inevitably lower them in the eyes of his servants, and would lead to insubordination and the concocting of many false complaints. As Warhurst observed, the Protector had been firmly put in his place while Reynolds received continued unsolicited testimonials (Desai & Vahed 2010).

Charles Reynolds continued to abuse his workers, aware that he had a powerful ally in the form of the state. Despite reports of unnatural deaths through suicides, burns and assault by overseers, the Wragg Commission concluded with Reynolds Bros that the Protector's actions resulted in a loss of respect and consequent insubordination against the employers. The Commission came to this conclusion, even though visits to the estate on 22 and 24 June 1885 recorded horrendous conditions. The water was infested with human excrement, venereal disease was rampant, and assault common. There was no findings against Reynolds Bros and maltreatment continued unabated (Desai & Vahed 2010).

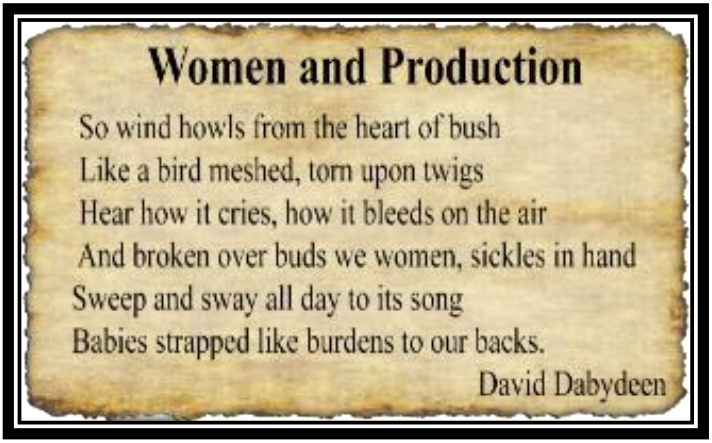
> *Charlie Reynolds acted with impunity, emboldened by the knowledge that he could escape flagrant breaches of the system. Durban Magi-*

> *strate Herbert Miller assisted Mason in an inquiry in November 1900 … despite many complaints the Commissioners concluded that there was no evidence of systematic abuse and that most workers appeared to be quite content and satisfied with their work and treatment* (Desai & Vahed 2010).

9 Abuse of Women

Women were treated particularly harshly. Protector Polkinghorne presented evidence showing that those with suckling children were in the fields for eleven hours. When he raised this with a white overseer, he was told that Indians had never been 'so well treated as at present, and if they were to be treated better he would have to leave' (Desai & Vahed 2010:139). Overworking women was a long-standing practice. In 1879, Dr L.P. Booth stated the deleterious effect of women working long hours in the cane fields hoeing and weeding,

> *In the crowd of women are always some in the earlier stages of pregnancy, some suckling babies, and many who have left a number of little children behind them in their huts, so that not only is the health of these women subjected to risks, which need not be particularised at a time when they required all care and consideration but the children are left to injure themselves … and to scramble up to adult life as best as they may* (Desai & Vahed 2010:13).



Protector Polkinghorne described the impact of physical work on women workers,

> *With cane cutting, the work is of the dirtiest nature as the canes are usually burnt and consequently the clothing and skin of the Indian becomes covered with the burnt trash, and consequently they arrive back in a filthy condition. It can easily be imagined what is the state of women with children who arrive back late in this condition when water has to be fetched, food cooked and children attended to after the toil of the day … Seeing that they have to turn out at dawn and they also had to get what fuel they can* (Desai & Vahed 2010).

They engaged on Sundays to gather fuel for the week, but in some barracks at least firewood was very difficult to procure and the Indians therefore had to depend on dried cane chiefly, which burns out very quickly. The Commission heard that the women were forced to work until the seventh month of their pregnancy. In some cases, because women were denied rations when they stopped working, in breach of their contract, they worked until the ninth month, gave birth and immediately returned to employment.

Vellay Munami (94 999), ill and pregnant, was forced to exacting task work. She was just 19 years old when she was placed at Reynolds Bros in September 1902. The Protector noticed during one of his visits that she was pregnant and ill and instructed the manager to send her to hospital. However, she was made to work the whole of the following day before receiving medical attention, and lost her baby through a miscarriage. As soon as Vellay returned to Esperanza, she was put back to work in the fields, despite Dr Rouillard prescribing a minimum of 21 days' rest. The excuse of the manager, Tracey, was that Vellay did not have a 'note' from the hospital to be put off work. Polkinghorne replied that common humanity should have suggested this to the manager.

