

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

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**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 'girmitiya'. 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, girmitiya, 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

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the globe, every creature has been migrating for various reasons since ancient times, and human beings have been no exception from this. There are various reasons for moving to another country like social, economic, religious, slave trade, human trafficking, deportation, war refugees, and forced displacement. Since ancient times, in search of a job, food, and a better life, human beings move from their country to a developed country; it is usually basic criteria of diaspora. The term 'diaspora' derives from the Greek word 'διασπορά' which means 'to scatter' or 'to disperse.' The term 'diaspora' basically mentions the exile of Jews from Babylon in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Cohen employed the term 'classical Diaspora' in 1997 that refers to the Jews. In the present time, the term 'diaspora' has been covered by various groups of people throughout the world who disperse from their original homeland.

*"To study a banyan tree, you not only must know its main stem in its own soil, but also must trace the growth of its greatness in the further soil, for then you can know the true nature of its vitality. The civilization of India, like the banyan tree, has shed its beneficent shade away from its own birthplace.... India can live and grow by spreading abroad- not the political India, but the ideal India."*

-Rabindranath Tagore (cited in Tinker 1977: 3)

Indians migrated to different countries for various reasons like poverty, famine, in search of a job, better life, and so on, but they connected to their roots. The colonizers prohibited slavery in India between 1830-1860 only to replace it with another form of slavery as the indentured or bonded labourer. (Banka, Neha. 2019). During the colonial era, there are

three different patterns of Indian emigration identifiable: 1) 'indentured labour emigration, 2) 'kangani' and 'maistry' labour emigration, and 3) 'passage' or 'free' emigration.(Tinker. 1993). There are about over 25 million people of Indian Origin all over the globe- Mauritius, South America, Suriname, Trinidad, Tobago, Guyana, Middle East, Oceania, Fiji and so on. (Sinha, Aakash. 2016). The indentured labour contract was officially sponsored by the colonial government; it was a three or a five years contract with a specified salary to work on a sugarcane plantation and for agricultural work. The indentured system began in 1834 and ended in 1920. The Indian indentured labourers had to go through so much pain, struggles, and many obstacles. They have fought for their equal rights and identity. The term 'Fiji Indian' was used by writers like K.L. Gillion and by the academic and politician, Ahmed Ali. There is an immense contribution to the politics, socio-economy, and business given by the Indian in Fiji. There are several Indian Fiji contributed in the growth and development of Fiji such as, James Madhavan who was longest serving parliamentarians in Fiji, Siddiq Moidin Koya who was lawyer, Fiji Indian leader, Mahendra Chaudhary who was the fourth Prime Minister of Fiji, Rajesh Chandra who is Indian descent and gives his precious service in academic field in university of Fiji, and there are also in sports, film industry, singer, and song writer.

### **Diaspora and Different Types of Migrations of Indians**

There is no particular definition for the term 'diaspora.' Generally, the term depicts the dispersion of Jews after their exile from Babylon in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. The term 'diaspora' derives from the Greek word 'Diasperien' which means 'scatter' or 'dispersion'. Diaspora is not merely a journey or migration but a postponder; there are so many reasons behind it such as social, economic, religion, food, slave trade, human trafficking, deportation, war refugees, forced displacement, and voluntary migration. Mainly, the term 'diaspora' depicts the dark side of the migration, and that is 'forced exile.' 'War' and 'Partition' are common examples of forced exile. Kosinski and Elahi write, "Withdrawal of the British from India and the division of the letter into India and Pakistan was associated with a massive transfer of population estimated at 14.5 million between 1947-1951" (Kosinski & Elahi, 1985, 4-5). A massive transfer of large groups of humans from one geographical area to another is called the 'Mass Migration'. According to William Safran, diaspora is an exile minority community that has the following six characteristics: a) dispersed from an original homeland to two or more peripheral points; b) feels nostalgic about homeland; c) feeling of alienation in the host society; d) eventual return to the homeland, when time is right; e) they are committed to the restoration and prosperity of the homeland; and f) continuing relationship with the homeland gives rise to consciousness and solidarity in the diasporic community. (Safran, 1991: 83-4). Robin Cohen has chiefly added the idea of victim and labour/trade diaspora to the list of William Safran's characteristics of diaspora. The following two mainly added features of diaspora: a) a sense of fraternal bonding with co-ethnic members in other host lands; and b) the possibility of a distinctive creative, enriching life in host countries with a tolerance for pluralism. (Cohen. 1997: 26, 180-7). As the term diaspora is active and changing from time to time, so we cannot give a particular definition of the term diaspora. In short, we can say that the meaning of the term diaspora is- 'due to any reason persons or groups of people who are moved from homeland to hostland and still, have the feeling of attachment to his motherland.'

