Chapter: 2

HISTORICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF INDENTURED WORKERS

2.1. Contextualising Indentured Workers

The indentured labourers was preceded by the movement of labour worldwide which followed two distinct route, the first one during the 17th & 18th centuries from Western Europe, British Isles and Germany, to the colonial settlement in north America. The second phase of labour movement took place from the middle of the nineteenth century to the first quarter of the twentieth century from Asia, Africa to the newly conquered colonies of Caribbean, west Indian ocean and Africa, for the production of plantation crops. There are basic difference between the two plantation system with respect to that of the racial composition, the racial attitudes of the recipient countries, the relative incomes of the sending and receiving countries the specific uses of labour during the period of contract, and the opportunities available after the contract had expired. 

Nevertheless, the basic legal commonality between the two systems lay in the export-oriented nature, the industrial organization of agricultural production and the long distance and employed under contractually specific condition, presumably voluntarily agreed to by the migrants to provide labour for a limited period of time in exchange for transportation, with regulation and controls by national government.

2.1.1. Indentured workers across the Atlantic

The first stream of the labour movement (17&18th c) to the British West Indies and North America, with subsidiary streams from France to Canada and the West Indies, Netherlands to New Amsterdam and the Caribbean, after the second half of the 18th century from Germany to Pennsylvania. The substitution of the slave labour for servants occurred rapidly with expansion of the sugar economy in the West Indies, and more slowly in the Chesapeake tobacco region in the late 17th century, where competition

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between these labour forms was most direct and protracted. The transition was more rapid and complete for the areas producing tropical plantation crops- of which sugar was by far the most important. There were less direct competition among these labour institution in the northern parts of the mainland North America, where plantation crops were not grown and slaves were few in number and relatively unimportant economically, and in those areas of south America and Mexico settled by Iberian nations. The combination of the presence of a native labour supply, the rapid introduction of slave labour for use in plantation production and mining, and the infrequency of any contract labour from Europe meant that White servants labour was never an important source of labour in the process of settlement and expansion.\(^3\) However, it was only with the end of apprenticeship in the British West Indies that a demand for new source of labour to supplement the ex-slaves led to the resumption of a large scale movement of contract labour and the final approval of that labour movement was to come from India, China then Singapore and Japan for Caribbean Islands, west Indian ocean Islands of Mauritius and La Réunion, which constitutes major sugar producers using slave labour.

The indentured system also necessitated two basic criteria to introduce workers: Firstly, it should be virgin, sparsely populated and preferably in the tropical colonies. Secondly, there should be an uninterrupted supply of cheap labour. Thus indentured servitude was an initial solution to an acute problem of obtaining a labour supply that existed in many regions of colonial America, and the basic form of the institution developed by the Virginia Company was widely adopted and used throughout the British colonies in the seventeenth and eighteenth century.\(^4\) The introduction indentured system was also meant for the movement of labour into areas of labour shortage arising out of the abolition of slavery, on the part of the European colonisers and planters. These labour movements can be bifurcated into two groups- voluntary and involuntary- most white movements to North America particularly in the 19\(^{th}\) century, was free migration [voluntary]. The individual paid his/her own cost of transportation and, upon arrival, was free to choose an occupation and form of employment, the magnitude and sources of these flows of

\(^3\)Engerman, Stanley L. opcit, p.264.
voluntary migrants varied with economic and political conditions in areas of out-migration and in-migration.\(^5\) On the other hand, the indentured system was both free and involuntary. While the former was of white from Europe, settled mainly in temperate climates in predominantly white societies, the latter was mainly of Asian moving into tropical areas which frequently had relatively few white residents (and those whites often were plantation owners or managers for European capital) but often with numerous resident black ex-slaves, for employment in the production of plantation crops.\(^6\) The system prior to the 20th century had contract longer than one year, and should be distinguished from diverse forms of annual agreements, with or without permanent settlement, which are entered into by migrants workers in parts of Europe. At the end of the specified time period, the migrants were freed, with a choice between settlement and return.\(^7\)

2.1.2: Commodification of the indentured workers

The seventeenth century Englishmen conceived it to be essential to the organization of agricultural labour; it was therefore seen as a legitimate institution within the socio-economic organization of the society.\(^8\) These institutions also grew out of the feudal system of apprenticeship, and was characterised by the establishment of a contractual agreement with mutual obligations, not moral but legal, between the master and the servant. In the formative period of West Indian colonisation, however, the system evolved quite differently in its functions and forms of legitimation. Some historians prefers to call it as “white slavery” and referred to indentured servants as “white Niger’s”.\(^9\) Individuals preferred to reclaim debts by obtaining indentured servants; they could either be quickly sold for cash or a commodity, or easily put to work. Therefore there was a wide preference for indentured servants as a short-term capital investment, more than for African slaves, who were seen as problematic, in that they had to be trained

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\(^5\) Engerman, S. L, opcit, p.267.

\(^6\) Ibid, p.276.

\(^7\) Ibid,pp.267-268.

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into productive roles. For example in March 1674, John Wiseman, Barbados planter, was in debt to the value of 500lbs, of cotton to William Russel. In order to satisfy Russel, Wiseman had to mortgage his "...plantation and servants..." until the agreed repayment date was fixed. Therefore, placing of indentured servants on two to five years mortgage was common, some individuals also preferred to used servants as guarantees in such agreement, whereby indentured servants as a form of currency and legal deeds was accepted and legitimised by local law and customs. Smith argued however, that whether property or not "...indentured servants were Christian [in the context of Trans Atlantic migration] and they were white, hence they were protected... By their right of servants to complain to local magistrates." By hinting this rights of servants over excessive tortures, and implied that this undermined the conception of them as property.

2.1.3. Indentured workers in Tropical Colonies

In 1807 a ban was imposed on slave's trade in the British Empire, followed by the Emancipation of slaves in 1833, and the period of unpaid apprenticeship the British government created safeguards against new form of slavery -the newly devised apprentice system popularly known as 'indentured system', which was little different from the earlier slave trade [system]. Therefore, Britain was forced to look elsewhere for cheap labour to keep the colonial economy alive through this system and subsequently turned its attention initially to China, and then to India. The indentured system provided a solution for the British colonial economy that was primarily employed for plantations, railways and other establishment. The major source of indentured labourers was British India to different streams of colonies like Mauritius, Trinidad, British-Guiana, Surinam, French Guiana, Martinique, Guadelope, Réunion, Fiji, South

10. Ibid, p.42.
12. Ibid.
14. Smith, A.E. "Colonist in Bondage": 34. cited in Ibid,p.43.[ smith referred to the indentured in the Atlantic belt]
Historical and Conceptual Framework of Indentured Workers

Africa and Malaya. Most of the 1.3 million Indian migrants who ventured overseas under the indentured system were processed through the British depots, traveled on British ships, and regulated by the British officials in Westminster and Delhi. Even those who went to French and Dutch colonies were largely subject to conditions of travel and labour set down in treaties and other agreements with Britain.\(^{17}\)

2.1.4. Major destination of Indian indenture workers

The official historical chronology of Indian labour emigration under the indenture system first started in 1834 to Mauritius, Uganda and Nigeria. Later the laborers emigrated to Guyana (1838), New Zealand (1840), Hongkong (1841), Trinidad and Tobago (1845), Malay (1845), Martinique and Guadeloupe (1854). Grenada, St. Lucia and St. Vincent (1856), Natal (1860), St. Kitts (1861), Japan and Surinam (1872), Jamaica (1873), Fiji (1879), Burma (1885), Canada (1904) and Thailand (1910). Under the indenture system some 1.5 million persons migrated.\(^{18}\) On their arrival in the colony the immigrants were assigned to the plantations to which they were 'bound' for five or more years where they lived in isolated and insulated life. When their indenture contract were completed, some immigrants stayed on the plantations while others moved out into the rural communities. They combined subsistence farming with wage labour. However, most of these migrants and their descendants did not return home though the indentured system of labor was discontinued in 1917.

**Table.1. showing Major Colonies Importing Indian Indentured Labour\(^{19}\)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colonies/Region</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>No. of emigrants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mauritius</td>
<td>1834-1900</td>
<td>453,0634</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Guiana</td>
<td>1838-1916</td>
<td>238,909</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaya</td>
<td>1844-1910</td>
<td>250,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trinidad</td>
<td>1845-1916</td>
<td>143,939</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>1845-1913</td>
<td>36,412</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\(^{18}\) Clarke, C., C. Peach and S. Vertovec (1990) "Introduction", in Clarke, C. et. al.(eds.) *South Asians Overseas*, Cambridge, C U P.

### Historical and Conceptual Framework of Indentured Workers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grenada</td>
<td>1856-85</td>
<td>3,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Lucia</td>
<td>1858-95</td>
<td>4,350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natal</td>
<td>1860-1911</td>
<td>152,184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Kitts</td>
<td>1860-61</td>
<td>337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Vincents</td>
<td>1860-80</td>
<td>2,472</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Réunion</td>
<td>1861-83</td>
<td>26,507</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surinam</td>
<td>1873-1916</td>
<td>34,304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiji</td>
<td>1879-1916</td>
<td>60,965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Africa</td>
<td>1896-1921</td>
<td>39,282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seychelles</td>
<td>1904-16</td>
<td>6,315</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above statistic regarding Réunion gives data from that of the Anglo-French convention of 1861 rather than 1826 when the first recruitment were done from the French ports in India, till the first pause of 1883.

