Towards the New Horizons (1870s to 1920s)

The journey of Indian diaspora in Mauritius which started with their arrival as indentured labourers reached a celebrated landmark when, at the time of independence, a descendant of an indentured labourer became the premier of independent Mauritian state. This transition was accomplished not as an impulsive rupture but as a result of an incessant struggle and an unvarying yearning of the indentured labourers and their descendants to fight the tyrannies of the repressive plantation regime and other circumstantial odds.

However, the temporal scope of this chapter is limited to the 1920s or more precisely till 1921 when two members of the Indian diasporic community – R. Gujadhur and D. Lallah got elected to the Legislative Council which was the apex representative institution of governance. This was a major landmark in the historical transformation of Indian labour diaspora from a victim to an achiever. In this chapter my attempt will be to map out this process of deliverance of indentured labourers from the confines of sugar estates and their entry into the economic and political space and diverse vocational domains of the island. I shall try to discuss three intrinsic tangibles of this process which worked in concert – first, acquisition of landed property by Indian community, second, emergence of political consciousness and third, education. But before further deliberation on these issues, it may not be out of place to narrate certain developments in the plantation dependent political-economic realm of Mauritius during 1870s, because these developments provided the instantaneous impetus to the elongated process of diasporic transformation.
The decade of the 1860s witnessed the planters' desperate attempts to control the mobility of immigrant labourers off the estates in order to secure abundant labour supply at cheaper wages for the crisis ridden sugar economy. Their attempts were fully supported by the administrators who, in turn, proposed several legislations to control the 'habitual vagrancy and desertion' among the old immigrants who were seen as 'dangers to the society' and who turned to 'a life of plunder, robbing or pilfering at night'.\(^1\) The most repressive and stern vagrancy law in this context was promulgated in 1867 as Ordinance 31. In December 1866, a strange epidemic (later identified as Malaria) erupted in Mauritius claiming more than twenty five thousand lives, mostly in suburban settlements of Indian immigrants. Colonial authorities ascribed the insanitary habits of the Indian immigrants as the reasons for this epidemic and argued for a stern law to regulate their habitations. The anti-Indian prejudices of Colonial authorities in describing the reasons for this epidemic outbreak got reflected in the following observation of Governor Barkly:

'This agglomeration of people of dirty habits in wretched and overcrowded huts – constructed without the slightest regard to sanitation and grouped together often in the most unsuitable localities, is universally regarded as the main cause of the excessive mortality...'\(^2\)

However, the Royal Commission recorded in its report that this prejudiced view against Indian immigrants 'was used as an excuse for introducing arbitrary and coercive legislation on the whole Indian population of the island'.\(^3\) Whatever reasons the colonial officials ascribed for such harsh vagrancy laws, the underlying intentions of such regulations were to curtail the

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\(^1\) Report of the Procureur General on Ordinance 31 of 1867, CO 167/ 501, PRO.
\(^2\) Barkly to Duke of Buckingham, dt. 30 December 1867, SD 93/ 338, MA.
\(^3\) Report of Royal Commission, 1875, p.107.
attempts of indentured labourers to explore opportunities other than agricultural labour and compel them to re-engage themselves to the estates on adverse terms and conditions imposed by the planters. This ordinance made it compulsory for all the immigrants who had completed their required 'industrial residence' in Mauritius to carry a ticket with their photographs on them, and they had to apply for a new ticket every time they changed their residence or occupation. Apart from these procedural complications, this ordinance gave unrestricted powers to the Police. Police and even the ordinary public could arrest any immigrant as vagrant on mere suspicion. Ordinance 31 proved very effective in preventing the Indian immigrants from breaking the shackles of indenture and finding a livelihood in some other sector and from securing a better deal. This was because the convoluted procedure of obtaining tickets and the high costs of photographs made it practically impossible for the time expired immigrants to obtain a ticket and thus venture into any other opportunity. This ordinance confirmed that for the Mauritian state, Indian immigrants were first labourers and then citizens and the essential motive of the government was to protect the commercial interests of the planters at any cost. All the promulgations of benevolence and protective initiatives were available to the Indian labourers only till they unconditionally tied themselves to the estates and the moment they tried to assert their natural rights to freely explore the landscape of opportunities beyond plantations, the planters as well as the administrators, with a shared eagerness, declared them delinquents. The coercive intentions of this ordinance were noticed by the Indian government also. In a sort of complaining voice, A.O. Hume, Secretary of the Government of India, wrote to the Colonial

\[\text{\textsuperscript{4} Carter, Marina, \textit{Servants}, p.204.}\]
Secretary that under the said ordinance, ‘a system of oppression has been organised and administered’.  

For old immigrants, the intents of these regulations were ‘to control and discipline’ instead of ‘protect’ and the official agents of protection like the Protector of Immigrants were also equally obliging to the plantation lobby in their support for the draconian anti-vagrancy laws. He reported that this ordinance would ‘very greatly improve our laws relative to labourers’ and ‘it would entail no inconvenience worthy of notice’. Under such harsh legislations, initially there was no resistance from the immigrant community which led the Governor to report that ‘the process of registration of the old immigrant population is going on rapidly and has been accepted without a murmur by the parties concerned’. However, the attitude of acquiescence response did not last very long and by the beginning of the 1870s, murmurs of dissent began to erupt among the immigrants. These murmurs turned into massive protest against the coercive anti-vagrancy laws with the help of pro-labourer but ‘outsider’ planter Adolphe de Plevitz, and with the arrival of a sympathetic Governor Arthur Hamilton Gordon.

Adolphe de Plevitz was of German origin and he came to Mauritius in 1859 and initially worked for some time as Forest Ranger in the Woods and Forest Department. In 1860 he married the daughter of Francois Rivet, a planter of Creole origins who owned an estate Nouvelle Decouverte, near Port Louis. After the marriage, de Plevitz started looking after the estate and thus began his first hand experience with the old immigrants and their problems, because many

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5 Hume to Colonial Secretary, dt. 13 July 1872, Prog. No. 23, Rev., Ag. and Com., (Emi.), September, 1972, NAI.
6 Report of H.N.D. Beyts, Protector of Immigrants, dt. 16 December 1867, CO 167/ 501, PRO.
7 Barkly to Duke of Buckingham, dt. 16 June 1868, SD 96/ 179, MA.
of them had settled around Nouvelle Decouverte area. Soon after his taking charge of the estate, De Plevitz sent some old immigrants to the local police station to get their passes revised as he had become their new employer. But these immigrants were immediately arrested by the police for carrying inadequate passes. De Plevitz himself appeared in the court and deposed for the immigrants who were then released but with stern warning. De Plevitz personal appearance in the court in favour of old immigrants, as his biographer and great grand daughter Loretta Plevitz argues, earned him the trust of the immigrants ‘as a man willing to stand up on their behalf’.9 Moved by the sufferings of old immigrants, de Plevitz brought out a pamphlet recounting the disabilities imposed upon the old immigrants in the name of disciplining their lives. He further decided to submit a petition on their behalf to the Governor for redress. He moved around in the island to collect signatures from the immigrants and finally submitted this petition to the Governor Gordon on 6th June 1871 with 9,401 immigrants’ signatures on it. This petition was appended with a testimony of several old immigrants narrating their predicament under the repressive laws – difficulties in obtaining passes, arrests despite having all the papers in order, arrests of children and even girls, arrests during visits to their relatives, etc. The fundamental urge of the petitioners was their desire for freedom and equality with the other residents of the colony. After a long haul of contractual bindings they all wanted to be free from the clutches of indenture and explore the impending prospects in the colony, whether by selling vegetables, working as gardeners or whatever might came their way. As the opening statement of their petition underlined:

9 ibid. p. 23.
..your petitioners suffer many and great grievances from the existing laws by which they are deprived of that freedom which all other inhabitants of Mauritius enjoy.'

Testimonies of the old immigrants appended with the petition documented how these old immigrants, who were leading their lives outside the estates in a peaceful and law-abiding manner, were convicted as criminals merely because they had lost some paper describing their status or some unscrupulous policeman decided to arrest them at the instigation of some planter:

‘Your petitioners are thus at the mercy of the police, and the most industrious and best conducted man amongst them cannot stir but by their sufferance. An old immigrant may be honestly maintaining his wife and family, sending his children to school, be possessed of some little property, and carefully endeavour to observe all the laws and ordinances, yet, if by some mischance he loses his papers, he may be, and often is condemned indiscriminately with a number of others, all charged on the same sheet, to imprisonment with hard labour as vagabond.’