In the mid-nineteenth century, the Indian indentured labour system was introduced by the British empire that led to the expatriate of about 3.5 million Indians to the British colonies as Indian indentured laborers. (Roychowdhury, Adrija. 2017). Historically there are five types of Indian migration: 1) **Kangani/maistry**- The term 'Kangani' is derived from the Tamil language word 'Kankani' which means foreman. It started in the first quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was a recruitment system, and Kangani employed labour and paying them in advance for expenses. They supplied South Indian labour to Malaysia and Sri Lanka. In the 'maistry system', the contract did not have a limit of the time, and laborers were legally free, and there was no need for any middlemen. The maistry system almost resembled the kangani system. It started in the third quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. 2) **Free passage** - It was primarily in countries of South Africa and East Africa such as Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. Generally, it was the emigration of business or commerce classes. Mostly Gujaratis and Punjabis migrated to East Africa, and they settled as shopkeepers and took over the business and commercial activities. 3) **Brain drain** - In the late 60s, the numerous Indian immigrations moved into the advanced and developed industrial societies of North America is known as 'Brain Drain' or 'Voluntary Emigration.' It started in the 1960s, during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it has been the migration of traders, white-collar workers, professionals, doctors, engineers, teacher, IT professionals, scientists, etc. to the western developed country such as Australia, Japan,

Hong Kong, Singapore, and Gulf countries. The immigrants who come under this system are entirely voluntary, highly educated professionals and skilled, semi-skilled industrial workers. Sikhs comprise the single largest ethnic group in Britain, Canada, and the U.S in this class. 4) **Skilled/semi-skilled labour**- Unlike the brain drain system, the migrants were not free, but they were contract workers; and they could not settle for a lifetime in the host land. Due to the booming oil economy, the shortage of skilled/semi-skilled workers increased the numbers of Indian migration into West Asia. In West Asia, Keralites comprise a large group of Indian migrants. 5) **Indentured Labour**- Indentured was a contract of three or five years to work on sugarcane plantation with a specified salary. The Indentured contract was quite impressive, and every detail was included in it; it was three or a five-year contract, the workers or girmitya had to work on a sugarcane plantation, medical facilities, and living quarters. This kind of contract was known as 'girmitya', and the workers who came under this contract were known as 'girmitya'. But it was a huge difference between promises and reality. The workers' condition was terrible, and the employers had exploited them in Fiji.

#### **'Girmitya'- the Indenture Contract:**

Indenture was a contract of three or five years in which emigrant was bound to work on the plantation with a specified payroll; at the end of the contract, the laborers could re-indenture or could go back to their homeland at their expenses. The term 'Girmitya' is a crooked form of the English language word 'agreement.' It was an agreement of work for a particular time in Fiji with specific rules and regulations in it for the workers; the workers who came under this agreement were known as 'Girmitya.' According to the Girmitya contract, the Girmityas were free to go to India after five years at their expenses, and they could also renew the contract for the next five years. The indentured laborers' form included the following terms: a) time of service; b) type of labour-work; the number of days and hours for work on the plantation; c) monthly/daily or rates of task-work; d) different work-rates and work-hours for male and female; e) mostly wages paid weekly on Saturday; f) at the end of the contract, the labourer may return to India at their expenses; g) the emigrant above the age of twelve who continuously resided for ten years and during that time has completed an industrial five years, shall be eligible to a free- return passage; h) in the initial sixth month, the emigrant will receive ration from the employer at a daily cost of fourpence; i) the child between five and twelve years of age will receive half ration free of cost; j) the emigrants will receive medical facility, hospital accommodation, medicines, and; k) emigrant will not marry for the second time until the first wife is alive. (Ed. Lal.V.Brij. 1998.p 7)

