

Indians Overseas

A guide to source materials in the India Office Records for the study of Indian emigration 1830-1950

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND 1830-1950

The abolition of slavery by Britain brought about a great migration of Indians from their homeland. This migration was in answer to the need of many former slave-plantation colonies for labour that was cheap and plentiful. From 1830 until 1920 the recruitment of Indians in India to work on the various plantations of the British and French colonies was organised through what became known as the indenture system, and throughout the period it was the responsibility of the Government of India to curb malpractices within the system. While undertaking this difficult task the government often came into collision with the Colonial Office which in its turn had to deal with increasing hostility towards Asiatic labourers in the colonies and the newly created British Dominions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The period from 1920 until 1950 saw the increasing growth of nationalism in India, especially between the two world wars. Indians both at home and abroad were struggling towards freedom and a national identity. In India the struggle was towards home rule and Dominion status, while abroad Indians demanded full rights as citizens of the countries in which they had chosen to settle. Both causes gained in importance because they were espoused by Mahatma Gandhi. It was hoped that the struggle for fairer treatment for Indians abroad would achieve success with Independence in 1947 and with India becoming a republic within the Commonwealth in 1950, but the problem was never resolved satisfactorily in the following decades.

1830 -1920

By 1830 the Industrial Revolution which had changed the material prosperity of Britain had left India economically poor. She was a consumer of British products, and could no longer claim to be a large-scale supplier of cotton goods to Europe. Most production that took place in the country was solely for local consumption. The slump in the cotton industry was accompanied by wide-scale unemployment, which caused many to seek work among the large peasant population of village India. But even the land was not secure, subject as it was to recurrent droughts accompanied by starvation on a huge scale. Thus the Government of India's proclamation in 1812 that it "should aim to protect the weak from oppression and secure to every individual the fruits of his industry" ¹ hardly rang true.

The situation in India was ripe for exploitation by British and French planters in the former slave-owning colonies, who wished to adopt the indenture system used by South American planters to obtain Chinese labour from the Portuguese settlement of

Macao. Under this system labour was recruited for the planters by their agents to work for a certain period of time (usually five years), during which the employer was legally obliged to provide fixed wages, medical attention and other amenities for the labourers. After the period had elapsed the labourer could either renew his term of employment or return to his native land. To the landless unemployed of India emigration offered hope of work, and they were no strangers to emigration as in the early years of the eighteenth century many of them from the over-populated east coast of the country had crossed to Burma.

Indian emigration to Mauritius began as early as 1830, but the labourers selected were described as "people taken from the refuse of the population of Madras",² and they were dismissed from the island. Yet on 9 September 1834 thirty-six men of the Dhangar or hill caste voluntarily attached their marks to an agreement in the Calcutta Police Office to work for five years on a sugar estate in Mauritius in return for a salary of Rs.5 per month, with six months' pay in advance and the payment of their outward and return passages. As the men accepted voluntarily to go to Mauritius the Bengal Government raised no objections.³

From 1 August 1834 to the end of 1835 fourteen ships landed "coolie" labourers from Calcutta in Mauritius, and the West Indian colonies were to follow in the recruitment of free Indian labour. The recruits came mainly from the Tamil areas of Madras in Southern India, from the United Provinces and from Bihar in the north. But to many of the recruits' new employers there was little difference between their new charges and their former slaves.

Governor Nicolay in Mauritius had to inform employers that Sunday work, unlimited hours and corporal punishment were illegal.⁴ In Calcutta the question of the transportation of Indian labourers was under review by Macaulay's Law Commission, and in London the anti-slavery committees opposed payment of compensation to Mauritius because the colony had continued the illicit traffic of slaves after the abolition of the trade.

Despite this malpractices still occurred within the indenture system, especially in the securing of safe passages for Indian emigrants. In 1837 accounts of disease, death and overcrowding were brought to the attention of the Indian government, and in May of that year the Legislative Council passed Act V, which made Captain F.W. Birch, Superintendent of Police at Calcutta responsible for the control of emigration, his duties being to check the engagements of the indentured labourers, the personal identity of the emigrants and accommodation on board ship.

In the same year that Act V was passed John Gladstone, father of the great Liberal leader, and three other planters arranged for the introduction of Indian "coolies" into British Guiana. The Colonial Office felt there was no need for an Order in Council for the admission of the labourers into the colony, and the scheme itself was thought "novel".⁵ But the Government of India banned all Indian indentured labour to the colonies until 1838 because of the abuses within the system. However these continued, and even in 1873 J. Geoghegan stated in his report:

“that very grave abuses had prevailed in India, emigrants having been in many cases entrapped by force and fraud, and systematically plundered of nearly six months wages, nominally advanced to them but really divided, on pretences more or less transparent, among the predacious crew engaged in the traffic.”⁶

The Court of Directors of the East India Company also discussed the question of total prohibition of emigration from India and, in 1838, after a meeting called at the Calcutta Town Hall by Thomas Boaz, a minister of the United Chapel there, a petition was presented of the Governor-General in Council protesting against the export of Indian labour and begging the Council to stop the traffic until it could be proved as beneficial to the Indian labourer as to the exporter and the employer.⁷

Through such protests, mainly by Evangelicals in Britain and India, a proposal was introduced that each Presidency should establish committees to enquire into malpractices in the system, and that the labour-importing colonies should also appoint Committees of Investigation to report on conditions in their areas. It also led to the “Natives of India Protection Bill” which was debated in the House of Commons on 20 July 1838; and the “Times” newspaper entered the fray by declaring the delivering of coolies to the West Indies at £21 a head was a “novel abomination”.⁸ During the debate Sir George Grey suggested that emigration to the West Indies should be stopped pending a full inquiry, but Sir Robert Peel questioned the right of the Governor-General in Council to stop Indians going overseas and further stated that the Bill should be dropped on the security of a two year ban on emigration, which would also give time to consider if this should be made permanent or not. The debate was halted when Sir George announced that the powers of the Governor-General in Council were being investigated and the House would receive information in due course.⁹ Act XIV, which was passed in India on 29 May 1839 by the Governor-General's Council, prohibited emigration for the purposes of manual labour, and persons carrying out such emigration were liable to a fine of Rs. 200 or three months' imprisonment. The colonial Committees of Investigation began their work at this time and immigration was closed to Mauritius, Demerara, Reunion, Ceylon and Australia. Yet the Committees were by no means a complete safeguard, as in the case of Mauritius where estates were inspected by four local officials with officers from India, and disagreement arose over the conditions under which the Indian labourers were compelled to work. All the officers apart from Charles Anderson, the special magistrate, reported the conditions satisfactory. Anderson declared to the Colonial Secretary in a letter dated 18 November 1838:

“With few exceptions they are treated with great and unjust severity, by overwork and personal chastisement; their lodging accommodation is either too confined and disgustingly filthy, or none is provided for them and in cases of sickness [there is] the most culpable neglect”.¹⁰

The other members of the committee remained adamant, but were compelled to admit that many immigrants had been deceived as to their conditions of work, some being told that they were going to do ‘gardening’.

On the Gladstone estates at Demerara, British Guiana, there were cases of overseers extorting money and assaulting the Indian labourers, whilst the conditions of the estate hospitals, were described as having "such unalleviated wretchedness, such hopeless misery".¹¹ Many suffered at the hands of their own countrymen employed as overseers on the estates or put in charge of the immigrants on the outward voyages because they could act as interpreters. But it was found that many only spoke certain dialects, not always the same as those for whom they were made responsible.

India Act XV of 1842 regulated the emigration to Mauritius of those Indians who came under the jurisdiction of the East India Company. It provided for a Protector of Immigrants in Mauritius and gave the colonial government the option of appointing a second Protector. Emigration was permitted from Calcutta, Madras and Bombay where there were to be Emigration Agents, acting for the Mauritius government but answerable to the Presidency governments. By providing such Protectors and Agents it was hoped that the Indian labourers would receive ample protection on the outward and return voyages and during their stay in the colonies. The first ship cleared from Calcutta under this system was the "Emerald Isle", which arrived at Port Louis, Mauritius on 23 January 1843. The immigrants were eagerly "signed up" by planters anxious for their services but they were reluctant to employ female immigrants who simply followed the men to whom they were attached.

