Fiji is a small island country, situated in the Southern Pacific Ocean. The Fijian group of islands number 250, of which about 80 are inhabited. Of the two main islands, the largest one is Vitilevu, which covers 4,053 square miles. The next in size is Vanualevu that stretches over 2,128 square miles. The island of Rotuma is a dependency of Fiji. The total area of the Fiji Island is 7,083 square miles, of which a major part is steep and mountainous. Suva, the capital, is situated on the island of Vitilevu and is 1,743 miles distant from Australia. The average temperature is about 76° F over the year for the islands as a whole. The temperature in Suva shoots from a minimum of 68° F in July to a maximum of 86° F in February. Hurricane hits Fiji in the hotter months between October and April, wreaking havoc.

I

Early History

Abel Jansen Tasman, a Dutch navigator, is generally credited with the discovery of the Fiji Islands in 1643. But there is a view that one or more of the old Spanish navigators were already there. Captain Cook made a survey of the island of Vatoa and the neighbouring sea in 1774. Bligh and Captain Wilson made important discoveries at a later time. D’ Urville made a fairly comprehensive, but not accurate enough, chart of two islands and a few harbours of the Archipelago in his two Voyages in 1827 and 1838.

Commander Wilkes, who was in charge of the United States Exploring Expedition, completed a more reliable chart of its islands, reefs and harbours in 1840 and published the results of his investigations a few years later. Towards the close of the eighteenth century and in the beginning of the nineteenth century, Fiji began to be visited by vessels from the East Indies, which came in search of sandalwood and beche-de-mer

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3 Ibid.
for the Chinese market. The inhabitants of the island at that time were regarded as ferocious savages. Several of the crew of these vessels, however, took up their residence on shore. They are considered to be the first white immigrants in Fiji.

About the year 1808 there was a ship wreck on the reef off the island of Narai. The greater part of the crew escaped but two of them took passage in local canoes. One landed at Bau and the other at Verata. The former, a Swede, named Charles Savage, acquired great ascendancy in the Kingdom of Bau where he taught the Fijians the use of fire arms. This gave them a considerable advantage in inter-tribal warfare. Others also began to gain foothold in a similar way, as there were several rival states fighting each other for supremacy. An Irishman named Conner attained in Rewa a status to that of local tribal chieftain in Bau. The chieftain died in March 1814, near the island of Vanualevu, where he had carried on a war with the Fijians for the purpose of procuring a cargo of sandalwood for an English trading vessel. Together with some of the crew, he had been killed. His flesh was eaten, while his bones were converted into needles and distributed the people as a memento of victory.

The first missionaries to arrive in Fiji were from Tonga. On landing in October 1835, they began their work at a time when the political state of Fiji was in formative stage. In the Eastern group of islands Lakoba was a vassal state. By turning their attention to these lesser people they provoked the jealousy of the Chiefs of the neighbouring sovereign State of Cakaudrove. Therefore when the missionaries extended their activities, the chiefs opposed the spread of the new doctrine by all means in their power. The Bauans by their prowess in war were then paramount. They were against the work of the mission. Finally, in 1854, King Cakobau adopted Christianity and this helped to settle the sensitive religious matter once for all. Cannibalism had for a long time

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6 Ibid.
7 Ibid., p. 193.
8 Ibid., p. 194.
9 Ibid.
played an important part in the ceremonials of the Fijian people; it was interwoven in the elements of society.\textsuperscript{10}

In 1858 the United States corvette “Vandalia” arrived in Levuka and the Commander Captain Sinclair, acting on behalf of his fellow countrymen already settled in the Colony demanded 45,000 dollars. Cakobau as king of Fiji, requested Captain Sinclair to allow him twelve months time to meet the demand. Meanwhile negotiations in respect of this claim between Cakobau and the British Consul led to an offer of the cession of the Islands to Great Britain, on the condition that the American demand was met by the British Government. Payment certain land as a direct equivalent, ‘if required’ was to be granted besides the conferment of sovereignty on the whole populace. Subsequently, on 14 December, 1859, the Chiefs of Fiji acknowledged and ratified the offer of the cession of Fiji to Great Britain, made on 12 October 1858. The offer was, however, declined by British Government in 1862.\textsuperscript{11}

About this time the shortage in the world supplies of cotton, caused by the American Civil War, led to an influx of Europeans into Fiji for the purpose of cotton cultivation.\textsuperscript{12} In 1871 this settlement made it necessary to reconcile Fijian and European interests within the frame work of a political order acceptable to both.\textsuperscript{13} Attempts to form stable Governments commanding general respect had been unsuccessful and on several occasions only the intervention of British warships had prevented a complete breakdown of law and order.\textsuperscript{14} The European settlers established a settled form of Government with the principal Bauan Chief, Cakobau, as King of Fiji.\textsuperscript{15} The Government existed from 1871 to 1874, nominally under the authority of the paramount Chief Cakobau was in fact controlled by European ministers. Within a short time the Cakobau Government was on

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., pp. 195-196.

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., p. 195.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., p. 196.


\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{15} Waiz, Indians Abroad Directory, p. 196.
the verge of bankruptcy and no longer commanded general support either from the
Europeans or from the Fijians. Under the above circumstances the annexation of Fiji
had been urged by both Australia and England since 1869. In 1873 the Earl of Kimberly
commissioned Commodore Goodenough, the squadron of the Australian station and E.L.
Layard, then Britain’s Consul in Fiji, to investigate and report on the matter. The
Commissioners, on 21 March 1874, reported on the offer of the sovereignty of the islands
from the Chiefs with the assent of the Europeans, but on certain terms which were not
acceptable. Sir Hercules Robinson, then Governor of New South Wales, was sent to Fiji
in September 1874 to negotiate. The mission was completely successful and the
sovereignty of the islands was ceded to the British Crown by the Cakobau, the Chief of
Bau, Maafu, the Head of the confederacy and the other principal chiefs, in a deed of
cession signed on 10 October 1874. A charter was shortly afterwards issued by Queen
Victoria creating the islands as a Crown Colony and for providing a Government of the
Empire there.

II

Indian Emigration into Fiji Plantation

In 1877 the British authorities paved the way for Fiji being recognized by the
Government of India as a colony suitable for the emigration of Indians. Conditions
applied to those proceeding to Mauritius and the West Indies were ordered to be
followed. Fiji Island was very thinly populated. The abundance of fertile land and the
“communistic system” under which they lived rendered it unnecessary for the Fijians to
seek work on the sugar estates. The measures at first advocated by the planters to
induce the Fijians to take to work was not approved by the British Government. Attempts
were made from time to time fill up the deficiency of labour by the introduction of

17 Waiz, Indians Abroad Directory, p. 196.
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid.
21 Report of the Committee on Emigration from India to the Crown Colonies and Protectorates, part I,
1910, p. 85.
Polynesians from the South Pacific Islands had not been successful. It was proposed by the Lord Stanmore, who was Governor of Fiji from 1875 to 1880, to import indentured labour from India. The Polynesians were employed principally for the cultivation of cotton and coconuts on the small estates of a large number of individual planters.

When Fiji was taken over most of the planters were unable to introduce Indian labour. The price of cotton had fallen, following the revival of American cotton production and the collapse of the French market during and after the Franco-Prussian war. Many Fiji planters were leading a hand to mouth existence. They were caught between low cotton prices and the accumulation of interest on borrowed capital. They could not afford to bring in any more labour, nor even to pay and send back to their homes about three thousand labourers in the island whose contracts had expired.

The Indian immigrants did not arrive Fiji until 1879. Following Sir Arthur Gordon’s first speech to the colonists, funds had been voted for Indian immigration in 1876. But the planters resented the draft Indian Immigration Ordinance. They considered its provisions too restrictive and expensive. They wanted island labour to be subsidized. There were protests in London also. The Aborigines’ Protection Society complained to the Colonial Office that it would be difficult to secure protection for the Indian labourers from the native islanders. There was also opposition in England to the extension of the system of indentured Indian immigration to new colonies.

In July 1877 Arthur Gorden announced that he intended to send Charles Mitchell, his Agent General of Immigration, to India to arrange for the opening of immigration. The Colonial Office approved Gordon’s plan as necessary, but emphasized that the Government should pay no more than one third of the cost of induction and repatriation of the Indians.

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22 Ibid.


24 Gillion, Fiji’s Indian Migrants, p. 3.


26 Ibid., pp. 13-14.

In 1877 C. Mitchell visited India to work out the details. Mitchell submitted to the Government of India the draft Ordinance, which after amendment was finally approved and became law in Fiji on 27 May, 1878. When the indentured labour system was extended to Fiji the Fiji Government had merely to employ one of the existing Government emigration agents in India. Like other Colonies, Fiji took three-quarters of labourers from Calcutta rather than from Madras. Up to 1902 the only Fiji agency set up in India was in Calcutta. Emigrants were usually transported to Fiji during the first half of the year. Except in years when recruits were not available, the volume of the emigration was determined entirely by the labour demand from Fiji.

When the agent received a requisition from the Fiji Government, he would arrange with sub-agents. The sub-agents were often unscrupulous. While employing sub-agents the agent would ensure that recruiting licenses were issued to them. There were many aspirants for sub-agents work. If immigrants were wanted and the applicant seemed respectable and the district suitable, the emigration agent arranged for a license.

Money was the real nexus which helped the emigration going. The sub-agents were paid commissions. Different rates were paid for men, women and children. In 1886 the rates ranged from Rs.17 to Rs.25 for a man Rs.24 to Rs.34 for a woman and Rs.10 to Rs.12 or 8 for child. In 1905, commission rates were increased to Rs.40 for a man and Rs.55 for a woman. This time higher commission for fetching a woman. But by 1908 the commission rates fell to Rs.25 for a man Rs.35 for a woman. Again in March 1910 labour commissions for sub-agents rose to Rs.35-40 for a man, Rs.45-50 for a woman and Rs.17-18 for a child recruits. In 1915 the commission for women recruits was fixed as Rs.55.

Emigration to the Fiji Islands was declared legal by the Indian Government in 1878 and the Colony of Fiji opened in the same year an agency for the first time at

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29 Gillion, Fiji's Indian Migrants, pp. 29-30.
30 Ibid., p. 30.
31 Ibid.
32 Ibid., pp. 30,31.
In 1879 the ship "Leonidas" arrived in Fiji with the first Indian emigrant labourers. They were (908) quarantined at Levuka for two days. After that Sir Arthur Gordon spoke to them about the nature of job and pay. But the arrival of the peststricken ship only strengthened the planters' opposition to Indian immigration. The planters were determined not to apply for the new arrivals and their resolve was backed by a new plentiful supply of Pacific Island labourers. The Government had 464 Indian immigrants to dispose of: one planter, Captain J. Hill of Rabi Island, took 106 for field work. A few went to Levuka to serve as house servants. The rest were allotted to the Public Works and Police Departments at Suva, which was to become the new capital of the Colony.

The experiment was not fully successful. The Fiji employers' lack of knowledge of Indian languages and customs was a contributing factor. In November 1879 the Government took over the Great Amalgam Estate on the Rewa, on which coffee leaf disease had broken out and many of the Indian indentured labourers employed there made unsuccessful efforts to eradicate the disease which was threatening to ruin Fiji's promising coffee trade. After this, four planters who had seen Indians at work were encouraged to apply for them.

