

**INDENTURED LABOUR FROM INDIA TO MAURITIUS :
1834-1920**

*Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the award of the Degree of
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY*

ALOK KUMAR SINHA

**CENTRE FOR WEST ASIAN AND AFRICAN STUDIES
SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI-110067,
INDIA
1994**



जवाहरलाल नेहरू विश्वविद्यालय
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI - 110067

CENTRE FOR WEST ASIAN AND AFRICAN STUDIES
SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

CERTIFICATE

Certified that the dissertation entitled,
"INDENTURED LABOUR FROM INDIA TO MAURITIUS : 1834-1920",
submitted by Mr. Alok Kumar Sinha, is in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Degree
of **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY** of this University. This
dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree
to this University or to any other University and is his
own work.

We recommend that this dissertation be placed
before the examiners for evaluation.


DR. (MRS.) GULSHAN DIETHL
CHAIRPERSON


PROF. ANIRUDHA GUPTA
SUPERVISOR

CONTENTS

	Page No.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	i-ii
PREFACE	iii-iv
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND - THE SETTING UP OF THE INDENTURE SYSTEM IN MAURITIUS	1-16
CHAPTER II: FACTORS OF EMIGRATION FROM INDIA 1834-1920	17-38
CHAPTER III: THE SYSTEM OF RECRUITMENT OF INDENTURED LABOURERS FOR MAURITIUS	39-57
CHAPTER IV: THE IRREGULARITIES ON THE PLANTATIONS AND THE END OF THE INDENTURE SYSTEM	58-75
CONCLUSION:	76-81
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY	82-86

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Few human endeavours succeed without the active cooperation and encouragement of their fellow beings. It is high time that I acknowledge all those persons whose help went a long way in preparing and finishing my present work.

First of all, I am deeply indebted to my supervisor PROFESSOR ANIRUDH GUPTA for his constant support, efficient guidance and constructive criticism. The present study could not have reached fruition without his kind help. His great insight on the subject helped me to explore many difficult ideas while doing my research. I am again thankful to him that he gave me adequate time and vital suggestions even in the midst of pressing time.


Helps, encouragements and goodwishes have come from many sources. On the personal side, I owe a lot to my parents. They have been a constant source of inspiration in my academic pursuits, of which this dissertation is a part. It is their blessings and best wishes that gave me power of sustenance for such hardwork.

My thanks are also due to my friends namely Ranjit, Manoj, Rajshekhar, Sanjeev, Kailash and Anil for their active help and encouragement in various stages of this work.

Last but not the least, I am grateful to Mr. Bhupal Singh Bisht for his cooperation in prompt and excellent typing.

Though I have taken advantage from different streams of intellectual thoughts, the views presented in the dissertation are entirely my own and I owe sole responsibility for errors, if any.

2nd July 1994


ALOK KUMAR SINHA

PREFACE

The 19th Century witnessed the arrivals in lands overseas of thousands of Indians. Most of them went as indentured labourers to the British sugar colonies. The emigration of indentured labour started soon after the abolition of slavery and the emancipation of slaves in 1833 (which led to a shortage of labour on plantations). The planters were already looking towards India to make up their labour force. The void was filled by Indian indentured labourers. And thus, from 1834 onwards, we find the emigration of Indian indentured labourers to the sugar colonies. The main countries to which the immigration of indentured labour took place were Mauritius, the Carribean countries and Fiji.

In this dissertation, we have chosen to study the emigration of indentured labour from India to Mauritius, the period being 1834-1920. This study becomes interesting in the light of the fact that currently, about 70% of the Mauritians are of Indian origin, and the major languages spoken in Mauritius are also of Indian origin - Hindi, Bhojpuri, Urdu and Tamil. Besides, a good number of people speak Telegu, Gujarati and Marathi. In this dissertation, an effort has been made to make a comprehensive and holistic study of the entire process of emigration - the setting up of the system in Mauritius, the causes of emigration, the methods of recruitment, the

irregularities on plantations and finally the abolition of the indenture system.

The study is mainly historical and analytical in nature. Secondary materials such as, books and journals have been the main source of reference for the purpose.

The first chapter is introductory and gives the background of the setting up of the indenture system in Mauritius, and the reasons that helped such a system to take its roots.

The second chapter deals with the causes which forced or prompted the Indians to emigrate as indentured labourers to Mauritius. It also surveys the major areas in India from which emigration took place.

The third chapter analyses the nature of the system of recruitment of indentured labourers in India, and stresses specifically on the irregularities in the recruitment system.

The fourth chapter, deals with the irregularities on the plantations in Mauritius. It further goes on to highlight the condemnation and finally the demolition of the indenture system.

The concluding chapter recapitulates the main arguments in this study and tries to highlight the major conclusions reached upon in the course of research.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND: THE SETTING UP OF THE INDENTURE SYSTEM IN MAURITIUS.

The Republic of Mauritius lies in the Indian Ocean 860 k.m. east of Madagascar between latitudes 19° 58' and 20° 32's. The population of Mauritius is of mixed origin, including people of European, African, Indian and Chinese descent.

Following unsuccessful attempts at colonization by the Dutch in the seventeenth century, the uninhabited island of Mauritius was occupied during the subsequent century by French settlers from the neighbouring island of Reunion, who established sugar plantations. Mauritius passed into British control in 1810.

The sugar plantations used slaves from the continent of Africa. The French Governor Mahe 'de Labourdounnais also used "Indian labour and craftsmanship from the French comptoirs in South India".¹ In fact even before that the Dutch had introduced Indians as slaves in Mauritius - probably from what is now the state of Kerala, and a few from Bengal.

1. Uttam Bissoondoyal, 'Tiger of the Indian Ocean' (Article in the Times of India, New Delhi, Wednesday, June 29, 1994, p. xii, ASCENT)

The economy of Mauritius was based on the sugar plantations flourishing on the labour of slaves. But after the colony came under the Britishers voices were raised against this system. A legislation passed in 1811 made the traffic in slaves a felony, punishable with transportation. "The great majority of abolitionists welcomed the ending of the slave trade: they believed that without the replenishment of supplies, plantation slavery would be unable to survive".² The leaders of the anti-slavery movement then decided that the next step was, "massive and comprehensive manumission of entire slave population".³ The Emancipation Bill was passed in 1833.

The Mauritian sugar industry fell into a crisis as a result of the emancipation. The slaves were legally freed but in practice remained bounded to their former owners as apprentices for further terms of four to six years. Slave emancipation jolted the British colonial sugar industry, leading to a universal decline in sugar production, during the period of Apprenticeship and after.

The sugar industry was severely affected by the labour 'crisis' which resulted, when the emancipees

2. Hugh Tinker - A New System of Slavery: The Export of Indian Labour Overseas 1830-1920 (Oxford University Press, London, 1974, p. 1.)

3. Ibid., p. 2.

withdrew almost totally from plantation labour. This labour crisis has been explained, by most contemporary observers and by subsequent commentators, 'in terms of the former slaves' unwillingness to remain field labourers after emancipation and of their ability to subsist, without recourse to wage employment on the plantations'.⁴ The colonists argued that the slaves deserted the plantations because 'they were innately lazy and irrational'.⁵ However, it can be said that the desertion took place because of the unattractiveness of estate labour on planters' terms and inhuman conditions and because they were better able to make a living elsewhere.

This ability of the slaves depended most importantly on the availability of unoccupied land. In the colonies such as Jamaica, British Guynna and Mauritius, where population density was low and unused arable land in plentiful supply, the emanipees left the estates to engage in peasant agriculture. In Mauritius, some of the free slaves were able to save enough money during Apprenticeship and thereafter, to purchase freehold plots. "Liberated slaves who were unable to purchase or

4. M.D. North-Coombes - 'From Slavery to Indenture: Forced Labour in the Political Economy of Mauritius 1834-1867' in Indentured Labour in the British Empire 1834-1920', edited by Kay Saunders, (Croom Helm, Australia, 1984, p. 81.)

5. Ibid., p. 83.

rent land, became 'squatters' or illegal occupiers of private or crown land".⁶

The ability of the freed slaves to obtain alternative means of livelihood set the reserve price of plantation labour quite high. Most planters refused to raise wages or improve the working conditions and followed a 'cheap labour strategy to secure an abundant supply of labour at low wages'.⁷ For this they tried to hinder the formation of an independent black peasantry and force back the emancipees on to the plantations. But this attempt failed.

Indians had already been successfully introduced on the plantations as slave-labourers. And so the planters turned greedily towards 'the millions of India, who they believed would be induced to labour in the canefields for a pittance no greater than that awarded to the slave'.⁸

The planters approached the Indian Government through the imperial and colonial governments for a steady and continuous supply of Indian labour. "The earnest

6. M.D. North Coombes - 'From Slavery to Indenture: Forced Labour in the Political Economy of Mauritius 1834-1867' in 'Indentured Labour in the British Empire 1834-1920' edited by Kay Saunders (Croom Helm, Australia, 1984, p. 84.

7. Ibid., p. 85.

8. Hugh Tinker - 'A New System of Slavery: The Export of Indian Labour Overseas 1830-1920' (Oxford University Press, London, 1974, p. 18).

entreaties and the rosy promises held out by the colonial planters and government at a most psychological hour proved decisive".⁹ And organised emigration of Indian labour to the British colonies began from Bengal in 1838 under the supervision and direction of government of India. "The active sympathy of government of India accelerated the pace of emigration".¹⁰

However, the first move towards the export of Indian labourers under government regulation was provided by the French Indian Ocean island of Bourbon or Reunion in 1926. The contracts were for 5 years. Meanwhile, haphazard importation of Indians into Mauritius was beginning. The first attempt at immigration under Governor Corville (1829) was a failure.

In August 1834, the ship SARAH arrived at Port Louis with 39 deck passengers who were assigned to sugar planters. A leading part in the new traffic was taken by the Calcutta firm of F.M. Gillanders and G. Arbuthnot, with plantation interests in Mauritius. Writing to his relative, Robert Gladstone (1835), G. Arbunthnot stated that, 'Their Cost is not half that of a slave'.¹¹ By the

9. C. Kondapi, Indians Overseas 1838-1949 (Oxford University Press, N. Delhi, 1951, p. 5)

10. Ibid., p. 5.

11. Hugh Tinker - 'A New System of Slavery: The Export of Indian Labour Overseas 1830-1920 (Oxford University Press, London, 1974, p. 63.), quoted from S.G. Checkland, The Gladstones: A family biography - 1764-1851, (Cambridge, 1971, p. 318.)

end of 1838 perhaps more than 25,000 Indians had been shipped to Mauritius.

Though the European planters succeeded in inducing the government of India to permit Indian emigration, the large expenditure involved in importing labour in importing labour across the seas to distant colonies like Mauritius, West Indies and Fiji led the planters to devise a system "in which the labourer could be chained to the employer".¹² The one central idea which runs through all stages of Indian emigration has been expressed by Sir Thomas Hyslop as follows: 'We want Indians as indentured labourers but not as free men'.¹³

The time and the circumstances of the origin of indentured labour system of recruitment and emigration, as also the nature of the system which it was intended to replace, moulded mostly the character of the indenture system. Sir William Hunter stated that the indenture system was perilously near slavery. And when the system was later questioned in late 19th and early 20th centuries, eminent Indian public men like Gokhale, Mahatma Gandhi and C.F. Andrews described it as semi-slavery.

12. C. Kundapi, Indians Overseas 1838-1949 (Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1951, p. 6).

13. H. Tinker, A New System of Slavery: The Report of Indian Labour Overseas 1830-1920, (Oxford University Press, 1974, p. 7), quoted from S.A. Waitz: Indians Abroad, Vol. I, IICA, further quoted by Mr. W.S. Hosker, p. 265.

'Indentured labour' is also known as 'contract labour' and 'coolie labour'. And it was known by various names in various colonies for e.g. the contract system was called GIRMIT in Fiji and the contract labour GIRMITIYAS. The nature of 'coolie system' could be understood by the very fact that 'today the term 'coolie' is used to describe any overworked and exploited worker, for overwork and exploitation were the very essence of coolieism'.¹⁴

There is still some disagreement as to the derivation of the term 'coolie'. The reason that so many possible derivations, some of which are quoted below. Have been suggested is, that each mirrors different facet of the system. One suggestion is that the term 'coolie' is derived from a Chinese phrase meaning 'bitter strength', another that it is an Urdu word meaning 'slave'. 'Both are examples of the way in which the term itself reflects the striking resemblance between coolieism and slavery: for a long time the coolie system was distinguishable from slavery only by its legal status'.¹⁵ A further explanation of the term is that it was originally the name of a tribe in western India known to the Portuguese in the 16th century, and that the latter may then have carried it to southern India and China. "It is probably that it then

14. Lydia Potts, The World Labour Market: A History of Migration (Zed Books Ltd. London, 1990, p. 63.)

15. Ibid., p. 63.

came into use in southern India on account of its similarity to the Tamil verb 'to hire'.¹⁶

Elsewhere the word is again said to be derived from the name of a western Indian tribe, but this time the crucial factor is that 'its members often hired themselves out as workers abroad'. (Meyer, 1975).¹⁷ Finally, the term 'coolie' is said to be a mutation of the Indian word for 'wage labourer'.