#### 2.1.5. Third pattern of immigration

Emigration to East Africa, Natal, Mauritius, Burma, Malay and Fiji during the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries presents a third pattern: the free emigration of traders, skilled artisans, bankers, petty contractors, clerks, professionals and entrepreneurs. Though initially indenture labourers from India were brought to East Africa to build the Mombassa railway, most of the present Indian population of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania arrived after the railway stimulated opportunities for trade and commerce. Emigration to the developed countries like Britain, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand is a post World War II phenomenon. The first trickle of Indians to Britain occurred during the period of British Raj.20

#### 2.1.5.1. Dhangars

Earlier, the planters in Mauritius had experimented with slaves and convicts from India between 1815 and 1837. Soon sugar became the most important crops of the Island; the colonial masters then looked towards India for hiring contract labourers. The contract workers were recruited in the ports of Madras and Calcutta in 1829. The colonial officer

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agreed to Mauritius importing dhANGARS or hill coolies from Chota-Nagpur since the dhangars, who had worked in producing indigo in the home country were thought to be suitable for sugar plantation in the newly conquered colonies. The first batch of the dhangars arrived in 1834 on the condition that their return for safe passage to India was ensured. However, an investigation of the indentured labour movement to Mauritius in 1838-39 reveals sufficient anomalies in the recruitment system like coercion in the recruitment, exploitation and abuse on some plantations as a result of these findings the governments suspended all overseas labour migration in 1839.

There were more than 26,000 Indians of which only 1000 were women in Mauritius. Lord John Russell, the British secretary for the colonies, in February 1840 expressed deep reservations about the future migrations: “I should be unwilling to adopt any measure to favour the transfer of labourers from British India to Guiana...which may lead to a dreadful loss of life on the one hand or on the other, to a new system of slavery” Russell’s successor, William Gladstone, was also greatly perturbed by the circumstances of a growing exodus of Indian labourers which he conceded was voluntary, in his correspondence letter to the governor of Mauritius in 1846, “If, on the one hand, it is not to be doubted that the coolie immigration has been advantageous to the material interest of the immigrants themselves, and has also served the purpose of effectually relieving severe pressure of the demand for labour upon its supply, at and after the moment of emancipation, on the one hand, I think it is impossible to deny that serious objections prima facie lie against the scheme on almost every other ground”. However, by the second half of 1842, a ban on the emigration of labour to Mauritius was lifted. New regulation limited these migrants to one-year contracts that were signed only after their arrival in the colony under the supervision of the colony’s new protector of immigrants.

This period coincides to the new policy pertaining to the recruitment of liberated African in the Atlantic; a law of 16 November 1844 legalised Indian emigration to Jamaica, Trinidad and British Guiana, with the first shipload sailing from Calcutta in January 1845. Simultaneously, legal bans on emigration to Natal and Réunion were lifted in

23 Ibid
1860 and to the French West Indies in 1865. Indentured Indian labour emigration to Dutch Guiana began in 1873, to Fiji in 1879, and to East Africa in 1895.24 Vital aspects of the impact of Indian indentured labourer on African colonies emerged from the detailed accounts collected by the West Indian Royal Commission of 1879. One of these was the value of the indentured section at key points in the crop cycle. The commission’s interview with one articulate overseer proceeded as follows:

Q. What is your opinion with regard to increasing the supplies of coolies when there is in the colony at the present time an excess of labour?

A. The supply of labour has no bearing on the sugar industry; the whole origin of immigration hinges on this point. You may have work and plenty of it for a black man and a coloured man, and they will not do it. In planting cane if you leave certain agricultural work over your crop is ruined. Therefore it is absolutely necessary that you should have bound labour that you can command…certain kinds of works on an estate could be left to the unreliable work of the blacks, thus leaving the indentured gangs free to do urgent work. There are certain kinds of works which absolutely must be done at certain times- such as replanting in rainy weather- and for this an indentured gang is absolutely necessary'. 25

2.1.6. Major port of embarkation in India

Initially Calcutta, Bombay and Madras act as the designated port of embarkation for all indentured emigrants. Bombay was closed in 1865, thereafter only Calcutta and Madras were used. Karaikal and Pondicherry, served as port of embarkation for Indian emigrants to the French colony, with the British consuls acting as a protector after 1870. The French Indian ports cleared some 49,890 emigrants between 1842 and 1916 officially. 26

2.1.7. Legal contract

There are provision that the workers had to agree to serve for 4-5 years and a breach contract resulted in criminal prosecution, but this duration vary from colony to colony.

24 Ibid, p.64.
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The widespread penal sanction granted to planters, though were free to return home after the stipulated period sometimes resulted in a lifetime commitment without any rights, the long distance from their mother country made it difficult if not impossible to return home. These two conditions compounded with the unfreedom inherent in the system, namely the inability of the workers to withdraw his/her labour power to bargain over the terms of the contract or for higher wages. In other words the purpose of the indentured system was twofold i.e. in providing for a fixed term of service it stabilised the workforce by preventing a high turnover and at the same time the penal sanction placed in employer’s hands acted as a blunt instrument of discipline.

Despite the voices raised by freedom fighters in India against the indenture system the practice was carried out unabated for nearly a century from 1834 till January 1, 1920, When Gopal Krishna Gokhale, the most critical among the members of the Imperial Legislative Assembly, stated that the "worst feature" of indenture system was that the plantation labor was placed under a special law, never explain to them before they left the country, which is in a language which they do not understand and which imposes on them a criminal liability for the most trivial breaches of the contracts, in place of the civil liability which usually attaches to such breaches. Resolution passed at the second session of the All India Trade Union Congress held at Garia on the 30th -2nd December 1921, recommending, interalia, the abolition of the system of indentured immigration, the committee resolution No.15 reads “ That this Congress declares that the systems of indentured labourers and forced labour should be abolished forthwith as being highly immoral and cruel in their incident and calls upon workers and peasants to refuse to submit to provision which make the imposition such labour possible”.

Thus they are liable under this law to imprisonment with hard labour, which may extend to two and in some cases to three months, not only for fraud, not only for deception, but for negligence, for carelessness. Poor and helpless left the shores of India in thousands, undertaking long journeys with uncertainty and hope to be the victims of such horrendous system of labour under the British planters.

27 For further detail see Dept of Revenue and Agricultural, Emigration Branch, Jan 1877(Confidential), p.8.
2.1.8. Legislation to safeguard the system

Though the Colonial Government enacted a few legislative directives for the protection and well-being of the indenture workers in plantation barracks, they were only violated than followed. The colonial Government of India had persuaded the Secretary of State for colonies to appoint a few commissions of enquiry in order to seek justice against discrimination and exploitation of Indian labour but the reports of various commissions hardly mitigated their plight. Some such reports were so truthful they were not made public for fear of shame e.g. West Indies Royal Commission 1940 kept the only policy that the government followed was to export sufficient low paid work force to run the plantations. The British encouraged the indenture labour to settle down in their Island colonies following the ban on indenture system to serve essentially the interest of British plantations rather than the thoroughly exploited labour. This system also bequeaths the legacy of hatred between the descendents of emancipated African slaves and the Indian indentured labour that they called "coolies". This was a major problem in the Réunion Island, the Creole being in majority always have the upper hand in influencing all the major policy implemented in the Island where the Indian indentured workers are at the receiving ends.

2.1.9. End of the indentured system

During the early twentieth century the indentured system came under severe criticism from humanitarians groups like the missionaires, academicians and was a source of concern to the governments of the sending countries as well as the nationalist among the India National Movements that had led the campaign to abolish the system. A series of political actions in South Africa led by Mahatma Gandhi C.F. Andrews and Williams Pearson in India, stir up the masses and the intensity from the late nineteenth century, finally led to a decision by the British government in 1917 to prohibit further

28 Dept of Revenue and Agricultural, Emigration Branch, March 1922
transportation of Indians for purpose of servitude for debt, though each colony has different dates and years of termination.

2.2. Indentured Workers in Réunion Island

Oral traditions has it that, La Réunion Island, permanently settled in 1663, received its first contingent of Indians nine years later, when 15 Indian prisoners were sent from San Thome. As the embryonic colony needed female settlers, 12 Indo-Portuguese women and two young girls arrived from Daman in 1678. These early arrivals were not slaves as such indeed so small were the settlement that every inhabitant was valued. The administrators were even prepared to accept pirates, some of whom married the Indian women and founded families. Although, the scarcity of women sometimes gave rise to conflicts, it contributed, on the other hand, to the tempering of prejudices: Frenchmen did not hesitate to take a lawful wife from those ethnic groups whose skin colour, elsewhere, already ordained them to slavery. In 1709, a quarter of the slave population on the Bourbon was of Indian origin, coming from Bengal, the Malabar Coast and Surat.