Under India Act XXI of 1843 the ban on emigration to the several colonies was lifted but for the time being emigration was confined to Calcutta. Despite all well-intentioned efforts malpractice still occurred on the voyages, especially those to the West Indies and Mauritius. A case in point was that of the ship "Watkins" which had accommodation for 86 passengers but had been licensed to carry 118 emigrants.¹²

The voyage and the work took their toll of the immigrants, and regulations for passenger ships leaving from Indian ports were embodied in two acts of 1857 and 1859. Despite the regulations the Commissioner of the Circuit of the 16th District of Chittagong remarked upon the "pitiable condition" of labourers returning from seasonal work in Burma, due, he maintained, to the overcrowding of the emigrant ships in Chittagong port. By the mid-1850s every adult coolie should have been given seventy-two cubic feet of space. Surgeons on the West Indies immigrant ships were made responsible for vaccination, the selecting of cooks and sweepers, rationing, sick quarters, and for bathing each morning when 'in warm latitudes'. After the loss of the "Shah Allum" in 1859, which caused the death of 399 Indian immigrants, rescue equipment was regularly checked.

The Indian emigration depots, like the ships, left much to be desired. The Emigration Agent, who lived within the depot, and his Indian staff were supposed to be in charge of the well-being of the emigrants. The emigrants arrived at the depots under the supervision of the licensed recruiter or "Kangani" who had lured them away from their homes with promises of a bright future in the colonies.

The journeys were long, for example, that from Patna or Benares to Calcutta took thirty to forty days, and had the aspect of a forced march. Many Emigration Agents

testified that most “emigrants” arrived at the depot in very poor condition. Throughout the journey they had to contend with rival recruiters trying to lure them away and the taunts of the railway police. Yet despite such conditions few tried to escape, because it appears that the Kanganis placed persons amongst them who kept up the stories of the land of plenty that awaited them overseas.

The depots at Calcutta were designated for the various colonies, with never more than three or four there at any one time, especially in the 1880s. Two ships of coolies could be accommodated at the depots for two or three weeks before sailing but, if there were no ships waiting to sail, a delay of two or three months was not uncommon. New clothes were given to the emigrants and there was a medical inspection of both men and women. The men had their sight and hearing tested, and above all their ability to use heavy agricultural equipment. Women as well as single men were checked for venereal disease, but there were cases of women suffering from the disease being passed fit and subsequently arriving at their destination near death.

Yet a great many aspiring emigrants were turned away by the depots on medical grounds. Medical examinations improved over the years, and in 1894 the Protector of Emigrants noted in his report that out of 26,707 registered emigrants only 14,865 actually embarked for the colonies. A small percentage absconded from the depots and were lost in Calcutta’s teeming population. Those who did so most probably were frightened by the harsh side of depot life - the slightest hint of infection could change it into “a place of sickness and death”.¹³ Many testified to the filthy state of the depots, made worse when cholera was rife in Calcutta during the months of February to April. At Garden Reach, Calcutta, water was taken not from the wells but from tanks or pools in the vicinity of the depot. Most of the emigrants were from the hill tribes, the water was not agreeable to them, and numerous cases of dysentery resulted.

The passage to the colonies proved as harrowing an experience for the emigrants as the depot had been. The mortality rate for those emigrants who went to the West Indies during the 1840s and 1850s was very high. The heavier the annual numbers of immigrants the higher the mortality rate. The voyage of the “Merchantman” to British Guiana in 1857 ended with 375 out of 385 embarked falling sick, and 120 of these actually died on the voyage. Ships’ surgeons were hard-pressed on such voyages, and the Emigration Commissioners came down heavily on any who did not keep order and discipline, by use of the “rattan” if need be. Many surgeons complained of the poor physical condition of the emigrants on their arrival, and yet the same surgeons signed certificates of good health for these emigrants before departure.¹⁴

West Indies emigration had been restricted to Calcutta up until 1845, but the Jamaican Legislature then made a request, which was granted, for 5,000 Indian labourers. The period for which an emigrant qualified for a return passage in British Guiana and Trinidad was extended from five to ten years by an act of 1853. In 1856 India Act XXIX empowered the Governor-General in Council to prohibit emigration to a British colony where “there was reason to believe that proper precautions were

not taken for the protection of emigrants immediately upon their arrival in such a colony, or during the residence therein, for their safe return to India, or to provide a return passage at or about the time at which they were entitled to it'.¹⁵

Throughout the nineteenth century further acts were passed permitting emigration to various colonies under the indenture system and there was always a good supply of emigrants ready to escape the harsh realities of village India for the promise of steady employment in the colonies for about five years and then return home.

The Indian labourers worked on the sugar, coffee and rubber plantations overseas, as well as building the East African Railway and working as lumbermen in the forests of British Columbia in Canada. The expansion in rubber-growing attracted many former British, Dutch, French and Australian sugar planters, and plantations were often able to change from one crop to another, as in Ceylon, where when disease struck the coffee growing areas the change was made relatively quickly to tea.

Most new emigrants arrived in debt which was mainly caused through the settling of affairs at home and expenses for the journey. The Kangani kept a note of the debt, and deducted it from the labourers' wages, whose pay he collected. The pay was poor; the Kangani gave just enough to the labourer to stay alive, and thus the labourer was never out of debt. Planters in Ceylon during the 1850s paid labourers 4d to 6d a day, while in Java it was 1d a day. In the 1860s the pay at a bad estate in Jamaica was between 1/6d and 2/5d a week, and the average monthly wage in Mauritius was 11/- . By the 1890s rates of pay had risen a little, but Fiji, Demerara and Trinidad still averaged about 5/- a week. The 1909 Sanderson Committee found wages in Trinidad were under 3/6d a week. It should be remembered that most labourers had to accept wages in arrears, and were subject to stoppages because of absence or uncompleted work. On some estates in Ceylon before the revision of the labour law in 1883, wages had been in arrears for three years. Debt was not uncommon among the coolies, and many were indebted because they were blackmailed by their overseers with the plantation managers' knowledge.

Life on the plantations took its toll of both men and women, who usually arrived in poor physical shape and were not prepared for the rigours of field work. Much of the labour undertaken by the emigrants was as arduous as that of the former slaves and remnants of slavery still remained, such as the coolie accommodation or "lines" in British Guiana still bearing the title of the "Nigger Yard". The Jamaica Immigration Report of 1907-08 noted that the Brahmin or Fakir castes were also expected to undertake very rigorous work. Many of the emigrants died from home-sickness, but more died from overwork and appalling living conditions. The annual mortality rate for Jamaica in 1870 was 12%, and thirty years later the same figure was common for Mauritius. Many plantation owners worked the indentured labourers harder than slaves because they believed they were only there for a short period. Whereas they had given the slave two or three years to adjust to field work, the indentured labourer was expected to start at once before he was properly acclimatized. Sugar estates were worse than those of tea, coffee or rubber. One reason for this was the loss of profits in the sugar industry and the consequent lack of new machinery for the harvesting of the sugar crop. Thus to produce more sugar and at the same time

cut the losses the answer was to drive the worker as hard as possible and cut his wages. It is little wonder that most workers under these conditions spent what little rest they had in their barrack-like accommodation in drunken oblivion. Many coolies left the plantation after their indenture period had ended and returned to India, but for scores of others, mainly due to debt, there was no going back and the plantation was to remain the total area of their lives.

A petition of the Natal planters to Governor Grey in 1859 led to Indian emigration to South Africa in 1860, but emigration to East Africa did not begin until the 1890s, although Indian merchants had long frequented the latter area. The stream of Indian emigrants to Natal was small but steady and in 1895 the British opened up East Africa, using indentured labour to build the railway.

Many Indians established themselves as traders in East Africa especially in the settlements that sprang up alongside the railway. Lord Lugard saw golden opportunities in emigration and settlement for the expanding Indian population in the territory. Recruits for the Uganda Railway came mainly from Karachi, but it was not until 1901 that a Protector of Emigrants was appointed there. Over half the coolies returned to India at the end of their indentured term while others returned home as invalids. About 7% died and the remainder became traders or bought small tracts of land to work for their own purposes. The life of the railway coolie was very like that of the plantation labourer; the indenture period was only three years with payment of Rs. 15 a month, plus rations. There were no restrictions on off-duty hours and workers made their own living arrangements.

South African Indian emigrants lived mainly in Natal and Transvaal provinces, and the community rose in Natal from 10,626 in 1876 to 20,536 in 1880. Many had started as indentured labour but later became artisans and shopkeepers. The Europeans in the colony, especially the small businessmen, complained of being outnumbered by the Indians, and the 1885 Commission, appointed to study the question of Indian immigration there, upheld the view of the majority of opinion in Natal, that the Indian coolie "should remain under indenture during the whole period of his residence in the colony". A different view was taken ten years earlier when the Acting Protector of Immigrants states "that the "Indian settlers [were] ... in all respects free men' and fifty ex-indentured immigrants were listed as rate-payers and voters on the Burgess Rolls.¹⁶ This was reinforced when Sir Henry Bulwer, the Lieutenant-Governor of Natal stated in 1878 that:

"Time expired Indians are as regards the general law of the colony, in all respects free men, with rights and privileges not inferior to those of any class of the Queen's subjects in the colony".¹⁷

But there seems little truth in these statements considering that all Indians, including registered voters, had to abide by a nine o'clock curfew imposed on them by the municipalities of Durban and Pietermaritzburg.