The term 'indentured system' refers to a clearly defined contractual relationship whereby a migrant worker signs a contract in his/her country of origin which fixes the duration (as a rule five years, but sometimes even less and sometimes eight or less years). It was not possible for an indentured labourer to terminate the contract before expiry, and an actual or alleged breach of contract rendered the worker liable to prosecution.

On the other hand, the employer was also under 'a legal' obligation to provide fixed wages, free housing, medical attendance and other amenities'.¹⁸ But if the plantation owner failed to honour the contract, the worker's chances of enforcing a claim for the few rights granted by that document was slim. In fact, it will be seen in the forthcoming chapters that the legal

16. Ibid., p. 63.

17. Lydia Potts, The World Labour Market: A History of Migration, (Zed Books Ltd., London, 1990, p. 65.)

18. C.Kondepi, Indians Overseas 1838-1949 (Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1951, p. 31).

obligations of the plantation owners were never really binding on them and they flouted the rules and norms to reduce the indentured labourer on living a life of semi-slavery on the plantations.

Thus, to all intents and purposes such contracts meant enslavement, often lasting a lifetime, since 'many of the workers died before their contracts had expired; others had to make up for the time spent in prison, on the run, or in hospital after the expiry of the agreed term, and still more were made to renew their contracts upon expiry, often under duress'.¹⁹

Indentured labour was the form for which the majority of the host nations, especially those outside Asia, recruited and employed Indian workers. Indentured labourers were shipped to a variety of countries including Mauritius (from 1835), the Carribean (from 1838), Natal (from 1860) Fiji (1879).

Apart from the 'indentured system' there were two more forms of coolieism, the KANGANY system and the MAISTRY or contract system. Employers in Ceylon and Malaya used the KANGANY system to recruit their workers. A KANGANY was a foreman in charge of a gang of 25 to 30 coolies. He was an Indian and himself under the control of the plantation's head KANGANY. Each 'KANGANY' acted as

19. Lydia Potts, The World Labour Market: A History of Migration, (Zed Books Ltd., London, 1990, p. 65.

a middleman between the plantation management and the coolies, on all money matters as well. Part of his job was to travel to India with the plantation owner's money to recruit new workers. 'Unlike its Malayan counterpart, the KANGANY system practised in Ceylon was oriented towards extended family structures, each KANGANY led a group of related coolies, and even the recruitment was organized on a family basis'.²⁰

In principle the MAISTRY system, was very similar to the KANGANY system. It too used advances to bind the indebted worker, but in addition its extensive hierarchy - 'from head MAISTRY, through charge MAISTRY, to gang MAISTRY and a labour contractor - meant regular wage costs for the workers and numerous other repressive measures'.²¹ The MAISTRY system was used chiefly to recruit Indian workers in Burma.

The recruitment of indentured labourers for Mauritius etc. was mainly through middlemen called ARKATIS in Northern India. The details of the recruitment and a brief comparative analysis has been dealt in chapter 3.

Coming back to the system in Mauritius, ever since 1838, several abuses were found in respect of the

20. C. Kondapi, Indians Overseas 1838-1949, (Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1951, p. 51)

21. Lydia Potts, The World Labour Market: A History of Migration, (Zed Books Ltd., London, 1990, pp. 79-80.)

treatment of indentured Indian labourers and also as regards to their recruitment. The majority of the irregularities were, "...misrepresentation and deceit, incapacity of the coolies to understand the nature of contracts, prevalence of kidnapping and non-fulfillment of contractual obligations by the planters".²² The gross abuses connected with recruitment and treatment of labourers attracted public attention and the Government ultimately suspended emigration in 1839 and put the whole question of emigration before an enquiry commission.

The Governor of Mauritius requested the Government of India to lift the ban "on the specious ground that even the most illdisposed planters could be controlled against the exercise of arbitrary or unjust power".²³ The suspension order was withdrawn in the case of Mauritius in 1842 and in case of other sugar colonies in 1844. It must also be mentioned that in the period emigration was prohibited, a trickle continued to reach Mauritius. The illegal export of the coolies in this period was mainly carried on through Pondicherry.²⁴

Act XV of 1842 was passed, 'for regulating the emigration of the native inhabitants of all territories

22. C. Kondapi, Indians Overseas 1838-1949, (Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1951, p. 9.)

23. C. Kondapi, Indians Overseas 1838-1949, (Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1951, p. 9.)

24. H. Tinker - A New System of Slavery: The Export of Indian Labour Overseas 1830-1920 (Oxford University Press, London, 1974, p. 70.)

under the government of East India Company to the island of Mauritius'.²⁵ During 1843, 30,218 men and 4,307 women were to pass through the depots in India - the second highest annual intake during the entire Mauritius indentured emigration.

In 1845, the Council of Mauritius Government appointed a committee to report on the causes of the continued demand for labour in the colony despite large-scale immigration. This committee reported that the close competition to obtain labourers had led to the 'most mischievous consequences' in the employment of SIRDARS to procure them, in enticing of men from estates, and in rendering the labourer completely dependent upon the employer.

In 1856 the post of Protector in Mauritius was created by the Act XIX of 1856 to safeguard the interests of the indentured labourers. The years 1858 and 1859 saw emigration reach a peak. In the thirty-five years after the abolition of slavery, the sugar planters of Mauritius with the aid of colonial government and its organs, succeeded in consolidating a system of forced labour, based on Indian immigration and indentured service, which established the dominance of the plantation and of sugar-monoculture in the colonial economy. The ideological and

25. Ibid., p. 75.

coercive means employed to stabilise this system was visibly embodied in the Labour Code of 1867, 'which stands as a landmark in the history of labour repression under British colonialism'.²⁶

The Labour Code of 1867 represented an attempt to place 'old immigrants', and even the free passenger Indians, under the close control and regimentation to which indentured labourers were subjected. In 1872 when voices were raised against the system, there was general complacency in Britain and India. However, the Royal Commission of Enquiry was set up in 1873 to investigate the grievances of Indian labourers. "We are told that the reforms recommended by commissioners W.E. Frere and V.A. Williamson laid the basis for the more 'humane' labour law of 1874, which remained in force till 1922, leading to perceptible improvement in labour conditions".²⁷ However, much of the substance of the Labour Code of 1867 was left intact for example, 3 months. Jail for desertion, indolence, insult etc. Moreover, labour combinations were outlawed till 1937 in Mauritius.

26. M.D. North - Coombes - From Slavery to Indenture: Forced Labour in the Political Economy of Mauritius 1834-1867, in 'Indentured Labour in the British Empire 1834-1920', edited by Kay Saunders (Croom-Helm Australia, 1984, p. 114).

27. M.D. North - Coombes - 'From Slavery to Indenture: Forced Labour in the Political Economy of Mauritius 1834-1867 in Indentured Labour in the British Empire 1834-1920, edited by Kay Saunders (Croom-Helm Australia, 1984, p. 114). - quoted from K. Hazarusinh History of Indian in Mauritius, (Macmillan, Hongkong, 1975).

Thus, the system as it was to continue for another 50 years, was essentially completed by the early 1870s. "An uneasy balance had been evolved between the Indian government, Whitehall, and the various colonies, in which lipservice was paid to the interests of the Indian coolie..."²⁸, while plantation industry was enabled to draw upon a pool of cheap labour with the minimum of leverage against its workers.

The emigration of Indian indentured labour which started in 1834 continued till 1920. In 1909 some 300,00 Indians out of the total of 450,000 who had come in had already settled on the island.²⁹ The law itself abolishing indentured immigration from India was passed in 1916, following the successive motions to the effect by G.K. Gokhale, Pandit M.M. Malviya and the efforts of Mahatma Gandhi. The details of the abolition of the system is dealt with in chapter 4. On 12th March, 1917, the Government of India stopped all recruiting for the colonies and it was finally ended in 1920.

An interesting point to be noted is that it was Mauritius of all Britain's sugar colonies, which weathered the threat of emancipation most successfully. This

28. H. Tinker - A New System of Slavery: The Indian Labour Overseas 1830-1920, (Oxford University, London, 1974, p. 115)

29. Uttam Bissoondoyal, 'Tiger of the Indian Ocean, (Article in the Times of India, New Delhi, Wednesday, June 29, 1994, p. xii - ASCENT).

success came from the adequate supply of indentured labour from India. "Before 1834, Jamaica had produced twice as much and British Guiana seventy five per cent more sugar than Mauritius. Twenty years later, the latter island had become Britain's premier sugar colony: its sugar production had increased to more than twice that of British Guiana's and nearly five times greater than that of Jamaica's"³⁰

The Mauritian success in getting an uninterrupted supply of labour from India could be attributed to many reasons. It is partially due to the island's favourable - geographical location in relation to India. The long standing mercantile connections with the Indian sub-continent dating back to the 18th century, facilitated labour recruitment and trade between the two. Transport costs between the two were considerably lower and the voyage shorter than to the West Indies, giving an edge to the Mauritian planter over his Carribean counterpart in the use of indentured labour. The Indian government also "treated the subject of Indian emigration to the colony as a special case."³¹ In fact the colonial government

/30. M.D. North - Coombes From Slavery to Indenture: Forced Labour in the Political Economy of Mauritius 1834-1867, in Indentured Labour in the British Empire 1834-1920, edited by Kay Saunders (Croom Helm Australia, 1984, p. 79.)

/31. Ibid., p. 93.

described Indian immigration as the, 'sheet anchor of the colonial prosperity'.³²

Thus, the setting up of the indenture system using Indian indentured emigrants on the one hand meant a tale of economic success for the Mauritian planters, while on the other, the system (described by Hugh Tinker as 'a new system of slavery') was largely a tale of woe for more than 450,000 Indians who landed in Mauritius.

32. Ibid., p. 84.

CHAPTER 2

FACTORS OF EMIGRATION FROM INDIA 1834-1920.

The emigrant Indian labourers comprising various castes, classes and nationalities were recruited from different parts of the country extending over a period of over three quarters of a century. This was a very crucial period in the history of India with far-reaching political, social and economic changes. Therefore, the causes of emigration did not remain uniformly valid for all regions and periods.

The emigration operations passed through different phases with peculiarities each of its own. For the sake of convenience, the whole period could be divided into two halves - 1834 to 1860 and 1861 to the end of the indenture system.

Before coming on to the causes it will be worthwhile to mention, that it is somewhat unexpected to find that emigration from India was regarded as a natural phenomenon in the 19th century, when the Hindu objection to crossing the Black Waters is remembered. For most of the Hindus, crossing the sea was 'specially polluting because of the difficulty of obtaining supplies of pure water'.¹

1. Hugh Tinker - A New System of Slavery: The Export of Indian Labour Overseas 1830-1920, Oxford University Press, London 1974, p. 42.

In the first half, particularly in the thirties and forties, the recruiting ground was mainly the tribal areas. Many of the emigrants were so called 'Hill Coolies' who were recruited from the Chotanagpur Division, Shahabad, Bankura, Birbhum and Burdwan districts of the Bengal Presidency.² The main districts in the Chotanagpur division from where the emigrants came from were Hazaribagh, Ranchi, Lohardaga, and Manbhum. The 'Hill coolies' were also called DHANGARS, and were "'semi-aboriginal' people"³ The term DHANGAR is applied to "a hillman who works as a yearly labourer....and who mainly belong to the tribes known as Santhals, Mundas and Oraons".⁴

The DHANGARS practiced jhoom cultivation. But the opening of new cultivated lands was proving costly and hazardous. In such a situation, "the moneylenders tried to appropriate land under cultivation by various means without opening up new lands for fresh cultivation."⁵ There had also been excessive rack-renting by the non-

-
2. Panchanan Saha, Emigration of Indian Labour (1834-1900), PPH, Delhi, 1970, p. 28, Quoted from General Dept. Emigration, records 10 Feb. 1836, No. 11, and Ibid., March, 1861, No.1.
 3. H. Tinker A New System of Slavery. The Export of Indian Labour Overseas, 1830-1920, Oxford University Press, 1974, p. 47.
 4. Ibid., p. 47.
 5. P. Saha, Emigration of Indian Labour (1834-1900), PPH, Delhi, 1990, p. 37., Quoted from Hunter, Statistical Account of HAZARIBAGH, p. 116.

resident landlords and other land speculators who purchased estates in this area by various means.

For long the people had paid their rent to the Raja in kind. But since 1818, they had to pay their rent in money. The introduction of rent in money became a source of oppression to the people. There was another device by which the tribal people were forced to work as bonded servants in the fields of the money-lender. They would become 'KAMIA' or the bond-servant of the creditors. "The KAMIA system came into vogue with the immigrant speculators from the plains of Bihar. This was an obvious means of securing cheap labour in a thinly populated area".⁶ The 'Kamias' executed a formal bond ('SAUNKNAMA') for a loan, the terms of which were three degrees of stringency. Under the first and the most severe, the Kamia found himself and his descendents to serve into perpetuity.