De Plevitz’s attempts to seek redress for old immigrants were perceived by planters as possible threat to their hold over immigrants in the colony and their attempts to curtail the mobility of old immigrants. And as a result, de Plevitz had to face the planters’ rage. The pro-planter press demanded his prosecution and twice he was physically assaulted in public. Police took no serious action and arrested de Plevitz also along with Lavoquer, who attacked him, for creating disturbance. The Governor took a strong view of this and

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10 Petition of the Old Immigrants, dt. 6 June 1871, CO 167/536, PRO.
11 ibid.
ordered the dropping of charges against de Plevitz.\textsuperscript{12} The plantation lobby then tried to get rid of de Plevitz by demanding his deportation from Mauritius on the ground that ‘he has interfered with the safety of the inhabitants of the island; ...and that he has not shown becoming respect towards the colonial institutions’.\textsuperscript{13}

Arthur Gordon arrived from Trinidad to assume charge of Governor in early 1871 and soon he was surprised to note how from being a model of indenture legislation, Mauritius had become a striking example of inequity and neglect to its large Indian population.\textsuperscript{14} He criticised the living standards of Indian labourers on estates and the inadequate housing and medical attendance. He reported the frequent violation of labour laws by planters, huge wage arrears, and the lackadaisical attitude of the Protector and Stipendiary Magistrates in inspecting estates and addressing the grievances of the immigrant labourers because very often these Magistrates had interests in the sugar estates.\textsuperscript{15} He adopted a lenient view towards immigrants and instead of blaming them for every disorder, epidemic or crisis, held planters equally responsible. He also tried to initiate improvements in their working conditions, and ensure regular payment of wages, sanitation, and medical attendance.\textsuperscript{16} To ensure an effective implementation of various regulations on estates, he appointed Inspectors of Immigrants through Ordinance 34 of 1871. Since the existing system of inspection through Stipendiary Magistrates was not very effective because these Magistrates were occupied with several other responsibilities at their disposal and therefore seldom visited estates, the newly appointed

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{12} Gordon to Kimberley, dt. 17 November 1871, SD 113/ 197, MA.
\item \textsuperscript{13} Colonial Secretary to Arthur Edwards, dt. 14 November 1871, CO 167/ 536, PRO.
\item \textsuperscript{14} \textit{Select Documents}, Vol. I, p.94.
\item \textsuperscript{15} Gordon to Kimberley, dt. 21 September 1871, SD 112/ 138, MA.
\item \textsuperscript{16} Gordon to Kimberley, dt. 12 December 1871, SD 113/ 210, MA.
\end{itemize}
Inspectors were appointed exclusively for the inspection of estates. They had to make quarterly visits to all the plantations employing Indian immigrants and were empowered to check all the records available there. Employers had to provide half yearly returns about the payments of wages and general condition of immigrant labourers on estates and non compliance with the inspection and maintenance of records was liable for punishment.¹⁷

When Gordon received the petition of old immigrants along with de Plevitz’s observations, he forwarded it to the Secretary of State because he wanted a positive redress for the grievances of immigrants and general improvement in the system. In the accompanying note he observed that despite ‘a good deal of exaggeration and many inaccuracies’, ‘some of the assertions it contains cannot ... be denied with truth.’¹⁸ Upon receiving the petition of old immigrants and de Plevitz’s observation, along with the expression of the Governor’s unhappiness with the system of labour management, the British Government decided to appoint a Royal Commission. This would ‘enquire into the treatment of immigrants in Mauritius’ and make an impartial examination of all the allegations related to the condition of Indian immigrants and suggest future measures for the improvement in the system.¹⁹ Subsequently, William Edward Frere and Victor Alexander Williamson were sent to Mauritius as Royal Commissioners. Frere and Williamson visited more than fifty estates in the island and examined numerous witnesses including de Plevitz and finally produced a voluminous report on 5 November 1874.

The report of the Royal Commission remains the most comprehensive document, meticulously describing the every aspect and agency of the indenture

¹⁷ Ordinance 34 of 1871, SD 114/ 4, MA.
¹⁸ Gordon to Kimberley, dt. 17 November 1871, SD 113/ 197, MA.
system and the condition of Indian immigrants in Mauritius. This report corroborated many of the problems of the indenture system and austerity towards immigrants to which Gordon and de Plevitz's petitioners tried to draw the attention of the colonial authorities. Royal Commissioners noted deficiencies in the functioning of almost every aspect of indenture system. It particularly took serious note of the anti vagrancy regulations and the harsh and arbitrary manner in which alleged 'vagrants' were disciplined, and expressed their disappointment at the complete failure of the Protector as an institution to ensure a fair treatment for immigrants. It would be worth reproducing some of the conclusions of the Royal Commission related to the deduction of wages, inefficiency of the Protector and ill-treatment meted out to immigrants in the disguise of vagrancy control:

Para 4051. ...this law (Ordinance 31 of 1867) was enforced both by the Police and Magistrates in such a reckless and indiscreet manner, as to cause cruel hardship to a number of your Majesty's subjects....

Para 4052. The Immigration Department. We find that the title borne by the head of this department, viz., "Protector of Immigrants"]: is calculated to mislead, and that the powers conferred by law upon this office do not by any means correspond with his title...

Para 4071. ...very large sums have been annually illegally deducted from the wages of labourers...

Para 4078. We find that the offences of illegal absence, desertion, and vagrancy, which the law contemplates should be distinguished, have in

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21 Extracted from Chapter XXXIV, 'Summary of Conclusions', Report of Royal Commission, 1875.
practice been confounded; the result being in many cases the infliction of great injustice and hardship...

Para 4086a. We find that assaults upon labourers are of common occurrence, and that there are estates upon which ill-usage has been systematic and long continued.

Para 4087. We have not been able to discover the great physical, moral and intellectual advance occurring to Indians which is asserted to be the consequence of their immigration to Mauritius.

These conclusions exposed the wretched conditions of Indian immigrants in Mauritius even after forty years of the beginning of the system, despite all the administrative claims of general improvement in the conditions of immigrant labourers, effective legislative protection against alleged abuses of the system and ill-treatment of immigrant labourers by the planters. In the wake of these candid but damaging conclusions of the Royal Commission, it became imperative for the administrators to initiate legislative reforms to check the continued occurrences of the ill-treatment and exploitation of immigrant labourers but it took four long years and ultimately Ordinance 12 of 1878 was passed for better management of indenture system and to provide effective control over the abuses associated with it, and this ordinance continued till 1922.

Coming of Royal Commission and promulgation of this Ordinance is considered by many scholars as the beginning of a new era of more humane and pro-immigrant labour legislation as it removed many repressive provisions of the 1867 ordinance and provided for a more effective system of checks. This

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view is not very tenable in the recent historiography because 'many of the problems extant in the indenture system remained in place'\(^{23}\) like absurdly long imprisonment for neglect of work and desertion, enormous deductions in wages on minor offences etc., as elucidated by the later enquiries.\(^{24}\) Yet, I shall try to argue that the submission of a petition signed by nearly ten thousand immigrants and the ensuing arrival of the Royal Commission marked the genesis of a new era in the lives of the Indian immigrants in Mauritius. It inculcated a new hope in them by opening up new possibilities of redress. It made them realise the potential of collective action and gave them self-confidence, which was most crucial for the growth of a community, but was constantly smothered by the planters and colonial authorities by accusing the immigrants of being responsible for everything which went wrong in the colony – whether loss of revenues or outbreaks of epidemics.

As explained earlier, I have tried to study this mobility of Indian immigrants in the period after the 1870s in three domains – acquisition of property, political consciousness and education.

**From Labourers to Land Owners**

The first batch of Indian immigrants arrived in 1834 to work on sugar plantations owned by white planters and these immigrants had no property to claim, even their clothes and utensils were provided by the planters. But in 1920, these immigrants and their descendents owned 44 percent of the total cultivated land in Mauritius.\(^{25}\) This sweeping transformation of indentured Diaspora from landless labourers to the significant landholding class of the island was achieved through a larger process of dynamic social and economic

\(^{23}\) *Select Documents, Vol. I, p.204.*


\(^{25}\) *ARPI, 1920.*

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change of the Indian immigrant community vis a vis the location and it involved two entwined processes: first, acquisition of property by the immigrant labourers and second, their settlement outside estates. The dynamics of these changes in Mauritius, as Richard Allen argues, has been analysed in very general terms or remain undescribed. Raj Virahsawmy, in his study of morcellement and emergence of villages in Mauritius, describes the emergence of Indian small planters as consequence of emerging capitalism and transformation of Mauritius from a semi-capitalist plantation economy to an agrarian capitalist economy. Another scholar of the political economy of Mauritius, M.D. North-Coombes describes this as the rise of semi-proletarianised peasantry. More recently, Richard Allen has tried to study the emergence of Indian small planters in a more comprehensive manner by linking it up with the ‘grand morcellement’ and the financial conditions of the Mauritian sugar industry. But the very crucial question which remains unrequited in the earlier studies as well as in Allen’s study is why the Indian immigrants decided to buy the small plots of lands when these tiny plots were economically not very self sustaining and they had to work as labourers to meet their requirements. The operation of economic factors offers explanations only for the availability of the plots and fails to elucidate the motivation behind the immigrants’ decision to buy them. To explicate this decisive motivation factor, we shall go back to the norms of social prestige and cultural significance of land ownership in the society which these immigrants came from. In village society of India, land ownership had, and still has, very significant ramifications for

26 Virahsawmy, R., Morcellement and the Emergence of Villages in Mauritius, The Case of Vale and Holyrood, University of Mauritius, Mauritius, 1978.
one’s status in society and the respect he commanded. When the Indian immigrant community got the opportunity to move out of estates, they aspired to attain some respectable social footing and the rare opportunity they had to accomplish this dream was through purchasing land which was available in 1860s onwards owing to various factors related to the transformation of the Mauritian political economy. This symbolic socio cultural significance the land ownership to an extent explains the rationale of immigrants’ choice to buy the small plots of land.