The 1885 Commission reported in 1887 and were in favour of a ban on the entry of free Indians into the colony, and a restriction on imported indentured labour. In fact,

they encouraged employers to use Africans instead. Free Indians, the Commission suggested "should be reduced to a lower level" having no civil rights and being made to carry passes. Turning to the indentured labour again, they condemned the recruitment system in India stating that the recruits were criminals and the women were prostitutes, plying their trade on their own and other estates.

If the South African government wanted to ban Indian labour, the Indian and British governments thought seriously about the banning of indentured Indians to the French colonies of Reunion, Martinique and Guadeloupe because the labourers were treated as semi-slaves.¹⁸ It is clear that by the late nineteenth century it was felt that the indenture system should be stopped, but not all the reasons were clear-cut; nor did they spring from humanitarian motives.

Joseph Chamberlain sympathised with the white settlers overseas, who saw themselves as "swamped" by alien races. "Alien Immigration" was discussed at the 1897 Imperial Conference and Chamberlain supported the determination of the colonies to prohibit influxes of Asiatics, with their alien religion and customs. But he had to qualify his support by stating that no distinction or favours should be made against or to any person on the grounds of race or colour. Yet his speech made it clear that in any struggle over equality in the colonies the white settlers would have the upper hand.

But Chamberlain and the Imperialists had not reckoned with Gandhi, who was working as a lawyer in South Africa during the 1890s and who continually battled with the South African authorities for equal rights for Indians. He addressed a petition to Chamberlain in 1895 protesting against the £3 tax that was to be levied on ex-indentured Indians, but for different reasons advocated the ending of the indenture system: "If the Colony cannot put up with the Indians ... the only course . . . is to stop a future immigration to Natal, at any rate for the time being. Such stopping of immigration will not, your Memorialists submit, materially effect the congested parts of India".¹⁹

As Gandhi in South Africa was making India aware of the plight of her countrymen overseas, so Curzon, as Viceroy of India, and the Congress Party made the question of Indian indentured labour one of the important issues of the day. Between them Gandhi and Curzon called the indenture system into question. Curzon saw indentured Indian labourers as slaves of empire, and was sceptical about the benefits of the system, refusing to yield to the pressure of West Indian planters by not terminating their obligations to give Indians return passages. He felt also that the numbers emigrating were so small that they made little difference to the ever-growing population.

By the turn of the century numerous complaints were coming from the colonies of the evils that arose from the indenture system and in 1903 the Governor of Mauritius felt it was only being allowed to continue because it provided planters with labourers whom they could pay below the minimum living wage on which the rest of the population existed. Curzon felt the Government of India should remember that, in requesting labour, the colonies were asking a favour, and not the reverse. He

further made his point when sending a lengthy despatch to the India Office giving a resumé of the history of indentured labour in Natal, which demanded full discretion to withdraw from the system if the Indian community did not receive better treatment.²⁰ Both the Government of India and the India Office began to check carefully every colonial application for indentured labour, and in 1905 the India Office requested that the Colonial Office try to stop mass recruitment of Indian labour to the Transvaal, to which the Colonial Office replied that the topic 'would be allowed to sleep.'²¹

Between 1900 and 1914 public opinion in India, Britain and elsewhere grew against the indenture of Indian labourers. Like Gandhi in South Africa, Manilal Maganlal Doctor, who arrived in Mauritius in 1907 to practise at the Bar, was soon involved with the struggle for Indian rights. The native population in the Caribbean colonies were opposed to indentured Indian labour and black working men's associations began to be formed to protect their livelihoods. In 1910 the Sanderson Committee caused the system to be further modified. For although it had found that indentured labour was beneficial, even given the many drawbacks in the system, the general effect of their recommendations was a rapid decrease in importation of Indians.

In addition, unofficial reports on the restrictions placed on Indians overseas were coming from Henry Polak, C.F. Andrews and G.K. Gokhale. Indenture to Natal was terminated in 1911 and to Mauritius and Malaya in 1910. In the same year the Indian Legislative Council passed the Indian Emigration (Amendment) Act, which permitted emigration to be prohibited and made unlawful in any designated country. In 1912, the Colonial Office proposed that recruiting for labour should only take place in certain ports of India.²²

Questions were provoked in the Indian Legislative Council by the shooting of Indians by police at the riot on the "Rose Hill" estate in British Guiana in 1913. At the same time Gandhi was experimenting with passive resistance campaigns in South Africa, where he and two thousand Indian labourers were arrested on the Transvaal border for illegal entry, and Gandhi himself was sentenced to nine months' imprisonment. The affair shocked the Indian and British governments, causing the Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, to urge Indians in South Africa to defy the law of that country. Smuts, the South African Prime Minister demanded Hardinge's recall, but the latter refused to bend to pressure, stating that what he had said "came from the heart".²³ However, an Indian Enquiry Commission was established, and most of the Indian immigrants' grievances were met with a seemingly accommodating spirit by Smuts.

The 1913 McNeill-Chimman Lal Report was the inspiration of Lord Hardinge. Like the Sanderson Report, it did not advocate the immediate abolition of the system but only the postponement of abolition, which was further deferred by the onset of the First World War. But Gandhi's return to India in 1915 once more opened up the question of the plight of Indians overseas, and caused C.F. Andrews to begin his own personal campaign on their behalf in the form of pamphlets and reports between the two world wars.

In the meantime the Government of India had considered the McNeill-Chimman Lal Report and concluded that the system was basically wrong. Sir Benjamin Robertson, the Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces, felt that the weight of Indian opinion should be enough for the government to make an end of it altogether and Lord Hardinge urged:

“...very strongly upon His Majesty’s Government the total abolition of the system of indentured labour in the four remaining British Colonies and Surinam . . . and thus remove a racial stigma that India deeply resents and which reflects upon His Majesty’s Government and the Government of India in the sanction granted by them to a system of forced labour entailing much misery and degradation and differing but little from a form of slavery”.²⁴

At last a representative of the British authority in India had served notice on Whitehall that the system had to be dismantled. While he also realised that free emigration would not be easy to establish, Hardinge remained firm, stating: “It is not the duty of the Government of India to provide coolies for the colonies”.²⁵ The Indian government at last realised that if they did not stand out against indentured emigration now, they might well have to yield to pressure later on.

The remaining colonies, Fiji, Trinidad, Jamaica and British Guiana appeared to be unaware of the opinion that was building up against the system, and could only bemoan the fact that, despite having 500 recruiters in India, they could not secure a sufficient number of emigrants. Recruiting for emigrants during the war became more difficult, and the Emigration Agent at Calcutta told the Colonial Office that he was having to compete with the military, who were recruiting for Mesopotamia. But, ironically, as the system of indentured emigration was declining so the protests against it in India became louder. In fact recruiting had already stopped but in such a way that people did not notice for weeks or even months, and all that was left for the British government to do was abolish the system officially. The colonies, in a last effort to delay the inevitable outcome, tried to get the British government to persuade the Indian government to accept a new scheme for supplying labour, but failed.

Many Indians hoped that the ending of the indenture system would also mean a change in the laws relating to emigration and immigration. In 1918 the Dominions representatives met in London for the Imperial War Conference, and accepted that ‘the several communities of the British Commonwealth, including India, should enjoy complete control of the composition of its own population by means of restrictions on immigration from any of the other communities’.²⁶ The Indian delegate, Sinha, voiced the hope that this meant that there might now be a system of reciprocity in migration arrangements.

Meanwhile C.F. Andrews pursued his own course by releasing a medical report of the Fiji government, which revealed the treatment of male indentured labour and the abuse of Indian women. Andrews was annoyed at the slowness with which events were moving and his action at least elicited an admission from the Governor if Fiji

that the criticisms in the report could not be refuted, and a condemnation of living conditions in the Indian coolie lines.