The oppression of the landlords and moneylenders made these people paupers and they started looking for alternate source of employment and livelihood. "These were the Hill Coolies attracted to metropolitan Calcutta, with its opportunities for seasonal employment, and soon to be lured into ships bound for Mauritius and Demerara".⁷

6. P. Saha, Emigration of Indian Labour (1834-1900), PPH, Delhi, 1970, p. 41.

7. H. Tinker, A New System of Slavery - The Export of Indian Labour Overseas 1830-1920, Oxford University Press, London, 1974, p. 49.

As late as in 1867, the Report of the Chotanagpur Mission confirmed the oppression of the landlords - "If the present state of affairs were not soon alteredthe Kols must either perish or emigrate en masse"⁸

The unfortunate tribals were deceived by the recruiters in various ways. Mauritius was described to them in glowing terms and often advantage was taken of their ignorance to provoke the belief that every necessity of life was cheap, labour light and the voyage would take only two days. Moreover, "they were always told that they were created especially as a labouring class"⁹

During the 1840s and 1850s, the DHANGARS formed a sizeable proportion of those taken overseas under indenture. No statistics were kept of their percentage among the emigrants from the port of Calcutta. Hugh Thinker has made a rough guess of about two fifth to as much as half of the indentured emigrants. However, from the middle of the 1950s, their number going to the colonies began to decrease, and by the end of 1860s, they were not systematically recruited for sugar colonies like Mauritius.

The fall in their numbers could partly be attributed to heavy mortality at sea and partly due to

8. P. Saha, Emigration of Indian Labour 1834-1900, Delhi, 1970, p. 42.

9. P. Saha, Emigration of Indian Labour, 1834-1900, PPH, Delhi, 1970, p. 42.

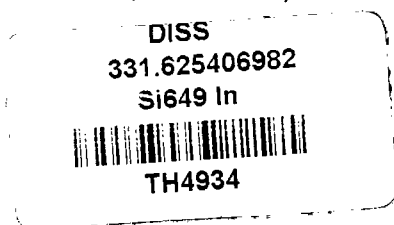
the competition of the tea districts of Assam. "The reports clearly indicate that the death rate among the Hill Coolies was considerably worse than the plains - people".¹⁰ And, from the 1860s, the demand for their labour in the tea districts began to increase. One important area was the Duars on the Bengal Bhutan border. The reason for their growing demand was not only because they were more suitable to withstand the jungle climate, but were also capable of harder work than the people of the plains.

With the drying up of recruiting among the Hill Coolies, the agencies had to concentrate upon other sources of labour. They often took the people who were already available in the ports of embarkation, Calcutta, Madras and Bombay. "These were the flotsam of humanity, drawn to the big city by the prospect of employment which had vanished and left them stranded".¹¹

During the first thirty or forty years of organized emigration, down to about 1870, the main port of embarkation was Calcutta, and the recruiters were furnished from the Calcutta hinterland.

10. H. Tinker, A New System of Slavery: The Export of Indian Labour Overseas 1830-1920, Oxford University Press, London, 1974, p. 49.

11. H. Tinker - A New System of Slavery - The Export of Indian Labour Overseas, 1830-1920, Oxford University Press, London, 1974, p. 51.



N20 ← M34
TH-4934

After the Dhangars, it was necessary to cast the net widely, and "the recruiters turned their eyes towards those areas from which manpower was drawn for the army and other services such as the police: the Gangetic Plains".¹² The search was concentrated upon the districts lying near Benaras, and forming the eastern part of the then North Western Province (later United Province - Uttar Pradesh) and extreme west of Bengal Presidency (Plains of Bihar in the twentieth century). These were the Bhojpuri speaking areas, the other major languages been Awadhi and Magahi.

Northern Bihar, and the 'Benaras Province', as it was called, provided most of the recruits for the East India Company's Bengal Army around the beginning of the 19th century. "Thereafter, the tall, dignified Brahmans and Rajputs of the princely state of Oudh became the infantry sepoy of the Bengal Army, and the Biharis were no longer much in demand".¹³ The Calcutta Emigration Agents began to concentrate their activities in this north-west area, although it was more distant than the country of Dhangars.

"The Biharis were steady and patient and accustomed to hard toil ('docile' in the words of the

12. Ibid., p. 51.

13. H. Tinker, A New System of Slavery - The Export of Indian Labour Overseas, 1830-1920, Oxford University Press, London, 1974, p. 52.

planters").¹⁴ Also they mostly spoke Bhojpuri, one of the dialects of Hindi, and Hindustani was the lingua franca of the emigration traffic. The main Bhojpuri speaking districts were: Arrah Saran, Champaran in Bihar and Azamgarh, Mirzapur, Banaras, Ghazipur, Gorakhpur, Shahabad in Uttar Pradesh. The people of Shahabad were the readiest recruits; they spoke Bhojpuri and responded to the recruiter willingly. Wrote an Englishman about them, "As fond as an Irishman is of a stick, the long-boned stalwart Bhojpuri, with his staff in hand is a familiar object striding over fields far from his home. Thousands of them have emigrated to the British colonies".¹⁵

In fact, the emigration from the Bhojpuri areas had started in the 1830s itself. A committee appointed to study the conditions of Indians in Mauritius, with Judge Campbell as Chairman wrote in 1839. "We estimate from the lands of Indians hitherto examined that more than half of the men brought from the Bengal Presidency are from the western provinces, where the duffadars and crimps found willing dupes to practice upon".¹⁶

14. Ibid., p. 52.

15. P. Saha, Emigration of Indian Labour, 1834-1900, PPH, Delhi, 1970, p. 74.

16. H. Tinker - A New System of Slavery - The Export of Indian Labour Overseas, 1830-1920, Oxford University Press, London, 1974, p. 54.

One of the first systematic accounts of the local origins of the recruits from the plains of North India is contained in a note supplied by Thomas Caird, the very experienced Emigration Agent at Calcutta in 1857. He gave the districts of recruitment as Banaras, Azamgarh, Gorakhpur and Jaunpur in the North Western Provinces, and Ghazipur, Muzaffarpur, Champaran, Shahabad, Gaya and Patna in Bihar alongwith Hazaribagh and Chotanagpur, the homeland of the Dhangars.¹⁷

The increase in the number of emigrants from the above mentioned areas will be further evident from the following figures:

"In the season of 1953-54 total emigrants embarked from the port of Calcutta - 14,368.
Share of Hindi-speaking Zone - 8,000
Share of Chotanagpur region - 2,234"¹⁸

Apart from Calcutta port from where the majority of emigration took place, the emigration also took place from Madras in the south and Bombay. In the south, the Protector of Emigrants of Madras in 1857 named Tanjore,

17. H. Tinker - A New System of Slavery - The Export of Indian Labour Overseas 1830-1920, Oxford University Press, London, 1974, p. 55., Quoted from Public Consultations - Report on the Mentality of Emigrant Coolies, on the Voyages to the West Indies in 1856-1857, (by F.J. Moreat.)

18. P. Saha, Emigration of Indian Labour, 1834-1900, PPH, Delhi, 1970, p. 29., Quoted from Records of Agriculture, Revenue and Commerce, Emigration Department, October 1873, No. 9.

Trichinopoly and South Arcot in south and Ganjam and Rajahmundry in North as the main recruiting grounds.¹⁹

Emigration from Bombay took place to a much lesser extent and emigration under the indenture system from Bombay ceased in 1865. The rise of industry created a demand for industrial labour in Bombay city and Ahmedabad and other cities, 'which absorbed much of the 'floating' labour, which in other parts of India was drawn overseas'.²⁰

Now, before coming on to the causes for the emigration from the Bhojpuri belt to Mauritius, it will be worthwhile to first discuss the social and caste composition of the emigrants. Like the areas of recruitment, the class and castes of Indian emigrants varied from period to period. In the earlier part, the so called 'Hill Coolies' were recruited as seen earlier but in the later period we see batches of different occupations and there were even many among them who had never handled the agricultural implements. "There were also serious charges that a considerable number of them were unfit for agricultural labour due to their old age".²¹

19. Ibid., p. 31, Quoted from the GEOGHAN'S REPORT, 1873.

20. H. Tinker - A New System of Slavery - The Export of Indian Labour Overseas 1830-1920, Oxford University Press, London, 1974, p. 389.

21. P. Saha, Emigration of Indian Labour, 1834-1900, PPH, Delhi, 1970, p. 32., Quoted from General Dept. Records Emigration, 17 July, 1843, No. 27.

In receiving colonies, it was frequently asserted that the emigrants were the lowest and the least desirable elements in Indian population. Sir Lionel Smith, Governor of Mauritius told Lord John Russell (29 Dec. 1840): 'These people from India have been the outpouring of the lowest caste of the population of each presidency, who are deplorably, disorderly and dissolute.'²² And 1870 also such a statement was passed, ".....We get a large infusion of criminal class", (Lt. Col. O'Brien, I.G.P. Mauritius).²³ However, there is no actual evidence that criminal castes or tribes, such as the Thugs, ever joined the emigration.

In fact as early as 1843, alongwith the Dhangars a large number of Hindus of various castes and some Muslims emigrated, which is evident from the comment of the Emigration Agent in Calcutta, "emigrants are people of different castes such as, rajpoot, goala, Kyste, Buneeha, Napit, Kaybatee, Bastam, Kurmee, Kahar, Dhobee, Ghunhuree, Dhangar and Mussalman".²⁴ Mr. Brennan of Bengal Civil service observed from his first hand knowledge of Mauritius that the emigrants were "not merely the lowest

22. Ibid., pp. 55-56.

23. Ibid., pp. 55-56.

24. P. Saha - Emigration of Indian Labour, 1834-1900, PPH, Delhi, 1970, p. 33., Quoted from Record of General Department Emigration, 17 July, 1843, No. 27.

and the most indigent class of people, but a large number of people of high caste and respectability....".²⁵

The Protector of Emigrants began to include an analysis of the ranking of his emigrants in every Annual Report. For the Year 1872-1873, we are told that 2,521 of the emigrants belonged to the high castes, 4,974 to the agricultural castes, 1,537 were artisans and 5,309 were low caste, with 2,910 Muslims.²⁶ Thus, the emigration from North India represented an average sample of the rural population, excluding the trading, clerical and priestly classes.

G. A. Grierson's Report of 1883 analyses the social position of 1200 emigrants from northern Bihar. Of these 264 were Muslims, 231 were of higher caste - (Brahman, Rajput, Chetri), 454 were of middle castes (Khar, Kurmi, Goala), 277 of the lowest castes. This conclusion is corroborated by the figures of the Calcutta Protector in 1883. According to his reports, 7,695 Hindus had emigrated of them, 1,995 were Brahmins and high castes, 2,454 were agriculturists, 456 were artisans and 2,770 were of lower castes.²⁷

25. Ibid., p. 33., Quoted from Record of Home Legislative (Emigration) Department, 27 Sept. 1845, No. 8-16.

26. H. Tinker - A New System of Slavery - The Export of Indian Labour Overseas 1830-1929, (O.U.P., London, 1974, p. 55.

27. Ibid., p. 56.

The pattern of emigration from northern India lasted throughout the indenture period, with recruitment increasingly concentrated in and around the districts of Banaras. The main movement took place before 1880. After 1880, the recruitment from Bhojpuri speaking areas was little. The Annual Report of the Calcutta Protector for 1904 showed that while 62% of the recruits were from the United province (that too mainly from AWADHI areas), 17% were from Central Province, 8% from Punjab and only 6% from Bihar. Probably, "by this period, the Biharis could find more attractive work in the industries of Calcutta or in the Jute fields of Eastern Bengal".²⁸

As far as the social and caste compositions of South Indian Emigrants are concerned, various sources show that they came from certain social and economic groups. In 1838, the collector of Godavari stated that "emigrants to Mauritius were discharge sepoy, weavers, agricultural labourers and inferior servants".²⁹

Besides the hill coolies, a considerable number of downtrodden people from the settled areas emigrated to the sugar colonies. In the recruiting districts of

28. Ibid., p. 58.

29. P. Saha - Emigration of Indian Labour, 1834-1900, PPH, Delhi, 1970, p. 36., Quoted from Collector to Chief Secretary, 28 Aug. 1838, Godavari Records, Vol. 4662 p. 274.

northern India, a custom of a kind of premordial servitude existed, under which the men of lower caste Hindus were kept bound to their landlord by liabilities which they never hoped to pay off. These downtrodden people became easy recruits for indentured emigration.

In Bihar, there was in existence a kind of semi-slavery known as the 'KAMIUTI'. Under this system the poor people sold their services, and sometimes those of their children in the years to come in order to obtain resources to meet their pressing needs. Such people were easy prey for the recruiters for emigration overseas. "It required little persuasion to show that they would be better off by engaging themselves to indenture, a form of servitude which must seem light compared to the yoke of the landlord or the moneylander. The Rs. 5 a month they were promised in wages would appear munificent".³⁰

The condition into which the lower castes had fallen, could be guessed from the government and the semi-government reports. The daily wages of a male labourer was only 3 and half to 2 pence and that of a female only 1 Penny. 'They were completely dependent on Zamindars and were rack-rented by the thikedars and khuti kindars'.³¹

30. H. Tinker - A New System of Slavery - The Export of Indian Labour Overseas 1830-1920, Oxford University Press, London, 1974, p. 53.