In 1714, the white community still constitutes a major population out of the total 1157. Since the exigencies demand of the economy required more labour perhaps more so, because of the adoption of Sugar plantation in the early 19th century preceded by the development of cash-crops cultivation, principally coffee, and large-scale slave importation, Bourbon rapidly became a society where Blacks outnumbered whites and hierarchical demarcation of slaves labour and free labour were asserted. The composition of the labouring population also underwent significant changes. Dr.Frederick J. Mouat a colonial officer in the Bengal Presidency who traveled to Réunion observes that, “Most of the old Negro race of servants in families has disappeared and their place seems to be but still ill-supplied by the Indian immigrants shipped from the Malabar Coast. The sugar plantations are now almost entirely cultivated by coolies from the Malabar Coast or who at least are shipped at Pondicherry. Among these I saw a man from the Deccan, Mysore territory and carnatic, most if not all of whom must have been

31 Hubert, G. “Engagees and coolies on Ré union Islands, Slavery’s masks and freedom’s constraints” in Emmer, P.C. (ed) 1986, Colonialism and Migration; Indentured Labour before and after Slavery’p.209.
32 Charpentier, F. 1975 Relation de L’Establishment de la Compagnie Francoise pour le Commerce des Indes Orientales, cited in Ibid.
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crimped and kidnapped from the British territory.”  

He also observe that, a recent paragraph in the Mauritius papers represents the immigrants population of Réunion to consist of the following as shown table No2.

### Table No.2. Showing Indian Population against African

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Particulars</th>
<th>Indians</th>
<th>Africans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>17,827</td>
<td>998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>4,529</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male children</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female children</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>19,643</td>
<td>1,215</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By 1765, Indians constituted 5 percent of slaves in the Island. Then followed by free immigrants from Pondicherry mainly skilled labourers such as Masons and carpenters. The subsequent century witnessed new waves of Indian migration coinciding with the development of Sugar industry. To meet the labour shortage in Réunion (French planters sought to imitate the example of their colonial brothers in Mauritius) by importing labour from India but their request for direct access to indentured deport in Madras and Bengal was turned down by the British in 1851 who having doubt in French planters sincerity in protecting the British Indian subject rights. While the negotiation dragged on, the French recruited whatever they could from their coastal enclave of Pondicherry in southeastern India obtained an average 5400 Indians a year in 1849-1855, but the average number of recruits fell to 1750 a year in 1849-1860, due to restriction on the recruitment of the British Indians through the Pondicherry port.  

However, the mounting scandals associated with the recruitment in Africa moved British authorities to relent and grant the French access to the better regulated Indian labour market in return for terminating their labour imports from Africa.

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34. This was the first instances of French and British official contact for importing British Indian subject for Réunion Island.
As one of the four ‘old colonies’ salvaged from the wreck of the overseas empire of the ancient régime, Réunionnais been French almost without a break since its discovery by the colonial explorers (The other three ‘old’ colonies are Martinique and Grandeloupe in the West Indies and Guayanne on the north-east of South America). During General de Gaulle’s first régime, before the advent of the Fourth Republic, all the four Islands were made Departments d’outré Mer (D.O.M) partly as a defensive strategy to tackle Americans intention to take over the West Indian territories. Close to the other Creole Islands in the Indian Ocean, Réunion was particularly suited to be decolonised through integration in the French Republic by means of a policy which had to be abandoned in Algeria.

2.2.1. Port of embarkation

With the signing of the Anglo-French convention of 1861, the French planters imported through the British India depot of Calcutta for Réunion starting with 5333 in 1862 and a ship from Madras reached Grandeloupe with 330 in 1864. The 1833, reports also reveals an interesting fact about the recruitment, disillusions and hesitation of the recruiting official [the Director of the interior] who without looking at the problem faced by the indentured workers attributed the revolts of the Indian indentured workers as a result “of the mistrustful character and disrespecting the contract agreement/bond.”

The grievances of these labourers also echoed in the Le Cri public. as; “The Indians, of gentle and peaceful habits, who have been introduced into the colony and who have come here only in the faith of the treaties and of the completely reassuring promises of a nation marching in the forefront of civilization[...have been inhumanly thrown into the hands of the police[...]placed under the deplorable patronage of the subordinate officer who, following habits acquired in dealing with maroons, sees all Indians living in the colony as nothing but thieves or brigands[...].They prefer to suffer in silence rather than to undergo the ignoble treatment of a so called syndic as well, a real slave-driver, who, before they have opened their mouths to complain and demand his intervention, showers-without-shame-punches, kicks and blows from big rulers on them in order, says he, to get rid of their importunities, or else, he reduces, arbitrarily and according to his whim, wages which have been irrevocably fixed between the parties. No, citizens, such a state of affairs can last no longer [...]! May the cause of our motives for bringing it to the

36 Ibid, p 27.
37 Ibid, p.213.
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notice of the National Assembly be removed....”\(^{39}\) Though in theory indentured seems to be regulated by certain strict regulation that is distinct from slavery, yet the legacy of slavery, corporal punishment, abuses, confusions and disillusionment are the daily routine that regulates their life. The Indian indentured workers in reality shared in all ways the daily plight of the slaves, for they worked in ‘bandes’ under the orders of ‘commanders’ from sunrise to sunset and were fed with rice, dry vegetables and salted fish.\(^{40}\) Sometimes they were also fed with rotten fish and beef.\(^{41}\) They were initially trained and look after by the local slaves. As the Creole oral tradition says that lots of Indians have been introduced in the Island where they have been employed with a large family like being domesticated.

2.2.1.1. South India

Pondicherry and Karaikal were the main port of embarkation till the British convention of 1861, which governs the immigration to overseas countries from British India.\(^{42}\) The ports of embarkation were also arranged according to the areas of recruiting agencies as follows:

2. Yanaon (Yanam): caters the district of Krishna, Godavary, Vizagapatnam, Ganjam and Cuttack.
3. Pondicherry: Caters the district of Salem, South Arcot, Coimbatore and Mysore Province.
4. Karaikal: caters the district of Tiruchipally and Tanjore, the province of Madurai and Tirunelvelly.
6. Bombay/Mumbai: caters the only the Presidency of Bombay/Mumbai.\(^{43}\)

\(^{39}\) Cited in Hubert, G (1986), Op cit,p.214.
\(^{40}\) Ibid, pp.214-215.
\(^{41}\) See Appendix No 3(b).
\(^{43}\) Ibid.
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Though Madras was the centre of all activities pertaining to immigration, however the largest ports of embarkation were Pondicherry and Karaikal. The recruiting agents scour the Coromandel region and initially never extend their activities to the Malabar region. Thus it was mainly from southern part of British India that majority of Indians immigrants went to Réunion Islands, particularly the Tamils. For instance, the figure from 1851-1883 which shows that 4891 persons of Indians come from Pondicherry, Karaikal and Madras and also an analysis of the patronymics also indicates the names of the native Tamils habitations. Moreover, the worship of Nagor Mira (Nargoulam) Muslims saint in the city of Tanjore and mainly to the south-east part of Cormandel. Though Indians in Réunion were known as Malbars, however, all the statistics so far shows the importance of the Coromandel Coast.

2.2.1.2. North India

Immigration statistics from North Indian is available s only after the Act of 1861. The port of Calcutta act as the main port of embarkation from recruits of areas such as Hazareebaugh (hazaribagh) Nagpore (Nagpur) and Raneegange (Raniganj) numbering 9752 immigrants to Réunion Islands. During the peak recruiting season from Northern India there are around 2700 men heading for Reunion 6(six) ships in six months. The following table shows the area specific of the recruitment.

Table No.3. Indentured immigrants to Réunion from various district in North India.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Slno.</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Arrah/Shahabad</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ghazepore(Ghazipur)</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Hazareebaugh</td>
<td>663</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Nagpore</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Patna</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

44 Ibid.
45 Initially we have only 521 people from Mahe and Cochin whereas Orissa and Yanaon show 2911 Immigrants. Narrated by Firmin Lacpatia, during my field work interview at his shop in Saint-clotilde, Réunion Island.
47 Ibid.
Moreover, the port of embarkation were fed from recruiting agencies like, Jessore, Bancoorah, Bhangulpore, Patna, Chuppra, Benares, Shahabad, Jaunpore, Krishnagur, Hazareebagh, Monghir, Arrah, Tirhoot, Bihar, Futeypore, Garuckpore, Nagpore, Gaya, Dynapore etc. Then we also have few immigrants from the Bombay presidency from 1851-1883, precisely 51 (fifty one) and 11 (eleven) from Bombay and Goa respectively. Out of the above mentioned recruiting areas Hazareebaugh and Raneegange act as the main recruiting places from Northern India. 48

2.2.2. Lazaret

On their arrival at St.Denis, the indentured workers are at once ordered off to the Lazaret where the coolies are landed and detained for ten days prior to distribution, although the ship and her crew are admitted to free pratique, unless a contagious disease may have broken out during the voyage. On the day of landing, a medical officer is despatch from St.Denis to the Lazaret as government commissaire and physician to take charge of the coolies during their detention there, and this official is supposed to submit at once to the administration all the complaints made by the immigrants.