In May 1881 it was announced that Thurston, Acting Governor of Fiji, who was in Australia soliciting investments, had persuaded the Colonial Sugar Refining Company of Sydney to extend its operations to Fiji. Although there had been a small output of sugar in Fiji before the company came, attempts to establish profitable sugar mills had failed for want of capital. As the Colonial Sugar Refining Company had both the capital and the confidence, it agreed to build a mill on the Rewa. The Government offered to provide to it 1,000 acres of land there and give it the option of buying another

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34 Gillion, Fiji's Indian Migrants, p. 69.
35 Ibid.
37 Gillion, Fiji's Indian Migrants, p. 69.
1,000 acres elsewhere in Fiji Islands. The sugar companies and the planters decided to employ indentured emigrant labourers. In 1881 the company recruited the Indian indentured labourers to the Public Works Department and applied for 250 more Indian emigrant labourers for 1882. This additional labour was required to clear, dig and drains the Rewa ground. It also charted ships to bring in Islanders. Of the 587 island immigrants indentured to the company within six months of 1881, over 220 were dead. The Fiji Government thereupon prohibited the allotment of Islanders to the Colonial Sugar Refining Company's Rewa estates. Thus the Colonial Sugar Refining Company became dependent on Indian indentured labour.

The New Governor of Fiji, Des Voeux, in 1882 tried to assist the planters to bring the Indians into Fiji in many other ways. The Indians brought on the Leonidas were paid by installments spread over a period of five years. Des Voeux promised to do the same for future shiploads by floating a loan to assist immigration. The Government was to pay about half the cost. However, the Colonial Office rejected Dex Voeux's proposal on financial grounds. The Governor was told that if Indian emigrations were resumed it was to be financed from existing revenue and the Government was to pay no more than one-third of the cost. There was to be no system of payment by installment. Thus, from 1882 when further Indian emigrants arrived, the planters paid the full cost of their introduction and the Government bore the cost of repatriation and the maintenance of the immigration establishment in Fiji.

This decision had important repercussions on the structure of the sugar industry in Fiji and on the employment of Indian labour. Many of the smaller planters who had applied for Indian labour under the proposed system of payment by installment withdrew their applications, but those with capital were able and willing to pay for their labour at the time of allotment. The Colonial Sugar Refining Company even increased its

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38 Ibid., pp. 69-70.
39 Ibid., p. 71.
40 Ibid., p. 72.
41 Ibid., pp. 72-73.
42 Ibid., p. 73.
requisition. So the number of applicants fell from thirty to nine, despite there was no change in the number of labourers requested for.43

In 1882 of the 908 Indians came to Fiji, 243 were women.44 Many of them originally came from North-India particularly from Basti, Faizabad, Gonda and Gorakhpur and in earlier years Azamgarh, Ghazipur and Janunpur too. Among them only twenty were allotted to the small planters, the rest were taken by the Colonial Sugar Company.45

Within twelve years from the cession, the pattern of agriculture pursued and the enterprising nature of the European Community in Fiji had changed its structure radically. Many of the older settlers had left the Colony and Sugar Companies had brought in artisans, overseers and clerks.46 The Colonial Sugar Refining Company grew most of its own cane using Indian indentured labour in Fiji. With Fijian land and Indian labour construction of a second major mill was started by the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, at Ba in 1883. The company at first faced scarcity of labour from India. The agent was unable to meet the requirements in 1883 and 1884. In February 1883 the company’s Lexan Inspector threatened the Fiji Government that if adequate labour was not available he would make his company to transfer all its interests to some more favourable quarter. He suggested that Chinese or South Indians be introduced.47 But Knox rejected the idea of introducing Chinese labourers due to their bitter experience with them in the Queens Land. Besides Chinese labour was considered expensive.48 So attempt was made to obtain South Indians in 1883 but the Mauritius agent in Madras, to whom the inquiry was directed, reported that even he could not recruit the numbers required for his own colony.49 In 1883-84, eight agencies in India supplied the Indian

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43 Ibid.
45 Gillion, Fiji’s Indian Migrants, p. 46.
46 Ibid., pp. 74-77.
47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
indentured labourers to the British and Foreign Colonies. Table IV: 1 shows the names of the Colonies to which the labourers were supplied authorisedly by the depots in Calcutta.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Colonies</th>
<th>Empire Country</th>
<th>Name of the Emigration Agent</th>
<th>Dates Of Government Approval</th>
<th>Location of Coolie depots</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mauritius</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>F. Dela Mare</td>
<td>7th December 1883</td>
<td>Bhowanipore No. 11, Garden Reach, Calcutta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trinidad</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>O.W. Warner</td>
<td>30th December 1881</td>
<td>----- do------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiji</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>-----do-----</td>
<td>16th January 1884</td>
<td>-----do------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Lucia</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>-----do-----</td>
<td>11th December 1882</td>
<td>-----do------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demerara</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>H. Kirke</td>
<td>9th May 1883</td>
<td>No. 8 Garden Reach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natal</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>-----do-----</td>
<td>-----do------</td>
<td>-----do------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surinam</td>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>E. Van Cutsem</td>
<td>27th April 1876</td>
<td>No. 20 Garden Reach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guadeloupe</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>E.A. Charriol</td>
<td>20th September 1880</td>
<td>No. 17 Garden Reach</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Annual Report on Emigration from the Port of Calcutta to British and Foreign Colonies, 1883-84, p. 3.

On 16 July 1883 F. De La Mare had been appointed by the Earl of Derby as Emigration Agent at Calcutta for Mauritius and Fiji. He had taken over charge of the Fiji Agency from Warner. The Bengal Government notified his appointment on 7 December 1883. During 1882-83, the Fiji Government asked the Government of British India to provide 1,000 labourers for their plantation but 855 ½ labourers only were sent. For 1883-84, the Fiji Colony required 2,100 labourers but 1,401 labourers alone were sent. The vessels “Bayord”, “Poonah” and “Syriya” carried labourers respectively from India to Fiji. In the year 1884-85, licenses for recruitment of labourers were issued to 131 Fiji

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49 Ibid., p.76.
50 Annual Report on Emigration from the Port of Calcutta to British and Foreign Colonies, 1883-84, p. 3.
51 Ibid., p. 17.
Emigrant Agencies and 2 licenses were later cancelled due to the misconduct of the agent.\textsuperscript{52}

On 10 May 1884, the ship “Pericles” left India with 487 labourers for Fiji. An outbreak of Cholera on board killed 25 emigrants in voyage and the ship Howarah also met with the same fate. Among the 515 labourers 18 died on board.\textsuperscript{53} In 1886, 176 emigrants were detained in deport more than one month for the cause of sickness. For the purpose of holding enquiry by the Magistrate Fiji Emigration Agency was closed from 1 April 1886. As a result there was no emigration from India to Fiji in 1887.\textsuperscript{54}

In 1886, about 994 labourers left India for Fiji by two ships. The same year 13 labourers returned to India from Fiji. But there was no information given about their financial and physical condition in the official government report of that year.\textsuperscript{55} The year 1886 is significant in the history of emigration from India to the Empire Colonies by the coming into force of Act XXI of 1883 replacing the Indian Emigration Act of 1871.\textsuperscript{56} The demand for labourers in Fiji was very high in that year compared with other colonies. In the following year 345 recruiting licenses were issued, of which 32 were meant for the Fiji Agency, which however, sent no emigrants.\textsuperscript{57} Table IV. 2 provide the details of Indian labourers emigration to Fiji and their repatriation for the years 1889 to 1902.

Due to the depression in the sugar industries in the mid-eighties, of Sharpe-Fletcher Company at Navua had crashed. This company had employed 518 Indian indentured labourers. There was a serious crisis. If prices fell further, the other sugar companies would also have to close down. But the investment of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company over £ 500,000 in 1885, had helped to advance large sums to planters

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid for 1884-85, p. 18.

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid for 1886, p. 12.

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., p. 14.

\textsuperscript{56} Annual Report on Emigration from the Port of Calcutta. 1887, p. 1.

to continue their sugar production.\textsuperscript{58} Table IV: 3 shows the cost of rations in Fiji every labourer had to incur.

\textbf{Table IV. 2}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Labourers dispatched for Fiji</th>
<th>Labourers returned to India</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1889</td>
<td>677</td>
<td>401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>1,157</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>1,038</td>
<td>383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>1,523</td>
<td>474</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1893</td>
<td>777</td>
<td>517</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td>1,081</td>
<td>1,039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>1,416</td>
<td>599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>1,172</td>
<td>672</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897</td>
<td>1,323</td>
<td>No immigrants repatriated due to plague and famine in India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898</td>
<td>567</td>
<td>387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1899</td>
<td>930</td>
<td>357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>2,273</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>2,388</td>
<td>515</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902</td>
<td>1,556</td>
<td>481</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\textbf{Table IV. 3}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food items</th>
<th>Ozs</th>
<th>Weekly cost, d.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flour</td>
<td>11 ozs</td>
<td>7.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>11 ozs</td>
<td>8.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhal</td>
<td>4 ozs</td>
<td>3.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghi</td>
<td>1 ozs</td>
<td>5.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mustard Oil</td>
<td>1 ½ ozs</td>
<td>1.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curry Stuff</td>
<td>1/3 ozs</td>
<td>1.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar</td>
<td>2 ozs</td>
<td>1.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salt</td>
<td>1 ozs</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The following was the schedule of work in 1895 for the Indian Emigrants employed in the Fiji plantation job.\textsuperscript{59} Everyday, excepting on Sundays and authorized

\textsuperscript{58} Gillion, Fiji’s Indian Migrants, pp. 77-78.
holidays, they had to work nine hours continuously in the plantation. The term of agreement for the work was five years. This would begin on the date of their arrival in the plantation.\textsuperscript{60} The labourers were classified into two categories, namely, adult labourers (Male or Female) and minors or children. Above the age of 15, male or female were considered adult labourers and those under the age of 15 were considered minors.\textsuperscript{61} For every task they had to perform, if they completed, they were paid 8 annas for adult male labourers. The adult female labourers were given half the work assigned to male adult labourers and paid 6 annas on completion of the task. Their remuneration were paid once in a week. The employer provided accommodation to every indentured labourer who worked in his plantation, free of cost. The labourers also availed medicare in the plantation hospital free of charge. On completion of continuous residence of ten years in Fiji a free return passage was granted to the labourers.\textsuperscript{62} It is on record that in 1897, there were 10,000 Indian labourers residing in Fiji.\textsuperscript{63}

The Fiji Sugar Company at Nauva, the second largest company, with investments totaling £ 120,000 by the end of the century, had not paid any dividend to its shareholders up to 1896. Even Colonial Sugar Refining Company, the largest sugar firm in Fiji was warned in 1895 that it might become bankrupt unless better class of Indian labourers were introduced and suggested that there should be no burdensome restrictions placed on their employment.\textsuperscript{64}

In 1901 the ascertained savings per head of the resident Indian emigrant labourers in Fiji was £ 1 s. d. 5. The figure was based on the amount of the savings bank balance, the value of landed and other property and the remittance to India.\textsuperscript{65} (See Table: IV: 4)

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{59} Annual Report on Emigration from the Port of Calcutta, 1895, p. 2.
\item \textsuperscript{60} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{61} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{62} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{63} Report on Moral and Material Condition of India, 1897-1898, p. 183.
\item \textsuperscript{64} Gillion, Fiji's Indian Migrants, p. 79.
\item \textsuperscript{65} Report on Moral and Material Condition of India 1901-1902, p. 321.
\end{itemize}
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Amount deposited for transmission</th>
<th>Value of Jewellery Deposited in Local Banks</th>
<th>Number of immigrants, who deposited in the local Bank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>£</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1882</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1883</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1884</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1887</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1888</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889</td>
<td>6,919</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>3,102</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1893</td>
<td>3,465</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td>5,512</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>4,432</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>5,133</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898</td>
<td>2,749</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1899</td>
<td>1,323</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>2,982</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>3,139</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902</td>
<td>4,310</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903</td>
<td>4,444</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904</td>
<td>1,457</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>1,558</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>1,885</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907</td>
<td>2,421</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>1,056</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909</td>
<td>1,285</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>1,156</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>2,391</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>1,879</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 1900, 405 Indian emigrant labourers, including 80 women and 8 children left Fiji for India. 228 repatriated labourers returned with their savings but 177 brought no savings when they arrived in India they were in a destitute state. Table: IV: 5 shows the number of emigrants who went to Fiji during 1891-92 - 1901-92 from the Calcutta port.