For more than three decades of indentured immigration, Indian labourers’ movement off the plantations was severely restricted through anti-vagrancy and desertion laws. Though, in principle, there was no restriction on their entering into any vocation after the minimum residence period (ten years), planters made every attempt to tie them with the estates through draconian laws. During this period, most of the immigrant population was confined to the estates and had no opportunity to venture out and acquire any property. However the situation began to change favourably for Indian immigrants when they got the opportunity to acquire land from 1870s onwards when various restrictions on their mobility were removed. The opportunity of acquiring land was provided to the Indian immigrants through the process of subdivision of estates which was termed as grand morcellement in the contemporary administrative accounts as well as in the recent literature. Grand morcellement was central to the emergence of a class of small planters for the first time in the history of island. Since almost all of these small planters were Indian immigrants, it had far reaching consequences in the socio-economic development of the Indian immigrants and subsequently their participation in the political processes and formations of Mauritius.
Chapter 6

The beginning of *morcellement* is usually dated to late 1870s but Richard Allen traces the genesis of this process of land acquisition by the immigrants to the mid 1860s\(^{29}\) when the planters adopted a binary strategy of consolidation of production process on the one hand and subdivision of their not so productive land holdings on the other to make the production more cost effective. This became imperative for them in the wake of the sinking fortunes of the sugar economy. The first traces of *morcellement* were found in 1862 to 1866 when various properties such as ‘*Le Hochet*’, ‘*Terrain Ganet*’, and ‘*La Menagerie*’ were subdivided and sold mainly to the old immigrants. However, the *morcellement* during this phase was limited to the town of Port Louis and adjoining areas and most of the plots were of very small size, of a few hundred square metres, not enough for cane cultivation but only to establish a small garden to grow vegetables or build a house or workshop.\(^{30}\)

The second phase of *morcellement* began in the mid 1870s when an old immigrant Seewoodharry Bhaguth, acting as mediator, purchased 312 arpent of land from Augustin Perrier and started selling off small portions of this land.\(^{31}\) However, the first *morcellement* of any importance took place in December 1880 when a property belonging to Mrs. Joseph Diore in Flacq district was divided into 22 lots.\(^{32}\) From 1880s onwards, the process of *morcellement* became very extensive and consequently the numbers of Indian peasant proprietors increased enormously. Census of 1881 enumerated 701 such


\(^{30}\) ibid.


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independent Indian proprietors which increased to 1074 in 1891.\textsuperscript{33} This growth of Indian small planters was seen as inevitable by the Colonial authorities. Acting Governor King Harman also noted the need for improvement in the sugar factories so they could utilise the increased cane produced by these small planters.\textsuperscript{34} The process of morcellement helped the Indian immigrant community to emerge as the most prominent cane cultivators by the time indentured immigration came to an end. In 1921 they counted for 93 per cent of the total planters of the island and as the following table shows, they were cultivating about 44 per cent of the total area under cane cultivation:

Table 6.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Area Cultivated by Indians (arpents)</th>
<th>% of Total Cane Cultivation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>45,914</td>
<td>31.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>47,743</td>
<td>33.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>50,067</td>
<td>33.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>54,887</td>
<td>35.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>59,132</td>
<td>37.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>65,197</td>
<td>39.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>72,388</td>
<td>43.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>72,633</td>
<td>43.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>73,725</td>
<td>43.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>86,000*</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>88,000*</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* for 1919 and 1920 area under cultivation is measured in acres.

\textit{Source: Blue Books for 1910-1920; Mauritius Almanac 1921; Report of Kunwar Maharaj Singh on his Deputation to Mauritius, 1925 for 1919-20.}

\textsuperscript{33} Census of Mauritius and its Dependencies, 1921. hereafter Census.

\textsuperscript{34} Annual Report on the Condition of Colony, 1895. hereafter AR.
Once the initial break was made, Indian immigrants achieved phenomenal success in acquiring properties. Between 1895 and 1900, the property acquired by Indian immigrants was valued at more than Rupees 10,297,506.\(^{35}\) According to Richard Allen’s estimates, Indian immigrants invested more than 24 million Rupees in acquiring landed properties between 1864 and 1900.\(^{36}\) The following table shows the annual average of the property acquired by the Indian immigrants:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Value of Property (Rs.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1864-1887</td>
<td>5,342,760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1888-1894</td>
<td>8,519,679</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895-1900</td>
<td>10,297,506</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901-1904</td>
<td>6,117,956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905-1909</td>
<td>6,214,655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910-1914</td>
<td>12,078,390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915-1919</td>
<td>26,852,940</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


As this table demonstrates, the amount of capital invested by Indian immigrants in acquiring landed properties was incredible, especially when we take into account the low levels of their earnings which ranged between 5 to 7 Rupees per month and that too entailed many deductions. So how did the immigrants mobilised the resources for such massive investment? To meet the

\(^{35}\) AR 1900.
capital requirements, immigrants used every possible means available – their savings, borrowings from money lenders who were usually sirdars, or payments in instalments. Because of the specific arrangements on the estates, Indian immigrants had very little opportunity to splurge – their food and clothing were provided by the planters, and they were not allowed to move beyond the estates to go to towns or markets. In addition, many labourers made use of the uncultivated areas in and around the estates to grow vegetables and maintain livestock, which increased their earnings. All these factors contributed to the high proportion of savings by the immigrant community which they either remitted to the homeland or more commonly used to acquire property. Most of the properties acquired by Indian immigrants were small holdings, often less than two acres and therefore these individual savings and petty borrowings could provide the capital for small acquisitions, but purchasing the larger estates required more capital. According to Allen, Indian immigrants arranged the capital for the larger plots either by making joint purchases or payments in instalments. He cites several cases where immigrants paid a much smaller amount initially and the rest amount over a period of five or six years\(^\text{37}\), often on quite favourable terms compared to the borrowings form money-lenders.

Another process, which began in the late 1870s, and helped in the Indian immigrants’ transformation from labourers to cultivators was the *Metayage* system. This system was very similar to *bataidari* or share-cropping, prevalent in the Indian agrarian system where big land owners give parts of their estates to mainly the landless or small peasants to cultivate and in return these

sharecroppers would give the land owner a significant part of the produce in lieu of land use. Planters resorted to Metayage system as a response to the lack of capital to invest in agriculture and it was preferred over morcellement because unlike the later, Metayage system tied the cultivators or 'metayers' to the estates and therefore helped them in maintaining their hold over the production process. Table below shows how the Metayage system marked a consistent increase along with the morcellement in the 1910s and 1920s.

Table 6.3
Sugar Cane Cultivation by Small Cultivators under Metayage and Morcellement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of Small Cultivators on Estates (Metayage)</th>
<th>No. of Small Cultivators outside Estates (Morcellement)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>18,587</td>
<td>35,483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>16,637</td>
<td>41,232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>24,470</td>
<td>39,087</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>32,557</td>
<td>36,891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>28,960</td>
<td>45,616</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>31,298</td>
<td>47,514</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>31,705</td>
<td>47,382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>30,474</td>
<td>48,850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>30,700</td>
<td>52,739</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>32,343</td>
<td>51,300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Blue Books for 1911-1921; Census 1921.

Instead of liberating immigrants, Metayage system actually established a new network of dependency and economic exploitation for them because as metayers they were obliged to sell their cane to the estate owners, at whatever prices offered. Despite this dependence, Metayage system did contribute as an additional source of income for the metayers. Sooryakanti Nirsimloo-Gayan in
her analysis of small planters’ strategy, though she cites the empirical evidence for a period much later than the purview of this study, argues that it was a ‘source of additional prosperity to the small planters’ because she finds that many of metayers were also small land owners and therefore Metayage enabled them to double or treble the area they cultivated.\(^{38}\)

The acquisition of landed property by the immigrants and their foray into cane cultivation gave rise to a new class in the Mauritian social order – *petits planteurs* or small planters. In the Mauritian plantation economy this class was established as the most significant cane cultivating class and by 1920, these small planters were cultivating more than 44 per cent of the total area under cane cultivation. But to what extent this class had the economic independence and to what extent this prominence in cane cultivation attain ‘liberation’ for this class, as some Mauritian scholars have argued,\(^ {39}\) is a matter that needs to be investigated in a methodical manner. Most of the plots owned by small planters were very small, often less than 2 acres. Even in 1930, when the first reliable enumeration of small estates was made, out of a total of 14,495 small holdings off estates, 13,312 or 92 per cent holdings were less than five acres.\(^ {40}\) Such small holdings were not adequate to support the entire families of small planters and they had no choice but to resort to work as wage labourers. The options of supplementary income were further limited by the increasing concentration on cane plantation by small planters, marking a shift from earlier patterns of vegetable, fruit and other food grains. According to the census enumeration for