Although in 1918 abolition of the system seemed near-at-hand it was delayed by proposals for quasi-indentured emigration. The Government of India as yet had no definite policy on labour emigration but it knew that the Indian people would never lend their support to such a scheme. The other colonies, apart from Fiji, accepted the inevitable and stopped taking Indian indentured labour. Fiji tried to move the Colonial Office by stating that sugar production had fallen by 50% in 1919 and the need for Indian labour was urgent. Both the Colonial Office and the India Office remained indifferent to such tactics, and the indenture of Indian labour came to an absolute end when the Colonial Office received a telegram from the Governor of Fiji on 2 January 1920 cancelling all indentures of East Indian labourers as from that day.²⁷

1920-1950

With the end of the indenture system, Indians were now faced with the problem of deciding either to return to India or to settle in their homes in the colonies and new Dominions. Other problems had been foreseen by M.C. Seton of the Judicial and Public Department of the India Office, who warned that it was "important to remember that the coolie's troubles will remain after his adroitly being removed from the role of political pawn".²⁸

Many Indians had seen the 1918 Imperial War Conference as an important step on the road of equality with the new Dominions, and felt therefore that some reality should be given to the concept of equality under the British Crown. The Indian National Congress in 1920 demanded that Indians be given equal status in the Dominions, and at the same time India was seeking Dominion status as a stepping-stone towards the fulfillment of home rule.

By 1920 Indians could enter British colonies with little difficulty but the Dominions were closed to them. There were also restrictions on those already residing in the Dominions, due to the white settlers' fear of being "swamped" by Asiatics. Nowhere was this more prevalent than in Kenya, whose legislative council had eleven elected Europeans to one nominated Indian representative. The best residential and commercial areas in Nairobi were reserved for whites, as were the best farming districts in the White Highlands. The planning of the town of Kampala in Uganda was also based on a similar segregation system. Such treatment forced Indians to demand equality and Dominion status, and it was only the Dominion of Newfoundland and the Irish Free State which had no restrictions on entry. Britain was not experiencing immigration problems at this time because it was felt 'our climate keeps coloured races away more effectively than the most drastic immigration restrictions'.²⁹

The more demands for white supremacy were asserted the more Indians agitated for their demands to be met. The more militant became members of the "Ghadr" or

“Revolution” party which made its first appearance in San Francisco with a journal which acquired a wide circulation amongst discontented Indians in the British colonies and dominions, and later became associated with terrorism and violence.

However, the 1921 Imperial Conference recognised the claims for equality by Indians in the Dominions. But recognition was not reached without difficulty. The Indian delegates, Sir G.S. Bajpai and Mr Srinivasa Sastri, had to deal with the Colonial Secretary, Winston Churchill. His main task was to mediate between Sastri and Smuts, the South African Prime Minister, though he never consulted with Sastri and dealt only with Smuts, whose vision of the British Empire was one of a “federation of white races”. While Churchill gave Smuts practical support, Hughes, Prime Minister of Australia, supported Sastri on the grounds that if he did not it would “strengthen the hands of those who, like Mr Gandhi, wish to wreck the Empire”.³⁰

Sastri tried to convey to the conference, and later on his goodwill tour of the Dominions of Australia, New Zealand and Canada, the loss of honour felt by Indians over the racial nature of the Dominion immigration restrictions, and the denial by the Dominions of full rights of citizenship to Indian residents. Few Indians wanted a revival of full-scale emigration, but neither did they want restrictions on their movements within the Empire.

Sastri’s 1922 Dominions tour needed to be a success because the passive resistance movement and the nationalists’ opposition to the Prince of Wales’ tour in 1921 showed India in a poor light to other members of the Empire.³¹ In Australia, he found Indians disqualified from obtaining land in certain areas and a lack of urgency about passing amending legislation.³² Sastri discovered hostility towards Indians in Canada, especially in the province of British Columbia where memories of the “Komagata Mara” remained strong. This was the incident in 1914 when a ship bearing 567 Indians (mainly Sikhs) was refused landing permission at Vancouver and turned back. Mackenzie-King, the Canadian Prime Minister, well knew British Columbian feeling about Asiatics, and being dependent on a single-vote majority in Parliament at the time he was not going to inflame that opinion by raising questions of citizenship rights for Indians.³³

Although Sastri’s tour was less successful than he had hoped, he at least laid the foundations for future harmonious relations.

Churchill, who had been opposed to Indian aspirations, now appeared to want them to have a greater partnership in the government of Kenya. In 1922 the Wood-Winterton Report proposed a common roll which would enfranchise Indians, the qualification for admission being a test census which would admit 10% of male Indian adults. But the number of Indians was to be kept to only half the number of Europeans by regulating the constituencies.

Conditions appeared to be improving in Kenya, and Sastri’s tour encouraged Indians to feel that they were making some headway along the path of equality. But such visions were shattered slightly with the appearance of the Devonshire Report in 1923. Political development was to be postponed in favour of the Kenya

government 'exercising a trust on behalf of the African population'.³⁴ However, Indians could now elect four representatives to the legislature and segregation was ended in the townships, though the White Highlands were to remain the white man's preserve. The interests of the Africans were to be paramount, and the 1923 Imperial Conference declined to revise policies on Indians overseas.

In South Africa, Patrick Duncan, Minister of the Interior, introduced the Class Areas Bill which aimed at placing Indians into separate urban areas for purposes of residence and commerce. Certain groups had been stirring up trouble against Indians and Smuts aided them by portraying the white settlers as a gallant little army defending themselves against the mighty Indian empire. The Class Areas Bill was introduced in 1924, and the same year saw the fall of the Smuts government and the election of Hertzog and the National Party. Indians now saw their fate in the hands of men who cared little for the union of the Commonwealth, and whose political creed was in the Afrikaner tradition.

In the same year a Labour government took office in Britain, and J.H. Thomas became Secretary for the Colonies. He showed himself ready to abide by the rules already laid down for colonial administration. In July a meeting was held of the Colonies Committee, promised at the 1923 Imperial Conference, at which the problems of East Africa and Fiji were discussed, but there was no discussion on South Africa.

The outcome of further meetings was first the Kenya Immigrants' Registration and Employment Ordinance, which established a board to restrict any trade or business detrimental to African interests, and secondly, concerning Fiji, a proposal that there should be a common franchise for all communities. The Colonial Office rejected the latter proposal in 1926, because Fiji, although wanting Indian labour, was not prepared to pay such a price.

In 1926 Ford Birkenhead presented to the Cabinet a bill whose aim was to bring about a considerable reduction of Indians in South Africa. The British government was placed in a difficult position, for if it accepted the bill's recommendations it had to face the deep Indian resentment against South Africa.³⁵ This serious situation led to an Indian delegation being invited to a Round Table Conference at Cape Town between December 1926 and January 1927. The main topics for discussion were repatriation to India and an examination of ways in which Indians residing in South Africa could conform to western living standards through improvements in public health and education. Sastri, one of the delegation, was greatly admired by Hertzog and white South Africa, and he was chosen to be the first Agent for the Government of India, with the dual task of monitoring the voluntary repatriation scheme and of dealing with the problems of Indian residents in the Union. Gandhi urged Sastri to accept the post: "You will break the hearts of Indians in South Africa if you do not go You alone can set the tone".³⁶ Sastri took up his new post in 1927, and for the moment it seemed that a spirit of understanding and conciliation would prevail in South Africa.

The new secretary of the All-India Congress Committee, Jawaharlal Nehru, was intensely interested in international affairs. In his draft foreign policy produced for

Congress in 1927 he questioned the relations of India and Indians to the British Commonwealth, and maintained that the overseas Indian was an exploited hireling. But he also put forward the idea that Indians should co-operate with the people of their chosen country through friendship and service, helping the natives of the country and at the same time not claiming any special position for themselves.

The Hilton Young Commission undertook a further examination of East African problems a year after the appearance of Nehru's draft foreign policy. The Commission recommended federation, and Hilton Young told Lord Irwin, Viceroy of India, that the Africans had to have a government capable of protecting their interests, and further, that the white population of Kenya could not be granted political self-expression without in some way affecting the position of Indians. In view of this the Government of India was anxious that an Agent be appointed in Kenya to attend to the problems of the Indian community. Hilton Young rejected the idea of a common roll to include Indians, and felt that power should be in the hands of the Europeans in the legislative council. In contrast, the Donoughmore Commission, reporting from Ceylon in 1928, recommended a universal franchise, including permanent Indian residents, with no discrimination between the various races.

In 1929 Congress decided to establish an overseas department to forge links between India and Indians abroad. Most of the links were with Britain and America, but slender contacts were formed with South and East Africa. Sir Samuel Wilson, Permanent Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office, and Sastri made visits to East Africa to assess Hilton Young's recommendations. L.S. Amery, the new Secretary for the Colonies, did not like the idea of a common roll, backed Hilton Young's view of the situation, and saw an Indian Protector in Kenya as harmful. But by 1930 the British Government had at least accepted the proposal of a common roll for the country.