**Table IV. 5**

**Emigrants to Fiji, 1891-92 – 1901-02**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Departure Year &amp; Place</th>
<th>Destination: Fiji</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1891-92, Calcutta</td>
<td>1,985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1892-93, Calcutta</td>
<td>781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1893-94, Calcutta</td>
<td>1,082</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894-95, Calcutta</td>
<td>1,432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895-96, Calcutta</td>
<td>565</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896-97, Calcutta</td>
<td>1,953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897-98, Calcutta</td>
<td>567</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898-99, Calcutta</td>
<td>N -A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1899-00, Calcutta</td>
<td>1,490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900-01, Calcutta</td>
<td>2,553</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901-02, Calcutta</td>
<td>2,319</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** *Moral and Material Condition of India, Reports for the years 1891-92 to 1901-02*, p. 321.

There was a shortage of labour due to good harvest in the traditional recruiting areas. There was an outbreak of plague which resulted in the closure of all sub-depots. The departure of one ship was even delayed for four weeks while recruiters hunted for labourers willing to emigrate. As commissions for agents had been raised and they were enthusiastically urging the people to move out of the native place. There was also expansion of sugar production around this time in Fiji.

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66 Annual Report on Emigration from the Port of Calcutta, 1900, p. 16.

67 Gillion, *Fiji’s Indian Migrants*, p. 47.

68 Ibid.
Force of circumstances made Fiji awake to the virtues of the Tamil labourers. Yet it took two years to get into action. On May 24, 1901, Thomas Hughes, the head of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company in Fiji, suggested to the company manager in Sydney, Australia, that recruitment should be transferred to Madras. He had been impressed at the Madras depot by the ‘far superior physique’ of the men, while the women were of the ‘healthy and hard working class’. The Colonial Sugar Refining Company sent Thomas Hughes to India the same year to investigate the labour supply. He reported back to the Colonial Sugar Refining Company as follows: ‘future prospects were less promising than before, because of the slower increase in population in the last decade, after the high death-rate from famine and plague and increasing opportunities for labour in industry and mines in Assam and Burma.’ He, however, proposed that an agency should be opened in Madras, The Colonial Sugar Refining Company put Hughes’s recommendations to the Government of Fiji which accepted and adopted them.

In 1902 a proposal for establishing an Emigration Agency for Fiji in Madras, was forwarded to India. In support of the proposal it was argued that the colony would be benefited by the introduction of a better class of emigrants, while the possession of a second Emigration Agency in India would minimize the risk of complete stoppage of emigration to Fiji owing to the prevalence of plague in the traditional recruiting areas.

As a response the Government of India had informed the Colonial Secretary, Fiji, that there was no objection to the establishment of an Emigration Agency in Madras. The Government of Madras had also expressed its willingness to the appointment of J.E. Conron, Emigration Agent for Mauritius in Madras to that post. Thus Fiji established an

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21 Ibid.
23 Ibid.
Emigration Agency in Madras, shared with Mauritius and Trinidad.\textsuperscript{74} The first batch of 598 emigrants from Madras to Fiji sailed in the “Elbe” in 1903.\textsuperscript{75}

Those who embarked from Madras to Fiji included people who spoke Tamil, Telegu, Malayalam and Kannada. But Tamils were preponderant. Most of the Tamils were recruited from North Arcot, Madras, Krishna, Godavari, Vizakhapatnam, Thanjavur, Malabar, Coimbatore and Chengalpattu.\textsuperscript{76} The two districts North Arcot and Madras supplied more than half in every year.\textsuperscript{77} Table IV. 6 give the details of Indian labourers’ embarkation from the ports of Calcutta and Madras for Fiji, for the years 1903 to 1916.

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|}
\hline
Year & Emigrants from Calcutta & Emigrants from Madras \\
\hline
1903 & 1,234 & 598 \\
1904 & 1,158 & N.A \\
1905 & 1,405 & 1,731 \\
1906 & 2,594 & 879 \\
1907 & 758 & 796 \\
1908 & 2,216 & 946 \\
1909 & 668 & 215 \\
1910 & 2,256 & 1,589 \\
1911 & 2,233 & 1,971 \\
1912 & 827 & 2,546 \\
1913 & 1,020 & 2,202 \\
1914 & 1,033 & 542 \\
1915 & 1,394 & 1,115 \\
1916 & 806 & 950 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Emigrants from Calcutta and Madras}
\end{table}


The recruitment of the required proportion of women was the biggest problem faced by the agents. Even in the best recruiting seasons it was hard to get women for

\textsuperscript{74} Gillion, Fiji’s Indian Migrants, p. 50.


\textsuperscript{76} Gillion, Fiji’s Indian Migrants, p. 51.

\textsuperscript{77} Ibid.
recruitment. Commissions for women were larger. Yet there was no uniform physical standard, amongst women as a higher proportion of them were drawn from low castes. According to the emigration records about one-third of adult females accompanied husbands. At the same time there were also many depot marriages in order to satisfy the rules. The recruiter would ask some recruits to say that they were husband and wife. The husband’s consent was necessary before a married woman could be registered for recruitment. The rest so called single women were mostly widows, runaway or deserted wives and professional prostitutes.78

From 1905 to 1910, about 8,000 Indian emigrant labourers had gone to Fiji, while only 2,200 returned to India in the past five years.79 The Emigration Agent for Fiji found it impossible to obtain the full proportion of women (4 women to 10 men) required under the provision of Rule 77 of the Act XXI of 1883. He sought the permission of the Government to flag off the “S.S. Virawa” to Fiji with 25 women short of the prescribed proportion. Permission was granted by Government, under the provisions of Rule 78, on the usual condition that the deficiency would be made good in the next shipment of emigrants to Fiji.80 Hitherto the departure of emigrant vessels to Fiji was restricted to sail in certain prescribed periods with a view to avoiding hurricane months (from 15 December to 31 March).

In 1908 the Fiji Government wanted the Indian Government to remove this restriction. The argument put forth by the Agent-General of Emigration, Fiji, was due to the employment of powerful steamers, the risk to the emigrant vessels and health of the emigrants was slim.81 The Government of India accepted the request for removal of restriction and amended the relevant schedule attached to the Colonial Emigration Rules which facilitated the “despatch of emigrants” to Fiji by steamers at any season of the year.82

78 Ibid., pp. 55-57.
81 Ibid for 1908, p. 1.
82 Ibid.
In 1910 a large number of the over-stayed indentured labourers left the plantation without opting for re-engagement as indentured labour. Many settled down as cultivators in a small lease-hold land. In the process they assimilated the culture of the general population of Fiji. (Table: IV: 7)

### Table IV. 7

**Indian Population in Fiji (1899 to 1908)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Indentured Indians on Plantation</th>
<th>Total Indian Population in Fiji</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1899</td>
<td>5,378</td>
<td>13,280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>6,021</td>
<td>15,368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>7,529</td>
<td>18,425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902</td>
<td>8,225</td>
<td>20,076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903</td>
<td>8,630</td>
<td>21,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904</td>
<td>9,776</td>
<td>22,790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>9,954</td>
<td>25,955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>10,681</td>
<td>28,540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907</td>
<td>11,689</td>
<td>30,920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>11,999</td>
<td>33,150</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Report of the Committee on Emigration from India to the Crown Colonies and Protectorates, part III, 1910, p. 67.

**Note:** There has been constant and continuous increase of Indian labour force in Fiji during the decade on focus.

Table: IV: 8 shows the occupations of Indians other than indentured in Fiji in 1911.

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83 Report of the Committee on Emigration from India to Crown Colonies, part 1, 1910, p. 86.
Table IV. 8
Indians Employed in Fiji during 1911

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupational Category</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Total strength</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural related workers</td>
<td>8,576</td>
<td>1,781</td>
<td>10,357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial works like hawkers and store keeper etc.</td>
<td>439</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bakers and confectioners</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbers</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carters</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpenters &amp; Painters</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dairymen</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goldsmiths</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tailors</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other industrial workers</td>
<td>965</td>
<td>804</td>
<td>1,769</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic workers</td>
<td>314</td>
<td>3,532</td>
<td>3,846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerks and interpreters</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lighthouse keepers</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police and warders</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priests</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupations not stated</td>
<td>1,487</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1,490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children under the age of 10 years not employed</td>
<td>3,971</td>
<td>3,760</td>
<td>7,731</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>16,000</td>
<td>9,976</td>
<td>25,976</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Note: Nearly 30% of the male work force was in agricultural related works. Surprisingly the percentage of women workers employed as domestic servants is higher than that of women engaged in agriculture related works.

In 1891 of 7,988 Indians in Fiji, 4,421 were indentured; In 1901 there were 7,033 indentured for 18,425 Indians. Out of 44,220 in 1911, 14,462 were indentured. Nearly one-half of the indentured people who arrived after 1902 were from south India.84

By 1910 the typical sugar cane plantation in Fiji was no longer a large estate. It had been divided into several plantations in the charge of overseers. A plantation of about 600 to 1,000 acres, in size leased out to private planters employed 60 to 100 Indian emigrant labourers.85

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84 Gillion, Fiji's Indian Migrants, p. 146.
85 Ibid., p. 99.
The most important event of the year 1914 was the amalgamation of the emigration agencies for Trinidad, Fiji, Jamaica and Mauritius with that for British Guiana and the appointment of a Central Emigration Agencies at Benaras. These measures were the outcome of the recommendations of Lord Sanderson’s Report on Committee on Emigration from India to the Crown Colonies and Protectorates. The same year 287 Indian indentured labourers whose contract period was over were repatriated to India. Florence E. Garnham, a socialist in Australia, observed that 61,000 Indians were living alone with others in the Fiji Island in 1917. In that year with the object of conserving man-power of India for the purposes connected with the First World War, indentured labour emigration to the West Indies and Fiji was prohibited under the Defence of India Rules, 1915, that came into effect from 12th March 1917. Steps were taken for the cessation of recruitment of Indian unskilled labourers to the British and foreign colonies under the Indian Emigration Act VII of 1908.

Indians had been in Fiji since 1879, when the first emigrant labourers arrived under indentured system which lasted until 1920. In 1922 it is understood that conditions in Fiji were not happy for Indians. Wages had dropped and the cost of living had become expensive and there was a surplus of labour. The labourers had to face wage cuts and the future looked gloomy for Indians. This prompted them to return to India. The outcome was in 1923 the number of repatriation of Indian labourers from Fiji to India, stood at 1,964.

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Fiji’s Indian Indentured Labour Laws

In 1877 C. Mitchell, Agent General of Immigration, was deputed to visit India in order to confer with the Government of India on the subject of Indian labourers to Fiji. He had seven years’ experience in the Immigration Department, Trinidad and had acted as a Royal Commissioner to inquire into the treatment of Indian Immigrants in British Guiana, submitted to the Government of India the draft Ordinance which after with some improvements was to become Ordinance No. VI of 1878, on 27 May of that year. This Ordinance was modeled on those of Trinidad and British Guiana. Migrants were to be recruited in India under Government supervision, to be given free passage to Fiji, to serve under government protection as indentured agricultural labourer for five years at a wage of 1 shilling per day.

Under this Immigration Ordinance, the emigrant indentured labourers could be prosecuted for a wide variety of labour offences, including desertion, unauthorised absence from work and failure to show ordinary diligence or to complete a task and offences against discipline such as using insulting language and disobedience on the part of the labourers. An extension of service was made by the court to cover the time lost through absence and non-performance of task and the day spent in court and the period of imprisonment. These penal sanctions had been discussed in 1877 when Charles Mitchell negotiated the terms under which Indian labourers into Fiji was to be permitted. When Government of India objected to a provision for extension of service, Mitchell replied that Stipendiary Magistrate would be instructed to abstain from inflicting the penalties and imprisonment under this section except where the labourer was a frequent offender.