1881 and 1901, there was a steep decline in the number of vegetable growers-sellers. In 1881, there were 16,222 Indian immigrants cultivating and selling various vegetables, fruits and other food grains which fell to merely 5,579 in 1901.\footnote{Census, 1881 and 1901.} This shift in the cultivation preferences not only reduced the additional earnings of the small planters which they used to earn by selling these products but also made them solely dependent on the mill owners and vulnerable to the fluctuations of the sugar based economy. Another significant factor which was instrumental in restricting the real ‘liberation’ of small planters was the specific credit based financing of the land acquisitions by the immigrants. Due to financial constraints, most of the small owners acquired plots of land during morcellement on credit from the estate owners themselves. One of the essential conditions of these financing arrangements was the compulsion on the part of small planter to sell his crop to the mill owner or estate owner from whom he had taken the credit. This exclusive arrangement tied the small planters to the interlinked network of large estates and sugar mill and also rooted out the possibilities of competitive price negotiations by the small planters. All these limitations on the economic independence of the small planters form the basis of M.D. North-Coombes’ objection in accepting this class as ‘petty bourgeoisie’.\footnote{North-Coombes, M.D., Studies in the Political Economy of Mauritius, MGI, Mauritius, 2000. (compiled by W.M. Freund), p.143.}

Despite its restricted economic ramifications, creation of this class had immense symbolic value for the Indian immigrants because it epitomised an exceptional saga of upward economic and social mobility of a dispossessed class. However, it was not the culmination of the process of socio-economic mobility of a diasporic community but it marked the genesis of a much larger
and gradual process of the socio-economic and political advancement of a diasporic community. Indian immigrants bought plots of land well beyond their means by putting in the savings of their life time and heavy borrowings for protracted durations which at times turned disastrous for quite a few of them, yet they accepted the challenge to struggle against their predicament. While working in the cane fields under severe repression and relentless humiliation, these immigrant labourers had a dream and they sacrificed their present and immediate future to make this reverie into reality, to accomplish a privileged social and economic status for themselves and their future generations in their adopted land.

Education and Emancipation

Due to the deep rooted racist prejudices against the immigrant Indian labourers, planters' as well as the colonial authorities' depicted them as being 'from the lowest and most ignorant classes of their countrymen who at present appear to be beyond the reach of the civilising and humanising influences of religion and education'. Despite this awareness of lack the of education among the immigrants, the need to provide education to the labourers and their children did not fit into the scheme of planters neither did it get the attention from the administrators because, for Mauritian authorities, Indian indentured labourers were primarily 'transient sojourners' who had come to Mauritius as labourers to work on plantations and would eventually return to their homelands and therefore there was no logic or requirement to provide them education. The more fundamental reason for this slackness towards providing education was the inherent logic of capitalist production system which does not permit any investment for which there was no positive return. Since performing menial

43 Minutes of the Council of Government, Mauritius, 1851, MA.
labour in the cane fields did not require any specific knowledge, there was no motivation for planters to invest resources in making arrangements for education of immigrant labourers or their children. Even the missionaries, who were considered to very active in providing education to the underprivileged classes, somehow did not get involved in the ‘mission’ of educating the Indian immigrants. Superintendent of Schools, R.H. Walsh noted this inaction of missionaries in 1859 for which he put blame on ignorance of missionaries in languages spoken by the Indian immigrants,

‘...I am not aware of any efforts having been made on behalf of the Roman Catholic Church for the instruction of the Indians. None of their clergy in Mauritius I am informed are acquainted with any of the Indian languages...’

Despite this general lackadaisical attitude, colonial authorities at times put across the idea of educating the children of labouring classes though there were no efforts towards its realisation and it remained at the levels of rhetoric and individual opinion. Immediately after the commencement of indentured immigration from India, when the deplorable conditions of Indian immigrants attracted severe condemnation for the system from all quarters, Governor of Mauritius, Nicolay proposed to establish a government controlled education system to spread education, especially among the children of labourers,

‘On the subject of Public Schools, I have lately laid before you some propositions .....and if they should be adopted, I trust that there will at length be established throughout the colony a general system of schools, under the Control of Government, an

44 Note on Popular Education in Mauritius, 1859, PP, Vol. xxi, No. 31-ii, 1859.
object which I consider to be essential to the successful spread of education, specially among the children of labouring classes.\footnote{Cited in Bissoondoyal, Uttama, ‘Education and Multicultural Agenda’ in Nirsimloo-Gayan, S., (ed.) Towards the Making of a Multicultural Society, MGI, Mauritius, 2000, p.149.}

Nicolay made this proposition in 1839, yet no efforts had been made to provide education to the children of Indian immigrants till the 1850s. The first proposal for a comprehensive education system came from Bishop Chapman who visited Mauritius from Ceylon in 1850. He proposed that an annual grant-in-aid be provided by the government and there should be an increase in the number of Protestant clergy ‘especially ...for planning and assisting in the instruction of the immigrant population.’\footnote{Letter of Bishop Chapman, in Anderson to Grey, dt. 16 August 1850, SA 130, MA.} The matter of providing education to the Indian immigrants caught the attention of the Mauritian government with the arrival of Higginson as Governor in January 1851. When the Committee of the Mauritius Church Association proposed to set up a school in Port Louis for elementary education in English and Tamil and to train teachers to teach in schools to be opened with the help of Reverend Hardy who was engaged in providing education to the children of labouring classes in South India, Higginson opined that the proposal should not be neglected and was in favour of giving it a trial. Subsequently with a grant of £ 200, an experimental school was started for the children of Indian immigrants in Savanne district. An Indian school teacher was appointed to run this school and the medium was vernacular. This experiment was not a success and had to be closed down after few months because educating their children was not on the minds of the immigrant labourers and very few children came to attend.\footnote{Minutes of the Council of Government, dt. 8 March 1854, MA.} However, another observer
ascribes the possible reasons for the lack of attendance to the inability of Indian teacher who 'had no experience in education'.48

Despite this failure of his opening experiment, Higginson was not deterred and in 1854 came the famous Minute of Higginson on education which was the foremost document on the education of Indian immigrants in Mauritius, covering almost all its aspects. In this Minute he announced that,

'time has arrived, when some systematic attempts should be made, to extend the blessings of at least the rudiments of Education and of Moral training to the children of our labouring classes – and the success of which would unquestionably prove alike beneficial to themselves, to their employers, and to the community at large.'49

Higginson was trying to set up an educational system for the immigrants but he was aware of the 'obstacles' in making it a reality, which he attributed primarily to the background of the 'uncivilised' immigrants and their scattered pattern of settlement in Mauritius:

'When we call to mind the class of men from which our Indian immigrants are chiefly recruited – the social position which they occupy here – their transitory residence – their ignorance of the English language and the different dialects spoken by them – their apprehensions of proselytism so easily alarmed – the surface over which they are scattered – and the absence of those civilising influences which, under a less exceptional state of Society, might be exercised over them – it will be obvious to all, that the obstacles to be over come by the Government in maturing and introducing any general or comprehensive system

49 Minutes of the Council of Government, dt. 22 March 1854, MA.
for importing even the most elementary introduction to the Indian population are no light of ordinary character.\textsuperscript{50}

He was well aware of the fact that the reluctance would emanate from both the concerned parties – labourers as well as the planters. Since most of the children of immigrant labourers began to work on the plantations at an early age which not only contributed to the earning of their families but also provided a relatively cheap labour to the planters (children were being paid less wages that adults), the reluctance would obviously come from both the parties as sending the children would mean the sacrifice of immediate gains.\textsuperscript{51} Despite these apprehensions, he was optimistic that the Government, which possesses the power and the means for moral and social advancement, would be able to succeed in setting up a popular education system for the immigrant population of the island.

For Higginson, the solution lay in making the education compulsory but without resorting to coercion. The main points of Higginson’s proposal to the Council were:

1. Schools should be opened in the most convenient localities for the use of one, two, or more Estates as the case may be;
2. As the medium of education, mother tongue can not be excluded and therefore education should be given in English and one vernacular language;
3. The teacher’s salary, school books, & a. should be defrayed from a fund to be raised by a trifling deduction from the labourers’ wages;

\textsuperscript{50} Minutes of the Council of Government, dt. 8 March 1854, MA.
\textsuperscript{51} Minutes of the Council of Government, dt. 22 March 1854, MA.
4. Planters were to provide ‘gratuitously suitable accommodation for the schools and for the residence of teachers’;

5. To meet the requirements of qualified teachers, initially some teachers were to be introduced from India but later a Normal School would be set up in Port Louis at Government expenses to train teachers, proficient in English and Indian languages.\textsuperscript{52}

The bottom line of Higginson’s proposal was the setting up of exclusive Indian Schools and financing it through a cut from the wages of immigrants. C. Kalla finds this proposal inadequate and ‘a feeler to gauge the reactions of the sugarocrats’ because ‘it did not make any mention of the curriculum or of religious instruction’ and ‘no mention was made of evaluation in the form of inspection.’\textsuperscript{53} There had been no initiative for the education of Indian immigrants’ children by the time Higginson verbalised his proposals for the education of immigrant population and the larger strategic concern for him was that whether the immigrants’ children should be included in the existing system of schooling or a separate system in their familiar mediums needed be started; and if a new system was to be started what would be the logistic arrangements.

The larger issue Higginson had to deal with was to choose a system and medium of schooling and once these choices were made; the curriculum and evaluation would have been obviously set forth by the administrators.