This was not an isolated incident. Reynolds Bros flouted section 17 of *Law 25 of 1891*, which required of women to do light fieldwork and not be made to carry heavy loads of sugar cane. Dr Rouillard reported to the Protector in August 1904 that Chinnamati was suffering from spinal disease as a result of persistent exposure to poor sanitary conditions. Despite her debilitating disease, she was 'assaulted by a Sirdar when she stated that she was unable to work when she was already suffering from the present disease' (Desai & Vahed 2010).

Reynolds Bros provided a meagre diet. Essential items such as dhal, salt and ghee were often not supplied for half the year. The Protector reported in 1904 that the Company was not supplying dhal, which constituted half the monthly protein content of the diet and when food was provided, the quality was often so poor that workers took ill. Dr Conran, medical officer for part of 1905, certified that a sample of food he tested was bound to produce illness. Dysentery, enteritis and other diarrhoeal diseases resulting from polluted water, poor diet and lack of adequate shelter ranked as causes of death on the estate. Men who were ill but could stay upright were forced into the female gang where they received half pay.

Dr. Hill reported that housing at Umzinto was 'appalling' and that the barracks failed to meet rudimentary standards. Many were condemned as unfit for human habitation. Overwork, malnourishment and squalid living conditions contributed to the high death rate. McLaren, an employee at the estate hospital, told the Commission that Reynolds Bros' workers were,

> usually weak individuals. You would make no mistake in picking out Messrs Reynolds Indians in the hospital as they are a needy looking lot. Despite marshalling evidence of maltreatment from many sources, Polkinghorne was concerned that little would be done because Reynolds Bros' reach was long. He felt that the case, notwithstanding the evidence, was slipping away (Desai & Vahed 2010).

10 Unjust Justice

Polkinghorne was distraught and wrote to the colonial secretary on 20 September 1906,

> *To me it is the shame and injustice of it all, that such a state of affairs should be allowed to continue and that as a statuary officer I should be compelled to allot Indians to the Company under the circumstances …. Subsequent to the inquiry, reports of ill-treatment persisted* (Desai & Vahed 2010:13).

C.W. Petchell, an engineer with the Company (Reynolds Bros) conceded that some employees worked from 3:00 am until 04:00 pm the following afternoon, then returned for night shift. Extra men took the place of

men as they dropped out. Another supervisor, F. Mellon testified that in the mill, workers could start as early as 02:00 am and finish around 07:00 pm. They were not provided with food nor allowed to eat while crushing cane in the boiler (Desai & Vahed 2010:13).

E.B. Gaultier, head sugar boiler at Old Esperanza Mill, told the commission (Polkingshorne) that the same 70 men worked the morning and night shifts. He recounted a conversation with the employee who told him that he worked for Reynolds Bros. In the time of Ashton (former manager), the boys used to hang themselves in the cane (Desai & Vahed 2010:13).

10.1 Henry Shire

> *On 17 January 1862 … 22 workers walked off Henry Shires melkhout kraal estate in Umhlanga … Workers complained of irregular payment of wages, flogging from Shire and Sirdar Ramsamy, the poor quality of rations and long working hours. Sirdar Ramsamy did not let Shire down. Faced with a biased magistrate in Verulam and an interpreter who did not fully understand their language …. The workers left the estate* en masse *and turned up at the magistrates office in Durban 'in hope that the magistrate of this court, where there is a properly qualified interpreter – could and would grant redress for their grievances.* (Desai & Vahed 2010:13).

Instead, they were imprisoned for 14 days for leaving the estate without Shire's permission, an additional 14 days when they refused to return to work, and a further seven days when they hired an attorney to petition the Governor.

10.2 The Shire Commission

The authorities eventually relented and constituted the Shire Commission. A litany of abuse was laid at the door of the Commission. The Commission reported on 10 April 1862 that Shire extended the workday, deducted wages unlawfully, placed workers on half diet, and used Africans to administer beatings. The Commission, however, decided to take a 'favourable view' and not punish Shire, because he had 'great difficulty in obtaining work from his coolies'. This made him 'exceedingly irritated' and accounted for his actions. The Commission was emphatic, however, that the authorities should not accede

to workers request to be transferred, as they were entitled by law, as this would set a 'bad precedent'. The findings were a clear signal to employers that they could act with impunity, and for the workers it became clear that they could not rely on the law.