The Lazaret, although a roomy building, is unfortunately situated at the foot of a long and deep Ravine and a newly arrived immigrants are exposed to the dangerous effects of the cold mountains winds, which during the cool season, at which period the immigrants are invariably introduced, are very penetrating, and frequently produce fever, besides laying the germs of other illnesses. The lazaret, during those periods, is almost inaccessible by land and sea and the landing is only effected with dangers to life and limb. There are two Lazarets on the Island, The one at the Ravine of St.Jacques about four miles by sea and ten miles by lands from St.Denis, is a miserably constructed place and

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48 Ibid.
liable during heavy rains to be inundated with water from the river to the depth of one or two feet. The other Lazaret, that of "La Grande Chaloupe" is a fine large and new buildings also placed in a ravine about a mile south of St.Jacques and is in no way subject to submersion during floods. It is estimated that 42,000 Indian indentured workers arrived here since the Convention of 1861.49

2.2.3. Residence permits

It was on the 18th January 1826 that a decree was issued for an Indian indentured workers that stated the necessity of all immigrants to the Island a residence permit(caste de sejour) demarcating a place for them to reside, However, article no.6 of the decree of 1826 goes:

"Sont exempts de cette disposition, les domestiques qui, sur le vu d’un engagement de service personnel contacté avec un domicile pourront être pourvous, dès leur arrivée, d’un permis limité a la charge par le maître de consigner sur le register de la police, la soumission de pouvoir aux frais que le renvoi de la colonie pourrait ocassioner”[The domestics Indians who are exempted from this arrangement, in view of the undertaking of the contracted personnel service with the place of residence could be provided from their arrival a limited permit to the charge by the control/maintain the record on register of law and order, submission of payment of the cost/fees, that return of the colony could cause].50 This was followed by the decree that the entry of Indians have facilitated that also comprised other Indians who are also engaged in the road construction and the domestic works of the colonial administrator as well. However, most of the Indian indentured workers lack in the craftsmanship, who were supposed to earn very good pay offered like that of the engineers of the public works of the colonial council on 8th September1827: “...Les travaux de l'hôtel du government nécessitent sur toutes les faces extérieures et intérieures des enduits neuf qui seront d’une exécution difficile et il se trouve en ce moment à St.Denis, troi maçons malabars qui ont exécuté chez Mr.Gilot l'Etang des ouvrages de cette sorte avec un soin et une habileté qu'on ne peut attendre des ouvriers esclaves, libres et même blancs de la colonie. Ces ouvriers offrent de travailler pour le gouvernement à raison de 225 F et les vivre pour le chef ; 200F et les vivres pour le secont et 175 F et les vivres pour le troisième. L'ingénieur en chef malgré l'élévation de ces prix propose d'accepter leurs offres de service parce que, ne

49 Consul H.Hill report, Dept of Home, Public Branch, June 1862, Pros No.11.
les employant que pour peu de temps et avec plusieurs autres maçons, il espère en tirer un avantage qui balancera la dépense’’[... works in the government buildings require all the exterior and interior faces nine coating which will be difficult to execute, at the moment there are three malbars mason in St.Denis at the moment who have executed the house of Mr.Gilot pond with exceptional efficiency which was earlier not expected from there slaves. This workers offer to work for the government at the rate of 225 F(Franc) provision for the head/chief, 200F provision for the assistant and 175F for the third in rank below the assistant respectively.

Though it was quite expensive at that time looking at the cost of the artistic skills and the cost of labour in hiring many labourers, hoping to balance the expenditure, the chief engineer choose the Indian masons these are the instances from the legal clause of the archival sources from La Réunion that Indian indentured workers not only constitute the cane workers but also artisans craftsmen and other maid workers. By the order of the Turquoise ship, they were ordered to attract more indentured workers’ from India with a regulated work culture. It must also be remembered that in June 1728, Turquoise brought to this Island the indentured workers and other contract workers however they did not wanted to work less than five franc per day. Moreover, the French colonial administrator also passed on the Turquoise i.e. Fifteen Pariahs of which he had signed an agreement for three years, they were warranted a regular salary per months, food, clothes, law of repatriation and to practice their religion, and then hundreds and thousands indentured workers followed thereafter.

2.2.4. Role of the Governor

The general command and high administration of the Island is entrusted to the Governor, placed under the direct authority of the Minister of the Marine and Colonies. The Governor is appointed by the head, whom he represents, and with whose authority and prerogatives he is invested. He enacts rules and bye-laws in administrative and police matters, and for carrying into effect laws, rules and decrees framed by the national

51 Ibid.
52 Though most of the archival materials pertaining to indentured workers are lost due to fire at the Archive de La Réunion, fortunately we still can accessed the archival material documented by Firma Lacpatia.
government and promulgated in the colony. His ordinary powers extends themselves overall and every part of the service through the chief of departments, with the advice of his privy council, the advice, however, he is not obliged to follow. He is assisted in the administration of the colony by the following officers or heads of the department, viz.

1. The Director of the Interior.
2. The Ordonnateur.
3. The procureur General.

The administration of the colony also rests with the Privy Council and the Conseil-General. The Conseil Prive is presided over by the Governor, and is composed of-The Governor, The Ordonnateur and the Director of the Interior.54

2.2.4.1. The Director of the Interior

The Director of the Interior, whose business it is to supervise immigration affairs, is too much absorbed by other duties of his administration to give any attention whatsoever to the short-comings of his inferiors; therefore the whole management of the department devolves upon the commissaire d'Immigration and the sous-Commissaire d'Immigration, who are certainly not equal to the situation. The former through his want of administrative ability and incompetency as a chief, and the latter through the little respect he is able to inspire on account of his doubtful reputation.55 The Immigration Office might more properly be designated a “Protectorate of Planters and Creoles,” as the interests of the creoles, whatever may be their condition, invariably take precedence over those of the Indian immigrants. In another dispatch Consul Perry also wrote that, “The Syndics and clerks in the cantons are still more unsuited for the positions they occupy, and, as, a body may be looked upon as creatures of the planters. The whole service requires remodeling.56 Therefore it appears that, “Such articles of the Convention as refer directly to the Indian immigrant, as well as the wording of the contracts made in India, and the various Arêtes and quotations specified therein, should unquestionably be translated into PIOs dialect and printed copies circulated freely in the Madras Presidency among Indians about to emigrate the

54 Consul Perry report on Indian immigration in the Island of Reunion, January 1877, pp.6-8.
55 Consul Perry dispatch to Lord Derby, No. 78 of the 6th December 1875.
56 Ibid.
Reunion, in order that they may not, as now, arrive here without the slightest knowledge of the country they are coming to, or the work required of them.

In La Réunion the planters also heavily relied on commercial houses for importing Indian indentured workers. Therefore it is difficult to give an opinion as to the stability of the planters and commercial houses, as the whole Island may fairly be said to be in a state bordering on bankruptcy. The "Credit foncier Colonial" is already in possession of 17 large plantations, as well as many small; more falling every year into the hands of the company. The remaining estates are said to be mortgaged, with but few exceptions. Plantations are usually owned and worked by the proprietors themselves or by agents appointed by them. Therefore the poor white who cannot repay their loan to the commercial house had to sold off their farm. They fled to the mountainside and met the cafres where they produced an offspring’s called the Red Cafres.

2.2.4.2. The Commissaire d'Immigration

The Commissaire d'Immigration or the Chief of the Immigration Department is supposed to visit the plantations on tours of inspection. It is his duty to see that the rules and regulations concerning the immigrants are everywhere faithfully executed, that the engagistes fulfils their engagements towards their Indian labourers, and that the latter carry out the stipulations of their contracts. In conformity with the article 36 of the decree of March 1852, a protectorate of immigrants shall be established in the chief town of each "arrondisement". This Protectorate shall be composed of the Procureur de la Republique, or one of his substitutes, as president of an advocate chosen each year, and a Municipal councilor appointed by the Governor.

2.2.5. Correspondance

The mode of conveying accused persons, (the indentured workers) from one district to another is called- correspondence. Under this system a person accused of petty offences

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57 Ibid.
58 "Consuls Perry Report' Jan.1876 (Confidential), Dept. of Revenue and Agricultural, Emigration Branch, pp. 5-10.
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in the country districts are marched to the capital for trial, chained together by the hands in the bands of about dozen at a time, under an escort of mounted gendarmes, and although the journey varying from ten to sixty miles is broken by several halts in some of the district the prisoners are said to reach their destination in a pitiable state, weak and strong being chained to each other irrespective of their physical condition., The British Ambassador at Paris Lord Lytton in his letter to France Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dated 2nd June 1890, wrote that “It is understood that this practice is not confined to criminal offender alone, and that until a short time ago, Indians who had come to the capital to have their complaints investigated by the protector of Immigrants, were returned to their district in this manner”.59

2.2.6. Desiderata

In order to prevent this initial abuse of the indentured workers in the Island, the British Government of India in 1879 recommended the stoppage of recruitment in the French ports.60 This together with other important reforms is secured in Article 3, 4 and 5 of the Desiderata, which provide;

(a) For an official agent in India to supervise all recruitment
(b) For the conduct of all recruitment in British ports and
(c) For the submission of requisitions by the British consuls and their approval by the Governor of Reunion. Article 5 in particular is one of the most valuable concessions obtained from the Governor of Reunion, that reads “Every landed proprietors of Réunion who may desire to introduce or engage immigrants from India for the cultivation of the soil shall present a requisition to the protector of immigrants, indicating the number of men and women whom he desires to engage. On receipt of the requisition the protector shall inspect the camps and hospital of the proprietors and shall forward the requisition to the Governor accompanied with a report on the result of his visit. This requisition shall be communicated to the British Consul, who shall be at liberty to offer his observations to the Governor.” 61

2.2.7. Permis de S’ ejour

The delay and difficulty in the observance of the formalities is not enough but also compounded by the permis de s’ ejour, a tax varying from 16-500 franc per annum.

59 Dept of Commerce and Industry, Emigration Branch, July 1916, Pros No.12-13, Part, B.
60 British government of India Despatch No.10 of 8th May, 1879.
61 Dept of Revenue and Agricultural, Emigration Branch, September 1894,Pros,No.1-17,PartA.
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according to the means of the Grantee. This tax is imposed independently of any provision in the labour law which runs contrary to the Convention of 1861 that precludes the imposition of any condition save the proof by the cooly of regular conduct and the means of subsistence.