Higginson’s proposal was submitted to a Special Committee of the Council of Government, which deferred the matter for more than a year and finally submitted its comments in May 1855. While agreeing with Higginson’s

\textsuperscript{52} Minutes of the Council of Government, dt. 22 March 1854, MA.

concern for the need of education for the children of immigrants, the special committee dissented on the issue of separate Indians schools in vernacular medium because it was opined that an exclusive education system would not only prevent the assimilation of Indian immigrants with the Creole population and a permanent, cohesive settlement of the immigrants in Mauritius but would be a sign of a discrimination against the Creole population. Reflecting the dominance of planters in the special committee, it wanted education to be more functional for the sugar industry rather than training people for other vocations – curriculum should be designed to train the labourers to ‘the cultivation of the soil and ruder mechanical arts’. The report of special committee put across the planters’ obvious agenda behind supporting the education of the children of immigrant labourers in unambiguous terms – they wanted their dictate be obeyed in deciding the essentials of the education system and mould it as means to further the interests of the sugar industry.

Upon receiving the report of the Special Committee, the Colonial Office gave its authorization to Governor Higginson to go ahead with his proposal of compulsory education but with a cautious note about not infringing upon the ‘prejudices’ of the coolies. Despite the disagreement of special committee, Governor Higginson reiterated his preference for setting up of separate schools for the children of immigrant population with vernacular medium of instructions. He proposed to augment the number of schools in each locality where sufficient number of children could be found and on his initiative, two

54 Report of the Special Committee on Education, Hay to Herbert, dt. 3 May 1855, Encl., CO 167/367, PRO.
55 Hay to Herbert, dt. 3 May 1855, CO 167/367, PRO.
Indian schools were started in Port Louis.\textsuperscript{56} To explicate the reasons for his choice, he noted in the minute dated 12\textsuperscript{th} November 1856,

\begin{quote}
‘Indian parents prefer their children being instructed in language spoken and best understood by themselves...they can very rarely be induced to send their children to the Government Schools at present constituted; whilst they do not manifest the same reluctance to send them to the few Indian Schools that have yet been attempted’.\textsuperscript{57}
\end{quote}

He intended to introduce the compulsory education because ‘education can not be forced except by making it compulsory’ and got the Compulsory Education Ordinance approved by the Council in 1857. This Ordinance made it compulsory for all the boys between six to ten years to attend the school if they resided within 1 ½ miles from school. There was a £ 5 fine for restricting children from going to school\textsuperscript{58} but unfortunately the medium of instructions, against the desire of Higginson, was decided to be French which eventually earned the antagonism of the Indian government. The Compulsory Education Ordinance could not ultimately take off because of the disapproval of the Government of India which objected to impose compulsory education on Indian population in French medium on the grounds that it did not include their mother tongue and would lead to creolisation of Indian population.\textsuperscript{59} According to Hugh Tinker, a noted scholar of indenture system, this disapproval from Indian government came because of the treatment it expected for the Indian labour

\textsuperscript{56} Minutes of the Council of Government, dt 12 November 1856, MA.
\textsuperscript{57} ibid.
\textsuperscript{58} Teelock, Vijayalakshmi, \textit{Mauritian History; From Its Beginnings to Modern Times}, MGI, 2001, p.257.
Diaspora in their adopted lands. Tinker argues that the Indian government wanted the immigrants not to be assimilated but to be treated as ‘separate and unequal’ and therefore it objected to the French as a medium of education because it would lead to the assimilation of the Indian Community with the Creole population. Whatever the logical push had been behind this objection, the Indian government stalled the first attempts to introduce compulsory education for the Indian immigrants in Mauritius by this detrimental step, and it took more than two decades to recuperate from this and set forth a comprehensive education system for the Indian immigrants’ children. The inadequate condition of education among the immigrant population can be discerned from the relatively miniscule number of Indian children attending schools in the 1860s when the size of Indian labour Diaspora was more than two lakhs:

Table 6.4

Number of Children from Indian Community in Government Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1864</td>
<td>822</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1865</td>
<td>1169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1866</td>
<td>1729</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1867</td>
<td>1287</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ARPI, 1868.

The next spurt in the development of education came in the post Royal Commission era but, before going into that, I shall discuss the underlying motives of colonial administrators’ and planters’ efforts for promoting the

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education among the Indian immigrants. By the middle of 1850s, Indian labour Diaspora had acquired a numerically prominent presence in Mauritius with a sizeable number of young children and the colonial authorities began to call for rescuing these children from ‘stalid ignorance’\(^ {61}\) and ‘elevate their moral and social conditions’\(^ {62}\). But did these philanthropic civilisational intentions really induce the administrators like Higginson to take so keen an interest in promoting education or there were more matter-of-fact reasons behind it?

Racial stereotyping of the Indian immigrants continued to reflect in Higginson’s minutes on education where he traced the absence of civilising influences among them. The colonial authorities as well as planters portrayed these ignorant immigrants as undisciplined, destitute and a potential source of disorder and crime in the society and they found educating these uncivilised characters as the only way out because education was supposed to make the Indian children ‘docile and useful subjects’.\(^ {63}\) Higginson echoed the same tune,

> ‘Knowledge is the surest guarantee of social order – as ignorance is the chief source of crime and immorality.’\(^ {64}\)

There was a very strong pejorative undertone in the purpose of educating the children of immigrants. They were being educated not for their overall growth but to learn their obligations and limitations as servants. This was the rationale of the moral training programme of the Indian Reformatory School, which was set up in 1860 to restore vagrant children of immigrant population. The moral training programme was to teach these ‘vagrant children’

\(^{61}\) Minutes of the Council of Government, dt 12 November 1856, MA.

\(^{62}\) Minutes of the Council of Government, dt. 8 March 1854, MA.

\(^{63}\) Report of the Special Committee on Education, Hay to Herbert, dt. 3 May 1855, Encl., CO 167/367, PRO

\(^{64}\) Minutes of the Council of Government, dt. 22 March 1854, MA.
'the first principles of religion, the moral obligation of servants towards their masters.... and those portions of the law relating to servants and masters, and of the criminal code with which it would be most useful for them to be acquainted.'

These revelations of the colonial promoters of education make it clear that their innate motive for promoting education among the Indian immigrants was essentially based on the racist division of civilised and barbaric where illiterate immigrant labourers were seen as barbaric and possible threats to the 'civilised order of plantations' and therefore they were to be educated to dissuade them from turning towards the anti social disruptive ways of life. And it was not at all aimed at improving their general condition by genuinely educating them.

After Higginson’s initial efforts, only occasional exertions were being made during the 1860s and early 1870s. In 1866, ten new schools were opened, but the problem of finding trained teachers in vernacular mediums again came in the way of extending the education system. Superintendent of Government Schools noted in his report for 1867 that ‘the greatest difficulty is experienced in finding men qualified to teach the Indian dialects, especially those which are spoken in Bengal’. His suggestion to solve this crisis was to set up a Normal School to train teachers for other schools while the Protector opined that inviting teachers from India would be more pragmatic,

‘the object would be best attained by introducing school masters from India. While these would probably be better qualified to teach, they would also, through the influence of

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65 Report on Elementary Education in Mauritius Supported by Government, 1865, CO 167/492, PRO.
66 ARPI, 1868.
caste, be more likely to enlist the sympathies of the classes
whence the children have to be attracted. 67

This administrative uncertainty over the separation of schools for the
different communities in Mauritius and medium of education for the children of
Indian Diaspora continued to encumber the spread of education among the
Indian immigrant community. However, one significant attainment in the field
of education during this period was the setting up of Grant-in-Aid school
system which aimed at providing financial assistance to the non-Government
schools. In later years this system opened up the possibilities of setting up
schools on the plantations because it reduced the financial burden on planters in
running schools for the children of labourers which they were most hesitant to
do, for its ‘non-productive’ implications. Adolphe de Plevitz, who was trying to
secure a fair treatment for the immigrant labourers and also maintaining a
school on his estate for the children of Indian immigrants, was very much
concerned with the their education as well because he envisaged education as a
vehicle of socio-economic emancipation and strongly believed that education
would give ‘the children the opportunity of improving themselves so as to be
able to cope in their adult life in Mauritius. 68 He raised the issue of inadequate
educational arrangements for the immigrant labourers on estates in the press and
before the Royal Commission. He underlined the lackadaisical attitude of the
colonial government which had not taken a single legislative initiative to
promote the education among the children of immigrant labourers and lack of
qualified teachers for the Indian schools. 69 The derisory arrangements of

67 ARPI, 1868.
68 de Plevitz, Loretta, Restless Energy, p.27.
69 Adolphe de Plevitz’s opinion on Indian education in The Colonial Intelligencer, Journal of

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education for the children of Indian labour Diaspora was validated by the Royal
Commission also. Royal Commissioners reported that ‘the education was
deplorably low among all classes of Indian population’ and out of nearly 40000
Indian population between the age of five and fourteen years, not more that one
thousand were attending schools and even among this infinitesimal number of
school going children, the proportion of girls was negligible.70 In spite of
expressing serious concerns over the deplorable condition of education for the
immigrant children, Royal Commission did not make any concrete suggestion
for the setting up of a comprehensive education system. At the level of a vague
suggestion, it recommended for ‘some system of compulsory education’ for the
children up to ten years of age.71