#### **Arrival and condition of Indians as Indentured Labourers in Fiji :**

India has a long history of emigration of Indians; In the history of ancient India, we came across to know that the accounts of the Buddhist Bhikkhus travelled into Central and Eastern Asia. ( Tinker. 1977. 1). Indians have been migrating to various countries at a different time for several reasons. In Fiji, 49% of the Indian origin people are the single largest ethnic community, Guyana 53%, Mauritius 74%, Trinidad and Tobago 40% and, Surinam 37%. (Ed. N.Jayaram.2004. Introduction 16.) Approximately there are over 20 million people of Indian origin all over the world, besides six million Indian citizens. ( Government of India 2001:680)

Indians had been emigrating as indentured labourers for forty-five years. In 1879, the migration of Indians as indentured labourers started to Fiji by Sir Arthur Gordon, who was the first substantive Governor of the colony (1875-80). Peter Dillon recorded the first presence of an Indian in Fiji as a sandalwood trader of a lascar (Indian seaman) who saved from a shipwreck and lived amongst the indigenous of Fiji in 1813. (Davidson, J.W. 1975. p 31). The first ship of 464 Indians brought from India into Fiji in the British Steamer 'Leonidas' on 15 May 1879. (Kumar, Sunil. 2005). The journey took about 10 or 20 weeks to reach on the destination; the duration was depending on the destination. After few days of journey cholera, and smallpox burst out on the ship. And soon spread to the migrants. The migrants who were affected with smallpox kept in the sail locker, and cholera patients admitted to the hospital. The ship Leonidas arrived off the port of 'Levuka' on the island of 'Ovalau'. ( Lal, Brij. 2013. 143). The condition of indentured laborers on the ship was similar to those on slave ships. About sixty thousand indentured laborers came to Fiji; forty-five thousand from North India and fifteen thousand from the South. The huge numbers of migrants came from the region of North, such as Uttar Pradesh, Poorbea district, Basti, Gonda, Faizabad, Sultanpur, Azamgarh, and Gorakhpur. From South India, most laborers came from Madras, Arcot, Tanjore, Krishna, Godavari, Vishakhapatnam, Coimbatore, and Malabar. (Ed.Lal,Brij.1998.Introduction.1). It was not mere physical migration, but Indian indentured laborers carried

social and cultural baggage with them, which consisted of social identity, religious beliefs, and practices, languages, food habits, and family values on the journey. The most important thing is that they still have a connection with their motherland. The indentured laborers may keep a physical or mental attachment with their native land, which is known as 'the myth of return.'

With the abolition of slavery, the British Empire started to migrate laborers from India as indentured laborers to fill the loss of workers in their colonies. There were about 75% of Indians laborers from Calcutta in which 85.3% Hindus, 14.6% Muslims and 0.1% Christians; there were various castes in Hindu- Brahmin and other high cast consisted 16% of those who arrived Fiji through Calcutta, the agricultural castes, 31.3%, artisans 6.7%, low castes 31.2%. And the rest of the Indian labourers from Madras arrived in Fiji. (Ali, A. 1979). The main reasons behind migration to Fiji were the failure of crops, debts, atrocities of zamindars, lack of works, and population. The main reasons behind migration to Fiji were the failure of crops, debts, atrocities of zamindars, lack of works, and population. It was the push factor that worked behind to convince Indians to go to another land as laborers. The 'Arkati'-the recruiters, their work was to show Indians glorious dreams about the future and beautiful picture of would-be the destination, and recruit labour for the plantation. It was quite easy for the recruiters to convince people to work on the plantation because most of them were illiterate, and few of them understood the terms of the contract, and they put their thumb imprint on the contract. Most of the time, the recruiters misled the Indians regarding the wages and destinations.