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92 Report of the Committee on Emigration from India to Crown Colonies, part III, 1910, pp. 61-62.

93 Gillion, Fiji’s Indian Migrants, pp. 15-16.

94 Ibid.

95 Ibid., p. 118.
On this understanding the Government of India waived its objection, but in reality it was overlooked in Fiji.96

The principal administrative measures of 1880-1 affecting colonial emigration were the restoration of the rule that not less than 40 per cent of women to men should be shipped on board each vessel. With a view to reducing the mortality among the children during the passage down the Bay of Bengal, in the face of the monsoon, arrangements were made that the proportion of women shipped should be increased as the season advanced.97

The Indian immigration Ordinance that came into force in 1883 prescribed the rations for indentured labourers. They were for every adult labourers: Rice or flour- 22 oz, or Rice-11 oz and Flour-11 oz, Dal-4 oz, Ghi-1 oz, Mustard Oil- ½ oz, curry stuff- ⅕ oz, Sugar-2 oz, Salt-1 oz; children over 5 years of age: one half of the adult ration of rice, flour, dal, salt, sugar and fresh milk 1 imperial pint. Either the Agent-General or the District Medical Officer had the power to order rations to be given to any emigrant labour or the child of the labourer for a period not exceeding six months.98

The Indian Emigration Act XXI of 1883, included Fiji into the countries to which emigration was lawful.99 Meanwhile the Act XXI of 1883 had been postponed until rules could be framed for its administration. These rules were framed during 1885 by the Government of India in consultation with the Agents for Colonies and came into force on the 1st April 1886. The changes made by the new law were chiefly in matters of detail with regard to the registration of emigrants, the appointment of Registering Officers, the entry into the execution of contracts, the accommodation to be provided on board and the fees to be levied on emigration.100

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96 Ibid.
99 Department of Revenue and Agriculture, The Indian Emigration Act, 1883, p. 16.
100 Report on the Moral and Material Condition of India, 1886-87, p. 86.
Under the Indian Regulation Act XXI of 1883, an Indian ‘emigrant’ was one who went by sea under contract to work for a wage to some country other than Ceylon and the Straits Settlements. These countries were exempted on account of their proximity and of the similarity of their general conditions to those of India.

The emigration under this act was termed as 'Colonial Emigration'. Two notifications were issued by the Government of India, Under Section 56 of the Indian Emigration Act, 1883, relating in one case to the sleeping accommodation of emigrants during the voyage, in the other to the use of vessel for the conveyance of emigrants, which in their previous voyage had carried a cargo of salt. By Section 8 of this Act, Indians were permitted to emigrate under contract “to labour for hire only” to such countries which had satisfied the Government of India that sufficient provision was made for the protection of those who emigrated. Emigration other than under contract of labour was not controlled by legislation.

From 1885 to 1891 the Fiji legislature had enacted a set of Ordinances for the regulation of the Indian indentured labourers, who were employed in the sugar cane plantation of the Fiji Island. The Ordinance No. IX of 1885 facilitated the plantation owners to re-indenture of the time expired emigrants before a Provisional Magistrate and also suggested to them to create the Destitute Indians fund. The Ordinance No. XII enacted in 1886, prohibited the Indians from using and growing the drugs such as the Bhang or Ganja in Fiji. Ordinance No. XVII of 1887 empowered the District Medical Officer of the colony to classify the indentured labourers, based on physical status, into three classes. If the Medical Officer considered that labourers could perform full task, they were allocated into full task work; if he found that the labourers were not physically fit to perform the full task, they were allocated the half-task work or three quarter task and the wages were paid by the proportion of the task completed by the labourers.

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101 Ibid for 188-1889, p. 171.
103 Ibid for 1899-1900, p. 179.
Ordinance No. XI of 1889 requested the employers of the plantations to report the deaths occurring on their estates and advised them to keep a register related to their labour force.  

In April 1886, the Indian Government fixed Rs.2-8-0, as the amount of fee leviable under Sections 38 and 73 of Act XXI of 1883, for each emigrant who embarked for the colonies, as a consolidated fee. But in 1888 the fee structure was changed by the Indian Government through a notification, in which the consolidated fee of Rs.2-8-0 was raised to Rs.3 per emigrant embarked from India.

On a representation in March 1886, made by certain Indian immigrants in the Colony of Fiji regarding the withholding by the colonial authorities, under the provisions of Ordinance No. VI of 1878, of the necessary permission to return to India at their own expense after completion of the stipulated five years’ contract service, the Lieutenant Governor forwarded the demand to the Government of India which prompted the Government of Fiji to permit those emigrants to leave the Colony to avail themselves of the promised privilege. Based on this experience the expediency of amending the aforesaid Fiji Ordinance was felt to make the rules governing the return of emigrants in accordance with those of all other British Colonies importing labour from India. The Government of Fiji responded with an amendment to the Indian Immigration Ordinance of 1887 which read as follows: “Any immigrant shall have received or be entitled to receive a certificate of industrial residence of five years in the colony, may demand of the Agent General of Immigration a passport to leave the Colony”.

Ordinance No. XI of 1889, passed in the Fiji legislature, to provide the cost of return passage to the emigrants to India declared the invalids unfit for service under indenture. For them cost was born from return passages fund instead of from the Indian

105 Ibid.
108 Ibid for 1887, p. 3.
109 Ibid.
Immigrants Introduction Fund. This meant a great deal of relief to employers.\textsuperscript{110} Ordinance No. 1 of 1891, known as Indian Immigration Ordinance of Fiji, clearly explained the relations between the Government, the employers and immigrants. Before the passage of this Ordinance, there were 17 different Ordinances enacted at various times between 1878 and 1889. These Ordinances were repealed and consolidated in Ordinance 1 of 1891.\textsuperscript{111}

The actual cost of the introduction of Indian indentured labourers was wholly borne by the employers to whom the labourers were allotted. Ordinance No. 1 of 1891, Sections 10-12, declared that the cost of introduction of each allotted adult indentured labourer was fixed by the Governor in Council yearly and was divided as follows. The application fee fixed prior to October at 6 shilling per adult labour. The allotment fee fixed in the succeeding year. Section 4, stipulated that the amount paid to the Receiver General on account of introduction charges were credited to the Indian Immigration Introduction Fund, which was meant for meeting the under mentioned expenses.\textsuperscript{112}

\begin{itemize}
  \item[(A)] All expenses connected with the recruiting, maintenance, medical inspection and despatch of emigrants from India.
  \item[(B)] Expenses of transport and disembarkation.
  \item[(C)] Expenses during detention in depot on arrival in Fiji.
  \item[(D)] Maintenance and return to India of immigrants rejected at medical examination in Fiji.
  \item[(E)] Maintenance of orphans.
  \item[(F)] Repair and upkeep of immigration Depot in Fiji.\textsuperscript{113}
\end{itemize}

According to Sections 40 to 44 an immigrant leaving the colony except as a servant, with Agent General’s consent had no right to claim the return passage from the Fiji Government. Time-expired Indian indentured labour wishing to return to India should give a notice before the month of October of preceding year of his desire to the Immigration Office. The department would notify the date of departure of vessel to the

\textsuperscript{110} Report of the Committee on Emigration from India, part III, 1910, p. 62.

\textsuperscript{111} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., p. 67.

\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., p. 63.
desired emigrant. The immigrant should be granted a sum as compensation for delayed
departure of the vessel. All charges connected with return passages were to be met from
the general revenue. The Agent General was authorised with the consent of the Governor
to grant exemption from labour and issue a return passage to a permanently disabled
Indian immigrant indentured labour who worked in the plantation.114

Sections 46 to 47 of the Ordinance defined the general powers of the Agent
General of Immigration, Sub-Agent of Immigrants or Inspector of Immigrations.
Accordingly Agent General or any person authorised by him had power to enter any
plantation for any of the under mentioned purposes.115

(A) For the examination of condition of labourers.
(B) To check the rations supplied and examine the dwellings and structure and
facility of the hospital provided to the labourers.
(C) To enquire into any complaint which the employer had against any
labourer or any such complaint brought by the labourer against his
employer.
(D) To enquire into breach of the peace or violations of the provisions of the
Ordinance.

If anybody caused any obstruction to the Immigration Officers in discharging
his duty, he should be punished on conviction by a Magistrate. A sum not exceeding
Rs.50/- or imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months was awarded, if
convicted.116

Section 54 directed that every adult indentured Indian immigrant labour
should on his arrival in the colony be allotted by the Agent General to a plantation and
only thereafter the immigrant be deemed to be indentured to serve on the plantation for a
period not exceeding five years. Section 55 required a certificate to that effect which
should be signed by the Agent General and employer or the person authorised by him in
writing. Sections 56-58 dealt with the children who accompanied their parents. The name

114 Ibid.
115 Ibid.
116 Ibid.
of such children should also be entered on the certificate of the labourers, as they were also entitled to the privileges of indentured immigrants.\textsuperscript{117}

Sections 59-60 empowered the Agent General, with the consent of the Governor General of the Colony, to cancel the indenture of any immigrant in case of ill-treatment of the labourer or breach of contract on the part of his employer. The section also authorised Agent General to cancel any of the indentured labourer’s contract with the consent of the labourer’s employer.\textsuperscript{118}

Section 69 facilitated for the transfer of any of the labourer or group of labourer’s to any of the plantation other than where he worked. This could be to the same employers of some other estate. But the employment should be temporary exceeding not more than twelve months, on the application of the labourer’s employer.\textsuperscript{119}

Section 70 provided for extension of period of indenture of a labourer to compensate the period lost, if he had been convicted by a Stipendiary Magistrate for the offences such as unlawful absence from work, non-completion of task or refusal to perform work or desertion. Section 71 directed that one copy of the such extension of indenture was to be given to the employer of the labourer by the Magistrate and another one forwarded to the Agent General of the Immigrants. Section 74 of the same Ordinance empowered the Governor-General in Council to alter the such period of the extension or annul any order of such extension.\textsuperscript{120}

Section 75 facilitated that a time expired indentured labour could be re-indenture with any employer to work on plantation for any term not exceeding three years or less than six months. Section 76 required the certificate of re-indenture should be signed by the employer and the interested labourer before the Magistrate of the district or the Agent General of Immigration. Sections 84-85 provided that any re-indenture could be canceled in the same way as original indenture.

Section 104 required that every employer who had employed the indentured labourers in their plantation should provide every indentured adult labourer, with a full

\textsuperscript{117} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{119} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid., p. 64.
and fair days' work on all days. In the event of employer not being able to provide work on reasonable grounds of bad weather or Sundays or authorised holidays, he should inform the labourers, at the time of the allocation of work. It should be clarified whether the work was time-work or task-work. And the section further directed the employer not to force an indentured labour, who was not physically fit to attend to work in the plantation.\textsuperscript{121}

Section 107 of the Ordinance defined the task which could be performed by an able-bodied male adult labourer in six hours. In case of a female, three-fourths of such work was to be allocated. Every labourer was required to perform five and a half tasks in every week and when on a task being completed on any one day, he shall cease work for the remaining part of the day.

Section 108 Ordinance provided that the labourer should be punished by a Magistrate for the first time on conviction a penalty not exceeding three shillings, in default of such amount, he should undergo imprisonment for a term not exceeding one month.\textsuperscript{122} By Section 109 an indentured labour consecutively convicted for three times for unlawful absence from the work was to be imprisoned for any term not exceeding six months.