11 Mahatma Gandhi's Movement

The Shire report may have muted collective protest, but the spirit of resistance had been raised. Mohandas (later Mahatma) K Gandhi's Passive Resistance Movement from 1906 onwards was strongly supported by Migrant Indentured Labourers who were not exposed to make such sacrifices in their rural India. The response of this labouring class was simply remarkable. Gandhi was in South Africa from 1893 to 1914, and it was here that he mastered his political resistance strategies.

12 The Coolie Commission

The Coolie Commission of 1872, however, subsequently prohibited the practice of flogging. That did not mean an end to human rights abuses by the plantation masters and their boss boys, who included Indian Sirdars. An unrepentant Thomas Reynolds said, 'that to do away with flogging was to show ignorance in how white people needed to deal with native races'. (https://www.iol.co.za/mercury/opinion/feature-justice-for-indentured-indians-remains-elusive-38004489)

13 1906 Reynolds Commission

Two of the three commissioners accepted the veracity of Polkinghorne's evidence. The Commission, however, was loathe to take action against Reynolds Bros., despite the mass of evidence marshalled by Polkinghorne against the company. The colonial secretary advised Polkinghorne on 17 August 1907 that he did 'not consider it necessary to interfere with the management as long as the present improvement is maintained'.

14 Poverty in India

Premchand, a novelist from India, in his novel of Peasant India, titled *Godan*,

gives an on-the-spot account of what enticed the poorest of the poorest to consider emigration. In the Hindi language, Godan is a donation of a cow to a Hindu priest. Godan by Premchand is one of the most famous novels written by the stalwart writer.

Why should one touch the soles of a Zamindar's feet?

> *... During the twenty years of her married life, she had fully realised that even if she lived a niggardly life, stinted on every foot and clothes, scraped together every elusive anna, it was difficult to liquidate the rent of the Zamindar.' And what was her age?' (36) … canker of poverty. Why so much obsequiousness for a life which did not provide even the daily bread? Her mind would often rebel against such a state of affairs (Premchand 1939).*

'Would emigration, with all those promises, not entice such a family to seek greener pastures?'

15 Conclusion

The conditions in India, the unjust justice and abuses of indenture in the Colony of Natal are not just ideological perspectives, but lived experiences that require further research. The opportunity to engage oral history interviews with nonagenarians exists and thus the need by academia and research faculties to immediately engage the elder custodians who may possess primary knowledge and known truths, as experienced by their ancestors. The value of the spoken word and the shared telling and retelling of happenings may introduce new information that adds to the body of knowledge that exists.

Some researchers regard the mass migration of indentured labourers from India as 'Female emancipation' (Emmer 1986:248); 'A new system of Slavery' The export of Indian Labour overseas: 1830–1920 (Tinker 1974); 'An imperial re-allocation of Labour' (Kale 1998); 'Indenture was an Alternate Form of Slavery' (Gandhi); 'Nothing more than hard-working serfs in a feudal Colony Fighting for Justice' (Naidoo 2010) and 'An incarnation of Slavery' (Singh 2020, cited in Rajbansi 2020:85). The appendices that follow include global statistics, maps, poems, pictures, and reproduced original documents that add to the collection on paraphernalia on indentured Indians in South Africa.

There is much oral history research that can be undertaken to uncover what descendants of the indentured labourers have in their possession.