When the indentured laborers reached on the estate, they felt alienated into a new social atmosphere and in the dominant majority of the ethnic group. They came to know that their religion, culture, music, literature, fine arts, language, dress, food, etc. are utterly different from the other. They suffered from psychological fears, such as anxiety, stress, rejection, and suspicion of ethnic survival. It was their conviction and positive approach towards the Indian ethnicity; through these, they adjusted to the new social atmosphere. The history of the Indian migrants is associated with sugarcane plantation and with the Colonial Sugar Refinery Company. They worked in coconut and banana plantation and the plantation of cotton and cocoa. They also engaged in public works and sugar mills. The room allotted to the workers/girmitiya in a barrack of sixty rooms eight on each side, the rooms were 10 feet by 7 feet or, after 1908, 10 feet by 12 feet. They allotted room either to the three single persons or married couples only with two children. The rooms allotted with mere doors, and there were no other facilities such as windows, floors, ventilation, etc. The workers spent their life in the room; it was a storeroom, which was a living room, kitchen, and bedroom for them when they did not go outside. There was no privacy; some married couples had to adjust with a single person. They had to eat, work, and live together, and in this way the caste system was collapsed amongst the Indian indentured labourers. Most of the Indians came from the North and South part of India, and they conversed in different dialects and languages; so, they developed a new language, 'Koine language,' which is generally known as 'Fiji Hindi' or 'Fiji Baat.' 'Fiji Indians' diversity is reflected in their family lives and marriage institution. In rural areas, they continue the practice of arranged marriages. A boy and girl marry in the late teens, and wedding ceremonies run many days. In Hindu marriages, Pundit performs the ritual of wedding in the mandap. In Muslim, Nikah is done in the presence of Maulavi. Generally, a wedding ceremony is a time to show of family's wealth and status in the community. They built schools, temples, mosques; and also implanted Indian traditions, customs, and culture in their children to make secure that their children did not have to suffer their difficult circumstances.

Mostly Europeans owned the plantation in Fiji, and most of the employer of indentured labourers were C.S.R. The owners of the plantations and planters were whites, whereas the labourers were black in Fiji. There was not much difference between the indentured labour system and slavery; the behaviour and attitude of the owner of the plantation were worse towards the laborers. The indentured laborers were called 'coolies' in a degrading way by the white men on the estate. The indentured laborers had to face hardships such as getting up at the dawn for work on the field, and each labourer had to complete their given task on time. If any labourer were incapable to complete the task, they had been punished in the form of whipping, fined, imprisonment, and the extension of the indenture. Many indentured laborers tried to run away from the plantation, but unfortunately, they were recaptured and imprisoned. They did not have any choice except to work on a plantation for five years. On the plantation, the indentured laborers had not found adequate medical, inspection safeguards, food for most of the years. The overseers and supervisors sexually assaulted and raped indentured women, and at that time, the polygamous relationship was pretty common in practice. 'The Bharat Mitra' and 'Allahbad Leader,' a mass-circulating Indian newspaper, printed Kunti's story in their newspaper and also started an



exceptionally intense campaign to stop the emigration of Indian indentured labourer altogether. Kunti was an Indian indentured labourer. She was being punished for her quarrelsome behaviour and creating trouble for plantation management. As a punishment, she was sent alone to an isolated banana patch at Nadewa in Rewa, Fiji, on 10 April 1913. Forceful isolation was a common technique to get control over rebellious workers. In the afternoon, overseer Cobcroft came on his daily round of inspection and caught hold of Kunti and asked improper demand to her. Kunti screamed and struggled to free from him and ran towards the Wainibokasi river and jumped into the river. Fortunately, a boy Jagdeo saved her from drowning in the river (Lal, Brij, 2013.ch 11.195-196). Women were an easy target to blame for ills running on the plantation, such as murder, human trafficking, prostitution, etc. Prostitution was the result of asymmetric sex ratio on the plantation. Women who were in jail for trespassing, the contract was an easy and fruitful target for few freed Indian men to push them into sexual trafficking. Sometimes because of men's greed, women have to lose their lives. Hugh Tinker reports the case of a young girl Surumi. She was married to different men four times by her father before being offered to Ram Sundar. Her greedy father took her back and sold her to another man, Lal Bahadur. Sunder and his friend murdered Surumi, her child, and her husband, as well as her parents. (Lal, Brij, 2013.ch 11. 205-206). At the end of the contract, some indentured laborers had selected return to India, and others chose to stay there. The women laborers chose to stay there because they believed that their family would not accept them again. Over 300 Indians committed suicide between 1884 and 1925. During the first decade and half of this century, the rate of Fiji Indian suicide was the highest among all Indian labour importing colonies and much higher than in India itself. Most males committed suicide. The Register of Deaths of Indian Immigrants recorded 291 suicides in which 259 were males and only 32 females. (Lal, Brij, 2013.ch 12. 215-216.). Between 1900 and 1909, over 1000 Indian indentured laborers died.