2.2.8. Macadam

After the consul has counted and inspected the newly-arrived immigrants, he withdraws, and the work of distribution by allotment is carried on by the immigration officers, who subsequently furnish the forming of various lots, and the names of the persons to whom each batch has been assigned. In the events of an immigrant refusing to work, unless unquestionably incapacitated by sickness, he is immediately taken before a Juge de Paix of the district, and by that functionary the immigrants is at once sentenced to a fine varying from 5 to 100 franc, a high penalty being almost always imposed. In default of payment, this fine is convertible into an equal number of days of hard labour at the “atelier de discipline” (Macadam). The day passed at the Macadam have to be made up to his master at the expiration of the immigrant’s engagement. Illegal absence from work is punishable by fine, or an equal number of days at the Macadam, and for each day’s illegal absence, the immigrants owe two days’ work to his employer.

2.2.8.1. Journées de Remploi

An indentured worker refuses to re-engage, the master then sends a complaint to the commissary of Police against him for refusal to work or indolence, under Article 164 of the Decree of 1887. In the course of the enquiry cases were found in which it was actually stated in so many words that the indentured workers insolence had been manifested in the course of the trial thereby naively exposing the real motive of the complaint. Such complaints are eagerly received and the Syndics whose duty/interest is to promote re-engagements on account of the fiscal advantage to the colony and the commission which they are allowed to earn on the collection of this tax rarely exercise proper interference in the interest of the indentured workers. They are thus always condemned and the master is able to exact under the law as it exist the day passed in this imprisonment as “journées de remploi”
2.2.8.1.1. Petit-Culture and Colons par Ciaires

In this system the contract labourers are made subject to engagement and his remuneration consists of a share in the produce of the soil which he cultivates. This form of engagement is contrary to the convention of 1861 and is obviously open to great abuse. This stands out as one of the most fictitious engagement. It is also very difficult to check how these workers under this system are remunerated.

2.2.8.1.2. Syndics

A Syndic is appointed wherever there is a Juge de Paix. He is the delegate of the Protectorate for that district. From the Syndics and the Commissaire d’Immigration, the Procureur de la Republique receives all complaints which are likely to lead an action in the courts of law and the Procureur with his staff decides whether a suit shall be instituted, in which case he constitutes himself legal attorney: and the Protectorate, according to the nature of the case, either conducts the suit itself, or causes it to be conducted by the Syndics of the Canton. Though, the domestic servants receive a wages varying from 7.50-20, exclusive of food, francs per month. There is, however, no laws which regulates the amount of wages to be given to domestic servants, as Consul Perry puts it “I have heard the collies working merely for their food. The immigrants can only claim the amounts stipulated on their livers or contracts”.

At the expiration of the immigrants’ engagement, the “engagiste” shall within 48 hours, give to the syndics the livret of the immigrants and to the latter a duplicate copy, certifying that his engagement is terminated. Within the above-mentioned delay of 48 hrs, the immigrants, furnished with his “certificate of discharge” shall present himself before the Syndics to declare whether he chooses to re-engage, or to be sent back to India. However, Indian indentured workers who have completed their contract is induced, under the influence of drinks, or by the tempting offer of ready money, and not unfrequently by threats, to re-engage with his old master, months and even years, before the expiration of his contract. Consul Perry in his report wrote that “some Syndics, however, I am told to have

62 Ibid, p.11.
63 Ibid, p.12.
slightly modified this abuse by refusing to sanction re-engage ments, except within the six months preceding the expiration of the immigrant’s engagement. Of course there are Indians who resists all advances, and choose their own masters, but the generality do not enjoy the liberty guaranteed them by law. I am of opinion that no re-engagement, as I have already submitted to Her Majesty’s Secretary of state for Foreign Affairs, should be allowed without the sanction of the Consul, or be permitted to take place at all until three days after the expiration of the immigrant’s contracts 64.

The rules and administration on papers appears to be excellent but the fact that the administrator from the Commissaire d’Immigration down to the Syndics cantonaux did not function independently, Lyall in his report narrated that “The syndics and clerks are the needy Creoles of little or no education and belonging for the most part to the lower classes, some of them are Mulattos...dependent on the large proprietors, who make their power felt and do not scruple to threaten a syndics with the wrath of the Conseil General and rigours of the administration if he performs his duties to their prejudices” 65.

2.2.8.1.3. Juge de Paix

The summary magistrate or Juge de Paix, decides all the cases between the employer and the immigrants. These officials are largely dependent upon electoral influence for their posts, although they are nominally appointed from France. The emolument are given in such a way that no one from France would ever be induced to accept the appointment and the nominations are therefore with rare exceptions of Creole of the Island. The following illustrates how fair was justice done to the indentured workers, In a case before the Assize Court the presiding officer, a Puisne Judge, ask the prisoner an Indian “what have you to say in your defence? The Indian made his statement. The Judge to the Indians: “You are lying, and if you did not lie you must not be an Indian!” 66. Thus such an utterance from the superior Branch of the colony is indicative of anything but a disposition to the patient hearing of the Indian indentured workers.

65 Lyall C.J. note on indentured immigration in Réunion Island, p.45.
66 Dept of Revenue and Agricultural, Emigration Branch, April 1894, ProsNo.1-17, Part, A.
2.2.8.2. Education system

In the Decree of 1887, children if at school are allowed to remain free of engagement until 15 years of age. The state keeps up no less than 116 free schools and the allotment for education is 748,000 Francs of which 430,000 or about 1/10th of the total budget of the colony is for primary education. Muir Mackenzie in his report observed that, "Education I believe, for the French subjects nominally compulsory and the Creole certainly use the school in great numbers. It is a pity that the Indians does not share in these advantage, I much fear that while there is no reason to suppose that an Indian would refused admission, yet neither authorities nor proprietors as a body, (though there and an exception on individual) think it worthwhile to exercise any moral influence to induce Indian parents to send their children to school. But the number of Indians in them was quite insignificant, and included of course the children of the so-called "Arab" traders who are well to do and enlightened enough to educate their children". 67 Then we have from the commission report that only two proprietors—M. Kerveguen and M. Vetch—are mentioned as having school on their properties. 68 These two were also closed down on the pretext that none of the Indians parents encouraged their children to go to school.

2.2.8.3. Working Hours

As per the Anglo French Convention Article 10 of 1861, Indian immigrants are not bound to work for more than 9 and 1/2 (half hours) per diem, or more than six days in a week. However, Consuls Perry in his dispatch No. 40 of the 11th September 1876 to the Earl of Derby, had written that "these rules are neither observed or enforced, nor do I believe that there is a single planter who conforms to them. An aggravated case lately came under my immediate observation, where it was proved that the Indians immigrants (the weak as well as the able-bodied) were forced to work fifteen hours per diem, this breach of the law being perfectly well known to the authorities. 69 The Indian indentured workers were rather made to work more than 12 hours per day. Those who abscond from work were made to compensate it on Sunday.

As for the penalty imposed on the Indian indentured workers for absence from work, Consul Perry wrote that: "According to Article 23 of the Convention of 1861, and of the 2nd paragraph thereof, her Majesty's Indian subjects shall not have conditions imposed upon them more stringent than

67 Ibid, Para. 76-78.
68 Ibid, Para. 77.
69 Dept of Revenue and Agricultural, Emigration Branch, January, 1877.
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those prescribed by the Martinique Regulations. Article 6 of the decree of the 13th February 1852 appear to me a contravention of Article 32 of the regulations referred to above, which I understand as determining that an “engage” is to make up the days that he is absent from his “engagiste,” whatever may have been the cause; no mention being made of deducting for “Marronage” (desertion) two days for one, as is the invariable practice here.... The natural consequence of such a system would seem to encourage bad masters to ill-treat their employees, in order that they shall desert. Since the longer the “engage” is “Marron,” the greater the gain to the “engagiste.” Take for example the case of an Indian who absents himself for a year. By the decree of the 13th of February 1852, he is bound to work two years without wages, and at the completion of his engagement, to make up the year he has been absent. So that the immigrant gives three years’ work for one of an absence, receive pay only during one of the three years. The consul further lamented that “It is superfluous to add that a monstrous abuse of power is sufficient in itself to demoralise the whole Indian population, and make them worthless. The authorities assert that no impediments are placed in the way of Indians desirous of communicating with the Consul. On the other hand, the immigrants declare that if they breathe the name of the Consul they run the risk of being sent to the Macadam. Nor do I think this statement exaggerated.”

Nothing can be more lamentable than the present disorganised state of this service. This may be said to be without a Chief.

2.2.9. Police Gratuities

The Police Gratuities implies that, for the arrest of every Indian indentured worker who venture out of the jurisdiction of their master farm was given a monetary rewards. This is one of the most iniquitous and vexatious local laws which was used by the local police to multiply their incomes. They degrade the indentured workers and brand them as social pariah.