But Section 110 provided that the employer enforcing work, beyond that specified in the contract would be punished and on conviction, a sum not exceeding five shilling as fine would be collected or in lieu of that he should undergo imprisonment not exceeding one month. Section 112 insisted on keeping a Limited Task Book in every plantation and required the Medical Officer of the district to inspect all immigrants who were under indentured in his district, for every six months. He should enter the Limited Task Book the name and number of every labourer, who in his opinion, was unfit to perform full task. The labourers were classified as a three-quarter task labourer or as a half task labourer. The Medical Officer should sign the book with the date of such entry. Section 116 directed that ages of the indentured labourers should be paid in British coin on the Saturday of each week afternoon or in case of such days being an authorised

\textsuperscript{121} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{122} Ibid.
holiday should be paid on the first available working day in the following week, after the working hours.\footnote{123}

Section 118 empowered the indentured labour to proceed against his employer for non-payment of wages or payment in arrears. The Magistrate could order the labourer to work for an additional day for each day on which he had absented himself from work, if the salary had been withheld on account of absences. Section 120 defined that an immigrant indentured labourer absented himself from the plantation for three continuous working days without reasonable cause or lawful cause, as deemed to be a deserter. Such person could be arrested without warrant wherever he may be found by his employer or by any constable. When an indentured labour had been arrested and returned to his plantation, the employer, if he intended to prosecute the labourer for desertion, should do it within one month of his return. Such labourer should be produced before the Magistrate of the district and should be confined at police station to await the trail. If the labourer as convicted he shall be fined a sum not exceeding 5 shilling. If he defaulted he shall be imprisoned for a term not exceeding three months.\footnote{124}

Section 121 stipulated that when an indentured labour had completed fifty hours of time work or five and one half tasks in any one week, he was at liberty to absent himself from work for the remaining day of the week. Section 123 stipulated punishment for breach of Section 121. An employer could be fined a sum not exceeding 10s. In default he shall be imprisoned for a term not exceeding two months. The Section 124 directed that when re-indentured labourers term of service was expired, a bonus of money at the rate of three pence for each day of such term of extended service required to pay the labourer by the employer. Section 125 of this Ordinance introduced the principle that the Agent General of the colony required to issue a certificate for the effect of proving the completion of a labourers industrial residence, when the labourer demanding such a certificate should be provided with the certificate without any charge of money from the labourer. If such certificate was lost by any time expired immigrant labourer, he

\footnote{123}{Ibid., pp. 64-65.}
\footnote{124}{Ibid., p. 65.}
should prove the missing of the certificate to the Agent General and if it was proved he was entitled to receive such certificate from the Agent General without any charge.\textsuperscript{125}

Section 171 directed that a hospital should be provided in every plantation where there were more than five indentured labourers were working. The building of the hospital should be inspected and it should have the facilities to accommodate at least one tenth of labour force of the plantation, in the proportion of 50 superficial feet and 800 cubic feet of space for each patient. The Agent General should issue a certificate of approval of the hospital only after his inspection. Section 179 empowered the Agent General or District Medical Officer to order removal of any indentured labourers to public or other hospital from any of the plantation of this colony. Section 180 authorised the Agent General to withdraw the certificate if he found during his inspection such hospital was not fulfilling the requirements of the rules and if the Governor of the colony considered the condition of the labourers was very pathetic in any of the plantation, he had the power to cancel the labourers' indentureship and not the license of the estate.\textsuperscript{126}

Section 181 stipulated that any indentured immigrant labour bartering or selling the rations, what provided to him, to other persons should be punished with a penalty of a sum not exceeding 10 shilling, in default of which subjected to imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months. The purchaser of the ration should pay a penalty not exceeding 5 shilling or in default imprisonment for a term not exceeding one month had to undergo.\textsuperscript{127}

The Indian Immigration Ordinance I of 1891 was amended by IV of 1892. Through this amendment they changed the title of the Indian Immigration Ordinance into Indian Immigration Principal Ordinance.\textsuperscript{128} Prior to 1892 there was no legal procedure for the celebration of marriages among the Indian immigrants in Fiji. In that year an Ordinance No. IV of 1892 was passed for the purpose of conducting civil marriages of Indian immigrants who were residing in the colony. Section 3 of this Ordinance required

\textsuperscript{125} Ibid., p. 66.

\textsuperscript{126} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{127} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{128} Number of Proceedings, 32 to 35, General Department (Immigration), File No. 1G / 1, October 1896, p. 1.
the labourers, who wished to marry, should register their marriage before the Agent General of the Colony. He in turn will provide a certificate, with the details of the names of the parties married, father's name, age, registered number and place of domicile etc. Section 4 referred to the mode by which the immigrants upon arrival in the colony should declare marriages on oath and receive a certificate from the Agent General. The declaration of husband married in India, in accordance with the custom, to more than one wife was to be permitted to live with them. Section 6 of that Ordinance stated that any Indian male immigrant of the age of fifteen years or above and females of twelve years or above, with the consent of their parents, could convey their desire of their marriage to the Magistrate of the district in which they resided or to the Agent General of Immigrants.

Section 16 of this Ordinance provided authority to the Agent General to transfer an indentured labourer to another garden without his consent. Section 76, authorised the Supreme Court or any other duly constituted court of the colony to convict the labourer for any criminal offence. The Agent General had been empowered by the aforesaid section to order an extension of indenture to the labourer after his or her release from the prison to compensate the servant’s former employer for the time lost in view of their absences in the plantation.

Sections 55 to 59, made possible the transfer of any immigrant working under indenture from the plantation he served to any other plantation of same owner or to others owned by some other employers. But before transferring the labourer, according to this section, the employers and the labourers consent should be obtained. In order to facilitate the transfer, the Agent General should issue a certificate of indenture to be duly signed by the transfer. The tenure of work was period of the immigrant’s term of service that remained with their former employer. A transfer fee of three shilling for every year or part of a year of such unexpired term of service should be paid by the employer. All such transfers should be recorded in the Plantation Register and if any employer permitted his labourer to work in any other plantation owned by other employer, without prior

129 Ibid.
130 Ibid.
131 Ibid., pp. 3-4.
permission from the Agent General, the employer could be punished. A penalty not exceeding five pounds for each such labourer was liable to be collected from the employer.\textsuperscript{122}

Section 60 stated that the employer should provide all necessary provisions to the immigrant labourers like water, food, medical aid and sleeping accommodation under cover during their transit between the depots to plantation. If any violation of this section the employer should be punished by a fine not exceeding 10 pounds and in default of the amount be imprisoned for any term not exceeding one month. Section 115 empowered the Agent General to refuse to grant a passport to a labourer if it be shown to his satisfaction that the applicant was deserting his wife or children or leaving without due provision for their life.\textsuperscript{133}

Ordinance No. XIV of 1893, prohibited the immigrants to leave the colony for the Australasian Colonies and Pacific Islands without the consent of the Governor of Fiji.\textsuperscript{134}

The Indian Immigration Principal Ordinances IV of 1891-92 was amended by the Ordinance No. XII of 1895 on 22 August 1895. Sections 3-10 of this Ordinance dealt with ration provisions to every indentured labourer while in hospital and to every child of such labourers. The Ordinance empowered the Agent General and District Medical Officer to inspect the stores and the building in which ration goods were kept. The rations were required to issue once in a week. If any labourer not present on plantation on the day of the rations supplied he could receive his ration after his arrival on the plantation. If any of the employer violated the aforesaid provisions, he could be punished with a fine not exceeding twenty-five pounds and in default of payment be imprisoned for any term not exceeding three months.\textsuperscript{135}

The Act XII of 1904 that was enacted to amend the Indian Emigration Act of 1883, was designed to provide for the imposition of a fee on the registration of emigrants

\textsuperscript{122} Ibid., p. 4.

\textsuperscript{133} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{134} Report of the committee on Emigration from India to the Crown Colonies, part III, 1910, p. 62.

\textsuperscript{135} Number of Proceeding, 50-53, General Department (Immigration), File No. 10 / 1, May 1896, pp. 314-320.
under Act X of 1902. It also empowered the Governor General in Council to permit, in
special cases, emigration under the Act 1902 from some parts other than those from
which emigration was lawfully permitted.136

The Ordinances of No XX of 1905 and VIII of 1906 were passed to amend the
conditions of service and law related to the Indian Immigrants. The Ordinance No. VIII
of 1906, section 2, stipulated that an immigrant introduced into Fiji after the coming into
operation of that Ordinance, was not entitled to a free return passage to India unless the
emigrant exercised his right within two years after the exact date of his completion of ten
years of residence in the colony.137 The claim for fee passage could be made on behalf of
children who had come along with an immigrant and who had completed 12 years of
age.138

The Ordinance No VI of 1907 was passed by which any person having control
over the Indian indentured labour should not beat or ill-treat the labourers. If anybody
violated this rule he was liable to pay a penalty or had to undergone imprisonment.
Section 4 ruled that any indentured labourer who had been three times convicted of
desertion, for every subsequent conviction thereafter should be inflicted with hard labour
for a term not exceeding six months.139

The Ordinance No. IV of 1908, passed in the Fiji legislature, provided every
immigrant above the age of fifteen years on arrival into Fiji, who had obtained a
certificate of “industrial residence” and completed continuous residence of ten years in
the colony and every child of such immigrant labourer, if accompanying the parents, a
free return passage to India at the cost of the public revenue of this colony.140 The
Ordinance raised the adult age of immigrants from 12 years to 15 years.141 In 1907 a rule

137 Annual Report on Emigration from the Port of Calcutta, 1906, p. 3.
138 Report of the committee on Emigration from India to the Crown Colonies, part 1, 1910, p. 86.
139 Ibid., part III, 1910, p. 65.
140 Ibid., pp. 62-63.
141 Annual Report on Emigration from the Port of Calcutta to British and Foreign Colonies 1908, p. 4.
provided for the detention of lunatic emigrants, in separate compartments on board ship.

In 1910, an Inter-Departmental Committee under the Chairmanship of Lord Sanderson had been appointed by the British Government to investigate the whole system of indenture. This Committee had reported in 1910 in favour of the system. Gokhale’s effort to have the system abolished was not successful. There was not any suggestion that general emigration to Fiji should be prohibited. The demand was for the abolition of the “contract of indenture” and the improvement of the conditions of the indentured labourers who were in the foreign land.

On the basis of the Sanderson Committee’s recommendations, an amending Ordinance No. II of 1912 was passed in Fiji, which eliminated the penalty of imprisonment and extension of service, except for serious offences such as repeated desertions, refusal to work or unlawful absence from work.

In 1913, the Government of India instituted a commission, consisting of McNeil and Chimanlal, to visit the four colonies of Jamaica, Trinidad, British Guiana and Fiji to study the condition of indentured labourers on the spot. The following year the commission also reported in favour of the system followed in Fiji. Unfortunately, however, it appeared from their report that they were concerned themselves more with the economic and material side of things, than with the inner life of the people and so did not get at the heart of the moral problem. The public feelings in India were against the indentured system. By 1915 it had gathered momentum. The Imperial Indian Citizenship Association, Bombay, deputed C.F. Andrews and W.W. Pearson, to make an independent inquiry into the condition of labourers in Fiji. Andrews and Pearson returned from Fiji in January 1916 and submitted their report to the Council of the Imperial Indian

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142 Ibid., p. 3.

143 Waiz, Indians Abroad Directory, p. 5.

144 “Indian Immigration: A Review”, p. 3.