#### **Experiences of Totaram Sanadhaya as an Indentured Labourer:**

Totaram Sanadhaya shared his experience as an indentured labourer in Fiji in his book 'My twenty-one years in Fiji Island.' He was born in the village of Uttar Pradesh. His family lived in poverty, and to earn money, he left home and started looking for work in 1893. and by chance, he met with an 'arkati' (recruiter), he offered him a job at such a place where you could eat until your stomach full and play music, etc. and Totaram signed on the contract. Then, the 'arkati' presented all men and women to the magistrate, who processed 165 men in 20 minutes. The magistrate asked, are they agree to go to Fiji or not? When the laborers' boarding on the ship, the arkati promised that the wages would receive 12 annas per day. Totaram was registered as Thakur on paper, although he was Brahmin by caste, which increased his chance of being recruited.

On 28 May 1893, Totaram, with 500 more Indians, arrived in Fiji by Jumna ship. Totaram reached Nausori, where he allotted a room that was dirty and also rats, and few dogs could find in the location. He did not get enough ration, and the condition was like starvation. Many times he thought to committed suicide, but he took strength by reciting Mahabharata and Geeta. Soon, he became popular as panditji amongst others in the colony. After the end of his indentured, he became a prosperous sugarcane farmer. He also worked for the freedom and rights of the Indian indentured laborers. He visited throughout Fiji island, meeting with laborers and listening to their stories. In 1902, he organized Ram Lila in Fiji, and it became a widespread practice. He wrote a petition to the British authorities to arrange schools for the children of Girmitiyas in 1910. Totaram and few others also wrote a letter to Mahatma Gandhi to send the English-speaking lawyer to help the Indians. In December 1912, Manilal Maganlal arrived in Fiji and immediately started work for the Indians. Totaram returned to India in 1914. His book 'My twenty-one years in Fiji in Fiji Island' was banned in Fiji Island but received wide popularity in India. (Kanwal, J. S. 1980.p 75). Totaram Sanadhaya's book was used as the primary source of information in the movement to end the Indian indenture system.

#### **Abolition of Indentured Labour System**

Indian indentured labourers raised their voices against the brutality. In the 1880s, when recession resulted in extensive incidents of over tasking, workers marshaled demonstrations, and several strikes blew up. This condition disturbed the social order. Many Indian indentured laborers and their children became the victim of diseases that could have been prevented with appropriate food and hygienic conditions. The echo of the indentured labor system, racism, and

discrimination had heard in India, and the members of the anti-indentured labor system started the movement to aware people of the reality of the sugar estate. They made the following pamphlet and produced in Muzaffarnagar :

“ESCAPE FROM DECEIVERS.

ESCAPE FROM THE DEPOT PEOPLE

BEWARE ! BEWARE ! BEWARE !

It is not service. It is woe.

Don't fall in to their snare. They will ruin you.

You will weep your life along.

Instead of rupees, rubbish will fall (on you).

They are taking you across the sea!

To Mauritius, to Demerara, to Fiji, to Jamaica, to Trinidad, to Honduras.

They are not islands; they are hell.”

(Roychowdhury, Adrija. 2017.)