2.2.9.1. Foreigners tax

This tax varies from 25-500 Francs/head. It was estimated that 9/10th of the foreigner tax payers are British Indian subjects. According to Consul Bennet, the Decree of 1887, was intended to touch foreigners of Asiatic origin coming here in large number to reside here for business purpose, which is expressly stated in Article 1 of the Decree “Cette disposition

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70 Consul Perry Report, Jan 1877, opcit, p.16.
71 Dept of Revenue and Agricultural, Emigration Branch, August 1884, Pros, No.20.
ne s'applique pas à ceux dont le séjour est réglementé par le décret du Mars 30, 1881, sur l'immigration". 72

However, take for the case of Joseph Apavon, who was born in the island of an immigrant father. Under article IX of the convention of 1861, Apavon is an immigrant and was entitled to be repatriated with his father if his father returned to India or without his father having served for 5 years engagement... Paying 10 Francs per year. On attaining the age of 21 in 1885, took out a permis de séjour, to which he was entitled, as a matter of fact under article IX clause 3 of the convention of 1861. He seems to have paid this tax of 10 Franc per year under the Decree of March 1881, but early in 1891 was called upon to pay the enhanced tax of 50 Francs per annum under the Decree of March 1887, and failing to do so, was imprisoned for three months. 73

2.3. Theorising Indentured Workers

Historians, Economist and Sociologist, have tried to explain the reason for this indentured system both by looking at the plights of labour in the era of colonialism on the one hand and also as a chance for upward mobility on the other. Historical work’s related to the Indian indentured worker’s appears on the academic scene only in 1950. 74

2.3.1. Arthur Gordon

Like all others colonies importing Indian indentured workers, the history of Indians emigration to Fiji is also closely related with the emergence of sugar industry as a result of the governor’s Sir Arthur Gordons’, policy of the Island financial consideration. 75 He considered it not merely as a guarantee of economic and financial stability, but also as a way of furthering the new colony’s political stability and the preservation of the Fijian people. 76 Following the early traders, whalers, adventurers and missionaries, European planters arrived in Fiji in the sixties and found cotton cultivation profitable because of the disruption of cotton exports from the southern states[in America] during and after the American Civil war. 77

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72 Consul Bennet letter to acting Governor of Reunion. 1st July 1891.
73 Dept of Revenue and Agricultural, Emigration Branch, May 1887, Pros, No.13.
74 Kondapi 1951, Cumpton 1953, Indian Overseas in British Territories, 1834-1854, O.U.P.
75 The first Governor, Sir Arthur Gordon (1875-80) had considered the introduction of Indian labour at least as early as July 1875.
76 Gillion, K.L (1962) Opicit, pp. 3-4.
77 Ibid.p.1.
2.3.1.1. Lord Salisbury

In England the indentured system in the British colonies was thought of as a great boon to the colonies, to the individual immigrants and in particular to India. Periodic calamitous famines reminded the British public of the plight of India. The condition of the labouring classes in India was melancholy to contemplate declared Lord Salisbury, the Secretary of state for India, in the House of Lords in 1877; he felt that emigration would afford them an outlet, quicken enterprise and gave new life and energy to the whole country. The British officials in British India were paternalistic. Not only did they feel themselves responsible for the welfare of the people of India, but to some extent even conceived of Indian interest as separate from those in Britain. The British Indian officials really thought the indentured system was in the best interest of India and of the emigrants. However contrary to the opinion of the colonial master emigration was not at all popular with the people of India. There were religious objections; for hundreds of years there had been an interdict on foreign travel among Hindus, especially in north India and except among certain trading castes, those who crossed the kalapani - the black water- lost caste.

2.3.1.2. West India Committee

In 1874 the West India Committee, which represented in London the interest of the West Indian Planters wrote to Lord Salisbury and pointing to the recent famine in India, suggested that emigration should be encouraged, not just tolerated by the Government of India and should develop into permanent colonisation through the elimination of return passages. It is not surprising, in view of the contemporary attitude towards Indian emigration, that this suggestion met with his ready approval. With the agreement of the colonial office, a dispatch was sent to the Government of India. Lord Salisbury first pointed to the benefits of Indian emigration:

"While then, from an Indian point of view, emigration, properly regulated and accompanied by sufficient assurance of profitable employment and fair treatment seems a thing to be encouraged on grounds of humanity, with a view to promote the well-being of the poorer classes, we may also consider from an

80 Ibid.
81 Ibid, pp.21-22.
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imperial point of view the great advantage which must result from peopling the warmer British possession which are rich in natural resources and only want population, by an intelligent and industrious race to whom the climate of those countries is well suited, and to whom the culture of the staples suited to the soil and the modes of labour and settlement, are adapted. In this view also it seems proper to encourage emigration from India to colonies well suited for an Indian population.”

Therefore, he suggested that there should be a considerable change in the attitude of the Government of India. On the one hand, its officer should directly encourage emigration. On the other, by stationing its agent in the colonies, it would be able to afford them greater protection. By the time Indian immigration was extended to Fiji in 1879 around 335,000 Indians were living in the British colonies. Let us now examine the interpretation of indentured workers systems according to various Historians.

2.3.2 Gillion, K.L

Gillion, who made an in-depth study on the Indian indentured workers in Fiji, argued that, the indentured system was not only drudgery but also the unaccustomed impersonal treatment on most plantations that made the system pathetic. He states that, ‘In India every man had its place in the social order, but in Fiji immigrants felt that they were looked upon as sugar-producing machines. To a man with a wife and a family, who had belonged to a middle or high caste in India, his new life was a miserable one, at best that of a well-treated animals –fed, looked after if sick, driven to work, and given a ‘stable’ or a kernel to live in. However, Gillion also talks about the positive aspects of the system and states that ‘It is true, of course, that conditions in the factories and the plantations in India were bad, if not worse. To a labourer who had known hunger, had slept in the open or in a mud hovel, and had encounter little but abuse and ill-treatment from his betters, a plantation in Fiji was an improvement.

85 Gillion, K.L (1962), Fiji’s Indian migrants, A history to the end of indenture 1920, 1962, Melbourne: OUP.
2.3.3. Tinker,H

In 1974,Hugh Tinker, the first volume on Tinkers trilogy, on the overseas Indians though specifically based on the Indians migrants in Mauritius-the British colonies by far that received the largest numbers of Indian indentured workers and the underlying arguments of A New System of Slavery, is confirmed by its title i.e. the indentured differed from chattel slavery only in that it involved temporary servitude rather than on being in permanent condition .The indentured system was also an unremitting disaster for those caught in its coil. He is the first author, well suited for the task, who, spoke good Hindi and visited almost all the places on Indian migrants' destinations apart from Fiji, to analyse in depth and within the context of the plantation system as a whole. He asserted that since coercion, low wages and the planter's inherent right to extract as much work as possible from the labourers were the inalienable part of the indentured system, that led to it being viewed as an euphemistic term for a “New System of Slavery” Tinker -1974, Rodney -1981, Gillion -1962, also subscribe to this argument in analysing the indentured system.

2.3.4. Rodney,W

Historians like Walter Rodney, maintains that nothing illustrate this better than the stagnant nominal wage rate paid to the contract labour on both Caribbean and Asian plantation throughout the period when the indentured system was in force. Low wage indentured labour was utilised effectively to curtail the bargaining power of free wage labourers, and thus functioned to “guarantee planter control over the entire labour process and “what is significant about this paradoxical presentation of low-wage immigrant labour as “expensive” is the clear admission that the indentured labour had as its ultimate function the guaranteeing of planter control over the entire labour process, and that this alone justified the continuation of indenturedship, irrespective of the cost to the individual proprietor and to the general tax payer. Of course, planters were determined to use their
politic power in the legislature to ensure that the indentured immigration was not for them as private capitalist an uneconomic undertaking. They shielded themselves from the full cost of indenturedship. At no time after 1878 did they[planters] pay more than two-third of the immigration bill; and at moments of acute distress during the 1890's, the colonial state lightened that load through deferred payments, loans and grants and also transferring part of the monetary burden of repatriation on to the immigrants themselves.92

However, Behal and Mohaputra, states that the revisionist overlooked the wages were determined outside the labour market and argued that "the indentured system was designed not so much to provide economic opportunities for the labourer but was a mechanism to secure for the planters a labour force whose wages were determined completely outside the labour market"93, Rodney also stressed the similarity between slavery and the indentured labourers and states that "It is one that comes easily, since indenture followed so closely on slavery, and since it can scarcely be denied that hangovers from the slavery epoch were present in the attitudes and practices of the plantation owners".94

2.3.5. Ruhmon, P

Peter Ruhmon, one of the first Creole Indian Historians, asserts unequivocally that "no trick of sophistry or twist of logic... Can ever avail to defend the system of semi-slavery paraded under the guise of indentured immigration, under which Indians were brought to the colony to labour on the sugar plantations, in the interest of a powerful and privileges body of capitalist,".95 More than anything else, it was the regimented social and industrial control which caused indenture to approximate so closely to slavery. Legal control of the

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indentured portion of estate labour gave to employers a remarkable advantage in imposing their version of industrial discipline.\textsuperscript{96}