31. P. Saha - Emigration of Indian Labour, 1830-1900, PPH, Delhi, 1970, p. 45.

If such a man fell in the trap of lucrative proposals of the arkates, the reasons were not far to seek. Emigration was liberty to them from the life of incessant toil and exploitation.

The attraction of easy prospects, no doubt, allured a number of the labouring population to migrate. If some of the labouring population of their ranks returned home after an emigration with a large future, the temptation for them became obvious. Besides, the recruiting methods of the arkatis - were no less responsible for the emigration of a large number of people of their ranks.

The causes of the emigration of the upper caste Hindu population cannot be explained only by social oppression or feudal exploitation. In fact, their character offered many obstacles to emigration. They were socially very conservative. It was a hard thing to leave one's 'janmabhimi'. "This was due to lack of initiative, ignorance of opportunities, fear of uncertainty and risks and the influence of tradition and social heritage.

Prejudices were many and varied. They had certain caste prejudices - a dread of interference with caste, fear of forcible conversion to Christianity etc. They had the dread of the unknown and the suspicion of fraud. Suspicions naturally arose from the paucity of news

received from those who had gone away and the small percentage who ever returned.

But, inspite of these social and religious obstacles thousands of Hindus, both upper and lower castes, emigrated to the colonies. The reasons, therefore, should be sought in the economic conditions of the people in the recruiting areas.

The grant of the Diwanee of Bengal to the British in 1765 accentuated the economic distress of the people. Permanent Settlement was introduced in 1793 which changed the structure of the village society. "In Bengal, the land tax was fixed at over 90%, with the rest going to the Zamindars. The land revenue which remained much the same from Todar Mal's settlement in 1582 to Shuja Khan's settlement in 1728, rose so high that Col. Briggs wrote in 1830 that, 'a Land Tax like that which now exists in India professing to absorb the whole of the landlord's rent was never known under any Government in Europe or Asia'.³² This created a new class of absentee proprietors, rack-renters, unscrupulous middleman and moneylenders bringing a heap of miseries on the heads of the poor peasants. Even the Act X of 1859 and various modifications that followed, could not liberate the unfortunate peasants from the exactions and oppressions of the landlords and their agents.

32. C. Kondapi Indians Overseas 1838-1949, Oxford University Press, 1951, p. 3., Quoting Minute of Munaro dated 31st December, 1834.

Thus, in Bengal and Bihar and even elsewhere, the peasants were getting impoverished and landless. "The Emigration Enquiry Commission in their majority report observed the minute division of land and the existence of a large body of small proprietors or occupiers in north Indian recruiting areas".³³ Such a situation forced the poor peasants into the greedy arms of the recruiters easily.

Another important factor for emigration was the decline of handicrafts. Indian economy could not escape the fateful effects of the Industrial Revolution in England. The industrial and commercial needs of England necessitated the transformation of India from a manufacturing power to that of a market for the supply of raw materials and the consumption of British manufactures.³⁴ The British manufacturers 'employed the arm of political injustice to keep down and ultimately strangle a competitor with whom he could not have contended on equal terms'.³⁵

Thus, due to the discriminatory policies of the Imperial Government, the handicraft industries declined and many people (artisans, weavers etc.), were thrown out

33. P. Saha, - Emigration of Indian Labour, 1834-1900, PPH, Delhi, 1970, p. 53.

34. C. Kondapi, Indians Overseas 1838-1949, Oxford Univ. Press, 1951, p. 2., Quoted from L.C. Kuowles: Economic Development of Overseas Empire, Vol. I., p. 53-54.

35. Pramathanath Banerjee: Fiscal Policy in India, Delhi, 1922, pp. 50-51.

of employment. They crowded in agricultural pursuits or were pauperised. The recruiters, both colonial and inland, found a favourable field to increase the number of their recruits.

The decline of manufacturing industries was great in United Province (later Uttar Pradesh). This decline had been most apparent in the eastern districts, from where most of the labourers were recruited for the colonies in the later part of the century as was earlier observed. In the west "perhaps from a sixth to a fourth of the looms had stopped work but in the east the trade had altogether decayed'... As a result the weavers had taken themselves to agriculture or other labour, to menial services or emigration to Mauritius and elsewhere..."³⁶

In this period, another peculiar feature was internal migration. Many out of work people would leave their work and go to other parts of the country in search of employment. In north India labourers from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh would leave their country to go to work on indigo factories where they stayed for years before they could earn enough to return home. A good number of these seasonal emigrants to Bengal became the victims of

36. P. Saha, Emigration of Indian Labour, 1834-1900, PPH, Delhi, 1970, p. 59., Quoted from a Report of the Secretary of Board of Revenue in Indian Revenue Proceedings, June 1864, No. 22.

emigration. "On being asked the causes of emigration, a group of labourers freely acknowledged in Mauritius that they had not enough to live on at home'.³⁷

The Mauritius Emigration Committee perhaps correctly assessed the causes of emigration that thousands and thousands of "such men could get no regular employment in the country and in consequence suffered frightful misery and promised a ready supply of useful and willing labourers".³⁸

In the second half of the 19th century, a number of public and private undertakings opened. It is interesting to note that these undertakings were dependent on labour from the same source as colonial emigration. However, "these industries could not absorb the surplus of pauperised labour caused by almost total disruption of the Indian economy in that century, further intensified by population growth".³⁹ Thus, thousands of people from densely populated eastern U.P. and Bihar migrated to Bengal and then overseas.

Natural calamities like scarcity and famine and consequent high prices of food also drove a large number

37. P. Saha, - Emigration of Indian Labour, 1834-1900, PPH, Delhi, 1970, p. 61., Quoted from Home Legislative (Emigration) Department Records, 27, September, 1854, No. 8-16.

38. Ibid., p. 62., Quoting from Mauritius Emigration Committee Report (Second) N.A.I., para 3.

39. Ibid., p. 67.

of people with their families from their homes, and the recruiters taking advantage of their necessity, had sent such people down in large numbers to Calcutta. "Emigration relied mainly upon 'push' rather than 'pull' factors, the need of people to obtain relief from a situation which was no longer tolerable".⁴⁰ There was clear co-relation between the years when the departures were heavy and times when the harvest was poor. This, was the case both in north and south India during the famine years. Thus, in 1860-61, there was famine in the North Western Province (U.P.) and high departure rate from Calcutta. (17,899 in 1860 and 22,600 in 1861).⁴¹ In 1904, the Emigration Agent for Fiji wrote that owing to "...bad havests and consequent rise in the price of foodgrains in the recruiting districts, the number coming forward has grown".⁴² When there was bumper or sufficient harvest, it was very difficult for the recruiters to enroll sufficient number of labourers and 'very few of the requisite number of women emigrants'.⁴³

40. Hugh Tinker - A New System of Slavery - The Export of Indian Labour Overseas 1830-1920, O.U.P., London, 1974, p. 118.

41. Ibid., p. 118.

42. Ibid., p. 119., Quoting from Annual Report on Immigration into Fiji (1904) and Annual Report of the Protector of Emigrants, Calcutta, (1905).

43. P. Saha - Emigration of Indian Labour 1834-1900, PPH, Delhi, 1970, p. 71.

Thus, calamity might effect only individuals or small communities, but still the incentive was the same: 'A river overflows.... scores of families without shelter or food...will welcome the appearance of the recruiter, glad to escape the miseries which beset them'.⁴⁴

As seen earlier in the chapter, the great Reevolt of 1857-58 indirectly worked as an impetus to emigration among a considerable number of people in these troubled years. "Prior to the Mutiny, the monthly average of Mauritius emigrants was about 700. The figures of emigrants to Mauritius from Calcutta are given year-wise which will make this point clear:

Year	Emigrants
1854-55	8,826
1855-56	7,995
1856-57	3,356

But Suddenly the emigration numbers shot up in 1858:

Year	Emigrants
1858	9,951
1859	14,062

44. Hugh Tinker - A New System of Slavery - The Export of Indian Labour Overseas 1830-1920, Oxford University Press, London, 1974, p. 119.

45. P. Saha - Emigration of Indian Labour - 1834-1900, PPH, Delhi, 1970, p. 75., Quoted from Records of the General Department (Emigration), September, 1859, No. 7.

The disturbed parts of Bihar during the Mutiny were Shahabad, Gaya and Patna. Among the three districts, Shahabad was the main Centre of mutiny in Bihar. "It will be observed that among the emigrants a large proportion comprising higher caste Hindu people from Shahabad districts were not recruited by the arkatis but they voluntarily came forward to the emigration depots".⁴⁶ It seems that these higher caste people were nothing but the disbanded native army who were denied a job in the British Indian Army after the Revolt of 1857. Among them, there were also many mutineers who 'voluatarily emigrated to escape punishment of compulsory deportation to Port Blair'.⁴⁷

While surveying the causes for emigration, it will be worthwhile to look into the psyche of people who were recruited - of their understanding of new adventurous livelihood they were seeking. Islands overseas were known as 'TAPUS'. The different colonies were identified by names - Mauritius in North India was known as 'MIRICHDESA' or 'MIRICHATAPU'. The emigrants were called 'MIRCHIAS' (Mauritius bound), because this was the colony to which most emigrants went. In south India, Mauritius became 'MORISU'. There was a widely believed

46. P. Saha - Emigration of Indian Labour, 1834-1900, PPH, Delhi, 1970, p. 76.

47. Ibid., p. 77., Quoted from Geogheghan's Report, 1873, Opposite Table 'J'.

legend that the coolies were really taken away in order to have their skulls crushed to extract the oil inside. "Crude pictures of oil factory circulated, with coolies hanging upside down for 'mimiama ka tel'".⁴⁸

It is evident from the above analysis, that the causes of the emigration of the indentured Indian labourers to Mauritius in the 19th century were complex and varied. It is also obvious that the migration of indentured Indian labourers to Mauritius was mainly from the Bhojpuri speaking region of the country, especially from 1850s onwards.

48. H. Tinker - A New System of Slavery - The Export of Indian Labour Overseas 1830-1920, Oxford University Press, London, 1974, p. 121., Quoted from Report on Conditions of Emigrants, SIMLA, 1914, p. 312.

CHAPTER III

THE SYSTEM OF RECRUITMENT OF INDENTURED LABOURERS FOR MAURITIUS

It was seen in the first chapter that indenture was conceived and set up as a cheap labour option in 1834 in the face of threats to the servile labour supply. It quickly became apparent in Mauritius that continued recourse to Indian labour would enable estate owners to dispense entirely with a more costly Creole labour force. Having identified India as an appropriate source of labour, planters and their commercial partners in India targeted potential recruits 'by tapping existing economically - induced seasonal rural-urban or rural-rural migrations'.¹ Local collaborators or intermediaries were then employed to direct such labour to the new destination.

The number of labourers exported to a particular territory depended upon the capital available to engage and transport them, legislative controls in India, and competing inland or overseas recruiting. "Thus, the incidence and level of migration was controlled by economic and political factors both at the site of mobilisation and destination".² Various means of

1. Marina Carter, Strategies of Labour Mobilisation in Colonial India: The Recruitment of Indentured Workers for Mauritius, Journal of Peasant Studies, 1990-91, p.321.
2. S.B. Mookherji, 'Indians in Mauritius', India Quarterly, 15, New Delhi, 159.

acquiring an effective immigrant workforce from this labour stream whilst keeping importation costs down were tested during the three decades following the initiation of this experiment in 1834.

Before 1842, and the imposition of government controls, the collection and transportation of indentured labour was undertaken by agency-houses located at India's principal port towns and aided by local recruiters known as 'ARKATIS', 'DUFFADARS' and 'MAISTRIES', who were remunerated on a payment by head basis. "The system of procuring labourers through the local agents was the backbone of all recruiting operations throughout the whole period of emigration".³ But, it must be said that apart from the arkates and the duffadars, the role of the returnees also became important. Their role will be discussed later in the chapter.

In a commercial transaction, which took place under the arkati recruitment system, various abuses crept into the system. In the 1830s, a number of Calcutta firms were engaged in procuring labourers on behalf of the colonial planters. The arkatis came lowest in this system of recruitment. Above the arkatis were the so called 'duffadars' who were described by the famous Calcutta newspaper 'Bengal Hurkaru', as the 'grand decoy of the

3. P. Saha, Emigration of Indian Labour, 1834-1900, Popular Publishing House, Delhi, 1970, p. 78.

Indian coolies' and 'the mainspring of the system' (Bengal Hurkaru, 21 Oct. 1838)⁴. The duffadars provided with money, badges and passes, supplied to them by the firms, proceeded with their subordinates or arkatis, up to Chotanagapur and other parts. "The hill coolies would easily fall prey to the cunning recruiter...."⁵

The 'hill coolies' were timid and ignorant to the extreme, and it was no wonder that they fell a ready prey 'to the allurements of these devils in human form'.⁶ In fact the arkatis were regarded as playing the most villaneous part in the whole operation. "He knew who was in trouble, who had fallen out with his family, who was in disgrace, who was wild or wanton".⁷ The arkatis frequented definite types of places to make his rendezvous with the intended recruit, for e.g. markets, caravanserais, railway stations, bazaars, temples etc. Certain towns were recognized as magnets for potential recruits; they were called 'NAKAS'.

