

# The Journey of Indian Diaspora as Indian Indentured Labourers in Fiji

**Kadri Nashrin. A**

Ph.D. Research Scholar, School of International Studies and Diaspora,  
Diaspora Research Center, Gujarat University, Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India

**Abstract:** Indian diaspora is the largest diaspora in the world. As we know, the basic reasons for diaspora are unemployment, natural disaster, forced migration, etc. In this paper, I would like to depict Indian diaspora in Fiji as an indentured labourers. Indian labourers brought to Fiji as indentured labourers to work on a sugarcane plantation. They signed a contract from labourers which was called 'girmit' and who came under this contract called 'girmitya'. It was a five-year contract that contained rules and regulations for workers. They had to face many obstacles during their journey from India to Fiji and also, they had to suffer hardship on Fiji island as indentured labourers. With the passage of time, Indian indentured labourers and their new generation have got the identity as Fiji-Indians. There are many notable Indo-Fijians like James Madhwan who was one of the longest-serving parliamentarians in Fiji, Mahendra Chaudhary was the fourth Prime Minister of Fiji, Sidiq Koya was politician, opposition leader and statesman and so on. Indians brought as indentured labourers to Fiji island but with their hard work and intelligence they have got their rights and made a distinct place in Fiji.

**Keywords:** Indian, diaspora, Fiji, Indenture, labourers, girmit, girmitya, Fiji-Indians

**Aims:** To explore the journey of the Indian Indentured Labourers in Fiji, and how did they come out from the oppressed situation; and got the identity as Indo-Fijian or Fiji Indian in Fiji island.

**Objectives:** To explore and understand the indentured labour system, to explore how Indians migrated to Fiji as an indentured labourer, and their struggle; fight for equal rights and identity. This research paper tries to show the positive side of diaspora that through struggles and fight for equal rights, they get their identity and highest position in different fields in Fiji

## REFERENCES

- [1]. Ali, A. (1979a). *Girmit: The Indenture Experience in Fiji* (Bulletin of the Fiji Museum, No. 5). Suva: The Fiji Museum.
- [2]. Banka, Neha. 2019. *International Day for Remembrance of the Slave Trade and Abolition: how it tells stories of Indian indentured labourers*. The Indian Express. Retrieved from <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-international-day-for-remembrance-slave-trade-abolition-tells-stories-of-indian-indentured-labourers-5932089/>
- [3]. Bhatia, Pashchiema. 2016. *May 14 is marked as Indian Arrival Day or Girmit Day in Fiji*. NewsGram. Retrieved from <https://www.newsgram.com/may-14-is-marked-as-indian-arrival-day-or-girmit-day-in-fiji/>
- [4]. Cohen, R. 1997. *Global diaspora: An Introduction*. UCL Press. London.
- [5]. Cohen, R. 2008. *Global diaspora: An Introduction*. (Second Ed.). London & New York: R
- [6]. Davidson, J.W. (1975). *Peter Dillon of Vanikoro: Chevalier of the South Seas*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press. p. 31. ISBN 0-19-550457-7. outledge.
- [7]. Ed. Kosinski. A., & Elahi. M. (1985). *Population redistribution and development in South Asia*. Holland: D. Reidel Publishing Company.
- [8]. Ed. Lal. V. Brij. 1998. *Crossing the Kala Pani : A Documentary of Indian Indenture in Fiji*. Division of Pacific and Asian History, ANU and The Fiji Museum, Suva.

- [9]. Ed. N.Jayaram.2004.*The Indian Diaspora: Dynamics of Migration*. Sage Publications. New Delhi.
- [10]. Government of India. 2001. India 2001:A Reference Annual. New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.
- [11]. Gupta, Neerja & Saraswat, Rakesh. 2010. *Summarisingthe History and Perspective of Global Indian Diaspora : Student's Edition*. Ashok Prakashan.
- [12]. Hugh,Tinker. 1993. *A NewSystem of Slavery: The Export of Indian Labour Overseas, 1830-1920*. Hansib Publishing Limited 2nd edition. London.
- [13]. Hugh, Tinker. 1977. *The Banyan Tree: Overseas Emigrants from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [14]. Kanwal, J. S. (1980). *A hundred years of Hindi in Fiji*. Suva, Fiji: Fiji Teachers Union. p. 75.
- [15]. Kenny, K. (2013). *Diaspora: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press, New York.
- [16]. Kumar, Sunil. 2005. *Contribution of Indians to Fiji's growth, development*. Hindustan Times. Retrieved from <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india/contribution-of-indians-to-fiji-s-growth-development/story-sXiEgTbjarWn9mzKQRAx6N.html>
- [17]. Lal,Brij.2013.*Chalo Jahaji: On a Journey through Indenture in Fiji*. ANU press.p 143.
- [18]. Ibid., ch 11. p195-196.
- [19]. Ibid., ch 11. p 205-206.
- [20]. Ibid., ch 12. p 215-216.
- [21]. May 17,2015. *Girmit Day in Fiji*. The Fiji Times. Retrieved from <https://www.fjtimes.com/girmit-day-in-fiji/>
- [22]. Nasokia, Waisea. 2020. *Farzan On A Comeback Trail*. Fiji Sun. Retrieved from <https://fjtimes.com.fj/2020/03/08/farzan-on-a-comeback-trail/>
- [23]. Prasad, Rajendara. 2020. *100th anniversary of the termination of Girmit*. The Fiji Times. Retrieved from <https://www.fjtimes.com/100th-anniversary-of-the-termination-of-girmit/>
- [24]. Prasad, Rajendra. 2015. *Banished and excluded: the Girmit of Fiji*. Himal. Retrieved from <https://www.himalmag.com/girmit-fiji/>
- [25]. Roychowdhury, Adrija. 2017. *Indenture system ended a century ago, but Indians still face racism in British colonies*. The Indian Express. Retrieved from <https://indianexpress.com/article/research/indenture-system-ended-a-century-ago-but-indians-still-face-racism-in-british-colonies-4596378/>
- [26]. Safran, William. 1991. 'Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return', *Diaspora*, 1[1]: 83-99.
- [27]. Sanadhya, Totaram. 2003. 'My twenty-one Fiji Island and The Story of the Haunted Line.' Fiji Museum.
- [28]. Singh, Swastika. 2015. *Fijian boxer Joy Ali passes away*. Fijivillage. Retrieved from <https://fjivillage.com/news/Fijian-boxer-Joy-Ali-passes-away-2r95ks>
- [29]. Singh,Ranjit. *The Stolen History of Indo Fijian Girmitya*. Retrieved from <http://girmit.org/what-i-do/thakur-ranjit-singh/the-stolen-history-of-indo-fijian-girmitya/>
- [30]. Sinha, Aakash. 2016. *Countries with more than 20 % population of people of Indian origin*. NewsGram. Retrieved from <https://www.newsgram.com/countries-with-more-than-20-population-of-people-of-indian-origin/>
- [31]. *The Constitution of The Republic of FIJI*. 2013. Ch.2. Retrieved from <http://www.pacii.org/fj/Fiji-Constitution-English-2013.pdf> p 23. L 10-11.
- [32]. Ibid. Ch.1. p 3. L 8.