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Annexures

Annexure 1: Global Statistics 1834 to 1924

Emigration: Worldwide – From India

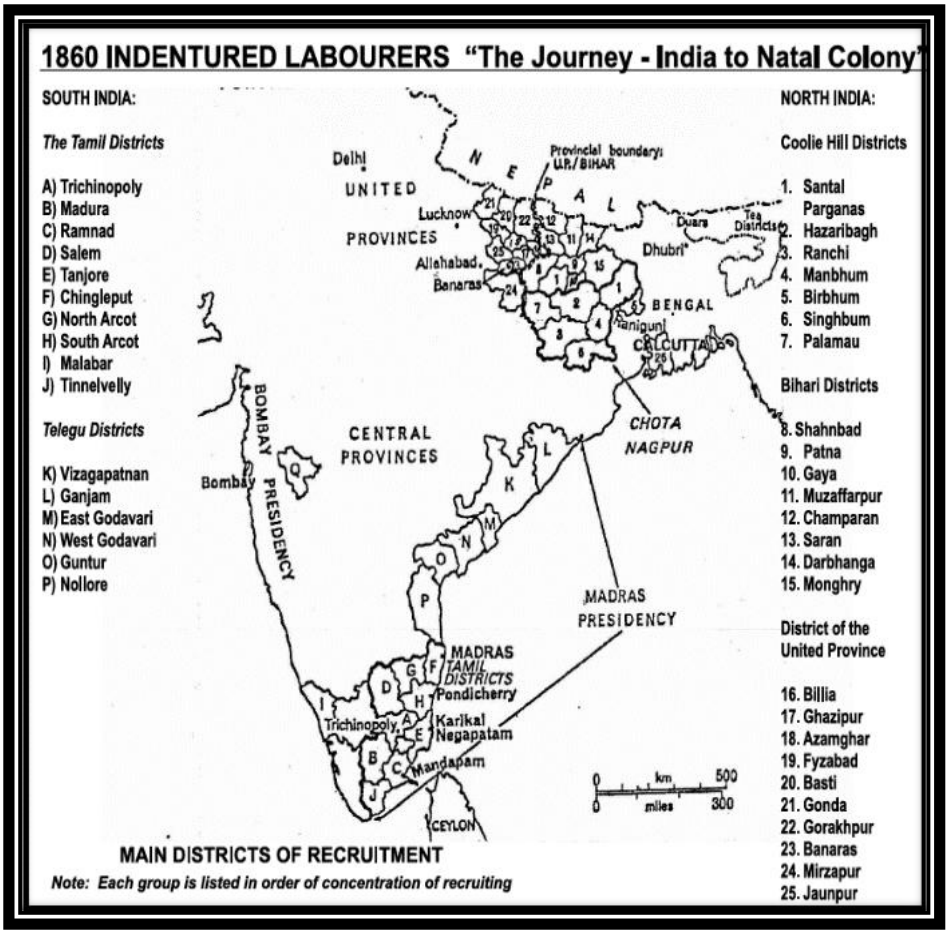
Mauritius	1834–1912	453 063
British Guiana	1838–1917	238 909
Natal – South Africa	1860–1911	152 184
Trinidad	1845–1917	143 39
Reunion	1829–1924	118 000
Fiji	1879–1916	60 969
Guadeloupe	1854–1885	41 326
East Africa: Kenya, Uganda	1995–1901	39 771
Jamaica	1854–1885	36 420
Dutch Guiana: Surinam	1873–1916	34 000
Martinique	1854–1889	25 509
French Guiana	1804–1876	19 296
Seychelles	1899–1916	6 319
*St Lucia	1858–1895	4 350
*Granada (W.I.)	1856–1885	3 200
St Vincent	1861–1880	2 472
Danish Colony: St Croix	1863–?	
*St Kitts	1861–1865	?
Ceylon	1876 ?	337
Malay States	1844	910 ?

*(British Caribbean)

Reference : Hindu Trinidad:- Steven Vertovec; The National Archives. Kew, Richmond, Surrey

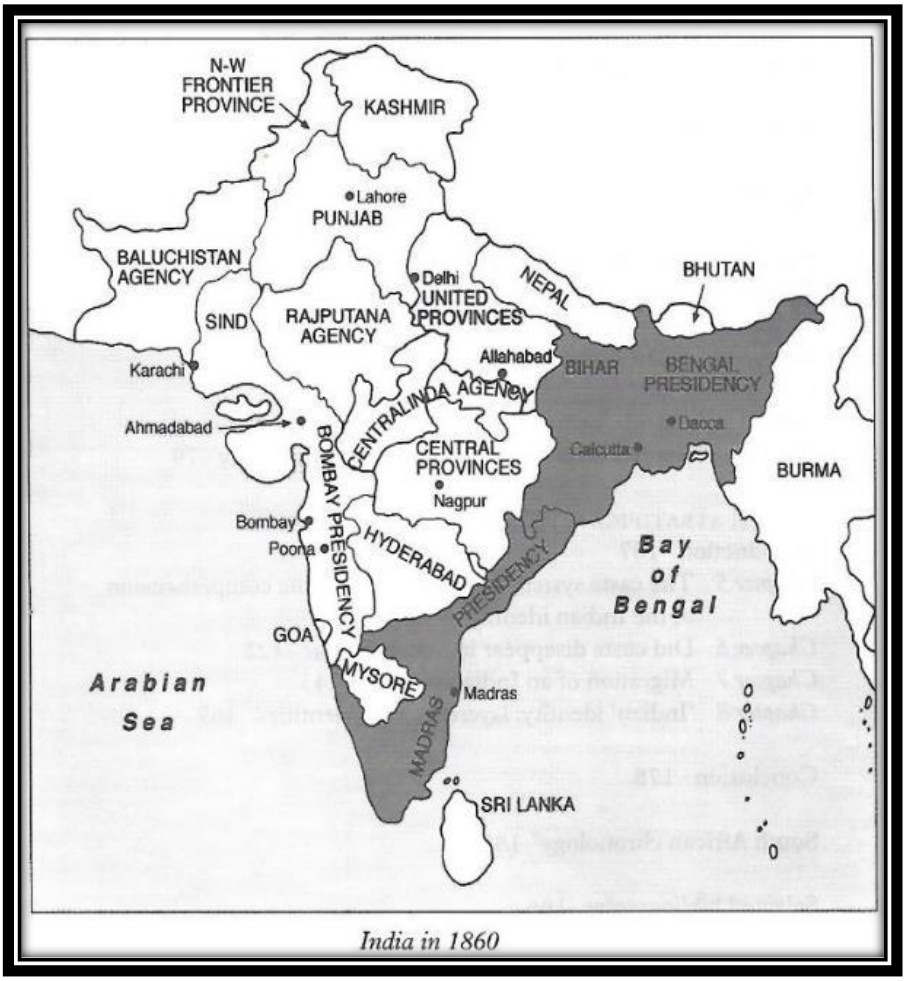
Source: Rajbansi (2021:45)