Apart from the hostility of the white communities in the colonies, Indians also began to bear the brunt of native hostility as well. In Burma anti-Indian feeling found an outlet when the Burmese rioted over being discharged from temporary jobs at Rangoon dockyard, which were usually held by Indians, who had gone on strike when Gandhi was arrested on 4 May 1930. Fears by and on behalf of Indians in Burma deepened and remained until separation in 1937 and beyond. The 1935 Government of Burma Bill gave assurances that Indians would not be discriminated against, and that their interests would be looked after by the Governor-General of India.³⁷ Ceylon was making her own advances towards self-government, but although the Indians there were assured by the Colonial Office that their rights would remain under the new constitution, discrimination still continued.

Indians in the colonies and Dominions were hit hard by the Depression, and many returned home. In 1931 a conference at Cape Town proposed the emigration of South African Indians to other colonies for resettlement. The Depression meant even stronger discrimination against Indians, and the changes that had been hoped for in Kenya never materialised. A coalition government was established in South Africa in 1933, headed by Hertzog with Smuts as a deputy. The new government appointed

an Indian Colonisation Enquiry Committee. A radical minority which threatened non-cooperation were warned, conversely, that the government need not cooperate with them. However, little came of the committee or its report, which studied a scheme for a country to be set aside for Indian colonisation, and it attracted hardly any interest.

During the 1930s Indians overseas found themselves given lesser jobs or out of work altogether. In Kenya, jobs on the railways which had formerly been allotted to them were now taken by whites, and were at the same time up-graded. This kind of discrimination spread to Ceylon, where a policy of "Ceylonisation" was undertaken. Its aims were to offer places in the public services to Sinhalese, at the same time excluding Indians from such posts. Even in Zanzibar, one of oldest Indian immigrant communities, decrees issued by the British Resident in the name of the Sultan placed restrictions on Indian traders. Protests by the Government of India served no purpose and the Colonial Office continued the task of dismantling the Indian commercial network in the island. Indian merchants were in a difficult position, being harassed both by Africans and Arabs. The Zanzibar government had a monopoly on Trading powers, but by 1938 the island's revenues were in a bad state, and there was a need for a compromise with Indian traders. After this had been agreed Indians recovered that share of the trade which they had lost in 1934 when restrictions were imposed.

In 1935 British Guiana produced a bumper sugar crop. The labourers demanded higher wages through the British Guianan Labour Union, regarded as communist by both government and employers because its secretary had visited Russia. More important was the fact that, with the ending of indentured labour, the Indian workers had lost their Protector. They were expected to work in the fields from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. for less wages, which caused resentment to smoulder and culminated in strikes. A commission found that the workers' grievances were justified, but Indian labourers continued to suffer such abuse because they were still regarded as indentured immigrants, an attitude which led to further strikes in 1939. The inquiry into the strikes found that the workers' grievances had not justified the violence, but employers were forced to recognise their union - The Man-Power Citizens Association. On Mauritius it was a similar story. The Indians had no spokesman and were found to be the island's lowest paid workers in 1937 and 1938. There were strikes, and a commission of enquiry penalised the strike leaders.

In Malaya the Central Indian Association was established to generate a sense of common purpose amongst Indians, who were given such a sense by Sastri's visit in 1937 to enquire into labour conditions on the rubber estates. Sastri found that there was much room for improvement in medical and educational facilities, and he was against the recruitment of labour left over from the days of indenture. However, his overall view was favourable. He felt that Indian workers enjoyed a healthy and respectable life at a standard higher than they could expect at home and saw no reason to prevent Indian emigration to Malaya. Nehru followed Sastri to Malaya and he also visited Burma in 1937, the year of its separation from India. Dr Ba Maw, the premier, warned Nehru to keep out of Burma. Anti-Muslim riots broke out in Rangoon and Mandalay in 1938, but non-muslim Indians also found themselves and their property attacked. The riots were caused by Indian-Burmese antagonism, and

could be attributed to the presence of Indian landlords and moneylenders in the country and to competition from cheap Indian labour. In Malaya the price of rubber fell in 1938, which led to employers offering Indian labourers lower wages, and so forced the Government of India to ban emigration there.

The introduction of new constitutional reforms after the First World War, the Round Table Conferences and the 1935 Government of India Act, assisted India along the road to home rule and Dominion Status. The Government of India and Congress were becoming forces to be reckoned with in the Empire. Sastri's and Nehru's tours proved the point, and when in 1938 the Mayne Commission was appointed to investigate the unrest and economic conditions of sugar plantation workers in the West Indies, the Government of India also sent an observer.

The Jackson Report on Indian immigration and employment in Ceylon led in 1939 to a visit by Nehru to investigate claims that Indian workers were still being given menial tasks. Although the report showed that Indians had contributed a great deal to the economic and general advancement of Ceylon, the Ceylon government stuck to the 1934 policy of "Ceylonisation" and the weeding-out of Indians from public office, while at the same time assuring them that they would be treated as Sinhalese.³⁸ The Government of India retaliated by banning the emigration of all unskilled labour to the island. But anti-Indian feeling continued and strikes broke out in 1940, causing unrest and the shooting of Indians. In 1941 the electoral rolls were revised for the purpose of reducing the number of Indian voters. However the anti-Indian Bills were disallowed and a draft agreement was drawn up, though not confirmed, which defined the citizenship of Ceylon Indians.

The prospects of Indians abroad were changed for a short time by the outbreak of war. Indian political leaders had been told they were at war with no prior warning or consultation and hopes for home rule were put aside under emergency measures. In Kenya immigration measures introduced in 1938 were reinforced in the whole of East Africa during 1944. The war also led to the evacuation of some Indians from Aden, Somaliland, Hong Kong and Gibraltar, but most stayed in their chosen countries of residence.

The year 1939 found South Africa taking measures against Indian trading and settlement, but Smuts withdrew them at the outbreak of war, giving assurances that there would be no further legislation directed against Indians during wartime. These assurances appeared to be strengthened by the appointment of the Agent-General Sir Benegal Rama Rau as the first Indian High Commissioner in South Africa. However, no change in his duties was involved: while as Agent he had spoken on behalf of the Indian community, as High Commissioner he could only approach the South African government on behalf of the Government of India. Meanwhile a commission was established under Mr Justice Broome to look into Indian settlement. It was given the title of the Indian Penetration Commission. Manilal Gandhi, Gandhi's son, refused to co-operate with the commission and declared in the newspaper **Indian Opinion** that his role was not that of "an importunate beggar, but to uphold the honour of India. It is not my function to lead Indians to adopt a defeatist policy".³⁹ In all there were three commissions under Mr Justice Broome, in

1941, 1943 and 1945. The 1943 commission produced evidence of Indian settlement in white areas and in April of that year the Union Government introduced the Trading and Occupation of Land (Transvaal and Natal) Restrictions Bill, intended to restrict Indian settlement. The Government of India countered this with Act IX of 1943, a Reciprocity Act which gave them powers to retaliate against discrimination against Indian residents by other countries.

A meeting took place between Smuts and Indian community leaders at Pretoria on 18 April 1944. The outcome was the withdrawal of the 1943 Trading and Occupation of Land Restrictions Bill and the establishment of a joint Indo-European Board in Natal. The agreement was later repudiated by the white community in Natal, who were observed to be 'showing a healthy Nationalist and South African attitude'.⁴⁰ India retaliated with her own racial discrimination - one example being the Taj Mahal hotel in Bombay banning South African visitors. The 1945 commission relented a little and proposed a modified common roll including some Indians among the white voters. But the report concluded with the basic philosophy of the white settlers:

"Long before the first Indian ever set foot in the country, the standard of western civilisation had been set up in Natal and that standard must be maintained. This matter is fundamental. It can never be made the subject of negotiation or barter or compromise".⁴¹

In 1941 Indians were shot during riots in the Klang district of Malaya over demands for higher wages. The local Agent tried to persuade them to follow Gandhi's example of non-violence, to no avail. The leaders were jailed and demands for an enquiry into the incident were successfully resisted.

A further report on Indian emigration into Burma appeared in 1941. The aims of the two countries were very similar when it came to the question of home rule, but the Burmese had no plans for Indians in an independent Burma. Further trouble erupted over an agreement on the future of Indians in Burma which was repudiated by the Indian public, and there was ill-feeling towards the Chettyars or Indian moneylenders residing in the country.