Finally in 1920, the indentured labour was abolished in Fiji, and all Indians indentured laborers became free in the country. Most of them became small sugarcane farmers, and others engaged in farming of rice, bananas, coconut, and vegetables. The other Indians worked in sugarcane industries as farmers, cane cutters, laborers, mill workers, transport operators; they also worked in a construction site, manufacturing, community, and social services, etc. Many other Indians joined skilled and semi-skilled jobs in both the public and private sectors. The small Gujarati community had power over the country's retail and wholesale business. The colonial government did not encourage the Indians in skilled and semi-skilled works because they saw Indians as agricultural labourers and farmers, and they did not stimulate the Indians to improve their education. However, through recital religious songs and stories, Indians kept alive tradition and education in their children in Fiji. After the indentured period, religious organizations such as the Methodist, catholic missions, Arya Samaj, etc. attempted to educate Indian children. Fijians were afraid of the increasing number and demand of Indians on their land. After the second world war, the population of Indians increased in Fiji, and Fijians were afraid of displacement in their country. Fijians filed a petition to the colonial office to ban the number of Indians in Fiji. Fijian was ready to admit dominance of the British over Lordship to neutralize Indians. On the political front, Fijian and European leaders united to frustrate Indians. At that time, the Fiji Indian community divided into the social-cultural grouping, such as North Indians and South Indians, Gujarati v/s West, Hindu, and Muslims; it was also the subdivision in Hinduism - Arya Samajis, Sanatanis, and in Muslims - Sunnis, Ahmadis and so on. Indians had to struggle and fight for equal rights and their identity. Indians migrated in a large number to North America And Australia. It had been a major impact felt in Fiji due to professionals-doctors, lawyers, senior civil servants, experienced teachers, and skilled workers had left Fiji. According to the constitution of Fiji, citizens of Indian descendants are known as Indians in Fiji, and in government documents, they use this name. However, numerous names have been advised to distinguish the Indian origin, India born Immigrants and born in Fiji, such as Fiji Indian, Indian Fiji, and Indo-Fijian. The term Fiji Indian was used by writers like K.L. Gillion and by the academic and politician, Ahmed Ali. The term Indo-Fijian has been used by writers, such as Adrian Mayer and Brij Lal. Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi, who was the vice-president of Fiji from 2004 to 2006, also used it in his speeches. (NRIOL.1997).

Indian and Indo-Fijians faced hardships for equal rights with the other ethnic groups in Fiji in the colonial period. They had to face off discrimination, abuse, and harassment. In the early 1960s, the election was held between two major political parties: 1) The Federation Party led by A.D. Patel (Indian born Gujarati Lawyer), which was popular, anti-colonial, anti-racial; 2) the other party was The Alliance Party, which was under the control of Colonial regimes. In April 1987, Fiji Labor Party defeated the ruling Alliance Party. In the initial stage of the first coup, the violence flared up against all Fiji's Indian population; in this violence, they did firebomb on properties of Indian members, traders, and farmers. They targeted Indians, and many Indian families had to hide in jungles for days to avoid the harassment, loot, stoning, and rapes. A new constitution was introduced by the collaborative attempt of the leaders of the Indigenous Fijians and Indo- Fijians. On 8 May 1999, Mahendra Chaudhary became Fiji's first prime minister of Indian descendants. (Prasad, Rajendra. 2015. 2). During the first month of Chaudhry's premiership, Fijian nationalist firmly opposed him, and there were many arson and bomb attacks in his office in Suva linked to extremists; however, Chaudhry easily survived. On September 6, 2013, Fiji's fourth constitution was signed into law by President Ratu Epeli

Nailatikau. The Fiji Hindi language has an equal position in 'The Constitution of The Republic of FIJI', and it is mentioned in the constitution that iTaukei and Fiji Hindi languages shall be taught as compulsory subjects in all primary schools. (Constitution of The Republic of Fiji. ch.2. p23. L 10-11). The translation of the constitution is also available in the Hindi language (Constitution of The Republic of Fiji.ch.1.p3. L 8.).