Annexure 2: Maps – A Journey to the Unknown

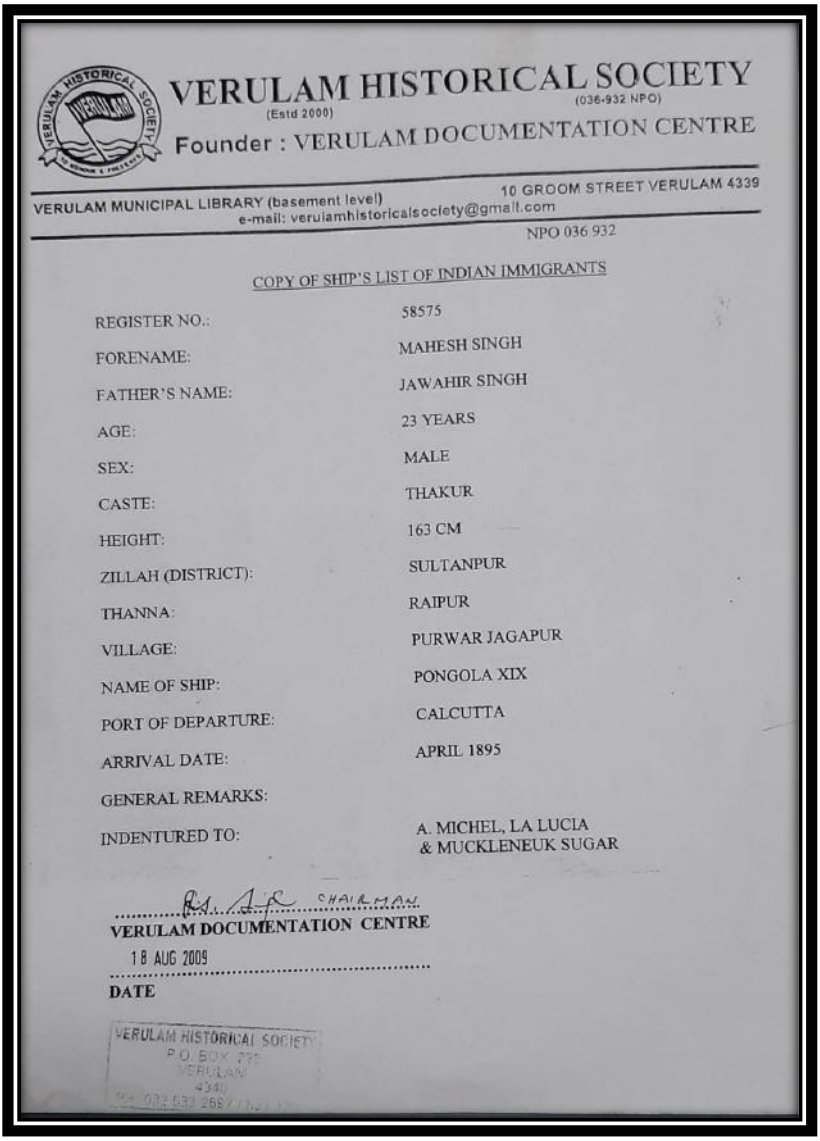


Map: C.G. Henning (1993) and Ebr Vally (2021)