The situation changed dramatically with the Japanese invasion of Burma in December 1941. Indian refugees struggled back home in 1942 from Malaya, Burma and Ceylon, and the Japanese encouraged the formation of the Indian National Army, to which the Sikhs were prominent recruits. Many Indian prisoners of war refused to have anything to do with the Japanese or the Free Indian Government established in Malaya and Burma under the leadership of Subhas Chandra Bose, and in 1945 the Indian National Army was disbanded with the return of the British forces.

A visit to investigate the life and working conditions of Indian labourers on the islands of Fiji and Mauritius was made by a representative of the Government of India in 1940. He concluded that Indian workers had fallen victim of the pleasures of Western society and were spending more money on clothes and rum. In fact, the story was much the same as it always had been - low wages, hard work, strikes, shooting of Indians and further commissions of inquiry. Of all the islands only

Trinidad offered some hope when, in 1944, a universal franchise was introduced to include Indians.

The problems of Indians overseas had been lost among the larger issues of the war, but in 1945 they came into prominence once more. The Soulbury Report recommended self-government for Ceylon and the assimilation of the Indian population. White Papers appeared on the inter-territorial organisation and land policy of Kenya, alarming both whites and Indians. The land policy recommended the establishment of an Indian and Arab Settlement Board. For Indians who had their own capital and were "locally born" there would be land, but there was nothing concrete for the African native. Meanwhile, an unofficial Commonwealth conference held in London in 1945 heard demands for equality and common citizenship on behalf of Indians.

By this time Indians were taking the initiative in tackling the problems of their countrymen overseas. Nehru made visits to Malaya and Burma in 1946. The Indian population in both countries were in a confused and bewildered state because they found themselves leaderless with the collapse of the Free Indian Government and the Indian National Army. It was reported that 25,000 of them in Malaya wanted to return home. The strict immigration controls in East Africa were investigated by Maharaj Singh and in Ceylon Indians boycotted the new constitution. The President of the Ceylon Indian Congress accused Sinhalese leaders and Whitehall of conspiring "to oppress the Ceylon Indians" and he wanted to see an end to the "servitude and humiliation" imposed on Indians since 1930.

The South African attitude continued to anger most Indians. In 1946 Smuts had hoped to introduce legislation giving Indians representation in the Union Parliament, provincial councils and municipalities. Instead what emerged was an act which confined Indians to certain areas and provided them with white representatives in Parliament. South African Indians staged a passive resistance campaign against the act and India cancelled her trade agreement with South Africa. Nehru called for Agents to be appointed in the colonies and dominions where Indians resided. The South African "Ghetto Act" as it was known, caused India to denounce South African policy at the United Nations in 1946. The outcome was that many Third World countries took an anti-colonialist attitude towards the North Atlantic countries. The United Nations Assembly, however, required India and South Africa to consult together over the question of Indians in the Union.

India and Pakistan became independent in 1947, and remained in the Commonwealth. Now other Commonwealth countries had to deal with Indians no longer under the administration of a white government. Race and migration were the main topics of an Asian Relations Conference held in India that year, and in December India and Ceylon discussed the future of Indians on the island. A six-part formula emerged from the discussions - but had it been agreed upon? Many of the most pressing questions were left to be answered at a later date or as events dictated. In Burma an Emergency Immigration Act was introduced to which India took exception. Nehru was surprised and disappointed by the measure. Fiji also produced an ordinance which restricted entry, its main aim being to restrict numbers

of white vagrants entering the island - even so Indian immigration proceeded to decline after 1947.

In Malaya there were further disputes, caused by the failure of the Malayan government to take the conditions of Indian workers seriously and this prejudiced the future supply of Indian labour. The Indian leaders of the disputes were jailed and a new federal constitution was introduced which reduced Indian participation. Naturally enough Indians proceeded to boycott such a constitution which limited their rights.

Yet some good came from the debate on Indians in South Africa at the United Nations in 1946-47. Canada, which had stuck to a policy of isolationism between the two wars, watched the debate with interest. It was decided that Indians domiciled in the country should be enfranchised. This decision was reached even though India's resolution on South Africa was rejected by the United Nations. The British Columbia Committee recommended that the majority vote be given to Indian and Chinese Canadians, and it was also recommended by a minority that this be extended to Japanese Canadians as well. But there were restrictions: Indians had to possess an adequate knowledge of English and French, and they were still excluded from the municipal franchise in British Columbia.

At the same time a Commonwealth Conference of experts on citizenship laws was held in London, at which ten countries were represented. Apparently an observer for India was supposed to be present, but disappeared after the first session. Two committees were established to compare British and Canadian legislation and to examine the different classes of citizens in the two countries.⁴²

India's independence and her emergence to nationhood between 1948 and 1950 did little to ease the problems of Indians abroad, and in many ways appeared to intensify them. In 1948 the Indian government appointed agents in Mauritius, Fiji, East Africa and the West Indies. The Colonial Office tried to dissuade the new Indian Commissioners from taking up the causes of Indians who, as they termed it, belonged to the colonies - yet the office itself did little to induce a sense of belonging in these Indians.

Problems of immigration and land settlement still concerned the white settlers of East and South Africa, and these always reflected on Indians and other Asiatics. In 1948 all the East African territories introduced yet further immigration controls, which reduced Indian immigration. But Indians residing in these territories had to come to terms with the new Africa that was emerging and understand how they could contribute towards it. In 1950 a contribution was made in the form of a general strike. The strikers were mainly Africans, but the strike leader was an Indian, Makhan Singh, who had formed the first overall East African Trades Union Congress. Before the strike, which lasted ten days and was confined to Nairobi, Makhan Singh was placed in detention and later deported. The Kenya India Congress, a moderate organisation, found its leadership contested by militants who wanted to see a closer relationship between African and Indian politicians. Nehru had asked the same of all Indians overseas in 1927, when he produced his draft foreign policy for Congress.

But, as in 1927, many owned businesses or industries and were reluctant to cooperate with Africans.

In South Africa Smuts was defeated and Dr Malan assumed power. The election had touched on racial issues, with the electors being told that the Indians' prosperity was due to the inventive genius of the white man. Malan wanted to repatriate Indians to their homeland, and at the same time he was moving along the road to apartheid. Indians were removed from the franchise, and then the Nationalist government forbade them to leave South Africa and requested that they restrict their United Nations activities. In January 1949 Africans rioted in Durban and in the ensuing violence destroyed Indian homes and shops and attacked individuals. The official view attributed the violence to African resentment of Indian dominance of labour, trade and industry.⁴³ The two communities replied by stating that the problem lay in the slum conditions in which they lived and went further by forming a joint council of the African National Congress and the South African Indian Congress.

The United Nations passed a resolution calling for a round table conference between India, Pakistan and South Africa. But before this, in 1950, South Africa introduced the Group Areas Act which in effect restricted Indian settlement. In retaliation India and Pakistan cancelled the round table conference.

In Mauritius the vote was extended to those who were able to read or write simple sentences in different languages and also to those who had served in the armed forces. A general election under the extended franchise was held in 1948, and the Indians won eleven seats in the legislature. However, the Colonial Office noted that there was no real party alignment: "Indian divides against Indian, Coloured against Coloured".

Trinidad's constitutional reforms were introduced in 1946, but the island's political aspirations were moving fairly fast and the reforms were soon felt to be unsatisfactory. A committee was appointed by the legislature to recommend further changes. Five political factions were represented at the general election in September 1950, but the election did not reflect or result in any racial alignments, and the Indians won five seats. In fact, in numbers they dominated the Trinidad legislature with a total of seven members.

In 1948 British rule came to an end in Ceylon and Burma. In Ceylon there was still no real answer to the pressing problem of Sinhalese-Indian relations. The Indian and Pakistani Residents (Citizenship) Act laid down the conditions whereby Sinhalese citizenship could be claimed. It required continuous residence in Ceylon since 1946, and before that date residence of seven years for married couples and ten years for single persons. Citizenship applicants were required to produce documents showing their antecedents. Most estate labourers did not have and could not acquire such documents. The 1949 Ceylon (Parliamentary Election) Amendment Act removed voters of Indian origin from the register, and the Government of India protested that this made Indians in Ceylon stateless persons. Ceylon was willing to grant Indians certain concessions in return for certain advantages from India, one of which was the removal of a sizeable proportion of her people from the island. In Burma the Indian community had always felt ill at ease because of the resentment of the Burmese

people towards them. Few of them therefore bothered to register for citizenship when the country gained independence in 1948.