145 Waiz, Indians Abroad Directory, p. 5.


147 Waiz, Indians Abroad Directory, p. 5.
Citizenship Association. This report fully exposed the serious nature of the evils which existed under the indentured system in Fiji. 148

Ordinance No. XXIX of 1915 was passed in Fiji, in which the power to imprison for labour offences was completely eliminated from the colony. In the same year a circular was sent by the Fiji Government to all District Commissioners instructing them no to use the offensive words "Coolie". 149 The same year the Government of India informed the Secretary of State that 'the time had come for His Majesty’s Government to assent to a total abolition of the system of indentured Indian in the four British Colonies where it still prevailed and in Surinam.' 150

In 1916, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya moved a resolution in the Imperial Legislative Council urging the Government to take early steps for the abolition of indentured labour. The resolution was accepted and Lord Hardinge announced that the Secretary of State had agreed to the proposal. But it was felt, 'that time must be given to the Colonies to re-adjust themselves to the altered situation.' But the indefinite period for the final abolition of the system did not satisfy the public. 151 In 1916, the Government of India under the Defence of India Act, stopped indentured emigration during 1st World War to Fiji, Trinidad, British Guiana and Jamaica. 152

In the early part of 1917, Mahatma Gandhi launched his offensive against the indentured labour system. He was supported by C.F. Andrews, Polak, K. Natarajan, J.B. Petit and various organizations in the country. The campaign was carried on throughout India. Mahatma Gandhi had given a time limit for the Government’s action and was planning passive resistance in India, unless the Government made a public pronouncement within a time-frame that he had set. At a public meeting held in Bombay on 9 February 1917, under the chairmanship of Sir Narayan Chandvarkar, the citizens of

148 Ibid., p. 6.
149 Gillion, Fiji’s Indian Migrants, p. 17.
151 Ibid.
152 "Indian Immigration: A Review", pp. 4-5.
Bombay expressed their alarm at the continuance of the indentured system. A women's deputation led by the Lady Dorah Tata waited on Lord Chelmsford on 27 March, 1917 as a part of a lobby to abolish the indenture system which had, according to them, proved so destructive to 'Indian woman hood' in Fiji. The viceroy attitude towards the women's deputation reassured the hope for the abolition of the system.\textsuperscript{153}

The indentured system was finally brought to an end on January 1 1920. All those who were still under indenture were set free.\textsuperscript{154} The Indian Emigration bill was introduced in the Central Legislative Assembly by George Barnes on 21 March 1921. He began his speech by stating that ‘some would like to keep every Indian in India. While that was unjustified there was a definite need for the protection of unskilled workers wishing to emigrate.’\textsuperscript{155}

The Government of India prohibited the emigration of all unskilled works, except to such countries and on such terms as the Governor General in Council specified.\textsuperscript{156} The Governor General retained the discretionary power to prohibit emigration of skilled workers also. This measure was sought to be included in the proposed bill which was passed through both the houses of the legislature. It received the Viceroy’s assent on 11 March 1922 as Act VII of 1922.\textsuperscript{157}

After the Act came into force, a joint standing committee of both the houses of Indian legislature was constituted to form Emigration Committee. Rules were framed under 1922 Act to regulate emigration to specified countries, such as Ceylon, Malaya and Mauritius and these rules were ratified by the Indian legislature. According to the new law the emigrants must be 18 years of age or over. The most important was rule 23 which laid down that two out of every three males emigrants, should be accompanied by wives. The rules also emphasized the hours of work, wages, conditions, welfare provisions (medical sanitary, housing) which employers should observe. Penal sanctions were

\textsuperscript{153} Waiz, Indians Abroad Directory, pp. 6-8.


\textsuperscript{155} Hugh Tinker, A new system of slavery, p. 368.

\textsuperscript{156} Waiz, Indians Abroad Directory, p.9.

\textsuperscript{157} Annual Report on Emigration from the Port of Calcutta. 1922, p. 1.
specifically excluded. An Agent of the Government of India was appointed in Ceylon and Malaya to ensure that the rules were properly applied. 158

III

Working Condition of Indian labourers in Fiji

The day of the indentured labourers started at 3 or 4 a.m. in the morning when they were woken up by the mill whistle and the sirdars. They would bathe, cook their breakfast and lunch and at 4 or 5 a.m. would be mustered with their tools. After the muster the labourers set off for the field. The maximum distance immigrant labourers could legally be made to walk to work without compensation in the form of reduced task was two miles. They should arrive at the field at about 5 or 6 a.m., where they would be allotted their tasks for the day by the overseers and sirdars. The labourers usually worked in gangs under a sirdar, the women in a separate gang, but the tasks were individually assessed. On a sugar plantation the work consisted of digging and clearing drains, planting, weeding, trashing, cutting and loading cane. In earlier years there were shovel ploughing tasks also, but later horses were used instead. The size of the task depended on the nature of soil and the state of the cane. 159

The 1878 Indian Immigration Ordinance stated that the labourers would be employed in task work or time work for all days of the week except Sunday. At time work, immigrants were to work for nine hours: a task was defined as the amount of work which an ordinary able-bodied adult male could do in six hours of steady work. A woman’s work was fixed as three-quarters of a man’s task. In a week, a labourer required to do five and a half tasks. Although the ordinance allowed for both task and time work,


labourer who could not choose which type of work he or she wanted. Only the employer could make that choice.\textsuperscript{160}

Typical tasks were: draining, 200-300 cubic feet; digging 150-200 holes; weeding and trashing 10-15 chains, 6 feet wide; cutting 3 tons of sugarcane per day; loading 36 cut of cane; shovel ploughing 7-10 chains. This tasks could seldom be completed in this six hours time, except by the strongest worker; in practice the employers made the hours of task work the same as those of time work. This led majority of the labourers could not leave until 3 or 4 p.m. or even later after dark. This is the main reason had created tensions among the labourers.\textsuperscript{161}

In 1883 for example, in three districts, Rewa, Navua and Tavenui only one-quarter of the immigrant labourers made their minimum wage of 1 shilling per day, whereas only 8 per cent of the women indentured emigrant labourers made 9 pence. The reset of the women earned less than 5 pence per day.\textsuperscript{162} Average wages of indentured labourers in 1902: males 11.52d per working day, 12.79 per day actually worked; females 6.14d per working day, 7.60d per day actually worked. The wage rates remained the same for the whole of the indentured period in Fiji.\textsuperscript{163}

A labourer in the mill, informed the Independent Inquiry Committee members that he was obliged to work on twelve hour shifts and on alternate week, had to go on night work from 6 p.m to 6 a.m. without any extra pay. They found out, still further that a large amount of highly skilled labour was being performed by the indentured labourers at an absurdly low rate of pay. In one mill, three men came up to them who had each lost a limb and crippled for life. The labourers informed the members that they had lost their limb at the time of their work when they engaged in looking after the machinery of the mill. Yet no compensation had been paid to them for this life-long injury. Thus the mill-


\textsuperscript{163} Gillion, Fiji’s Indian Migrants, p. 110.
owners used their unskilled labourers under the cover of indentured system for the skilled work under the low wage.¹⁶⁴

The difficulties in the way of the labourers laying charges were outlined in a report by the Sergent of police at Labasa to his Superintendent in Suva in 1897: ‘Sergeant Mason begs to inform the Superintendent that it is a usual thing for Indians to come to the police station between the hours of 9 and 12 at night to complain of the treatment they get on some of the plantation and when asked why they are so late they say that they have to wait till dark as the sirdars watch them and will not let them go. This is when they have been beaten during the day and if the overseers hear that they have been to Police Station they get their money cut, also get heavy tasks to perform and most likely another thrashing. Directly the overseers hears that the sirdar has beaten any of the people he at once cautions the one who got the beating and all who saw it that if they go to complain to the Stipendiary Magistrate or Sergeant that he will beat them and give them heavy work to do. The consequence is that when any of the people are ill-used they cannot get any of those who saw it to go as witness for them because of these threats.’ In Fiji generally over the period as a whole, intimidation was certainly very common. Labourers were assaulted when no witnesses were present, sometimes by certain selected men who made a specialty of escaping punishment or witnesses were often too afraid to testify or were bribed not to do so. Sometimes an Indian, who had been sent to hospital, covered with bruises, would deny to the police that he had been assaulted, for he had a greater fear of the overseer and sirdar than he had faith in the law. Even if he took his case to the police, the overseer was usually represented by counsel and was able to present his case in a more plausible and effective manner than the poor labour who could not exploit the weak points in the employer's case and often embellished his own evidence with irrelevanies and contradictory statements. Usually a tendency had prevailed among the magistrates to disbelieve the evidence of Indians of principle. Even when convictions against overseers were obtained the sentences were usually very light.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁵ Gillion, Fiji's Indian Migrants, pp. 112-113.
The fluctuation in sugar prices had important repercussions on the treatment of the Indian labourers and the Government’s administration of the indentured labour system. In 1882 the Immigration Department was in the charge of Henry Anson. He was an Englishman, aged about 30 and an Oxford graduate in Modern History, who had been appointed as a stipendiary Magistrate by Sir Arthur Gordon. Thanks to his firmness, integrity and concern for the immigrant population, he became unpopular among the employers of Fiji.

Conditions on plantations steadily deteriorated after 1884 and in 1888 a strike broke out at Koronivia but Thurston’s ordinance suppressed the protest without removing its causes. In July, Hamilton Hunter, Stipendiary Magistrate, reported that on the Rewa plantations the universal and usually justifiable complaint was ‘we are over-tasked.’ It was a common practice to increase the tasks of those India labourers who finished their task early. The over-tasking was concealed in the annual reports. But not the low average wages and excessive mortality. In 1890 Allen Stewart, Emigration Agent in Calcutta, had already noticed the low wages disclosed in the 1890 report and had written to Fiji.

Stewart told Wingfield, Colonial Secretary, that repatriates from Fiji had expressed dissatisfaction with their treatment there and a Secretary of Bengal Government reported that immigrants were treated worse in Fiji than anywhere else. Stewart did not allow the criticism of his selection of emigrants to pass unchallenged and in a despatch, supported by medical authority, he established that the emigrants sent to Fiji were not inferior to those sent to the other colonies.

In 1896, Wingfield wrote: ‘This is a very conclusive answer to the frequent allegations or insinuations of the Fiji authorities that due care is not taken in the selection and examination of coolies sent to the colony... I have often wondered that the Indian Government have not threatened to stop it. The fault does not lie in the legislation, for the

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166 Ibid. p. 79.
167 Ibid. p. 81.
168 Ibid., p. 89.
169 Ibid.
170 Ibid., p. 90.
ordinance have been revised over and over again but in the administration the office of Agent General has been combined with some of the office... The staff of Inspectors has been utterly insufficient and the planters have been allowed to have their own way. We have continually called attention to the unsatisfactory state things especially as to the health of the coolies and their very small earnings. Various excuses have been put forward but it was evident that the supervision was necessarily inadequate...\(^\text{171}\)

The Colonial Officer then rebuked Thurston for suggesting the stoppage of indenturing of immigrants to Rewa and Navua in his report of 1894. Thurston had cited the poor wages, high mortality as reason for his suggestion. Significantly, a copy of this despatch was not sent to the India Office and therefore did not reach the authorities in India who remained silent about the management of the immigration in Fiji.\(^\text{172}\)

The Fiji Government proposed in 1898 that immigrants should pay part of the cost of their return passages, as in the West Indies but the Government of India turn down the request stating that 'the relations between the employers and the immigrants are not satisfactory as they are in the West Indies.'\(^\text{173}\) The Colonial Office admitted that condition in Fiji was worse than the one in Mauritius and British Guiana.\(^\text{174}\)

**Voyage Deaths (due to shipwrecks and contagious diseases)**

"Leonidas" which took the first Indian emigrants from the port of Calcutta to Fiji. The "Leonidas" arrived off Levuka, on 14 May 1879, the Surgeon Superintendent "called out a warning to keep away" as there had been cholera, smallpox and dysentery aboard. There had been eleven deaths from cholera and six on account of dysentery. Smallpox was still on board. The migrants landed on Yaunca Lailai, an islet near Levuka, which had been made an immigration depot. The "Leonidas" was sent away and armed guards, with orders to shoot the immigrant if necessary, patrolled the area in boats to prevent contact with the shore. The Indian immigrants were in quarantine for ninety days,

\(^{171}\) Ibid., p. 91.

\(^{172}\) Ibid.

\(^{173}\) Ibid., pp. 92-93.