Annexure 3: India in 1860



Annexure 4: A Reproduced Version of a Ship List



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COPY OF SHIP'S LIST OF INDIAN IMMIGRANTS

REGISTER NO.:	58575
FORENAME:	MAHESH SINGH
FATHER'S NAME:	JAWAHIR SINGH
AGE:	23 YEARS
SEX:	MALE
CASTE:	THAKUR
HEIGHT:	163 CM
ZILLAH (DISTRICT):	SULTANPUR
THANNA:	RAIPUR
VILLAGE:	PURWAR JAGAPUR
NAME OF SHIP:	PONGOLA XIX
PORT OF DEPARTURE:	CALCUTTA
ARRIVAL DATE:	APRIL 1895
GENERAL REMARKS:	
INDENTURED TO:	A. MICHEL, LA LUCIA & MUCKLENEUK SUGAR

CHAIRMAN
VERULAM DOCUMENTATION CENTRE
18 AUG 2009
DATE

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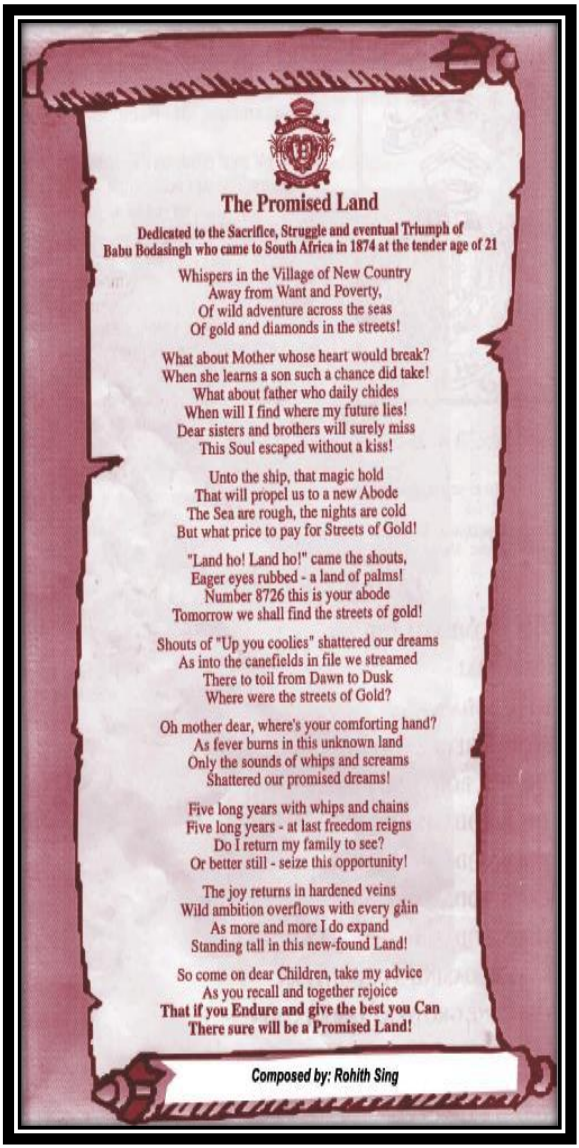
Annexure 5: Bodasing Dynasty Brochure



The Promised Land

Dedicated to the Sacrifice, Struggle and eventual Triumph of Babu Bodasingh who came to South Africa in 1874 at the tender age of 21

Whispers in the Village of New Country
Away from Want and Poverty,
Of wild adventure across the seas
Of gold and diamonds in the streets!

What about Mother whose heart would break?
When she learns a son such a chance did take!
What about father who daily chides
When will I find where my future lies!
Dear sisters and brothers will surely miss
This Soul escaped without a kiss!

Unto the ship, that magic hold
That will propel us to a new Abode
The Sea are rough, the nights are cold
But what price to pay for Streets of Gold!

"Land ho! Land ho!" came the shouts,
Eager eyes rubbed - a land of palms!
Number 8726 this is your abode
Tomorrow we shall find the streets of gold!

Shouts of "Up you coolies" shattered our dreams
As into the canefields in file we streamed
There to toil from Dawn to Dusk
Where were the streets of Gold?

Oh mother dear, where's your comforting hand?
As fever burns in this unknown land
Only the sounds of whips and screams
Shattered our promised dreams!