A state of emergency existed in Malaya with rival guerrilla armies struggling for control of the country. Both the Indian moneylenders and labourers residing there were now "pawns in a much bigger game".⁴⁴ The High Commissioner in Malaya sought limited powers to deport British subjects, although in practice he felt that this would only apply to British Indian subjects. In fact, these deportation measures amounted to banishment laws. Apparently the Indian government did not object to the Malayan government's actions against Indians but pointed out that they would be obliged to protect their own nationals. Most Indians during 1948-49 were concerned with their future status under Indian and Malayan law and, when the new constitution took effect in India in 1950, less than half the Indian community registered for Malayan citizenship.

In 1948 India and Pakistan made an important contribution to the British Nationality Act when they requested and succeeded in having the phrase "Commonwealth citizenship" accepted as an alternative to the status of British subject. India proposed in 1949 that she become a republic but remain within the Commonwealth, which was accepted by the other Commonwealth nations. However, India's request for the consideration of Commonwealth citizenship remained theoretical, because she herself had imposed strict controls on the entry of persons from her closest Commonwealth neighbour, Pakistan.

When the new Indian constitution came into being in 1950, the opportunity of citizenship was extended to Indians overseas. Most took the citizenship of the United Kingdom and Colonies, while in East Africa and Malaya they registered as Indian citizens, at the same time, retaining or adopting British or United Kingdom and Colonies citizenship. In this case they were urged to take dual nationality, but were also advised to remember that their first loyalty went to their country of residence. Not all Asian residents were happy about this commitment.

From 1830 to 1950 the history of both India and Indians abroad was one of struggles for equal rights and against discrimination. In 1949 India called for the equality of Commonwealth citizens and pledged that when a republic she would remain within the Commonwealth, with her membership full and equal. Despite the attitude towards Pakistani immigration into India, equality was what Indians had struggled for at home and abroad and they believed even more strongly in "full equality of status" in the new era of the independent Commonwealth. Other Commonwealth nations talked about it but India actually challenged them in 1949 with her acceptance of a Commonwealth based on a mutual equality of peoples.

NOTES ON THE MAIN AREAS OF INDIAN EMIGRATION

These notes only cover the main territories within the British Empire and Commonwealth to which Indians emigrated between 1830 and 1950.

AUSTRALIA

Emigration of indentured Indian labour began 1837-1838. It was a very small influx, which limited the scope for Indian employment. In 1841 a committee rejected a planter's proposal for the importation of Indian labour on the grounds that the system was the perpetuation of slavery in another form. In 1878 Queensland passed an act banning the employment of Asians in the gold mines, later extended to the sugar and banana industries.

To restrict the entry of Asians the Australian government officially abolished the indenture system and in 1897 adopted a non-discriminatory literacy test in the English language. In 1901 the Immigration Act defined a prohibited immigrant to include any person who failed to pass the dictation test in any European language. From this date policy was aimed towards a white Australia, though in 1949 it was suggested that Asians should be admitted on a quota plan.

BURMA

With the annexation of Pegu in 1852 the Government of India encouraged Indian emigration and colonization of Burma. Failure in recruiting native labour to work in the rice fields led to attempts after 1874 to attract Indian emigrants, in the first instance as agriculturists and then as labourers. Between 1876-1878 over 15,000 Indians came to Burma as free settlers, and in 1883-1884 there were about 83,000 assisted entrants. Many Indians were recruited through contractors rather than government agencies, which offered the protection of the Government of India's 1876 Labour Act.

Indians were employed in a variety of jobs in Burma and their numbers rose steadily. The 1931 Baxter Report stated that 14% of them figured largely in finance, business, and government employment. Meanwhile, between 1934 and 1939 the number of Burmese skilled workers increased. With the Japanese invasion of Burma many Indians went home, only to return at the end of the war. In 1947 the Burmese government carried out a purge of non-nationals in government positions and by February 1949 1,000 Indians had returned to India. Another 600 Indian and Pakistani employees were dismissed in mid February 1949. The Burmese government's attitude was that the Indians should become Burmese citizens, and the position was further complicated when Burma attained her independence in 1948.

BRITISH GUIANA (GUYANA)

Indentured Indian labour was introduced in 1837, and between 1838-1917 about 240,000 men, women and children were brought to work on the plantations of British Guiana.

In 1924 an enquiry into the working conditions of Indians revealed that wages were not in line with the rise in the cost of living. The position of Indian labourers further deteriorated in 1932 when the post of Agent-General was abolished. Between 1933 and 1936 there were serious labour troubles, and in 1934 11,000 Indians emigrated, which was taken as proof that wages had declined on the sugar estates, and that their interests were not being properly protected. The West India Royal Commission of 1938 exposed considerable unemployment among Indians on sugar estates, and the use of child labour to reduce the employers' wage bills. In July of that year a standard wage system was introduced, but the shortage of work remained acute. The Labour Disturbances Committee of 1937 recommended the establishment of an authority for the protection of both employees' and employers' interests, and the Labour Ordinance of 1942 introduced an Advisory Committee which investigated conditions of employment and recommended minimum wage rates.

CANADA

In 1905 admission was permitted to 45 Indians, mostly Sikhs, but anti-Asiatic feeling was strong. The 1910 Immigration Act stipulated that Indians should possess the sum of \$200 when landing in Canada, although for other Asians it was only \$25. In 1913 an Order-in-Council banned Indians who were artisans, skilled or unskilled workers from landing in any port in British Columbia. Indian immigration was further restricted in 1914, when any immigrant who had not come to Canada in one continuous journey from the port of emigration was refused permission to land, a policy which led to the "Komagata Maru" incident at Vancouver.

Between 1915-1930 several Indians were deported for illegal entry, and the number of immigrants fell from 2,623 in 1908 to 80 in 1930. Only 418 Indians were allowed to visit Canada between 1921 and 1930. Those Indians who did stay went to British Columbia to work in the logging camps. In 1939 some 300 Sikhs were threatened with deportation, but the Supreme Court ruled that they be allowed to remain in the country. In 1947 Indians were finally granted the rights of domicile and citizenship.

CEYLON (SRI LANKA)

Between 1837 and 1904 Indian labour was secured in Ceylon by contractors, and was uncontrolled by the Government of India. In 1847 the Ceylon government proposed an ordinance for the protection of Indian coolies, which led to Act XIII of that year. In 1861 a further ordinance relating to contracts for the hire and service of labourers in the country was proposed. There was some dissent over the ordinance at first, but in 1862 the Indian government stated that it was satisfied with Ceylon's system for protecting Indian labourers.

In 1904 the Coast Agency was established, which meant that there were two forms of recruitment in India, one uncontrolled and one controlled by the Agency. There was also a local recruiter in Ceylon. In 1921 Ceylon recruiting was adjusted to the assisted emigration policy and the Indian Emigration Act of 1922 empowered the Government of India to control emigration and safeguard Indian interests. The act introduced Protectors of Emigrants into Ceylon, and employers there wishing to assist the emigration of skilled workers from India had to satisfy the Protector of Emigrants as to the terms of the engagement. However, the dismissal of Indian daily-paid staff in government departments led to a Government of India ban in 1939 on emigration from British India to Ceylon for the purpose of unskilled work unless exempted by special order. The ban was relaxed in 1941. In 1943 the Government of India appointed a representative to Ceylon, who was given the status of High Commissioner when the country became a Dominion, to look after Indian affairs.

FIJI

Indian indentured labour began in 1879. During the first decade 7,315 immigrants were introduced into Fiji and in 1889 the first repatriates left the colony. Indian immigration increased between 1900-1911 with the great expansion in the sugar industry. In 1917 C.F. Andrews reported on the Indian indenture system on the island, and 1920 saw complete freedom for every Indian in the Colony.

The Fijian plantations were threatened with a shortage of labour because of the abolition of the indenture system. The Indian government stipulated that Indian emigration to the colony could only begin again when Indians were granted full and equal citizenship rights, but only three Indians sat on the Legislative Council.

However, as in many other plantation colonies, wages did not keep up with the cost of living, and in 1933 the Indian labourers' daily wage went down to 1s 6d a day, while in 1934 the imposition of a residential tax drastically reduced wages. This led to the appointment of a Commissioner of Labour, authorised by the Labour Welfare Ordinance XX of 1941, whose task was to safeguard and promote the workers' welfare. However, Indian labourers went on strike for higher wages in 1943.

In 1947 the Fiji Government produced a further Immigration Ordinance for the better control of immigration, under which prohibited immigrants were those who did not possess a valid permit to enter the colony. A further residential tax hit hard at poorer Indians. Yet by 1949 the Fiji government had not replied to the Indian government's requests for a reduction of the tax and the introduction of a more equitable taxation system.