The steady development of ‘Indian education’ in Mauritius began only
after the arrival of Arthur Phayre as Governor in 1874. Phayre’s concerns were
similar to Higginson – saving the Indian children from growing up as
destitute.72 However, he was clearer in his priorities and more in command of
the situation than Higginson was, and therefore he could attain certain
landmarks in establishing an educational system for the children of Indian
diaspora. The need for educating the children of immigrants was realised by the
colonial officials who witnessed the permanency in their settlement patterns.
These officials could visualise the growing prominence of Indian Diaspora in
the economic realm of the island because of the large scale land acquisition by
the diasporic community. The Procurer General suggested government
intervention in the education for immigrants, because he could envisage them as

70 Report of Royal Commission, 1875, Chapter XXXIV.
71 Report of Royal Commission, 1875, Chapter XXXV.
72 Bissoondoyal, Uttama, ‘Education and Multicultural Agenda’ in Nirsimloo-Gayan, S., (ed.)
Towards the Making of a Multicultural Society, MGI, Mauritius, 2000, p.146.
‘the future Lords and Masters of the land in Mauritius’. In Phayre’s opinion, English education is not of much use for the children of immigrant community and he proposed languages spoken by the immigrants as the medium of education. On Phayre’s scheme of education in vernacular medium, the Superintendent of Schools, Browne noted his disagreement and proposed a two language system – English as the main language, and Tamil or Hindi as secondary language. He reiterated the scarcity of qualified teachers as the main obstacle for adopting the vernacular medium as the primary language of education. However Phayre remained unperturbed and firmly decided to go ahead with his proposal of setting up of separate schools for immigrants’ children in their own languages, especially Hindi and Tamil. Phayre also set aside the pressure from the missionaries to promote Church education so the children of Indian community could be induced to convert in Christianity and his observations on ‘secular instruction’ were very progressive and much ahead of his times and they remain an illustrious impression for how state should not indulge in promoting religious education,

‘The pupils will for the most part, be children of Hindus or Mohamedans. It is not the duty of Government to provide for the conversion of these people. It would be wrong to do so without the consent of their parents or guardians; and a Government cannot, in my opinion, ever be sure of the voluntary consent of hundreds or thousands to the instruction of their children in a religion other than their own. The noble work of instructing these children in the truths of Christianity, may probably be left to the clergy of the Churches in the Colony, to be accomplished elsewhere than in school.’

73 Phayre to Secretary of State, dt 20 July 1877. CO 167/ 572, PRO.
On Phayre's insistence, the Education Committee finally assented to open the schools in immigrants' languages on an experimental basis, and to start with three schools were opened in the Grand Port area under the supervision of Reverend Wright which were later increased to five. These schools were in Beau Vallon (Hindi), Plaisance (Hindi), St. Hubert (Hindi), Mare Chicose (Hindi, Tamil and Marathi) and Riche en Eau (Hindi). Phayre's ardent preference for the vernacular schools over the Government schools led to consistent incongruity between the Governor (Phayre) and the Council of Government which was dominated by the representatives of the planters' interests and therefore when Phayre left Mauritius, the fate of vernacular schools tumbled. New Governor George Bowen appointed a Education Committee to examine the working and efficacy of the vernacular schools. The Committee found the working of these schools highly satisfactory and well organised and creditable proficiency among the students, yet it recommended for the closure of these experimental schools. The main contention of the Committee for the discontinuation of these schools was related to the medium of instruction. Committee opined that vernacular learning would be of no use to the immigrants and English education would be better for them. Further the Committee found the expenditure on importing teachers from India uncalled for. Upon the recommendations of this committee, Governor Bowen decided to change the nature of these schools. Some were relocated, English was included as the medium of instruction and these were rechristened as Anglo-Vernacular Schools after their administrative control was handed over to the School Department. At first glance, this emphasis on English appeared to be

75 Bowen to Kimberley, dt. 26 July 1880, CO 167/589. PRO.
very progressive as it could inculcate progressive values in the children of immigrants', but the essential intention of the administrative inducement for the education of immigrants’ children remained the same — make them capable of calculating their wages. This attitude exemplifies the discriminatory attitude of the colonial administrators who wanted the Indian immigrants to be labourers forever. The Protector of, for example, noted in his report for 1881, ‘all that need to be taught is to be able to read and write and to master thoroughly the principles of addition and subtraction in order that they may be able to calculate their wages due to them and may be able to jot up their accounts’.  

In 1883, a committee was set up under the Protector of Immigrants which recommended the setting up of new primary schools under Government control, converting the Anglo-Vernacular schools into Second Grade schools and English as medium of instruction. Being the Protector of Immigrants, Trotter had first hand experience of the appalling economic condition of Indian immigrants and therefore he made the most crucial recommendation of this committee — free education for the children of immigrants — for the first time in the history of education which had far-reaching consequences in the development of education.

The next major official development in the education of immigrants’ children took place in 1888 when half time schools were proposed. These schools were proposed to set up keeping in mind the crucial earning potentials of the young children for their families. These schools would hold two sessions of three hours each in the morning and afternoon. Children who worked in the morning would attend afternoon session and those who work in the evening, would attend the morning session. In the curriculum of these schools, children

76 ARPI, 1881.
had the option to substitute English or French with one vernacular language and the teachers in these schools were required to speak vernacular language.\textsuperscript{77} These provisions were reiterated again in the 1902 code of education. At long last, a tentatively organised and most importantly free education system was brought into being by 1910. Protector of Immigrants J.F. Trotter deposed before the Sanderson Committee that 'free but not compulsory education is given to all and there is a school near every estate.' However he also admitted the limited reach of the education, that it was accessed only by the better class of the Indians.\textsuperscript{78}

By 1880, there were 42 Government schools and 54 Grant-in-Aid schools in Mauritius, which increased to 47 and 57 schools in 1882\textsuperscript{79}, and this increasing trend in the number of schools continued there after. Yet the number of educated immigrants continued to remain at a low proportion. The situation did not show much improvement even till the end of first decade of 20\textsuperscript{th} century. In a memorial submitted to the Royal Commission of 1909, A. De Boucherville made the following observation on behalf of 'Action Liberale' committee which reveals the deplorable state of education among the Indian diaspora:

‘the bulk of Indo-Mauritian population do not attend any school. They are not allowed ... to idle away their time. They are educated by labour, either being employed in field work – each estate having a numerous young 'chokras' (boys) – or made to assist their parents in their various pursuits and trades; or again, trained as domestic servants or cooks. These remarks apply exclusively to boys, as the girls stay at home, and married at an early age.’\textsuperscript{80}

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{77} Report of the Council of Education, 1887, MA.
\bibitem{78} Report of Sanderson Committee, Part II, 1910, MA.
\bibitem{79} ARPI, 1881, 1882.
\bibitem{80} Memorandum on Primary Education, presented for transmission to the Royal Commission by 'Action Liberale' Committee, dt. 21 July, 1908, Report of the Royal Commission, 1909, Part III.
\end{thebibliography}
Following table of the figures of Indian children attending schools as per census reports of 1901 and 1911 also corroborates the above observation regarding the low educational levels among the Indian diaspora in a very persuasive manner:

Table 6.5

Number of Children Attending Schools in 1901 and 1911

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools^ / Population</th>
<th>1901(259086)*</th>
<th>1911(257697)*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European, White, Mixed and Coloured</td>
<td>3929</td>
<td>2560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>2773</td>
<td>595</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aided</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European, White, Mixed and Coloured</td>
<td>2226</td>
<td>1944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>1257</td>
<td>382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European, White, Mixed and Coloured</td>
<td>737</td>
<td>809</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal College</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European, White, Mixed and Coloured</td>
<td>389</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At Home</td>
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<tr>
<td>European, White, Mixed and Coloured</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>105</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>9</td>
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* figures within brackets is the total Indian population in the respective year. ^ for 1911 another category of 'not specified' schools had been listed and 730 (449M+281F) children from the General population and 498 (420M+78F) children from immigrant community were attending these schools. Source: Census Reports for 1901, 1911.
The demand for education from the Indian Diaspora did not come till the turn of the century. As a matter of fact, the Indian immigrants opposed the educational initiatives for their children till quite late and this has been ascribed by the colonial authorities as well as many scholars as the factor responsible for the restricted growth of education among the Indian Diaspora despite the serious efforts made by the administrators. We have already examined the validity of the colonial claims for promoting education among the immigrants’ children. Therefore in this section I shall discuss only the possible reasons behind the immigrants’ reluctance in sending their children to the schools. The primary education was dominated by the Christian missionaries, and the curriculum for the children had obvious focus on the religious values of Christianity, which made it suspect in the eyes of the Indian immigrants. They feared that their children would be proselytised to convert into Christianity in these schools and this apprehension prevented many of them in sending their children to schools.