The labourers were deceived by the arkatis in every possible way. The chief of the evils connected with recruitment in the earlier stage was the system of

4. Ibid., p. 79.

5. Ibid., p. 79.

6. Ibid., p. 80.

7. Hugh Tinker - A New System of Slavery-The Export of Indian Labour Overseas, 1830-1920. Oxford University press, London, 1974, p. 122.

kidnapping. "Before the enforcement of the Act-V of 1837, there was kidnapping to a considerable extent".⁸ However, it must be said that the emigrants tended to speak as though all had been deceived into going against their will, when doubtless many were quite unprepared for the ship and the plantation and were horrified by the experience, yet had not been deliberately misled.

Not only kidnapping but the surreptitious shipment of labourers was also extensively practiced. There were numerous such cases in their period of early emigration. "In October 1836 - nearly two-thirds of the immigrants in ship 'SOFIA' were without any pass from the police 'DAVID MALCOLM carried over two hundred unauthorised labourers .., in the ship 'DAVID SCOTT' leaving from Calcutta to Mauritius, thirty men were kidnapped and put on board".⁹ Thus, it appears that if the number of labourers in the colonies could not be obtained by fair means, the recruiter took the path of foul means.

To stop these abuses, two acts, Act-V of 1837 and Act XXXII of 1837 were enacted which put some specific conditions in the agreement form. However, the use of foul means for recruitment continued. Many in this early

8. P. Saha - Emigration of Indian Labour, 1834-1900, Popular Publishing House, Delhi, 1970, p. 801.

9. Ibid., p. 80., Quoted from Records of General Department (Emigration), 4 November, 1840, and 24 May 1843.

period of emigration had left Calcutta under the impression that they were going to 'company - ka - bustee' (a place supposedly nearby), the name by which the Mauritius was designated by the agents in India.

The gross abuses connected with recruitment and shipment of labourers to the sugar colonies attracted public attention and the government ultimately suspended emigration in 1839 and put the whole question before an enquiry commission. But the suspension order was shortlived, and 1842 by the Act XV of 1842. It was passed for regulating the emigration of the native inhabitants of all territories under the government of East India Company to the island of Mauritius.

By this act, recruitment through private companies was abolished. An Emigration Agent for each colony was appointed in Calcutta, Madras and Bombay, who became responsible for supplying the orders of the respective colony. Besides, the system of licenses for emigrant ships was introduced. The PROTECTOR OF EMIGRANTS was appointed in each port to safeguard the rights of the intending emigrants. It was his duty to explain the terms of the contract, the nature of work, the destination, pay and other facilities, and to see that the emigrants willingly emigrated. The license had to be countersigned by the District Magistrate of the area of recruitment and the license would be cancelled in cases of malpractice.

Earlier, the agents for different colonies would employ the arkatis for bringing intending emigrants from the countryside. But under the new system, services of paid local agents were hired, who were stationed in the countryside and received labourers from the recruiters. But, the new system did not eliminate abuses. These precautions 'were of little value in the face of organised sharp practice'.¹⁰ There were hundreds of charges against the recruiters in the local press.

In the early 1860s, a new system of recruitment was introduced by some of the agents. It was by the appointment of European and other subagents in very large district towns. The agents employed their own recruiters, who were furnished with printed circulars in Bengali and English, describing the production of the different islands, climate, soil, rates of wages etc. The recruiters were also furnished with badges and brass plates on which were engraved in Bengali and English, the name of the colony for which they were employed.

But the subagent procured labour by deceiving the simple agriculturist. He was "...with special promises induced to proceed to Calcutta and there shipped off in ignorance of his destination and duties".¹¹

10. Hugh Tinker - A New System of Slavery - The Export of Indian Labour Overseas 1830-1920, Oxford University Press, London, 1974, p. 122.

11. P. Saha - Emigration of Indian Labour, 1834-1900, Popular Publishing House, Delhi, 1970, p. 89.

The system of recruitment was put on a sounder basis and was improved considerably by the Act XIII of 1864. By one of its provisions, the intending emigrant in the countryside - other than Calcutta, Bombay and Madras, was to appear with the recruiter before the magistrate of the district. The magistrate would examine the nature of the contract and check that everything was in order. However, the recruiters knew how to circumvent the law. No real attempts were made either by the magistrate or the medical inspector to properly check the papers. Grierson dismissed the registration as a farce. He described the contract papers as, 'disorganized bundle of papers....more or less mutilated or destroyed by mice'.¹²

Thus, the arkatis went on with their jobs. "In Bihar Sonepur Fair generally offered a fruitful field to the recruiters".¹³ In the last quarter of the 19th century, the arkatis spread throughout the country to induce the people to emigrate.

It is important to discuss the recruitment of Indian women in the course of discussion. The Indian authorities had ruled that every shipment should contain

12. Hugh Tinker - A New System of Slavery - The Export of Indian Labour Overseas, 1830-1920, O.U.P. London, 1974, p. 132.

13. P. Saha - Emigration of Indian Labour, 1834-1900, PPH, Delhi, 1970, p. 92., Quoting from the records of General Department (Emigration), June 1883, and Griersons' Report - Files 5 to 24.

forty women for every hundred men, a quota of less than 30 per cent and additional regulations were issued in the various host countries. The colonial agencies constantly found excuses for not filling the female quota, but they had to demonstrate some kind of compliance with the regulations. "In the conditions laid down by Indian custom, the women had only one legitimate role, that of a wife. If the real wives were kept from emigrating, who would go instead?"¹⁴

So, to fill the quota, the recruiters tried to induce widows to go; 'the lot of the widow - especially of the woman whose husband had died before she attained the dignity of motherhood - was one of neglect and loneliness'.¹⁵ "The wife who had been unfaithful if her lover had deserted her. Then there were the prostitutes and dancers who had fallen on bad times; they were outcasts already, and the voyage overseas could not be worse than their present lot".¹⁶ And so the recruiter made up his female quota, 'supplemented by wives who were kidnapped, and women on pilgrimage to faraway shrines or otherwise vulnerable to the blandishments of the recruiter's tout'.¹⁷ Thus, the plight of such women at

14. Hugh Tinker, - Banyan Tree; Overseas Emigrants from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, Oxford University Press, London, 1977, p. 5.

15. Ibid., p. 5.

16. Ibid., p. 5.

17. Ibid., p. 5.

the depots was truly bad. Most among them were to set out to a life of drudgery and exploitation.

In the latter part of the century - in the seventies and eighties - an extensive network of recruiting operations developed throughout the country GRIERSON in his report gives a detailed account of the recruiting operations. The officials connected with a head recruiters' depot were (a) the headrecruiter or the subagent, (b) the recruiters, (c) the clerk, (d) the food controller, (e) the chuprassees who accompanied the recruiters to Calcutta and some others, who were unlicensed recruiters.¹⁸

The arkatis in north and maistries in south India consisted of all sorts of people - shopkeepers, peons, domestic servants, labourers and even emigrants. Very few people had favourable notions about them. A witness of the Sanderson Committee said, "the recruiting staff is very bad; the recruiters are the worst kind of men they could possibly have ...they very often tried to entice married women away from their husbands and try to get anybody they can".¹⁹

18. P. Saha - Emigration of Indian Labour 1834-1900, PPH, Delhi, 1970; p. 84., Quoting from Grierson's Report in the General Department (migration) Colonial Records, June 1883; File No. XV, No. 24.

19. Ibid., p. 85, Quoting form Sanderson Committee Report, 1910, Qestion No. 9598, Witness of John Alexander Brown, ex-Commissioner in the United Provinces.

The detailed method of recruitment differed in different periods and in different localities. In Shahabad, for example, where emigration was relatively known to the people, the recruiter had less trouble in procuring intending emigrants. In other districts, little was known about the colonies, and the recruiters faced tremendous difficulties in procuring labourers.

It is evident from the above details that the system of recruitment by the 'arkatis' was the major form of recruitment and was full of abuses. The evils of this system incited public opinion in India and in England. Newspaper reports, parliamentary discussions etc. show how the recruiters deceived the simple folk. The system of paying the recruiters by the number of recruits was universal and under such a system, abuses were bound to occur.

Apart from the role played by the arkatis in the recruitment process, an important role was also played by ex-indentured labourers as recruiters. This system has been described as 'RETURNEE RECRUITING'.

As we have seen, the arkati system was full of abuses and to prevent them there were repeated government interventions. The planters also suffered from the system whereby the arkatis or maistries collected labour for one colony and sold the recruits off to another colony or to

another planter. The employment of returnee recruiters, who were despatched to India by their employers to collect recruits and to accompany groups of emigrants from the depot to the plantation, was seen as a partial solution to such problems.

In an effort to secure a labour force which more closely approximated to the former, some estate owners initiated the strategy of sending back 'SIRDARS' (headmen) or other trusted workers to recruit from their own districts. The first ships bringing indentured labourers back to India from Mauritius in 1839-41 on the expiration of the first five year indentures thus also brought returnee recruiters, 'such as Dhoby Deen', who carried a letter authorising the payment of his return passage and that of any able bodied men who may wish to accompany him, not exceeding 50 in number'.²⁰

The use of returnees was officially sanctioned following the visit of an envoy of the Mauritian government to India in 1843, with a brief to report on the working of the emigration establishments. He recommended that a decided and fatal flow should be dealt to the duffadar system and that the onus in recruiting be placed on returnees such as those whose return to India

21. Marina Carter, Strategies of Labour Mobilisation in Colonial India : The Recruitment of Indentured Workers for Mauritius, Journal of Peasant Studies, 1990-91, p. 232.

with their savings had in his view already created ' a powerful stimulus to a growing emigration'.²¹

Local recruiters in India now also began to be drawn from the ranks of returnees and were given money to go into provinces to recruit labourers. Closer inspection of returnee operations in this period reveals a wide range of activities. "Some, like - Mauderbuccuss and Chuttoo who brought 43 men from their home district of Azamgarh in 1848, were indeed mobilising their fellow villagers; others brought smaller bands - often consisting simply of their spouses and close relatives; still others arrived at the depot with bands of unrelated individuals, collected en route to or at the ports".²² The relative importance of returnees in Mauritian labour mobilisation by mid nineteenth century is shown by the number of individuals arriving at the depot without having been recruited by groups. "The Emigration Agent of British Guiana at Madras, visiting theMauritius depot in 1850, counted 45 returnees with 215 new immigrants on one ship alone".²³

The Mauritian government initiated a service of measures designed to benefit such emissaries and to

21. Ibid., p. 233., Quoting from Parliamentary Papers XXXV (356) Anderson to Dick, 11 November, 1843.

22. Ibid., p. 233., Quoting Parl Papers 1949 (280) Caird to Col. Secy., 1 June, 1848, list of returnee emigrants on the JULIA.

23. Ibid., p. 233., Quoting from Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioner's Report, 1852.

encourage family immigration: in 1852 returnee immigrants bringing legitimate married couples, or the wives of the labourers already in the colony, were given a bonus of one pond for each such woman. This strategy was successful in Calcutta, but in Madras and Bombay local contractors continued to exercise overall control of the labour supply and often came into conflict with the returnees.

The part played by 'unofficial' returnees in recruitment was definitely dubious. Some of these returnees were 'merely using their position as planter emissaries to bribe or persuade individuals,²⁴ already en route for Mauritius to join their bands. They were shown to have been embarking ostensibly as new immigrants, and once on board seeking to win recruits for their employer by distributing small gifts.

Prior to 1858, the law prevented engagements from being signed in India, and allowed new arrivals 24 hours to 'select' an employer. Returnees in such a situation exacerbated competition between the planters at times of perceived labour shortage. This led the colonial government to adopt, in 1858, a system whereby engagement could be signed in India. This was designed to effect a link between migrant and employer which the will of the recruiter could not influence.

24. H. Tinker - A New System of Slavery - The Export of Indian Labour Overseas, 1830-1920, O.U.P., London, 1974, p. 124.

In 1861, a further enquiry instituted by the Mauritian government again supported the role of returnees claiming that recourse to Mauritius had become an established custom in certain areas encouraged by them. These recruiters had been indulging in number of fraud practices due to rivalry between local recruiting officials (arkatis) and the returnees.

Now the question which arises is whether the returnees were in any sense less coercive or exploitative than the arkati/duffadar mobilisation? Returnees were certainly recognized to be efficient, low cost means of maintaining the migrant stream to Mauritius, even when the conditions there were less favourable than elsewhere, as they were given several benefits from the planters. "It can hardly be argued, however, that they were more likely to deceive or profit from migrants than local recruiters, who has an equivalent pecuniary interest in labour collection". Moreover, returnees could disseminate information about the colonies in India and were important mobilisers of family groups.