Many notable Indo-Fijian people have given their contribution to the development of the country in a different field-politics, film industry, music, sport, etc. In politics, James Madhwan was the longest-serving parliamentarians in Fiji, the other Indo-Fijian politician Sidiq Moidin Koya was the opposition leader, and after the death of A.D.Patel elected a leader of the National Federation Party. Mahendra Chaudhary was the first Indo-Fijian Prime Minister of Fiji. In sports, Joy Ali, Junior Farzan Ali, etc. are a memorable name; Joy Ali was the country's best boxer. His career was at the peak of height in 2005 when he defeated Ercument Aslan of Australia in the first round to claim the Pan Asian Boxing Association (PABA) junior middleweight title and got no.15 ranking with the World Boxing Association (WBA). In the academic field, the first Vice-Chancellor of the anew founded University of Fiji was Rajendra Prasad, and so on. Unfortunately, many Indians descendants of indentured laborers forgot how their ancestors were treated on the plantation. In commemorates of the Indian indentured laborers' hardship, struggle, their dreams, and sacrifices in the development of Fiji, who was the first settler in Fiji, celebrates May 14 as a 'Girmit Day' or 'Girmit Diwas.'

## II. RESULTS

Through the indentured system, the British colonies brought laborers from India to work on the plantation and made their colonies prosperous. They dehumanized, exploited, abused, and harassed Indians on the plantation. The colonizers wanted that Indians farmed on the sugar estate and earn money for them; and they would not give any kind of rights whether in social or politics, they would not give any kind of freedom and benefits. Before the end of the indentured system, Indians had to face hardships from the British colonies; after the abolition of the indentured system, Indians had to face discrimination, violence, harassment, and cases of loot from the indigenous Fijians. Indian indentured laborers fought for their equal rights and identity; they succeeded in getting their identity as Indo-Fijian. They started their journey as Indian indentured laborers and ended it as a citizen of Fiji island.

## III. CONCLUSION

Indian Diaspora is the world's largest diaspora. Since, ancient times Indians have been migrating for several reasons in different countries at various times, such as for religious preaching, for trade, and because of natural calamities, etc., some of them returned to the homeland, and some of them settled in the host land. The abolition of slavery had affected mostly Indian people; to fill the loss of workers in the British colony, they brought laborers from India, and in this way, they started the indentured labor system. The Indentured Labor system or Bonded Labor system was another name for slavery. Indians went to Fiji with the dreams of a better life, good job, and food but reality was different; they became a slave in the form of an indentured laborer. The chief factors for leaving the homeland and went to another country was lack of work, famine, exploitation, poverty, and so on. It was easy for recruiters to convince people for a job in the colony, and the second important part was that most of people were illiterate so, they did not understand what was written in the agreement, and they made thumbprint on the contract. The laborers had to face terrible situations and circumstances on the ship, even they did not know how far Fiji island was. They did not have any freedom; they had to work from the dawn to the evening; they did not get proper food, medicines, house, and salary on the plantation. The owner of the plantation exploited and abused indentured laborers; women also did not safe, indigenous Fijian also harassed Indians in Fiji. Fijians ruled over Indians in Fiji, and they believed that Indians would work on plantation only for them; they would not give any rights to questions and demand, whether political or social. Their only work would be to farm the land and pay rent to the Fijian landowners. The colonizers believed that it would be arduous for Indians to renounce their belongingness and their identity. In the initial stage on the plantation, it was difficult for them to adjust to the new society and in the new culture. In Fiji, indentured laborers had to eat, work, and live together, and these kinds of things demolished the caste system among Indians. They kept it alive their Indian culture and tradition by reciting religious songs on festivals, and they celebrated all festivals with each other, forgetting about the caste differences and religious differences. Despite the hardships they had to face on the plantation, Indians fought for their identity and equal rights and get success in getting an identity as Indo-Fijian. The journey of Indian indentured laborers

turned the dark side of the diaspora into the positive side by their hard-work, struggle, sacrifices, and become citizens of Fiji island and known as Indo-Fijian. Though the history of indentured laborers or girmitiya of Fiji has been hidden from the world.

To mention some future aspect, this paper can be extended to the research areas like the historical aspect and to measure the contribution and struggle of indentured laborers to the development of the country Fiji. It can also be extended to the journey of indentured laborers and their struggle, and for equal rights and identity.

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