The other major obstacle was the medium of instruction, which was a major issue of contention among the administrators as well. Barring a few years under Phayre’s term, the medium of instruction remained predominantly English till the late 1880s. The very first lessons in an alien language created a widespread lack of interest among the children as well as parents who could not visualise the ‘far-reaching’ benefits of English education as pronounced by the administrators. The completely alien medium of instruction further dissuaded the already apathetic diasporic community for whom the knowledge permeating through an alien medium was regarded as offensive to their value system and which would make their children misfits in the community.
Further, in Mauritius, education was always paid for till the 1880s, which worked as another very crucial deterrent to the spread of education. The colonial administrators always opined that the education should always be paid for by the beneficiaries because only then its importance would be realised. Instead of furthering its importance, the system of paying for education actually made it a premium service which became unattainable for the Indentured labourers who were living in extreme hardship and for whom it was very difficult to spare resources for the education of their children. The other important economic factor, but which had been propagated the most in the colonial authorities' blame game, for the absence of children of Diaspora was their productivity potential for an economically distressed community. From a very early age, the children of indentured labourers began to extend their helping hands to their families in the plantation work by taking up not so physically demanding work. Working of children in the plantations, which was encouraged by the planters as well because it provided them relatively cheap labour, contributed significantly to the incomes of immigrant families and reduced the financially strain. But this logic was at work only till the 1870s and in post 1870s phase when the Indian immigrants gradually amassed modest amount of wealth, they made every possible effort to secure the best possible education for their children. In fact, the lackadaisical attitude of the colonial authorities who never made education compulsory in a clear manner, the insensitive response and refusal for support from the planters and the imposition of an alien medium of instruction deterred the spread of education more than the economic pressure of the immigrant community.

With the changing economic fortunes of the Indian labour diaspora, their attitude towards the education of their children also began to change. Despite
acquiring considerable economic resources, they still felt handicapped because of their ignorance and they gradually focused on the education of their children, which they were now in a position to pay for. Indian children were educated in the traditional knowledge through *Baithakas* and *Madrasas*. In fact *Baithakas* contributed very significantly not only in inculcating the initial education in the children but were also vital in emergence of community consciousness among the immigrants. The first demand from the Indian immigrants for their participation in education, as traced by C. Kalla, came from the Muslim community towards the end of 1880s when a petition signed by more than 7000 members of the Indian community was submitted to the Governor. \(^81\) This sectarian classification of this petition by Kalla is falling in line with the distorted explanation offered by the colonial administrators to reject the petition and it does not hold much wait as Kalla himself mentions that the petition was signed by members of diasporic community across the religious affiliations. The possible lead was taken by a group of Muslim merchants who were emerging as economically influential class among the Diaspora. At the turn of the century, the attitude of the Indian immigrants witnessed gradual positive change in favour of educating their children as Governor Jerningham reported to the Secretary of State, ‘The half time schools are rapidly becoming full time second grade schools, a proof that Indian parents are anxious to give to their children the full benefit of a whole day’s education’. \(^82\) This affirmative outcome of this changed attitude soon began to reflect through increased representation of Indian community in different ‘white collar’ vocations like clerks and some

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even going to European countries after getting education from the prestigious Royal College, as a report observed in 1906:

‘Many of their children are educated in the Government Schools, and have become clerks in Government and mercantile houses. Several have obtained the laureateship at the Royal College, and taken up liberal professions in Europe.’

The diasporic community not only became attentive towards getting the basic education but also turned their attention towards access to more specialised and highly professional education like medicine and law. In a petition to the Governor, the members of Indian community tried to attract his attention towards the confusion created from the discrepancies in the compatibility of secondary education between Mauritian and Indian education system and demanded special facilities for the diasporic Indians for their entry into Indian universities, especially in law and medical education. By 1920s, the attendance of Indian children in different schools, despite remaining at a low relative proportion, crossed the total attendance of the children from General population for the first time. According to Census enumerations of 1921, the total number of children of immigrants were 14725 while the number of children from General population 14,194.

**Political Consciousness**

The genesis of political consciousness among the Indian labour Diaspora in Mauritius was the culmination of the process of collective resistance which began with the attempts to voice their grievances in a collective manner in the pre-Royal Commission period. In period beginning with the 1870s, the growing economic and numeric presence of Indians in Mauritian socio-economic realm

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84 Census 1921.
instilled a sense of self-assurance and more importantly a very critical collective consciousness among the immigrant population. Making an affirmative departure from the earlier feelings of anguish and despair, the diasporic community could progressively see a ray of hope at the end of tunnel and began to 'perceive the reality of oppression not as a closed world from which there is no exit, but as limiting situation which they can transform'.\textsuperscript{85} This crucial perception of reality was manifested through the political consciousness of the labour Diaspora which initially aimed at getting redress from the oppressive institutions of the plantation regime and in later years graduated to making demands for participation in the institutions of governance and for an equitable share in the political space.

The representative form of governance was introduced in Mauritius for the first time by Governor John Pope Hennessey through the Constitution of 1885, implemented in 1886. Under the new constitution, the Council of Government was constituted of eight officials, nine nominated members and ten members who were to be elected by a popular vote. But the qualifications for the franchise rights were so restrictive that only few thousand 'whites' and some coloured population could get the right to vote. For 1886 elections, only 6000 or less than 2 per cent people had voting rights, from among a total population of about 360,000. The representation of Indian immigrants was extremely low – only 300 Indian immigrants got the franchise rights despite their being 69 per cent of the total population, and many of these were actually the traders and not the descendents of the indentured labourers.\textsuperscript{86}

Making property the essential qualification for voting rights, the traditional dominant classes like white planters and bureaucracy saw a possible threat to their uncontested hegemony from the Indian small planters who had acquired significant landed property by then. Brushing aside these apprehensions of the plantation elites, Governor Hennessey assured them by making a note of the political apathy among the Indian immigrants, ‘Indians were not politically minded, they were too sensible to be politicians and neither they nor the Chinese would ever cause any trouble’. However, Indian immigrants did not voluntarily opt out of politics but they were denied participation in the political process through discrimination. The massive political participation by Indian immigrants in post 1930s period outrightly refuted the Governor’s reading of their alleged political apathy.

There was deliberate discrimination against the Indian Diaspora in granting the franchise rights to its members. Owing to the morcellement process in 1870s, many of the immigrants had acquired the property required for getting the voting rights but they were debarred through indirect method of discrimination – they were asked to sign the form in English. This became a major barrier for large numbers of Indian land owners and therefore they were debarred from getting the right to vote. The Constitution of 1886 had strong racial bias against Indian Diaspora and it included every possible legal barrier to prevent Indians from getting into the electoral system, yet it had landmark significance for the political participation of Indians as it opened up the possibilities of their entry into the political system.

An Indian immigrant was also nominated by Governor Hennessey to the newly constituted representative Council. Gnanadicarayan, who was nominated

to the Council, was not a descendent of indentured labourers, but his ancestors
came as traders during the French period.\footnote{Hazareesingh, K., \textit{History of Indians in Mauritius}, Macmillan, London, 1975, p.71.} He refused to identify with the
indentured labourers and therefore his appointment could not be hauled as a
triumph for immigrant Indian labourers. The political awakening among the
Indian labour Diaspora and the levels of their participation in the political
process of the island did not change much till the beginning of 20\textsuperscript{th} century
when concerted efforts were initiated by the educated sections of Indian
Diaspora for greater levels of participation in the political process and for
significant political space.

In 1901, Mohanalal Karamchand Gandhi, who later rose to lead the anti-
colonial mass movement in India and was accorded the towering status as
Mahatma Gandhi by the Indian people, came to Mauritius en route from South
Africa to India. Mahatma Gandhi landed at Port Louis on 30\textsuperscript{th} October 1901 and
left on 19\textsuperscript{th} November.\footnote{Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Chronology.} At that time, Mahatma Gandhi was fighting against the
racial discrimination against the Indian immigrants in South Africa and the
disabilities imposed upon them by the colonial government. During his brief
stay in Mauritius, he also stayed with Charles Bruce, the Governor of the
colony. Mahatma Gandhi went around in the Indian localities with a purpose to
acquaint himself with the conditions of Indians in that colony.\footnote{Gandhi, M.K., \textit{An Autobiography or the Story of My Experiments with Truth}, Navjivan,
Ahmedabad, 1995(1927) p.186.} The Indian
Diaspora, which had followed the work of Mahatma Gandhi for Indians in
South Africa, was elated upon his arrival and reception committee was set up
with a leading Indian businessman Hajee Goolam Hossen as its head. He was
given receptions by the Indian community\textsuperscript{91} and a huge public meeting was 
organised for him in Port Louis.\textsuperscript{92} Although Mahatma Gandhi had not recorded 
much about his stay in his writings, he was certainly perturbed by the 
deplorable condition of the Indian immigrants, the enormous disabilities 
imposed upon them by the colonial rule and complete lack of civil and political 
rights for the entire community. Addressing the public meeting of Indian 
immigrants, he underlined the contributions of the Indian community to the 
prosperity of Mauritius and expressed his concerns over the disabilities imposed 
upon them despite their vital role in the economy of the island. He suggested the 
Indian community to pose a collective struggle for their rights and honourable 
space in the socio-economic and political realm and to make this struggle 
successful, he urged the Indian diasporic community to bridge their differences 
and form a collective identity, educate their children because emancipation 
comes through education and more active participation in the political 
processes. He also asked them to maintain contact with the motherland.\textsuperscript{93}

Despite its short duration, Mahatma Gandhi’s visit had profound 
symbolic impact upon the Indian Diaspora in Mauritius and his call for a larger 
political participation worked as a great stimulus to the process of their political 
awakening.\textsuperscript{94} In 1901 itself, two Indians – Ajam Bigrajee and H. Sakir were 
elected as Councillors.\textsuperscript{95}