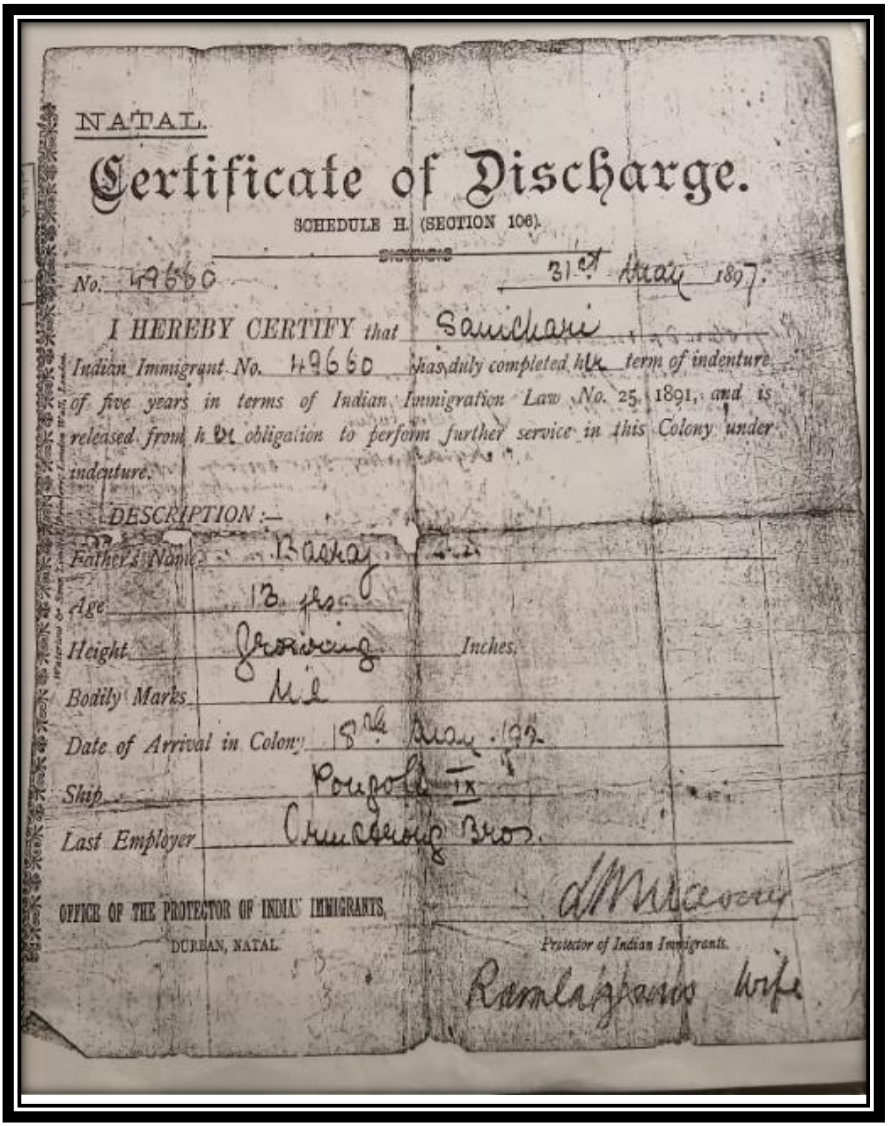
Five long years with whips and chains
Five long years - at last freedom reigns
Do I return my family to see?
Or better still - seize this opportunity!

The joy returns in hardened veins
Wild ambition overflows with every gain
As more and more I do expand
Standing tall in this new-found Land!

So come on dear Children, take my advice
As you recall and together rejoice
That if you Endure and give the best you Can
There sure will be a Promised Land!

Composed by: Rohith Sing

Annexure 6: Child Labour at the age of 8



NATAL.

Certificate of Discharge.

SCHEDULE H. (SECTION 106).

No. 19660 31st May 1897.

I HEREBY CERTIFY that Sanchari

Indian Immigrant No. 19660 has duly completed his term of indenture of five years in terms of Indian Immigration Law No. 25, 1891, and is released from his obligation to perform further service in this Colony under indenture.

DESCRIPTION :—

Father's Name Baskay

Age 13 yrs.

Height Growing Inches.

Bodily Marks Nil

Date of Arrival in Colony 18th May 192

Ship Pongola IX

Last Employer Cruickshank Bros.

OFFICE OF THE PROTECTOR OF INDIAN IMMIGRANTS, DURBAN, NATAL.

Protector of Indian Immigrants.