Popular perceptions of emigration were also undoubtedly shaped by returning labourers. As the pattern of migration to a particular territory became established

25. Mariner Carter, Strategies of Labour Mobilisation in Colonial India: The Recruitment of Indentured Workers for Mauritius, The Journal of Peasant Studies, 1990-91, p. 236.

ex-indentured labourers began to provide more accurate information to new recruits about changing conditions in the colony. Events of 1867 and 1868 in Mauritius when a malaria epidemic swept the island, occasioning heavy mortality, followed by a stringent vagrancy law, prompted what the emigration agent called, 'a growing dislike towards the island, from malicious reports circulated by disaffected returnee emigrants'.²⁶

On the other hand, the favourable or exaggerated reports of returnees acting for planters could be used to create attractive images of colonial destinations, drawing new recruits into the depots. Returnees' familiarity with the colonial situation and hence credibility as recruiters was undoubtedly used to serve the interests of labour imports. These returnees, could significantly enhance their position and status in Mauritius, if successful, obtaining appointments as 'sirdars', higher wages or cash payments per recruit.

At the same time, the success which prompted planters to rely increasingly on such inter-mediaries could be turned against them. Old hands were often sought out by rival labour exporters to recruit for them. "Some worked for more than one agency at a time. In so doing, they crossed over into the ranks of the 'duffadar', or professional local recruiter".

26. Ibid., p. 236., Quoting from Parl Papers 1847, XLIV(61) Gomm to Grey 23 August, 1847, encls.

Of more significance than the inducements offered to join rival agencies, however, was the potential for independent recruiting. This happened when the returnee recruits came into conflict with the planters and the returnees preferring to earn for themselves. These returnees then often took recourse to fraud and deceptions to augment their earnings. However, the deceptions now practiced, 'tended to be specific rather than general, related to destination rather than to conditions of labour, and were often a result of competition between exporters'.²⁸

The active part played by the returnees, gave to indentured emigration a momentum which could exist independently of government control. They were often driven back to Mauritius by more than the promise of monetary reward; tie of property and family in Mauritius acted as powerful incentives to return. "Some returnees closely resembled the KANGANIS who recruited in their own locality and travelled with their recruits to estates, where they acted as headmen or sirdars".²⁹

Other returnees acted as more informal recruitments, or merely remigrated with their families.

27. Ibid., p. 237.

28. Ibid., p. 238.

29. Ibid., p. 239.

Women who migrated under the indenture system (recruited by returnees), were not generally contracted as indentured workers. "Family migration to Mauritius was not designed to secure cheap female labour as such; it acted rather to ensure the reproduction of the work force in a colony which had come to rely totally on immigrants for the production of its principal crop".³⁰

The predominance of bands numbering fewer than 20 individuals, often bringing only family, kin or local recruits, generally all from one district, indicates that the average returnee was not a professional employee of the agent, or like local recruiters, acting as a collector of disparate individuals. In fact, those at the head of larger bands, which comprised a miscellaneous collection of migrants recruited from various districts or 'on the road', were generally designated special agents with a brief to recruit. And in general, 'their presence on arriving ships was less a sign of rootlessness than of enter-preneurship'.³¹

By the 1860s sustained immigration to Mauritius had created an over supply of labour and depressed wages rates, 'in theory enabling employers to control and discipline the work force with less resort to extra-

30. Ibid., p. 239.

31. Ibid., p. 239.

economic devices',³² In such a situation, returnees and 'sirdars' progressed from recruitment and supervision to becoming employers of labour. These people formed a 'new' elite which had emerged out of indentured immigration to join the 'old' Indian mercantile and landowning elite in Mauritius.

It can be mentioned here that the recruitment by returnee emigrants was not peculiar to Mauritius. This system was distinct from the 'arkati system' (local recruiters), but was similar to the KAWGANY system of recruitment, under which emigration took place to Malaysia and Ceylon. Some similarities can also be found in the experiences shared by these people and those emigrating as indentured workers to West Indies and Fiji.

In assessing the character of the indentured recruitment, it becomes obvious that the structure was exploitative. However, it could occasionally be subverted and the returnees were uniquely placed to effect this. As a result, labour mobilisation could be experienced very differently by individuals recruited at the behest of or by family members (as compared to those recruited by local

32. A. Adamson, 'The Impact of Indentured Immigration on the Political Economy of British Guiana, in K. Saunders (edit) Indentured Labour in the British Empire, 1834-1920 (London, Groom Helm, 1984, p. 48.

recruiters). And it can be inferred that 'direct coercion was a less efficient form of labour recruitment than the use of returnees'.³³ Moreover, returnee recruitment was family oriented, more cost-effective and less exploitative.

33. Marina Carter, Strategies of Labour Mobilisation in Colonial India: The Recruitment of Indentured Workers for Mauritius, *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 1990-91, p. 242.

CHAPTER IV

THE IRREGULARITIES ON THE PLANTATIONS AND THE END OF THE INDENTURE SYSTEM

When the first Indian coolies arrived on the sugar estates of Mauritius, they were marched to their accomodation, which was still called 'camp de Noirs', the accomodation earlier given to the slaves. The world of slavery still survived. The plantation was a world apart, on its own, subject to the laws or whims of those in charge i.e. the overseers and the manager or the proprietor.

The plantation way of life survived from the 18th to the 20th century with very little change. "And in the existing conditions, if the Indians were to survive as human beings, their survival depended largely on their own powers of resilience".¹ They devised their own pastimes, recreated some semblance of the lost Indian in their festivals and feasts. But it wasn't much. When goaded beyond their apparently infinite endurance and patience, they would try to rebel; but the protest almost always ended into repression. Although the indentured coolie could be held in legal bondage only for a period of few years the plantation held most of them for life. The only escape was a return to India - worn out and impoverished.

1. Hugh Tinker - A New System of Slavery - The Export of Indian Labour Overseas 1830-1920, Oxford University Press, London, 1974, p. 177.

In Mauritius, they were soon put to work after their arrival, whereas during the time of slavery, an interval of three to six months was generally allowed after the first arrival of an African before he was put to labour. The result of the immediate engagement of Indian labourers to work was 'excessive weakness and sickness.'² Thus, the indentured labourers did not undergo the introductory 'seasoning' or training. Moreover, they were forced to work the whole day unlike the earlier slaves. The reason being that the indentured coolies were the planters' property only for a limited period, so he did not bother to get them properly acclimatized and took maximum work out of them. The ruthless working of the Indians often led to their deaths too. "There was one special tragic case on record, that of Shawbaluck, who arrived in Mauritius in August 1900 and failed to adjust to a routine of field labour. He died in prison early in 1903, (held for vagrancy), 'his body very emaciated.'"³

The terms and conditions mentioned in the contract and the actual conditions and remuneration on the plantations had a wide gap. There were several protests and enquiries were put up. It was the difference between

-
2. P. Saha - The Emigration of Indian Labour, 1839-1900, Popular Publishing House, Delhi, 1970, p. 103.
 3. Hugh Tinker - A New System of Slavery - The Export of Indian Labour Overseas 1830-1920, Oxford University, London, 1974, p. 182.

the supposed conditions, as reported by the proprietors to British enquiries, and the actual conditions, as experienced by the coolies, 'which made all difference between a decent life and a miserable existence'.

Such discrepancies could well be seen in the payment of wages. Officials did their best, using legal and extra-legal methods, to pressure labourers into continuous employment and to force them to accept low wages. The labourers seldom received the rate of wages at which they were hired. Employers used a host of devices to retain a portion of workers' earnings. It was common practice to deduct a sum from monthly wages to refund money advances made to the labourers in India and as a security against misconduct. There is little evidence that the planters headed the colonial office's objections to these methods. Wages could be reduced below the agreed levels by means of the 'double cut'. The 'double cut' was 'the most powerful device invented by the planters to mulct the coolies,whereby anyone absent for day for whatever reason, lost his pay for two days'.⁴ This system was finally abolished only in 1909.

From the 1830s to the early 1900s the standard wage supposed to exist in all sugar plantation was 20 shillings a month i.e. Rs. 40 a month. In Mauritius, the supposed

4. Ibid., p: 184.

wage was half that sum - 10 shillings a month (Rs. 20). Even these rates probably represent an overestimate of how much was paid to the labourers. The wages were subject to stoppages of an almost arbitrary sort - for incomplete work, breakages, items in lieu of pay, and fines for absence from work (as discussed above). Such a system represents 'another background of slavery: the employer did not really accept an obligation to give their people wages'.⁵ Moreover, although redress against the breach of contract was available, 'legal processes were notoriously slow and the courts proverbially partial to the masters'.⁶

The Mauritius coolies worked a six day week. In addition they were required to do unpaid labour, 'corvee', on Sundays. 'Corvee' was a voluntary service, but it generally turned out to be a forced and compulsory labour.

All the indentured people were strictly confined to the limits of their master's estate, unless given permission to move outside under strictly regulated conditions. Even when the period of indenture was completed, in most of the sugar colonies, the ex-indentured Indians were required to carry an identifying document called 'LIVRET'. Absence from the estate without

5. Ibid., p. 188.

6. Ibid., 186

a pass called 'billet de pass' in Mauritius, was an offence punishable by fine or imprisonment, while prolonged absence was treated as desertion.

The award of punishment of summary nature was arrogated to the planters as their right, derived from their days of slavery. Beating and flogging appeared as a regular routine element in plantation discipline right upto the 20th century. "Mauritius Royal Commission recorded that fifty Indians had died of rupture of spleen as a result of severe beatings, between 1867 and 1872, without stating that those responsible had been punished".⁷

While worker in most industrial societies face the penalty of losing their wages if they withhold their labour, the indentured coolies forfeited their pay and also found themselves condemned as criminals for such action. It can be said that the Mauritian authorities were obsessed with vagrancy. Vagrancy was a conception that the Mauritian planters could not discard, and right down to the end of indenture, if a time expired coolie refused employment, he was classed a vagrant, and if he remained without registered employment for three months, he became an 'incorrigible vagrant'.

7. M.D. North - Coombes - 'From Slavery to Indenture: Forced Labour in the Political Economy of Mauritius, 1854-1867, in Kay Saunders (edit.), Indentured Labour in the British Empire 1834-1920, (Groom Helm, Australia, 1984, p. 95.

The Labour Code of 1867 represented an attempt to place 'old immigrants', and even the free passenger Indians, under the close control and regimentation to which indentured labourers were subject. Protests were made against it. The Royal Commission of Enquiry of 1873 which was appointed to investigate the grievances of Indian labourers could not bring about much changes in the Labour Code of 1867. Under the modified legislation, labourers could still be jailed for up to three months for desertion, while neglect of work etc. could entail the loss of two weeks wages or imprisonment with hard laborur for the same period.⁸ Moreover, the spirit in which the Labour Law of 1867 was framed continued to pervade the policies and practices of the colonial state with regard to Indian indentured labour and labour relations generally, throughout the ensuing generations.

There were great many estates labourers whose proper place was in hospital, or at any rate under medical care, but because medical attention was so casual and sometimes so callous, far too many of them prematurely ended their indentured servitude in death. From time to time large scale epidemics scourged the sugar islands. Mauritius went through a cycle of epidemics during 1860s, with malaria rampant in low lying areas. Medical care

8. Hugh Tinker - A New System of Slavery - The Export of Indian Labour Overseas, 18309-1920, Oxford University Press, London, 1974, p. 192.

was not much improved by the beginning of the 20th century. A report on estate hospitals in Mauritius (1902) showed that a total population of 91,924 was cared by 15 doctors in all. Of all the aspects of sickness and mortality on the plantation, the most sombre was that of suicide. It was common for the immigrants to throw themselves overboard on the voyage, and the depression of the first year or two of indenture was a bad time, when many sought to end their existence.

The disproportion between men and women was an important factor in shaping the life of the coolie lines. "A shortage of women is a feature of all pioneer immigrant societies, but this feature was artificially prolonged in the plantations by the perpetuation of mainly male immigration throughout the whole period of indenture".⁹ Males competed for scarce females and the absence of a wife or a housekeeper was a noticeable privation.