\(^{174}\) Ibid., pp. 96-97.
The worst disaster in the history of Indian emigration to Fiji was, the wreck of the sailing ship “Syria” on the evening of 11 May 1884, with inexperienced officers unfamiliar with Fiji waters. Nearing a land in a high wind and heavy sea, the ship hit the point of Nasilai Reef, four miles off the nearest coast. Indian emigrant ships had carried only a few lifeboats and lifebelts. Five of the six boats were wrecked in the heavy sea. The sixth one sent to get assistance, also failed to save the situation. Dr. Mac Gregor, the chief medical officer and Acting Colonial Secretary, took charge of the rescue operations the following day. Yet the wind and tide were rising and the ship was breaking up on the reef. Mac Gregor wrote to the Governor of Fiji, Gordon, afterwards: ‘The scene was simply indescribable and pictures of it haunt me still like a horrid dream that one is glad to escape from by waking. People falling, fainting, drowning all around one.’ In the end fifty six Indian labourers and three Lascars were drowned. The Fiji Marine Board held the master to be at fault and the Colonial Secretary wrote to the Emigration Agent that ‘The ship was lost by the joint effect of carelessness and incompetency’.

All the ships which were coming from India went to the Port of Suva, the capital of the Fiji island, where the Indian emigrants were transferred to barges and towed by steam launch or tug to the islet of Nukulan, which served as reception centre and quarantine station. There they were medically examined by the Agent-General of Immigration. The unfit were separated for return to India or detained in the depot for medical treatment.

Cholera broke out in the ship Fultala, which left Madras for Fiji on 28 February 1906, on the fourth day at sea. The ship was diverted to Singapore and kept for a month there while the sick were nursed ashore. 124 emigrants in Fultala had cholera; 61 died of the disease, while 8 others died of measles. Of the 879 embarked, only 800 landed

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175 Fiji Times, May 17, 1879, http://www.fijiirm.org/history.htm, pp. 1-2; See also Gillion, Fiji’s Indian Migrants, pp. 63-64.

176 Ibid., pp. 64-65.

177 Ibid., p. 66.
in Fiji.\textsuperscript{178} Even as late as 1912, out of 3,428 emigrants who had left India for Fiji, 27 died on the voyage. Eleven deaths occurred in the deport at Suva and 15 un-allotted immigrants died in the Colonial Hospital. Among those died, 20 were children.\textsuperscript{179}

**Punishments to Labourers for Violation of Law**

In 1882 the Immigration Department had only one inspector, due to this reason the Stipendiary Magistrates were ordered to visit each plantation every six months and prosecute where breaches of the law had occurred.\textsuperscript{180} But ‘Magistrates were very few in number and plantations were often far away from any centre. Hospitals, also belonged to the employers, not to Governments. It was all to the interest of the planter to hush up serious crime on his estate.’\textsuperscript{181} Even then a total of 8,853 charges of labour law violations were filed against a total of Fiji Indentured population of 5,237 in 1886. The number of prosecutions was 169 per cent of the number of labourers under indentured.\textsuperscript{182}

Over-tasking led to serious trouble in 1886. In February there was a strike of 300 Indian labourers on the Colonial Sugar Refining Company’s Nawo estate and although Carew, the stipendiary magistrate on the Rewa, considered that they had been systematically over-tasked, he felt obliged to imprison the ringleaders. In the same year 130 Indian Indentured labourers from the Rewas Sugar Company’s Koronivia plantation marched to Suva, carrying knives, axes, hoes and sticks, to protest against the raising of shovel-ploughing task from seven to ten chains. Although Carew fined several labourers, he ordered the task put back to the original scale. The planters complained that the government was too sympathetic to the Indians, who had become idle, insubordinate and

\textsuperscript{178} Hugh Tinker, \textit{A New System of Slavery}, p. 166.


\textsuperscript{180} Report of the Committee on Emigration from India to the Crown Colonies, Part III, 1910, pp. 62-63.


even dangerous. Some of the employers were even scared that they were about to be massacred.\(^1\)

In August 1886 Thurston, Acting Governor of Fiji, intervened with a measure called by the *Fiji Times* 'an enactment positively unique in the history of Fiji and Ordinance No. XIV of 1886 framed in the interest of the employers.' Penalties were greatly increased for insufficient work and it was made illegal for bodies of immigrants numbering more than five to make complaints or for immigrants to carry working implements when doing so. When Anson, Stipendiary Magistrate, questioned the need for the new Ordinance he was snubbed by Thurston.\(^2\) In 1887, when Thurston was away from Fiji, Anson produced a frank report on Indian immigration into Fiji for the year 1886 criticizing, amongst others, high incidence of mortality and imprisonment of immigrants physically incapable of performing the statutory task. He also recorded his impression that the percentage of prosecutions was apparently without a parallel in any other colony.\(^3\) The reactions to this report were most revealing of the respective attitudes of the officials in India and in London. It was passed almost without any comment in Calcutta.\(^4\)

In April 1887, when 130 Indians marched in a quiet and orderly fashion from Nausori to Suva to complain that they were overworked but underpaid, Anson received them well and expressed the opinion that they had good reason to complain; but since they had committed an offence under the 1886 Ordinance, they were prosecuted. Anson was warned not to negotiate in future in such cases.\(^5\)

Indentured Indians in Fiji during 1892 were 4,423. Of these 1,287 men received convictions, along with 538 women, representing over 40 per cent of the adult

\(\text{\textsuperscript{1}}\) Gillion, *Fiji's Indian Migrants*, p. 83.


\(\text{\textsuperscript{3}}\) Gillion, *Fiji's Indian Migrants*, p. 84.

\(\text{\textsuperscript{4}}\) Ibid.

\(\text{\textsuperscript{5}}\) Ibid., pp. 85-86.
population. The main offence was that of ‘unlawful absence’. In contrast, only one employer was convicted in that year on a charge leveled against him by his workers.\footnote{Hugh Tinker, \textit{A New System of Slavery}, p. 194.}

The amount of convictions reduced in subsequent years, but not any remarkable extent: during 1896, 25 per cent of the adults were convicted.\footnote{John D. Kelley, “‘Coolie’ as a Labour Commodity,” p. 249; Hugh Tinker, \textit{New System of Slavery}, p.194.} In 1898, 44.2 per cent of the men and 56 per cent of the women were prosecuted. In the Annual Report for that year, it was recorded that more than two-thirds of the charges laid against Indian women in the colony were instituted against two hundred and six women in Macuata district. This district, dominated by the Colonial Sugar Refining Company was infamous for over-tasking the indentured labourers.\footnote{Shaista Shameem, “Migration, Labour and Plantation Women in Fiji: A Historical Perspective,” pp. 60-61.} In 1900 the proportion was 18 per cent. About 90 per cent of the workers indicted in Fiji were convicted.\footnote{John D. Kelley, “‘Coolie’ as a Labour Commodity,” p. 249; Hugh Tinker, \textit{New System of Slavery}, p.194.} In 1901, for instance, while there were 2,468 charges against indentured labourers under the labour law, 2,201 of which resulted in conviction, 63 immigrants were warned and given extensions, while the rest were fined and jailed as well.\footnote{Gilhon, \textit{Fiji’s Indian Migrants}, p. 118.} In 1904, 22,790 Indians remained under indentured labour law in Fiji, of whom 19 per cent were punished.\footnote{John D. Kelley, “‘Coolie’ as a Labour Commodity,” p. 249; Hugh Tinker, \textit{New System of Slavery}, p.194.} But the proportion of women sent to Jail, fined or forced to work after their indentured period had exceeded the male proportion.\footnote{Shaista Shameem, “Migration, Labour and Plantation Women in Fiji: A Historical Perspective,” pp. 60-61.}

In April 1903 there was a riot occurred in the Fiji depot in Calcutta. After a gate-keeper had struck a man who complained about the food. In retaliation the emigrants armed with palings, broke down the fences and drove all the clerks and gate keepers out of the compound. They were finally pacified by the agent himself, but before of that
many had deserted. On their arrival in Fiji, six of them were promptly sent back to India. They thought the trouble makers were from Hissar and Karnal districts and hence recruitment for Fiji islands was stopped in those places.195

In 1907, there were not less than 2,291 charges brought forward by employers for breach of the labour law, of which over 90 per cent resulted in convictions and these charges involved 1,461 different persons. The charges were mostly framed on the newly arrived Indian immigrant indentured labourers into the colony, which led to the extension of their term of indentured period196.

The labourers, who were sentenced to imprisonment and kept at the rural lock-ups, were used to clean roads and grounds near public offices in Fiji. ‘The conviction, with fines or imprisonment of many thousands weak labourers was a great deficiency of the indentured labour system. The cost in the loss of self respect and demoralization was incalculable’.197

Increase of the free Indians’ strength in Fiji from 1908 to 1912 (see Table IV. 9) represented the fact that there was delay in repatriation of labourers to India. Five year compulsory industrial residence in the colony after expiration of their five year period of indenture in the plantation was made mandatory for their free return passage from Fiji to India as per the labour ordinances of Fiji.198

Amendments made from time to time; such as abolition of the penal clause for labour offences and the reduction of the daily task by the Government provided only palliatives. The main causes which led to the large number of suicides and crimes among the Indian indentured labourers in Fiji remained untouched (see Table IV.10).199

## Table IV. 9
### Free Indian Population in Fiji, 1908-1912

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Free Indians</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>21,151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909</td>
<td>23,163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>26,557</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>29,758</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>32,482</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** *Report on the Condition of Indian Immigrants in the Four British Colonies, Part II, 1914, p. 250.*

## Table IV. 10
### Suicides Among Indian Immigrants in Fiji, 1903 to 1912

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Suicides Among</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indentured Indian</td>
<td>Free Indian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>N.A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>N.A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** *Report on the Conditions of Indian Immigrants in the Four British Colonies: Trinidad, British Guiana, Jamaica and Fiji, Part II, 1914, p. 317.*

**Note:** The rate of suicide amongst the Indentured Indians is strikingly higher than those of Free Indians.
The courts were not always comfortable when called upon to formally and publicly extend justice to Indian victims in the colony. When one of the few European overseers charged with physical abuse of labour was found guilty for the sixth time, the Sub-Inspector of Police who was prosecuting, said in his summation that 'he was compelled to ask His Worship to inflict a severe sentence'. 'Though it was very painful to be obliged to do so, commented Fiji Times the overseer got two week imprisonment with hard labour.'

All communication between the Indian and Fiji Governments was conducted through the India Office and the Colonial Office and apart from the annual report which was sent direct by from Fiji, the authorities in India received only what was transmitted to them by the Colonial Office. As the Chief Secretary of the Government of Madras wrote in 1914: 'they are mainly statistical and nothing much can be gathered from them as to the way the immigrants are treated.'

Exploitation of Women

In 1888, occasionally, exploitation of daughters by their fathers came to light. A tragic murder in Fiji exposed such an example. Surumi was sold by her father, Jebodh, to four men in succession. Then he arranged with a young Brahman, Ram Sundar, to take Surumi in marriage for the sum of £5. Ram Sundar was still only eighteen years old, though he had served two and a half years of his indenture. A child was born of the marriage. However, Jebodh's greed was not satisfied and he took back his daughter and sold her to Lal Bahauder. Ram Sunder wanted to avenge to their treacherous deed and with the help of his friend Bharat Singh. The two young men entered the hut one night, while all the people concerned were sleeping. With their knives, Ram Sundar and


201 Quoted in K. L. Gillion, Fiji's Indian Migrants, p. 201.

Bharat Singh killed the girl, Surumi, her parents and her paramour. Ram Sundar and Bharat Singh were sentenced to life term for their offence.  