Ramlagan's wife

J.S. Singh Collection

Annexure 7: Sugar – The Indian Connection

- The Sanskrit word for sugar is *shakara*, which also means 'gravel' or 'sand'.
- Sugar developed in India where people originally chewed raw sugar cane for its sweet juice.
- In India, a method was discovered to convert sugar juice into granulated crystals (or sugar grains). This happened sometime during the Gupta Dynasty around 350 AD, the Golden Age of Indian civilization.
- The early method of refining was to pound or grind the sugar cane in order to extract the juice.
- The juice was boiled or dried in the sun until it formed into sugar grains (a process known as crystallization).
- Travelling Buddhist monks carried crystallization methods into China.
- Indian sailors spread the use of sugar along the various trade routes through to Europe (where it was known as 'sweet salt').
- At first, sugar was a luxury enjoyed only by the rich.
- Later, with better methods of producing sugar, even the poor were able to afford it.
- With increasing use of this product, sugar became an important commodity in the world's economy.
- When slavery was abolished, the British colonial planters were deprived of cheap labour. When they looked around for other forms of cheap labour they realized that the indenture system would help boost sugar production.
- Thereafter, the indentured labour supplanted slavery.
- It is important to note that this very commodity, namely sugar, which had its origins in India, was ultimately responsible for the movement of the Coolie from India to different parts of the British Empire, including the then Colony of Natal.

Source: Rajbansi 2021:14

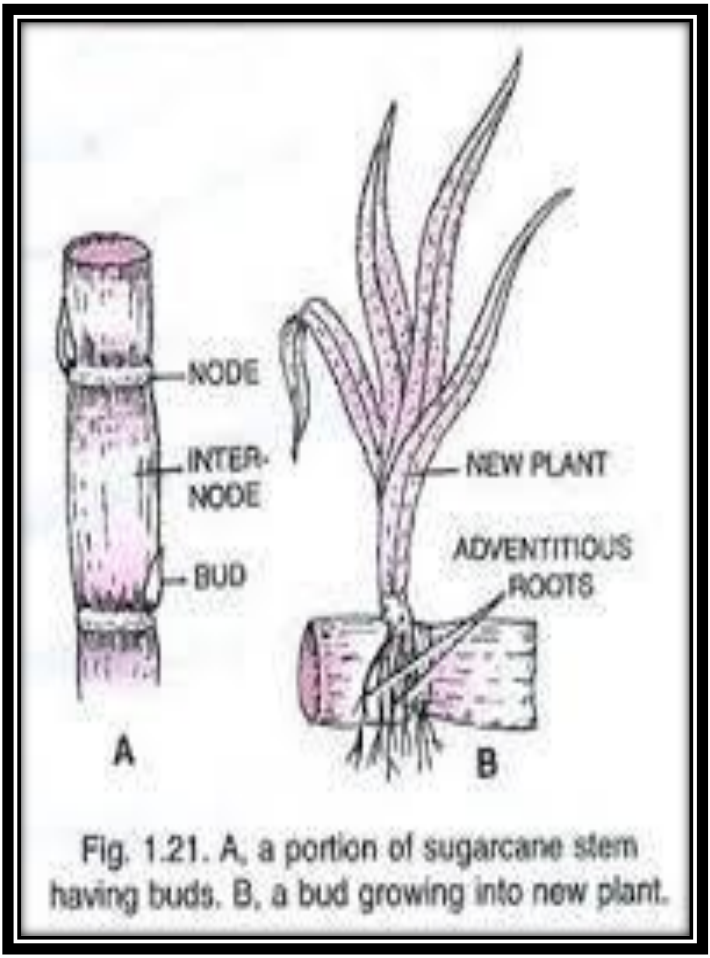


Fig. 1.21. A, a portion of sugarcane stem having buds. B, a bud growing into new plant.

Acknowledgements

I have relied heavily (for the stark realism of this narrative of the Great Indian Migration) on several authors for their painstaking, committed research and empathy for the most unusual movement of human beings in the world. If there is any error of historical fact or interpretation, the error is solely mine. Please forgive this fledgling scribe for inadequately failing to acknowledge some researchers in this episode:

- To Prof. Goolam Vahed: Co-author of *Inside Indian Indenture: A South African Story 1860-1914* (2010) and *Many Lives.150 years of Being Indian in South Africa*, for reading my script to ensure that the relevance of my subject is not lost.
- My grateful thanks and appreciation to Kimenthri Aveyan and Naran Rajbansi for typing my script.
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- Prof. Shanta Balgobind Singh for according me the opportunity to contribute a chapter in this publication on *Indenture* on behalf of the 1860 Indentured labourers Foundation, Verulam (Est. 2008).

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Retired School Principal
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