Ordinance No. 16 of 1862 made a provision for the engagement of female immigrants for work on the sugar estates. The main purpose behind the female immigration was to redress to some extent the sexual imbalance in the

9. M.D. North -Coombes, From Slavery to Indenture : Forced Labour in the Political Economy of Mauritius 1834-1867, in Kay Saunders edit. Indentured Labour in the British Empire 1834-1920, Groom Helm, Australia, 1984, p. 114., Quoting from Return of Protector of Indian grants on Coolie Labour, 9 May 196 in BPP 1906, p. 38.

immigrant population. Their presence was seen as a necessity in purely functional terms by the colonists, who characterised Indian women as 'leading lives of idleness and prostitution'. The sub collector of Nagapatum, responsible for emigration to Malaya said, "women do go, but many are of the ease-loving class of prostitutes. A married woman is reluctant to go, for she fears the loss of her reputation".¹⁰

This picture of women is at variance with the evidence of those Indian women arriving in Mauritius with their husbands. However, it was mainly as a result of the colonists' attitudes and actions, 'through the policy of an essentially male immigration, the refusal to recognise marriages contracted in India in the colony, and the sexual exploitation of Indian women by planters, overseers and sirdars',¹¹ that Indian womanhood came to be seen as inherently immoral, and Indian women as leading a degraded existence in Mauritius. Moreover, the move to employ female immigrants under contract was not for serving a moralistic purpose, but to stabilise the captive core of the labour force by attracting males to estate labor on a more committed and permanent basis.

In Mauritius, it was racism which was used very successfully, to provide for the preservation of the

10. Hugh Tinker - A New System of Slavery - The Export of Indian Labour Overseas, 1830-1920, O.U.P., London, 1974, p. 201.

11. Ibid., p. 205.

status quo. Racial discrimination was not rendered obsolete by emancipation. Instead, it was further elaborated and refined to legitimise continued planter domination of society, and the ruthless exploitation of Indian indentured labour. It focussed its attention on degrees of 'whiteness' rather than on any simple distinction between black and white, which was a ridiculous myth. The typifications of Indians as unclean and ignorant beings, 'as semi-barbarous heathens who were naturally prone to crime, provided a justification for extreme policies of control and social neglect'.¹²

The education policies pursued by the colonial state gave effect to the notion that Indians were only fit for unskilled labour. Most Indian children living on sugar estates in the rural areas received no schooling at all, but instead, spent their days labouring in groups of two or thirty, 'clearing the cane fields of weeds and preparing for the in-gathering of the staple produce of the colony. "Planter neglect of Indian education was tied up with a widespread colonial prejudice against the education of the poorer classes generally, as this was seen to be potentially dangerous for the labour intensive agricultural structure".¹³

12. M.D. North-Coombes - 'From Slavery to Indenture: Forced Labour in the Political Economy of Mauritius 1834-1867, in 'Indeentured Labour in the British Empire 1834-1900', edited by Kay Saunders (Groom Helm, Australia, 1984, p. 98).

13. Ibid., p. 102.

Apart from such gross neglect, the prison facilities were pathetic. In adjudication of disputes between masters and servants, the colonial judiciary was predisposed to favour the masters. In the early days of Indian immigration, many complaints of brutality and mistreatment were lodged by indentured labourers against their masters, however most offenders (planters) were lightly let off. At times, '.....magistrates readily used their influence to persuade or cajole them to act in conformity with the interests of their employers'.¹⁴

In such pathetic conditions, the Indians succeeded in retaining much of their identity. The preservation of the Indian languages was almost entirely due to the persistence of the coolies in speaking their mother tongue among themselves. The only occasions on which the estate Indians emerged from their condition of servitude, to create some replication of the colour and noise and majesty of their native land, was during the time of festivals.

To understand properly the repression of Indian labour in Mauritius one must locate it within the context in continuous and wide ranging conflict waged between indentured workers and their employers. However, labour resistance took either a passive a covert rather than a

14. Ibid., p. 102.

violent form. Moreover, worker consciousness was not highly developed and individual resistance was more common than organised mass protests. The most widespread form of expressing dissatisfaction with the plantation regime was through voluntary withdrawals from labour, for periods ranging from short terms of absenteeism to permanent desertion.

Thus, from the above mentioned description we realise that the immigrant indentured Indian had to face a number of hardships on plantations and live in semi-slavery conditions. It was only as the plantation system itself began to be modified that the Indians gained some freedom from its grip. Yet they still lived in its shadow. There was to be a long period, in which the system was being questioned and challenged, before it was finally ended.

The efforts made to abolish indentured emigration in the late 1830s nearly stifled the system at birth. Instead the pressure groups associated with the sugar producers were strong enough to revive the system, and expand its application. Then in 1870s, a series of scandals forced themselves upon the attention of the administrators and public men in London and Calcutta. But still the emigration continued on with all its evils and irregularities. By the close of the 19th century, the first serious opposition was expressed to the export of

Indians overseas. Twenty years later this opposition had grown so powerful that the system had to be ended; but for sixty years, 1840-1900, there was only questioning, which was at times superficial, but sometimes expressed genuine misgivings.

Emigration was stopped in 1839 but resumed again in 1842. This was questioned by the Anti-slavery Society in 1845. In Mauritius, in 1857 a local Creole advocate Napoleon Savy decided to write to the Governor-General of India, to tell him that there was little justice for the Mauritian Indians. The Governor-General referred the matter back to the Governor of Mauritius and the matter died here. Sir George Campbell also protested to the Government of India in 1873, but history repeated itself.

A.O. Hume tried to attract public attention on the police atrocities in Mauritius on the indentured Indian immigrants. Hume addressed the colonial secretary of Mauritius on the structures of the Police Enquiry Commission Report, but nothing came out of it. "In reality, there was no firm intention, either in Whitehall or in the government of India, to probe deeply into the wrongs of the system".¹⁵ A humanitarian, justice seeking governor like Sir Campbell, and a wise and sceptical

15. Ibid., p. 107.

department head like A.O. Hume could make little impression upon the complacency and indifference with which Whitehall treated the whole subject.

In the beginning of 20th century, Mahatma Gandhi started raising questions on the conditions of Indians in British colonies. He even wrote a letter to Lord Curzon, the Viceroy of India to look into the indenture system. And in fact, "Curzon was the first viceroy to see that the indentured Indians were helots of the empire, and he was the first to ask why the system should continue".¹⁶

Between them, Gandhiji and Curzon called the whole indenture system into question. It is important to recognize that this issue was raised, and later decided, by Indian public opinion. After these two, those chiefly responsible for bringing indenture to an end were Gopal Krishna Gokhale, the Indian Liberal statesman, Lord Hardinge, also viceroy, and C.F. Andrew, missionary and 'friend of India'. This was the first major Indo-British political and social issue to be decided in independent India, and not metropolitan Britain.

While Indian opinion was made freely conscious of the oppression in South Africa, and support for Gandhiji's struggle was growing, a much smaller but still significant

16. Hugh Tinker - A New System of Slavery - The Export of Indian Labour Overseas, 1830-1920, O.U.P., London, 1974, p. 246.

protest had emerged in Mauritius. The Mauritian Indians had never really had a leader of any stature from their race. When Gandhiji visited the island from a passing ship in 1901, he was distressed to discover how little was being done. He made a plea to the Indian community to be committed to education, unity and politics.

Partly at Gandhiji's suggestion, a young lawyer, Manilal Maganlall Doctor, arrived in Mauritius in October 1907 to practice at the bar. His main interest was 'to fight against the disabilities of the Indian community as well as to consolidate its economic and cultural life'.¹⁷ He was a barrister from Bombay University, and also enrolled as a member of 'Servants of India Society' established by Gokhale.

Almost at once, Doctor challenged authority in Mauritius, he refused to remove either his shoes or his Parsi style head-dress on entering court. Doctor realised that Indians were still treated with harsh severity by the law. "Mardaymooloo was given six months in jail for stealing two pumpkins. Another Indians received three years' imprisonment for stealing vases from a cemenry".¹⁸ Cases like this were now taken up by Manilal M. Doctor.

17. Ibid., p. 288.

18. Uttam Bissoondoyal, 'Tiger of the Indian Ocean', Article in The Times of India, New-Delhi, Wednesday, (ASCENT), June 29, 1994.

Manilal defended four Indians prosecuted for trial in the 'Morel' case. He was castigated by the conservative press of Mauritius for his role. This setback did not deter him. And he launched the first political journal in Mauritius to speak for the mass of the Indians: the 'HINDUSTHANI' (first issue, 15 March, 1909), with the motto: 'Liberty of Individuals ! Fraternity of Men!! Equality of Races !!! Manilal Doctor' was farsighted enough to ask for the setting up of an Agricultural Bank and for support to small planters as the basis for the economic evolution of the Indians. He gave his support to the Action Liberale Movement, the first multi-ethnic political party and also participated in the setting up of the Arya Samaj Movement. His departure in 1911 left a void which Pt. Cashinath Kistoe filled for some time.

The Sanderson Committee was appointed to review the emigration of the indentured Indian labourers. It criticized the system of recruitment, and in the colonies, the main criticism was directed against the enforcement machinery the use of penal sanctions, and also the remnants of re-indenture which remained in certain colonial colonies. Its general effect was not to condemn but to further modify the system.

While indenture was being ended in South Africa amidst a blaze of publicity, it was also brought to an

end, with little outside notice in Mauritius. Lord Crewe informed the Governor of Mauritius (7 November 1910) that in the light of the Sandarson Report, further indentured labour was 'unjustifiable'. Subsequently, the Government of India designated Mauritius as a colony to which emigration was 'unlawful'.

As a consequence, the colonial office (1 February 1912) informed the India office that the various British colonial recruiting agencies in Calcutta would be amalgamated and that recruiting would be confined to eastern Uttar Pradesh and a small part of Bihar, with a depot at Benaras.

In the meantime, perhaps the most important event occurred to influence the change of policy on indenture: the debate in the Indian Legislative Council upon a resolution moved by Gokhale asking the Government of India to prohibit all indentured recruitment within India and abroad. Gokhale called indenture, 'a monstrous system, iniquitous in itself, based on fraud and maintained by farce'.¹⁹ He also said that the system was degrading to the people of India. He asserted that wherever the system exists, there the Indians are only known as coolies, whatever their position may be.

19. Hugh Tinker - A New System of Slavery - The Export of Indian Labour Overseas, 1830-1920, Oxford University Press, London, 1974, p. 320., Quoting from Proceedings of the Council of the Governor General of India, April 1911 - 4 March, 1912.

Towards the end of 1915, when many discontents were boiling up to the surface, the indenture issue became the central question of Indian politics. Whitehall and Lord Chelmsford (unlike Hardinge) were not very sensitive to the issue and sought to device alternatives to the condemned system. In the end they were all compelled to acknowledge that no kind of organised emigration could be invented which would be satisfactory.

Between 1915 and 1920, Gandhiji and other Congress leaders played an important role in bringing the system to an end. Gandhiji started a big campaign against indenture. He demanded for its end immediately at the Industrial Conference and the annual session of Congress (Dec. 1915). He also attacked indenture in many of his journalistic writings. Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya moved a resolution in the Legislative Council (20 March 1920) calling for the abolition of indenture. He said, "My Lord, no reform will prove sufficient; tinkering will not do; the system must be abolished root and branch".²⁰ At the same time, the Anti-slavery society became active again in its campaign against indenture.

During January and February 1917, Gandhiji stepped up his tirade for the abolition of indentured system. The

20. Ibid., p. 344., Quoting from Proceedings of the Indian Legislative Council, 20 March 1916.

Britishers were looking for an alternative system. But they were finally forced to abolish the system in 1917, when recruitment stopped due to unavailability of ships in the war period. The year 1917 had been momentous as indenture had been ended and declared abolished. "So indenture died, one of the calamities of the Great War".²¹ Though it carried on in Fiji, it was officially abolished in 1920, bringing an end to the indentured labour emigration from India to the British sugar colonies.

21. Ibid., p. 334.

CONCLUSION

The dissertation has sought to analyse the emigration of the indentured labour from India to Mauritius in all its aspects. The important landmarks of the same have been recapitulated below.

After the abolition of slavery and the passing of the Emancipation Bill in 1833, the Mauritian sugar industry fell into a crisis. After emancipation, most of the emancipees withdrew almost totally from plantation labour. This was because, they were unwilling to work on the planters' terms and in inhuman conditions, and not because they were lazy and irrational. Moreover, as freedmen, they were better able to make a living elsewhere. Due to this crisis, the planters looking for alternatives, turned towards India to tap the vast reservoir of cheap labour. Indians had already been used successfully on the plantations as slave-labourers; and now again they filled the void as indentured labourers. This emigration from India to Mauritius, thus started in 1834.

In the meantime, the planters approached the Indian Government and convinced it of the need for indentured labour. And from 1838, organised emigration of indentured Indians began under the supervision and direction of the government of India.

The labourers signed a contract under this system for generally five years, during which they were bound to the planters. The planters rarely fulfilled their legal obligations made in the contract, and flouted the rules and norms at wish, to reduce the indentured labourer to living a life of semi-slavery on the plantations.

The indentured system took its final shape by the 1870s and for the rest of the period (till its abolition). The new system set up by the planters helped them to make Mauritius into the 'sugar bowl' of the Indian ocean, but reduced the labourer to a mere tool to be exploited at will.

The emigrant Indian labourers comprising various castes, classes and nationalities were recruited from different parts of the country. Till the 1850s, the majority of the emigrants were 'Dhangars', the tribals from the Chotanagpur Plateau^N of present Bihar. These simple people were easily deceived into emigrating by the recruiters who gave them a grossly false picture of indenture life. However, after the 1850s, there was a considerable fall in the numbers of Dhangars emigrating to Mauritius. This was partly because of high mortality on sea voyages and mainly because most of them started migrating to Assam tea plantations as labourers.