Moreover, there are exceptional cases when Justice was on the side of the immigrants, William des Voeux, had testified that many planters cynically declared that indentured immigrants on their estate must always be actually at work or in hospital or in Jail. Many who should have been in hospital were out in the fields. Doctors in charge of estate hospital were also employees of estates, and were prone to certify sick indentured labourers as fit for duty- either refusing them entry into hospital or discharging them permanently.\textsuperscript{97} The courts of law provided the final sanction for ensuring that indentured labourers were available every season, every week and every day. An unexplained absence was classed as “desertion” and like all other breaches of civil contract on the part of the labourer, absence constituted a criminal offence punishable offence by a fine or punishment.\textsuperscript{98} Moreover, period of absence from work [when proved in court] and terms of imprisonment were excluded when calculating the five year of the indentured bond.\textsuperscript{99} Therefore, the revisionist who are basically the defender of colonialism, toe the line of the colonial planters. During the fierce debate over a nominal wage increase for indentured labourer in Assam tea garden a planter representatives in the central legislative council of India in 1901 said: “When the collie goes to a garden he begins to live, whereas in chotanagpur (the home district of the labourer) he only exist…” Another planter was more emphatic in saying that the indentured contract was ‘an effort to give to the coolie in the only possible way an ability which he did not before possess; the ability to make a contract to better his condition.”\textsuperscript{100}

\textsuperscript{97} Chief Justice Beaumont dismissed in 1868 as a result of his sympathetic attitude towards the indentured workers.
\textsuperscript{98} Opcit.p.40
\textsuperscript{99} G N A., GD 5, 9 January 1895(CO 111/476) cited in Walter Rodney ... p.42.
2.3.6. Beckles, H

Hilary Mc D. Beckles,\textsuperscript{101} sees the plantation that employs indentured workers as a tool for expansion of new colonies in the new worlds in which the demands of plantation agricultural transformed the traditional form of indentured servitude, with its moral-paternalistic ideology of pre-industrial England into a form of 'proto-slavery' in the West Indies. Therefore, Beckles argued that "it was this system that provided the English planters with the necessary experience for the enslavement of Black labour, where servants were seen primarily as capital, as unit investments with property values".\textsuperscript{102}

2.3.7. Smith, V

Smith argued that "The decline of the Handicraft industry caused by the introduction of the machine -made cotton goods had caused unemployment both in Bengal and Madras... and famine had created temporary distress which encouraged thought of overseas work."\textsuperscript{103}

2.3.8. Economic pull factors

However, Galenson-1984\textsuperscript{104}, Emmer-1986, 1990\textsuperscript{105}, has challenged many of these arguments. They underplay the element of un-freedom involved in the indentured system and emphasised the economic rationality of a system, which according to them benefits the employers and labourers alike.\textsuperscript{106}

\textsuperscript{100} GoI, legislative 48-102, March 1990, Cited in Ibid.
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid, p.23.
\textsuperscript{103} Smith, Vincent A. (1920), The Oxford History of India from the earliest time to the end of 1911, Oxford: Clarendon Press, p.702.
\textsuperscript{106} Cited in Behal, R & Prabhu, P. Mahapatra,( October 1991) 'Tea and Money versus Human Life': The rise and fall of the indentured system in the Assam Tea plantation 1840-1908 Journal of Peasant studies,, Vol, 19(3)
2.3.8.1. Galenson

Galenson\textsuperscript{107} opines that the American Servitude specifically of servants indentured in the colonies, redemptioners and convicts that are largely excluded from the study as are non-Anglo groups like Germans and scotch-Irish who constituted most of the labour forces in places like Pennsylvania. He suggests that the indentured system rather than looking it as a novel institution or an extension of apprenticeship to a craft should be seen as a modified version of a \textit{farm service}. Young men and women bound themselves annually to a master for whom they performed agricultural labour and in return received room, board and sometimes-even livery-households in addition to wages. The expense of transporting servants to America plus the great profits that could be reaped from their labour led to longer terms of service in the colonies and a body of restrictive legislation aimed at protecting the master’s investment and also allowing him to liquidate or sell his interest in the servants when he pleased.

Thus he argues that “indenture system was essentially a facilitating device that enabled labour to flow from low labour productivity areas particularly-Asia to high productivity areas i.e. the newly conquered colonies-Caribbean, West Indian Ocean Islands and North America ...the powerful attraction of economic opportunity was sufficient to ‘prompt many migrant over the course of three centuries to enter indentures giving up much of their freedom for a period of years in hopes thereby to amend their estate”.\textsuperscript{108} In other words, Galenson believed that indentured system was a means of populating the barren region and at the same time also act as a means of economic emancipation of the laboring classes.

He further states that,[J]f coercion had played an important part in the recruiting process, merchants would have had no needs to give more valuable servants preferable bargains in the form of wages or shorter terms; that they did so indicates that they lacked the ability to force all servants into uniformly long terms. One reason, he cites, for this inability was


\textsuperscript{108} Ibid, p.24-26
clearly the competition among large numbers of English merchants for recruits.\textsuperscript{109} The ability to satisfy the changing demands of the colony labour market at critical period helped make indentured servitude one of the central institutions of colonial American society.\textsuperscript{110}

### 2.3.8.2. Frederick J. Mouat

Dr. Frederick J. Mouat\textsuperscript{111} observes that;

"I had frequent opportunities of conversing with many of this class [the immigrants who had returned from Mauritius] on my voyages back to India and perceived that there was a shrewdness, spirit of independence and worldly wisdom about the most intelligent of them that would never permit them again to submit quietly to the crushing and heartless oppression of the Zamindaris"\textsuperscript{112}

However, in spite of all these hardship the Indians often were very willing to signed the indentured contract which can be corroborated by S.S. Raghavaiper, a government official of the Madras Presidency who opines that ‘Emigration also offered large fields of profitable employment to the Indian coolie... But the difficulty was to induce him to leave his miserable home’.\textsuperscript{113}

### 2.3.9. Push factor

These historians placed indentured workers in a wider context in which its comparison to slavery comes under minute’s scrutiny. Their works is also distinguished from others in its global comparative approach to indentured labour. They particularly emphasis on the economic condition of the contract labourers in their home country.

\textsuperscript{109} *Ibid*, pp.112-113.


\textsuperscript{111} Frederick J. Mouat of the Bengal Medical Service was in India when the indentured system just began.

\textsuperscript{112} Mouat. Frederick J. (1852), *Rough notes of a trip to Reunion, the Mauritius&Ceylon*, London, W. Thacker & Co., p.96.

\textsuperscript{113} Raghavaiper, S.S.(1898). *Memorandum on the progress of the Madras Presidency during the last forty years of British Administration (1853 to 1892)*, Madras Government Press.
2.3.9.1. Northrup, D

Northrup, though, heavily rely on the secondary sources, identifies the political and economic factors that gave rise to the indenture system as well the motivation among the labourers themselves. "The push to migrate has also been attributed to the effects of British rule, both negative and positive. 114"

Reforms in land tenure and taxation led to widespread changes in rural communities, as did the abolition of various forms of rural servitude." Although, not all would agree, he argued, it seems likely...and that British presence was only one of several factors contributing to the desire to emigrate. 115 Like most of the historians, he also takes into account the systems of recruitment, the circumstances of the intercontinental voyages they undertook, the reasons for the mortality they suffered en route and also the social condition of these labourers at their destinations and their responses to the indentured system, "not surprisingly, many came from the social and economic margins of Indian society, even if they were not simply the poorest of the poor, already accustomed to migrants work on Bengal indigo plantations, many risked the journey to Mauritius, for example, to take advantage of wages that were easily three times higher in the 1840's, their recruitment was made easier by the fact that, like the Chinese, early recruits to Mauritius received "advances" or "gratuities" equivalent to two months' wages before sailing that enabled them to buy themselves out of debt and provide for family members left behind". 116 "Others recruits from the bottom of Indian society includes landless Tamils of South India, especially the Pariah (untouchables) who formed 20 percent or more of the Tamil population. A study of the ship records of migrants from the Madras presidency to Natal from 1860-1902 shows that the two largest social castes were the Pariah (14.6) and the Vanniah, another agricultural caste (14.3), but that their share of the total migrant was higher at the end of the period than at the beginning". 117

Throughout the period the migrants constituted not only the lower caste but cross-sections of the society. For example, one reliable civil servants accounts of the colonial administration that not merely the lowest and most indigent class of the society, but a large number of people of high caste and respectability", the greater part of whom had left home due to economic distress". At the base of the process was the Indian recruiter or arkatia, who watched the markets, caravanserais, railway stations, bazaars, temple and urban centres for likely recruitee, the arkatia sometimes lured the would be recruitees/indentured workers with exaggerated promises and eager recruits were often incapable of imagining the actual distances and circumstances they would face halfway around the world. It is mainly on these grounds that Northrup, argued that the nineteenth century indentured labourers was a 'distinct historical phenomenon' from the European migration of the same period in terms of its establishment, destination and control mechanism. He further argued that 'the indentured began as a daring experiment that sought to abolish slavery while preserving the colonial plantation economy'. Therefore, Northrup, concludes that indentured system was not a euphemistic term of slavery but rather was 'a form of trade'.

2.3.9.2. Shlomowitz, R

Then Ralph Shlomowitz, an economist by profession, provided quantitative analyses of the economic and demographic aspects of the Pacific Islands labour trade. He made a comparative analysis of the Indian and Melanesians and argued that workers coming from benign disease environments were at risk from a new range of viruses against their body system had little or no immunity. Emigrant workers were particularly vulnerable in the first year and especially the initial six months of service, after which the mortality rate tapered off as workers became acclimatised to their new disease environment. The epidemiological factors also explains the differential mortality between Melanesian and Indian indentured workers, he argues. Since the latter came from a more hostile disease environment and thus had a greater immunity to the respiratory and gastro-intestinal

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118 Statement of Mr. Robert Neave, 3 June 1845, enclosed in Gomm to Stanley, Mauritius, 2 July 1845, cited in David Northrup, p.68.
120 Ibid, pp.105-106.
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disease to which so many succumbed. He further demonstrates that, this had a bearing on
the relative cost of Indian and Melanesians workers.