To make the evil more worse, the Fiji Government had done its best to banish Hindu and Muslim religious marriages altogether from the Fiji land. Indian Christian marriage also shared the same fate in the eyes of the Fiji law. A Christian priest, who performed the ceremony of marriage for two Indians in church, was prosecuted for committing an illegal act. The only valid marriage was said to be that drawn up in the Immigration Department and this was a mere matter of payment and registration. An Indian had merely to go to the Immigration Office and register his name and that of his intended wife and had to pay five shilling for that effect. Then if no objection was lodged, after three weeks he received a certificate from the office declaring that he had been married. There was no ceremony, no solemn declaration, no mutual promise in the presence of witnesses. It was always necessary in Fiji to ask a man or woman, proving their marriage as a legal one. This gave scope for unscrupulous fathers like Jebodh.  

A missionary’s heartrending story related to Andrews and Pearson in Fiji is cited to highlight the wretched condition to which women had been reduced. Two brothers of a respectable Hindu family were guardians of their younger sister. They married her off by Hindu religious rites to a husband whom they regarded as suitable. But another person induced his sister to be married to him by means of the Immigration Office. This was legal. According to the Fiji Immigration law the Hindu Marriage was not legal. When the brothers knew that there was no other remedy, they killed their sister and went to jail. They declared at the trial that they had done it for the honour of their family and their religion. Yet they were hanged to death.  

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203 Andrews and Pearson wrote as an abominable trafficking of young girls in Fiji was much prevalent, which the law seemed unable to check. It was become a common thing for a father to sell his daughter to one man, allowing the betrothal ceremony to be performed and then to sell her to another. Divorces were equally common. Women left their husbands for the sake of jewels and went to live with other men. They seemed to do just what they pleased and to live just as they liked.  

204 C. F. Andrews & W. W. Pearson, *Indentured Labour In Fiji: An Independent Enquiry*, p. 38; See also (Ordinance No. IV of 1892, Section 3), N.P, 32 to 35, General Department (Immigration), File No. 1G/1, October 1896, p. 2; *Report of the Committee on Emigration from India to the Crown Colonies*, Part III, 1910, pp. 62-63.  

An unusually high number of single women with families came to Fiji in 1888. Thirty four women came unaccompanied by husbands, bringing with them fifty-one young children. Even the Agent of Immigration observed that, the prospect of women earning a livelihood under such a conditions was slim. He further said: ‘It was unlikely that the men would form alliances with them, burdened as they were with so many children, whose maintenance fell entirely upon parents after twelve months in the colony. In the first year, the children were looked after by the company employing the parent or parents. At the end of twelve months the mother become unassisted by husbands found it impossible to put away money after supplying their own wants and those of their children, still too young to work. Under such circumstances these women were prone to resort to means of livelihood which rendered them independent of the employment secured to them by indenture and moreover resulted in their becoming unfit for it. They were soon confirmed non-workers, frequent inmates of the hospital and Jail.’

Women’s resistance to capitalist exploitation took the form of withholding their labour, but at the more personal level they also carried out physical acts of violence upon male overseers or sirdars. Women would get together in gangs and beat up cruel and abusive plantation personal, utilizing hoes, knives and other work tools as weapons. They went to jail for such acts.

Not only Indian men, but white men also forced their attention upon women and those who resisted found that they would be given harder tasks the following day. Between 1891 and 1921 sixty-eight Indian indentured women were murdered due to ‘the sexual jealousy of men’. It was widely believed that murders of women were committed due to sexual jealousy on the part of males who could not cope with the immorality of the women. In murder trials in the colony during this period, evidence was


207 Ibid., p. 60; See John D. Kelly, “‘Coolie’ as a Labour Commodity,” remarks that as Walter Gill’s described as Fiji overseer, work-gangs of women ‘coolies’ disciplining their European overseers by capturing them, beating them, immobilizing them and urinating on them. An attempt to do this to him when he was overseer for a work-gang of women, P. 25.

frequently given that the female victim had either left her husband for someone else, or had threatened to do so.\textsuperscript{209}

An additional aspect of violent abuse of women by men is shown by the figures for sexual offences on plantation. Between 1885 and 1920, two hundred men were charged with committing sexual offences. The majority of the cases were for rape and carnal knowledge of girls under thirteen.\textsuperscript{210} In 1909, the manager of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company's plantation Vucimaca was reprimanded by the Agent General of Immigration for forcing a woman namely Baggia to live with a man and 'cook his rice'. The woman committed suicide because she did not want to live with the man and the Colonial Secretary's Office sent out a memo to General Manager of the Company, warning that managers and overseers should not meddle with the matrimonial arrangements of labourers.\textsuperscript{211}

A typical case of fraudulent recruitment was unearthed by Andrews and Pearson in the course of their inquiry in the Indian depot for Fiji. A Villager, named Fakhira, had his wife and daughter abducted from him by a recruiting agent, who offered to return them to him on the payment of a sum of a money. Fakhira had neither the money nor could he borrow it. He never saw his wife and daughter again. Nearly every labourers questioned in Fiji by Andrews and Pearson said he or she was away from home and when he or she was recruited. The Report of Andrews and Pearson described the situation graphically. 'In a very large number of cases the labourer's family members did not know anything about their recruitment. Many of them were ignorant village people, they were recruited when they had lost their relations in a crowded railway station or when they were on a pilgrimage or when they did not know the way and merely going from one village to another when the recruiting agent came along and tempted them to emigrate with false promises. After registration the recruits were escorted to Calcutta or Madras by the sub-agents or their assistants, by rail in ordinary third-class. It was noticeable among the women how many were recruited at the pilgrim centers. The

\textsuperscript{209} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{210} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{211} Ibid., p. 55.
common narrative was, that the recruiting agent came up, offering to take the women to her relations or to show her some sacred shrine and then took her to the depot.212

One of the examples which shows that the hardship of Indian immigrant indentured women life involved in the Fiji plantation, extract of the report of Andrews and Pearson had the following observation to make on how women were cheated by the recruiting agents: ‘The Indian woman who comes out under indenture has a still more serious charge to make against the signed agreement. These women are simple, ignorant Indian villagers who have been used to field work. They are told in the agreement that they will have agricultural work to do in Fiji at the minimum wage of nine annas per day for a complete task. They naturally picture to themselves a state of labour in the field such as they have been used to in India. But when they get to their work in Fiji, they find that all is changed. Those who have seen the Indian women working in the fields in India with her little family playing near her, will realize the change when she is told to leave her family behind in the coolie “lines”. She is not told, also, in the agreement that she will be compelled, under penal clauses to work incessantly, day in, day out, with no time to cook her own husband’s meal or look after her own children. She is never told anything also of the condition of the coolie “lines” in which she will be compelled to live, without any privacy or even decency, for five years, with no possibility of change. All this is hidden from the village woman who enters into the indenture agreement in India. In these circumstances, as well as other, it cannot be called a fair contract. For it is made on behalf of one party, the Fiji Government, who is fully aware of the actual state of affairs as they exist in Fiji, with another, the ignorant coolie woman, who is imaging entirely different conditions.’213

A Hindu Bania met Andrews and Pearson (in India) and told them that his wife was kidnapped by the recruiters. When Andrews asked him if he had made any attempt to get her back. He answered negatively and said because once she had been inside of the depot she was stained (polluted). The Report of Andrews and Pearson added: ‘It was clear from the narratives of the women in Fiji that when once they had

crossed the threshold of the depot, their terror became too great to allow them to turn back. The recruiter was then able to coach the women in the questions which they had to answer and they very rarely refused to answer according to his direction when the time came.214

As Andrews and Pearson wrote in their report, 'we can not forget our first sight of the coolie “lines” in Fiji. The looks on the faces of the men and the women alike told one unmistakable tale of vice. The sight of young children in such surroundings was unbearable to us. And again and again as we went from one plantation to another, we saw the same unmistakable look. It told us of a moral disease which was eating into the heart and life of the people. Though we were no novices to conditions such as these, yet what we met within Fiji was far worse than we had ever anticipated. We felt that vice was spreading, like blight, over the Indian population of Fiji.'215

Speaking at length on the much hated indentured system in Fiji, Armi Besant remarked: 'Decent kindly villagers are bribed or kidnapped in to five years of slavery in a foreign land; they are sent out, herded together in a crowded vessel, the unmarried men and women being in the proportion of one to three. Arrived in Fiji, they are lodged in barracks in an indescribable state of filth and misery. They live in promiscuity, or in the more ‘respectable lines’ in recognized polyandry, the kindly planter sorting out so many men to each woman, on the ground that there are fewer fights and murders and suicides under this condition than under general promiscuity. And these are Indian women, in whom from time immemorial chastity has been supreme virtue women to whom Sita and Savitri were held up from childhood as models...'.216

Assaults and Murders on Sirdars and Overseers

One problem, which was perhaps inherent in the system of indentured labour was that of violence on the plantations. Naturally every effort was made to induce labourers to finish their tasks. Labourers were urged on by overseers and sirdars not

214 Ibid., p. 10.
215 Ibid., p. 16.
always in a gentle manner but accompanied by abuse. There were some European overseers who were habitually cruel on the labourers. As a result, overseers and sirdars were sometimes assaulted and even murdered.

Important causes of assaults on and murders of overseers and sirdars were retaliation for assaults on immigrants, inadequate knowledge of the Indian's language, the frequent interference with labourer women, excessive tasking. The assault by immigrants almost invariably resulted in prosecution and conviction, only a small proportion of those by overseers and sirdar had the same outcome.217 For a time Labasa was the worst centre and until 1903 there was almost a state of civil war there. Labourers were often beaten and in turn many white overseers and sirdars were assaulted. Some overseers even carried revolvers for their protection. These conditions were probably due to the bad local management of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company and to the light sentence inflicted especially on overseers, by the Stipendiary Magistrate in Labasa. A serious warning was given to the company by the Governor Sir George O'Brien and in 1900 the Magistrates were asked inflict more severe sentence in future.218

Table III. 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Charges of Assault</th>
<th>Convictions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Labasa</td>
<td>1900</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labasa</td>
<td>1901</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labasa</td>
<td>1902</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: K. L. Gillion, Fiji's Indian Migrants, p. 115

In 1906, an indentured labour on Esivo Estate was kicked in the ribs by his white overseer. He was taken in pain over rough roads for eight miles to the nearest hospital, where he was pronounced dead. When the overseer was charged with manslaughter, he was acquitted on the grounds that the Indian labourer had fallen off a

217 Gillion, Fiji's Indian Migrants, pp. 112-113.

218 Ibid., p.115.
mule earlier in the day and perhaps sustained internal injuries. One of the labourers decided to administer his own justice; the man attacked the European with an axe and he was seriously wounded. His assailant was given ten years' penal servitude and twenty-four lashes.\textsuperscript{219}

In 1907, a revolt occurred in the Lambasa estate with the arrivals of about sixty Pathans and Pujabis, tough and muscular, who announced that they had been recruited for the police. But when they arrived on the Lambasa estate, another grievance had cropped up: instead of flour they were issued rice for their rations. The labourers refused to work fifty-seven of them marched off to meet the Stipendiary Magistrate. The Magistrate said that their complaints would investigated and ordered them back to the estate. They refused to go and three of their leaders were promptly arrested, while the remainders were escorted back to the lines by armed police. They still refused to work and beat up two blacklegs who wanted to give in. Ten more were arrested. The Indians then armed themselves with shovels, hoes and other implements and threatened the police party consisting of a European Inspector, a sergeant and eight constables. In order to protect his men, the Inspector ordered them to fire. Three Indian immigrants were severely wounded. The governor then redistributed individuals, who refused to work, to the Suva estate owners.

Attacks by Indians upon overseers and sirdars gave the European population particular anxiety in 1908 and planters' Association passed a resolution urging that steps be taken to suppress 'murderous outrages by indentured labourers. The government was asked in the Legislative Council to appoint a commission to inquire into recent cases, but it was replied that the time was no opportune. In the meanwhile the murder of one European overseer had led to the execution of five Indians responsible for it.\textsuperscript{220}

\textsuperscript{219} Hugh Tinker, \textit{A New System of Slaver}, pp. 230-231.

\textsuperscript{220} Ibid., p. 116.