After the 1850s till the end of the century, the main recruiting areas were Eastern Uttar Pradesh and

Plains of Bihar - chiefly comprising of Bhojpuri speaking people. There were several reasons as to why the immigration pattern pointed towards this area. It was mainly because many were agricultural labourers who had fallen on bad times due to changing agrarian relations after the Permanent Settlement of 1793. The natural calamities like famine and draught impoverished many. Those working in the East India Company's Bengal Army were forced to leave the army after the Revolt of 1857 as Sikhs and Gurkhas filled their places. All these people without an alternative source of employment, became easy prey to the recruiters. The sufferers of the KAMIUTI SYSTEM, a form of semi-slavery in Bihar, also recruited to escape from the yoke of landlords or moneylenders. The destruction of the handicraft industry, also left many jobless, who recruited as indentured emigrants. A peculiar feature of this period was internal migration jobless people flocked from eastern U.P. and Bihar, to Bengal to work in indigo factories, but failing to get employment were easily picked up by the 'arkatis', the local recruiters.

The backbone of all recruiting operations were the local agents called ARKATIS in North India and MAISTRIES in the South. There were various abuses in the arkati recruitment system. The labourers were deceived by the arkatis in every possible way - deception, kidnapping being well known. Another evil in the system was change

in the pre-informed destination. The firms were supposed to fill a quota of 40 women per 100 men. To fill this quota, the recruiters used various illegal and immoral methods.

Apart from the above mentioned system, another system of recruitment used and preferred by the planters was 'returnee recruiting'. Many of them were sent by planters from Mauritius to India to recruit trusted workers. The abuses in this system also, can not be denied, but it had one positive effect - it played a major role in encouraging family immigration, by recruiting legitimate married couples. This went a long way in removing a number of defects which crept into the social life of the coolies, due to lack of women on plantations. Moreover, returnee recruitment was more cost effective and less exploitative.

The labourers lived under pathetic conditions on the plantations. As mentioned earlier, the rules and norms of the contract were flouted by the planters, who saw the labourers in the same light, as they saw the slaves. There was no 'seasoning period' for the labourers to learn the ropes, and they were put to work immediately. The living conditions in the coolie lines were miserable. Punishments were harsh and at times inhuman causing deaths. The medical facilities were not even rudimentary. Marriage contracts made in India were held illegal and the Indian women were exploited by the planters, overseas and

sirdars. Education facilities were non-existent. Above all, racism was used very successfully, to preserve the status quo i.e. perpetuation of slavery. In such pathetic conditions, the Indians succeeded in retaining much of their identity - in preservation of the Indian languages and cultural festivals, which are even today very much a part of Mauritian life.

The indenture system was questioned and condemned by Europeans like Napoleon Savy, George Campbell and A.O. Hume in the 19th century and Viceroy Curzon and Hardinge in the 20th century, but continued unchanged. The Indian leaders played an important role in the end of this obnoxious system. Gandhiji raised the question of the conditions of Indians in British sugar colonies. He condemned the indenture system and even launched a satyagraha against it in South Africa. In Mauritius, an Indian advocate Manilal Doctor tried to alleviate the Indians out of their miseries in a spirited fight against the colonialists. Gopal Krishna Gokhale and Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya raised the issue of indentured labour in the Indian Legislative Council in 1912 and 1920 consecutively and called for its abolition.

The indenture system died in 1917 due to the disturbances during the 1st World War and the inability of the Britishers to devise a new system to replace it. Though a trickle of indentured emigration did take place

in the early 1920s, the system for all intents and purposes was abolished in 1920. Throughout the period of study a total of 466,018 Indians emigrated to Mauritius as indentured labourers.*

Thus, the planters of Mauritius with the active support of Government of India, succeeded in establishing the system of indenture, which was no better than the system of slavery existing earlier. Thousands of Indians had exchanged one form of poverty and servitude for another, and many found only death and disease in the new life. The fact that the system continued for almost a century after numerous protests and petitions, shows the apathy of the Britishers towards the whole system. Statesmen like Gandhiji, Gokhale, Manilal Doctor, Malviya, Curzon and Hardinge fought against its abuses, tooth and nail. And it is an irony, that it were the difficulties in recruitment and shipping during the Great war, rather than the will of the Whitehall or the Government of India that sounded the death-knell of the system.

* Hugh Tinker - A New System of Slavery - The Export of Indian Labour overseas (Oxford University press, London, 1974), p. 317.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

BOOKS

- ANDERSON, JOHN, A Descriptive Account of Mauritius its scenery, statistics & C., Mauritius, 1958.
- ANDREWS, C.F., and PEARSON, W.W., Indian Labour in Fiji: an independent inquiry, Delhi, 1916.
- ANSTEY, V., Economic Development in India, London: Longman, 1970.
- ARASARATNAM, SINNAPATH, Indians in Malaysia and Singapore, London, 1970.
- BANERJEE, PRAMATHANATH, Fiscal Policy in India, London, 1922.
- BANAJI, D.R., Slavery in India, Bombay, 1933.
- BARNNELL, P.J., Visits and Despatches. Mauritius. 1898-1948, Mauritius, 1948.
- BEATON, PATRICK, Creoles and Coolies, or Five Years in Mauritius, London, 1859.
- BHANA, SURENDRA, Indentured Indian Emigrants to Natal 1860-1902: A Study Based on Ships Lists, Promilla and Co. Publishers, New Delhi, 1991.
- , ed., Essays on Natal's Indentured Indians, Leeds, Yorkshire, Peepal Tree Press, 1990.
- BISOONDOYAL, S. Concise History of Mauritius, Bharati Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1963.
- BISOONDOYAL, U., and S.B.C. SERVASING, eds., Indian Labour Immigration, Moka, Mauritius, Mahatma Gandhi Institute, 1986.
- BUTTERWORTH, A.R., The Immigration of Coloured Races into British Colonies, London, 1898.
- CAMPBELL GEORGE, Memoirs of my Indian Career, London 1893, 2 Vols.
- CHATTOPADHYAYA, H., Indians in Africa, Bookland Private Limited, Calcutta, 1970.
- CHIROL, VALENTINE, Indian Unrest, London, 1910.

- CUMPSTON, I.M., Indians Overseas in British Territories, 1834-1854, London, 1954.
- DAS, A.C., The Indian Ryot, Calcutta, 1818.
- DEERR, NOEL, The History of Sugar, Chapman & Hall, London, 1950, 2 Vols.
- DUTT, R.C., Indians in the Victorian Age: An Economic History of the People, 1837-1900, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trusner & Co., London, 1904.
- DWARKA NATH, A History of Indians in British Guiana, Edinburgh, 1950.
- GANGULEE, N. Indians in the Empire Overseas: a Survey, London, 1979.
- GILLION, K.L. Fiji's Indian Migrants: a History to the end of Indenture in 1920, Malbourne, 1962.
- GUPTA, ANIRUDH, ed., Indians Abroad: Asia and Africa, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1971.
- HARRIS, JOHN H., Coolie Labour in the British Crown Colonies and Protectorates, London, 1910.
- ISAAC, JULIUS, The Economics of Migration, Oxford University Press, 1947.
- JACKSON, J.A. ed., Migration, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1969.
- KHAN, SHAFAT AHMAD, The Indians in South Africa Allahabad, 1946.
- KLASS, MORTON, East Indians in Trinidad, a Study in Cultural Persistence, Columbia, New York, 1961.
- KONDAPI, C., Indians Overseas 1838-1949. Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1951.
- MOOKHERJEE, S.B. The Indenture System in Mauritius, Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1962.
- NAPAL, D., Manilal Maganlal Doctor: Pioneer of Indo-Mauritius Emancipation, Mauritius, 1963.
- NARAIN, IQBAL, The Politics of Racialism, a Study of Indian Minority in South Africa, Agra, 1962.
- PINEO, H. LY-TIOFANE, Lured Away: The Life History of Indian Cane Workers in Mauritius, Mahatma Gandhi Institute, Moka, Mauritius, 1984.

- POTTS, LYDIA, The World Labour Market. A History of Migration, Zed Books Ltd., London, 1990.
- RAO, M.S.A. ed., Studies in Migration: Internal and International Migration in India, Planohar, New Delhi, 1986.
- ROY, JAYNARAIN, 'Mauritius in Transition, Allahabad, 1960.
- SAHA, PANCHANAN, Emigration of Indian Labour 1834-1900, Popular Publishing House, Delhi, 1970.
- SAUNDERS, K., ed., Indentured Labour in the British Empire, 1834-1920, Groom Helm, Australia, 1984.
- SCOBEE, JOHN, Hill Coolies: A Brief Exposure of the Deplorable Conditions of the hillCoolies in British Guiana and Mauritius, London, 1940.
- SINGH, RANBIR, Mauritius - A Key to the Indian Ocean, Arnold Hienmann, New Delhi, 1980.
- SUNDARAM, LANKA, Indians Overseas: A Study in Economic Sociology, Madras, 1933.
- TINKER, HUGH, A New System of Slavery. The Export of Indian Labour Overseas 1830-1920, Oxford University Press, London, 1974.
- , Banyan Tree: Overseas Emigrants from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, Oxford University Press, London, 1977.
- , South Asia: A Short History, Oxford University Press, London, 1966.
- WAIZ, S.A., Indians Abroad, Bombay, 1924.
- WATSON, J.L. ed., Asian and African systems of Slavery, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1980.
- WILLIAMS, ERIC, Capitalism and Slavery, London, 1944, 2nd ed., 1964.
- WOOD, DONALD, Trinidad in Transition: The Years after Slavery, London, 1968.

ARTICLES IN PERIODICALS:

- ALI AHMAD, Serving Girmity in Fiji 1879-1919 Seminar Paper, M.G.I., Moka, Mauritius, 1976.
- ALLEN, RICHARD B. The Slender, Sweat Thread, Sugar, Capital and Dependency in Mauritius, 1860-1936, Seminar Paper, M.G.I., Moka, Mauritius, 1976.
- BHANA, SURENDRA, A Historiography of the Indentured Indians in Natal: Review and Prospects, Seminar Paper, M.G.I., Moka, Mauritius, 1976.
- BISSOONDOYAL, U., Tiger of the Indian Ocean, Times of India, Ascent, New Delhi, Wednesday, June, 29, 1994.
- LAL, BRIJU, Girmityas: The Origin of the Fiji Indians, Canberra, Journal of Pacific History, 1983.
- CARTER, MARINA, Strategies of Labour Mobilisation in Colonial India: The Recruitment of Indentured Workers for Mauritius, Journal of Peasant Studies, 1990-91.
- CHAKRAVARTY, LALITA, Emergence of an Industrial Labour Force in a Dual Economy: British India, 1880-1920, Indian Economic and Social History Review 15, July - September 1978.
- DEERR, N., Indian Labour in the Sugar Industry, International Sugar Journal 40, March 1938.
- GAMBHIR, S.K., Mauritian Bhojpuri - An International Perspective on Historical and Socio-linguistic Processes, Seminar Paper, M.G.I., Moka, Mauritius, 1976.
- HAZAREESINGH, L., The Religion and Culture of Indian Immigrants in Mauritius and the Effects of Social Change Comparative studies in Society and History, 1966.
- JAIN R.K., Overseas Indians in Malaysia and the Carribean, Comparative Notes, Oxford, 1987 (Conference Paper.)
- JHA, J.C., Early Indian Immigration into Mauritius: 1834-1842, Seminar Paper, M.G.I., Moka, Mauritius, 1976.
- MORRIS, M.D., Economic Change and Agriculture in Nineteenth Century in India, Indian Economic and Social History Review 3, 1966.

- MOOKHERJEE, S.B., Indians in Mauritius, India Quarterly 15, New Delhi, 1959.
- NORTH - COOMBES, M.D., From Slavery to Indenture in the Political Economy of Mauritius 1834-1867 in K. Saunders (ed.) Indentured Labour in British Empire 1834-1920, Groom Helm, Australia, 1984.
- PILLAY, P.D., Imperial Policy and Immigration in Colonies, 1828-1920, in A. Gupta (ed.) Indians Abroad: Asia and Africa. Report of an International Seminar, Orient Longman, Delhi, 1971.
- SOULDIE, MADAN M., Indians in Mauritius in A. Gupta (ed.) Indians Abroad: Asia and Africa. Report of an International Seminar, Orient Longman, Delhi, 1971.
- STOKES, ERIC, The structure of Landholding in Uttar Pradesh, 1860-1948, Indian Economic and Social History Review 12, 1975.
- TAYAL, M., Indian Indentured Labour in Natal 1890-1911, Indian Economic and Social History Review 14, 1978.
- TINKER, HUGH, Colour and Colonisation, A Study in Rival Commonwealth ideas of settlement, The Round Table, October, 1970.
- , Odd Man Out: The Loneliness of the Indian Colonial Politician, The Career of Manilal Doctor, The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History, October, 1973.