\textsuperscript{91} As recorded in the \textit{Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi} (Vol. II), he was given one 
reception by the Indian Community in Mauritius which has been refuted by a prominent 
leader of Indian community and educationist of 1940s and 50s, Basdeo Bissoondoyal who 
complains that little attention has been given to Mahatma Gandhi’s visit to Mauritius by the 
editors of \textit{Collected Works} and claims that Mahatma was welcomed with great enthusiasm by 
the Indian community and several receptions were hosted for him. \textit{Selected Works of Basdeo 


\textsuperscript{94} The impact of Mahatma Gandhi’s visit has been acknowledged by almost all the scholars of 
Mauritian history. See Hazareesingh, K., \textit{History of Indians in Mauritius}, Macmillan, 
\textit{Indians Overseas: The Mauritian Experience}, MGI, Mauritius, 1984; Teelock, 
Vijayalakshmi, \textit{Mauritian History; From Its Beginnings to Modern Times}, MGI, Mauritius, 

\textsuperscript{95} Interview of Raj Mathur, ‘Indians and Politics’, in Bissoondoyal, U., (ed.) \textit{Indians Overseas: 
At the same time a sense of mistrust and anxiety about the Franco-Mauritians' loyalty began to erupt in the British administrative circles, which worked in favour of the political aspirations of the Indian community in Mauritius. To counter the overarching French dominance, the British officials decided to give more political and administrative representation to the Indians whom they found to be more loyal. Secretary of State suggested the Governor to increase the influence of the Indian community,

‘In view of the generally accepted fact that the French inhabitants of Mauritius must be regarded as less loyal than the Indian inhabitants, I am of opinion that it may be desirable that steps should be taken to increase the power and influence of the Indian community & to lessen that of the French who though few in numbers have hitherto been dominant in affairs’. 96

Following this policy of promoting the influence of Indian Diaspora, several of them were nominated to different representative bodies of the Government. Dr. Marius Francis Xavier Nalletamby, an England trained Christian doctor, was nominated to the Council97, another Muslim merchant Mahmoud Atchia, who later played a very prominent role in Mauritian politics, was nominated to the Municipal Board of Rose Hill and Beau Bassin. Due to this administrative turn about and the increased political consciousness among Indian immigrants enthused by Mahatma Gandhi’s suggestions, the number of Indians with voting rights increased from 300 in 1886 to 1400 in the 1906 elections, out of a total of 7800 voters.98 Raj Mathur ascribes this increase in the number of Indian voters to the influence of Mahatma Gandhi and the

96 Secretary of State to Bruce, dt. 28 February 1900, CO167/ 724, PRO.
97 Bruce to Secretary of State, dt. 3 September 1901, CO167/ 740.
encouragement of the Franco-Mauritians.\textsuperscript{99} However, a careful analysis of the correspondence between the Governor of Mauritius and the Colonial Office makes it clear that the first initiatives to increase the number of Indian voters came from the British officials as a counterbalance to the French dominance. While defending Governor Bruce’s attempts to introduce Indians in the institutions of governance, the Secretary of State Joseph Chamberlain noted in 1901,

‘The Indians are I think in a majority of the population & it is most desirable that their interests shd. be represented. I will face the storm. When it has settled down we shall be stronger in Mauritius than we have ever been & the French oligarchy will be kept in order by the other races.’\textsuperscript{100}

It was only around the elections of 1906 that the Franco-Mauritanian class, which had been at the helm of racist discrimination against the Indian immigrants, began to realise the vital importance of the numeric strength of these ‘filthy’ collies in maintaining their dominance in representative institutions of governance and thus in a struggle for hegemony, they also advocated an increase in the number of Indian voters who, as the Franco-Mauritian elite perceived, would support them in the electoral battles. However, in these attempts to lure the Indian community, neither the British officials nor the Franco-Mauritians were concerned with the across the board representation for the Indians in the political system and focused only towards a selected few who had acquired wealth or high levels of education.

The much needed concerted direction and leadership to the naïve struggle of the Indian diasporic community for political space in Mauritius was

\textsuperscript{99} ibid.
\textsuperscript{100} Minute of Secretary of State, dt. 21 November 1901, CO167/ 742, PRO.
provided by Manilal Maganlall Doctor who arrived in Mauritius on 13th October 1907.\footnote{This date of Manilall’s arrival is given by his biographer D. Napal. Napal, D., 
\textit{Manilal Maganlall Doctor: Pioneer of Indo-Mauritian Emancipation}, Mauritius, 1963.} Like Mahatma Gandhi, Manilal Doctor also represented the newly emerging stream of nationalist youth from India – awakened, educated and with a deep sense of national self respect and their political - civic rights. Manilal Doctor was a member of Gokhale’s Servants of India Society and was deeply influenced by the ideas of Gandhi and Gokhale. Gandhi met Manilal in London in 1906 and motivated him to go to Mauritius to practice law and work for the cause of Indians in Mauritius. After his arrival, Manilal registered at the bar in Mauritius to practice law, and started taking up cases of not so resourceful immigrants. It was during these cases that Manilal discovered the discrimination and oppressive humiliation of Indians especially the harsh punishment for negligible offences. He also found that Indian immigrant community was constantly demoralised and it had no access even to very essential civilian rights. Manilal started mobilizing Indians to take the legal route to fight against their oppression but soon realized that this could not be achieved unless there was a general awakening among the Indian immigrants for their rights and self respect. And therefore he decided to instigate the self respect in the Indian community,

‘If the Mauritian Indians, being poor in the beginning, have allowed themselves to be demoralised in certain ways for want of moral courage or proper example, it is high time now that they should be inspired with due respect for their home traditions exact a just respect for the same from their neighbours of non-Indian origin.’\footnote{Napal, D., \textit{Manilal Maganlall Doctor: Pioneer of Indo-Mauritian Emancipation}, Mauritius, 1963, p.18.}
Cover page of Hindusthani
With this began his crusade against the discriminations and disabilities of Indian Diaspora in Mauritius and efforts to build political consciousness among them. In order to reach the wider sections of the Mauritian society and to give a voice to the concerns and grievances of the immigrant community, he started a weekly journal *Hindusthani* in English-Gujarati and later in English-Hindi. The first issue came out on 15 March 1909. The masthead of the journal carried the motto - ‘Liberty of Individuals! Fraternity of Men!! Equality of Races!!’ which asserted the main focus of Manilal’s struggle – discontinuation of all discrimination and equal status to the Indian Diaspora. Following the very Gandhian strategy, Manilal also believed in the proper representation of problems before the authorities. He represented himself and mobilized many others to depose before the Royal Commission of 1909. He demanded that,

‘an enquiry be made into the conditions of Indian labourers, many of whom are dead or starving in the streets of Port Louis, and into the story of their being induced by false pretences to come from India, and into their present helpless position after the completion of indenture.’

Apart from demands for improvement in the working conditions of immigrant labourers, Manilal also demanded their representation in the political system of the colony and worked closely with ‘Action Libearle’, a political formation of the Creole population of Mauritius. Manilal’s efforts were not approved by the colonial authorities. The Governor feared that Manilal had become the unofficial political advisor to the Indian immigrants and ‘may

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103 I located some copies of *The Hindusthani* with the petition of Manilal to the Secretary of State. Petition of Manilal Doctor to the Secretary of State, dt. 29 July 1911, CO 167/ 800, PRO.

become the cause of disturbance and create a regrettable race agitation. They found that Manilal had ‘mischievous effect’ on Indians and to fetter his attempts to the political mobilisation of Indian immigrants and demands for extended representation in political system, colonial authorities decided to delegitimise Manilal’s efforts. As the Acting Governor Smith indicated,

‘Our policy must be I think to discredit Manilal Doctor and his party as much as possible in the eyes of the Indians and induce the latter to recognise the Nominee Members as their properly constituted representatives.’

Manilal’s attempts to mobilise Indian immigrants was condemned not only by the colonial authorities but also by the political representatives of the Indian community like Dr. Nalletamby, who were hand-picked by the authorities.

Apart from the demands for general representation, on occasions immigrants demanded for the nomination of a particular candidate in the council. In a petition signed by 142 Indian immigrants, petitioners demanded the permanent nomination to the Council, of K. Narainsamy, a shipping agent, who was appointed by the authorities as a substitute for another White member of the Council. At times even individuals demanded their nomination in the Council. In one such case, Rustomjee Mervanjee Mehta, a Parsee merchant from Port Louis, submitted a petition to the King George V, urging his nomination in the Council on the grounds that he was the only member of the Parsee community with so much success and thus deserved a seat.

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105 Governor to Secretary of State, dt. 19 February 1909, SD 162/58, MA.
106 Smith to Harcourt, dt. 12 August 1911, CO 167/798.
107 Petition of the Indian Hindu community, dt. 19 January 1912, CO 167/801, PRO.
108 Petition of Rustomjee Mervanjee Mehta, dt. 27 May 1911, CO 167/800, PRO.
Manilal Doctor finally left Mauritius in September 1911, but he had already instilled self respect and consciousness of their rights among the Indian Diaspora which continued to wage a struggle against oppression and demands for equitable status. The first major triumph of the process of political awakening which Manilal inspired was achieved in 1921, after a prolonged struggle of ten years, when two descendents of the indentured labourers – R. Gujadhur and Dunputh Lallah were elected to the council.