2.3.9.3. Emmer

Emmer, a staunch revisionist, argued that indentured emigration from India to overseas
colonies was the result of rational and deliberate choice on the part of the migrants,
prompted by hopes of bettering their future, an ‘escape hatch’ from social and economic
oppression at home and that ‘the indentured system was different from the slave trade in
looking at the process of recruitment’ there was “little evidence exist indicating that
fraud, deception and even kidnapping were widely used. Sometimes, the sudden
decision of the emigrants to leave their villages made it look as if they had been
kidnapped. In order to avoid enquiries by their family, some intending emigrants traveled
to other districts before they went to a recruiter and provided false information about their
real place of origin... ‘After the indentured emigrant had fulfilled his contract, a similar
problem arose upon his return home: it was impossible for her or him to imagine how the
reception would be back in India.  

The group of ‘return coolies’, who indentured themselves again to leave India after their
return, were the real victims of the system. They had failed to settle overseas and, at the
same time, they had become outcasts in India. The relatively low percentage of runaways
between the moment of first registration and embarkation indicate that indentured
emigration was usually the result of a choice made by the intending emigrant himself,
albeit not always based on rational grounds’. In this respect Emmer, on the lines of the
findings of Gail Omvedt, argued that “the indentured emigration had more in common
with the free emigration out of Europe during the 19th century than with the slave trade
during the preceding centuries. There is not a single indication that any of the colonial
recruiting agencies were interested in the kidnapping of emigrants or in using fraud and

studies, 9(3): 107-52
123 Emmer, 1986, p.204.
deception as a regular practice. In fact, the recruiter and sub-agent all faced a financial loss when a fraudulently recruited emigrant changed his mind.125

Emmer further argued that, "The possible negative demographic effects of the indentured system on the mother country were balanced by two factors. Firstly, single girls who emigrated usually had a higher chance of getting married and having children overseas than at home. If they returned with their family, their foreign born children constituted an increase in the Indian population. Secondly, 40-59 percent of the women who migrated, were married and the relatively rapid growth of the Indian communities overseas suggests that Indian women overseas might have had more children than at home or – what seems more likely- is that more of their children survived.126

Therefore, emigration of the Indentured workers to overseas colonies, according to revisionist historians, was considered beneficiary effect of the overpopulated Indians and as an escape route from starvation. However, the Indian indentured emigrants proved so beneficial to the colonial government that even after it was stopped in 1916, the colony of the British Guiana issued in India an idyllic 'Memorandum by the immigration department, that there are over 130,000 East Indians; some of them have sugar estates; some are doctors, lawyers and merchants; some have cattle farms and so on'. There would be excellent opportunities to keep one's own religion. Reassuringly, the pamphlet mentioned: 'there are no tigers or such dangerous animals such as in India. The biggest animals of this sort are the jaguar and the puma, but they do not attack men. People can go all through the jungle of the British Guiana at any time without a weapon and without fear; but, as in India there are venomous snakes in the jungles, yet few people get bitten and death from this cause is rare.' All newly arrived immigrants could settle as independent colonist, 'but any East Indian who does not know the country should go to the sugar estates first, where he will find numbers of his own countrymen, get regular work, regular pay, and help if he gets ill.127

2.4. Marxist interpretation

The Marxist interpretation of the indentured workers also sees it in the context of the political economy of the third world that has as its central historical theme in the disruption of the pre-capitalist societies of Asia, Latin America and Africa through penetration and subsequent domination by an imperialist power. Concepts like export economy, enclave economy, or colonial economy have as their referent the form through which these societies were integrated into the developing world capitalist system. Typically plantations are first established in open resource situations where there is an extensive land frontier and conditions are suitable for the production of tropical crops.

The dynamics of plantation development forces as quickly as possible and to its own advantages a closed resource situation; by extending its rights over fertile and well-situated land, large areas of which may be held in reserve, the plantation sector consolidates its dominance over the peasant sector, its potential competitor for resources. The pressure on the peasant sector is heightened by demographic growth and the intensification of plantation production. Forced onto productively and geographically marginal land the peasants' major sources of cash income are casual wage labour on plantations, or the sale of crops to plantation for processing and transporting.

In sum, then the development possibilities of the peasant sector are frustrated by its weakness in the face of plantation dominance manifested in the distribution of land holding and in control over credit institutions, transport facilities, price and marketing structures and so on.

The linkages associated with the movement of the product are located within the vertical integration of the international company which is geared to final processing and marketing in the metropolitan countries. This is emphasized by the fact that the actual production of crops may be of relatively minor significance in the overall structure of operations of the company, while the organization of production with its rigidities of
resources utilization is the dominant fact of life in the plantation economy itself.\textsuperscript{128} The pre-colonial social structure was based on the village.

2.4.1. Haude

Haude (1972) prefers to describe the principal mode of production as Asiatic rather than feudal. In return for supervision, administration and co-ordination functions local rulers collected taxes in the form of agricultural produces. The village was also liable for certain labour service on public work and other tasks. The ruler did not own land and needed to regulate his demands in order not to jeopardize the compliance of his subjects. Thus after 1870, the colonial system now made a ‘more forceful and penetrating impact on the economy of the village’ by leasing land for planting export crops from the government or the peasants. The coffee plantations were able to rely on the former but sugarcane plantations had to negotiate with villages to bring peasant land under cultivation.

2.4.2. Gordon, A

Alec Gordon (1972) has shown that the administrative and coercive apparatus of the colonial state continued to be necessary to bring the pre-capitalist village economy in to working relationship with the capitalist sugar mills. New measures were strategised to earn more revenue with the end of the culture system. Fiscal reforms and a new system of taxation were introduced to maintain peasant’s involvement with the sugar economy. For the Dutch ‘the entire Javanese economy was based on an abundance of cheap manual labour which is precisely what made investment in the estate so profitable’ (Wertheim) This was achieved by maintaining the existing social structure with its pre-capitalist social relations and low standard of life of peasants.

2.5. Role of the middlemen

The organization of early indentured migration in the succeeding century would adopt many of the features of the 18\textsuperscript{th} centuries slave traffic. European agents at the principal ports acted as suppliers with the support of local intermediaries and ‘recruiters. The

\textsuperscript{128}\textsuperscript{Furnivall, J.S. (1944). P.127}
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European private traders were quick to take advantage of adverse local conditions and sought to purchase slaves at low prices whenever a crop failure occurred. If ships arrived in years of crop surpluses, local political disputes could be stirred up; as a last resort, beggars would be rounded up in the late 18th century, high-caste beggars were forced into two French slavers in the port at Yannam, prompting public demonstrations against the owners. As mentioned above, during the first half of the 18th century was kidnapped was really rampant in the French ports. French settlers in the Mascarenes had begun sending ships to India to purchase Indian slaves.

In 1792, the British residents at Calicut reported at length on the measures prevalent ‘throughout the Malabar country’ to supply the French exporters: ‘...it has been a custom of the Moplahs [Mappila] to steal the children of the Nair and other Gentoo castes and carry them to the sea coast for sale.... This shocking commerce has grown into great extent.’ A group of ‘Southern Chulia merchants’ protested at the removal not only of these child slaves but also of their tindals (boatswain) and lascars. They explained the presence of the minors as follows:

...when we made a voyage to the northward lately in purpose of trade, several people of that part of the country having perished by the extremity of the famine, some of those who were victims offered their children, entreating us to be so merciful as to maintain them, so as to save them from the threatening destruction, some of us have been under the necessity of accepting them from motives of regard to the relief of their poverty, and with an intention of preserving them.

These harrowing accounts were also corroborated by Christopher Frykes, who traveled in the region in the 1680’s recounted that his landlady in Colombo possessed ‘twenty slaves from Bengal which she used very inhumanly’, and he reported meeting a Dutch general of the ‘East India forces’ at the Cape of Good Hope who traveled with a fine retinue and ‘a great many slaves from Bengal’. Moreover, these accounts were also found in the diary of Dutch political prisoner, Jacob Vander Heiden, who in 1706 happened to share a cell at the cape with an Indian slave named Ari, who told him that he had been kidnapped.

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130 Ibid, p.42.
131 Cited in Ibid, p.42.
132 Ibid, p.43.
as a child while playing on the beach at Surat. He had been sold from one master to another before escaping to join fugitives’ slaves, living on stolen food until arrested.\footnote{133}{Ibid.}

However, since many labourers obtained their contract through the European firm coupled with the reports of abuse and unhygienic accommodation in the ships, led the government of India to direct Indian Law commissioners to draw up proposals to regulate the indenture system. As a result according to 1837 Act clause V. stipulates that the emigration of contract labourers be subject to orders from authorities in India: that the emigrants be required to appear before an official appointed by the provincial government... that the recruiters obtaining labourers from fraudulent means be fined or imprisoned.\footnote{134}{Brij V.Lal(ed) \textit{The Encyclopedia of the Indian Diaspora}, pp.46-47.} However, the most profound act was the Emigration Act XXII of 1882. With minor modification in 1908 that governed the indentured till its end until its end in 1916. The act limited the indentured embarkation to the ports of Calcutta, Madras Bombay and abolished altogether from the French ports.\footnote{135}{Ibid,pp.51.}