JAMAICA

Indian emigration was permitted to the West Indies in 1845 from Madras, and between 1845 and 1847 4,500 Indian labourers were introduced into the colony of Jamaica. Emigration ceased in 1847 but was renewed in 1860 when the Jamaican

legislature sanctioned a loan of £150,000 for expenses of emigration, and between 1860-1863 4,600 Indians were again introduced into the colony. Between 1871-1886 the sugar plantations were struggling to keep alive. The 1883 Indian Emigration Act then proved helpful in supplying cheap Indian labour, but news of bad conditions in Jamaica severely reduced the flow. Conditions improved throughout the start of this century, and since 1931 there has been no assisted emigration to Jamaica.

Like most of the other plantation colonies during the 1930s there were serious labour disputes with workers striking for higher pay. Also, politically, Indians fared badly. In 1920 out of 18,000 Indians only 375 appeared on the electoral rolls, and in 1945 the Government of India requested that at least one Indian should be nominated to the Legislative Council and that they should be reserved at least one seat in the Legislative Assembly. But there was no Indian on the Legislative Council until 1949.

KENYA

Indian emigration to East Africa in general began in earnest during the 1890s, when the country started to attract the attention of white settlers. Many Indians were employed in building the East African Railways, and then went on to become traders, merchants and businessmen.

After the Boer War many South Africans settled in Kenya, especially in the White Highlands, and this was to lead to a change in policy. In 1907 the Land Board of the British East African Protectorate recommended that the government land in certain specified areas should not be allotted to Indians, and in 1915 a check was placed on land being sold to Indians by empowering the Governor to veto transactions between parties of different races, which clearly tampered with the legal rights of Indians. The Kenya White Paper of 1923 maintained the existing restrictions on land, reserving the highlands for Europeans. This policy was maintained throughout the years before the Second World War, and there was a tendency for the white settlers to want to keep Indians out of the country altogether. Even after the war, policy favoured white settlement of land rather than Indian or African.

The land question also meant that the political status of Indians in Kenya suffered, and even by 1946 the Legislative Council consisted of 32 Europeans, 5 Indians and 1 Arab, and the Executive Council consisted of 10 Europeans and 1 Indian. In 1948, when Pakistan was established, Muslims demanded a separate electorate, which was opposed by the East African Indian National Congress as it meant that the electorate would be divided on a religious basis. However, in the general election of 1948 two of the five Indians' seats were reserved for Muslims.

MALAYA

Indian labour was used on the Malayan plantations from 1833 onwards and recruitment was carried out at Negapatam by the Government of the Straits

Settlements. Restrictions were placed on emigration in 1867 when Malaya was separated from India. All restrictions to Indian emigration to Malaya were removed in 1897. In 1907 an Indian Immigration Fund was established whereby those planters who required a constant supply of imported labour subscribed to a compulsory levy.

In 1922, when the Indian Emigration Act came into operation, the question arose as to whether Indian emigration should continue after March 1923, at which date Malaya actually came under the ruling of the Act. But the demand for Indian labour was still great, so emigration continued until it was banned in 1932, when there was a drastic reduction of wages in Malaya which had been carried out without the knowledge of the Government of India. However, the ban was lifted in 1934. Increased production and an improvement in the economic situation was reflected in the increase of immigrant labour in 1936 and 1937, while deterioration in trade during 1938 led to cuts in wages and the prohibition of assisted emigration to Malaya. During 1940-1941 wages began to rise again, but with the Japanese invasion many Indians found themselves working on the 'death railway' and in 1946 were brought back from Siam to work on the estates where they had previously been employed. Dissatisfaction with wages led to strikes during the same year.

Politically, Indians had little say in Malaya until 1924, when the first Indian sat in the Legislative Council. Until then not a single Indian had sat on the federal or state councils. Matters had improved considerably by 1947, when Indians were included in the new Federal Legislative Council.

MAURITIUS

The emigration of Indian indentured labour was first permitted to Mauritius by the Government of India in 1834. However, there were always irregularities and abuses connected with Mauritius and the indenture system. In fact from 1840 to 1842 the Government of India banned indentured emigration to Mauritius, but the old abuses crept back into the system once again after the ban was lifted. The Government of India Act XIII of 1864 stressed the essential need for equality between the two contractual parties in an indenture transaction, and helped the future indentured labourer to Mauritius; but for those already on the island there were notorious vagrancy regulations which could be enforced at any time if a labourer did not produce the required documentation. The recruitment and conditions of Indian labourers on Mauritius continued to be unsatisfactory for the next thirty years, and the emigration committee recommended the discontinuance of Indian labour in 1909. In 1915 indenture was abolished and emigration to Mauritius operated under a free system. Although the indenture system in Mauritius was harmful to Indians, many became peasant proprietors and a few even planters, while a third of the area under sugar-cane came into Indian hands.

Indians enjoyed municipal and political franchise, but not until 1924 did an Indian sit in the Legislative Council, and it was only in 1937 that two were nominated to it. As late as 1940 Indians could never hope for a powerful voice in Government. The new

constitution of 1947 was inaugurated in Mauritius by a general election in August 1948, and out of 19 members elected to the Legislative Council, 11 were Indian.

SOUTH AFRICA

The first emigration of Indian labour was to Natal in 1860 under Act XXXIII of that year. Because of the ill treatment of labourers and the withholding of their wages, emigration was stopped between 1866 and 1874. An Act of 1874 accorded the right of land grants to Indians in exchange for their return passage to India or on the expiry of their indentures. But such settlement frightened the planters, and an Act of 1891 disallowed the grant of land in exchange for the return passage as a first step towards preventing settlement of Indians as free men. Under Act XVII of 1895 ex-indentured Indian labourers were allowed to remain in the country. In 1903 an ordinance was passed which stated that Indian children attaining the age of majority should be compelled either (1) to go back to India, (2) to remain in Natal under indenture (3) to take out year by year a pass or licence to remain in Natal. Finally, Indian opinion prohibited indentured emigration to Natal from July 1911. The treatment of Indians in other South African states differed little. South Africa insisted on compulsory registration of resident Indians and made them carry a pass. Many Indians were deported for their refusal to comply with these laws and in 1949 apartheid finally became part of the South African way of life when every citizen had to carry an identity card which showed him as European, native or coloured.

The political status of Indians in South Africa was always difficult because of the discrimination against them. When, for example, responsible government was granted to Natal in 1893 there was incessant discrimination against Indians for political and economic reasons, and in 1894 a bill was passed which deprived Indians of the parliamentary franchise. However, it was disallowed by Joseph Chamberlain, as Secretary of State for the Colonies. The repeal of Part II of the Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act of 1946 by the Asiatic Land Tenure Amendment Bill in 1949 was a first step in trying to get Indians to return to India but because of Indian opposition, Part II was not proclaimed and never came into operation.

TANGANIKA (TANZANIA)

Like Kenya, Indian emigration began to Tanganyika in the 1890s and, as with most of the states in East Africa, it was connected to the building of the railway. Similarly, many Indians went on to become traders and businessmen.

The immigration policy was less rigorous than that of Kenya, and thus there was less discrimination against Indians. However, in 1932 the Tanganyika government raised the deposit paid by immigrants. Europeans, Asians and Africans had to pay £100 if they were not natives of the country, plus £50 for each child or dependent that they brought with them. The government also had wide powers to exclude undesirables, and these regulations barred most Indians from entering the country, except the few who were wealthy enough to pay the new deposit charges.

In 1946 the Executive Council which assisted the Governor in administering Tanganyika included four nominated non-official members, one of whom was an Indian. The Legislative Council consisted of thirteen official members and not more than ten non-official members of whom three were Indian, all nominated.

TRINIDAD

Trinidad, like British Guiana, was one of the first to accept indentured Indian labour after the abolition of slavery, and emigration began after August 1845. Like other West Indian islands, Trinidad plantation owners treated indentured labourers as they had treated the former slaves, and wages were poor. In 1908 an ordinance was passed which improved the position of both free and indentured labourers, yet despite this there were still problems over wages and, like other West Indian islands during the Depression, Trinidad had its share of strikes and labour disturbances. Apart from this, immigrants from India were discriminated against by having to pay a deposit of \$500 if they were unable to satisfy the immigration authorities that they would not become a public charge, whereas immigrants from the West Indies had only to pay \$100 and those from Europe or America \$250 under the Immigration Restriction Ordinance IV of 1936.

After 1931 there was no assisted emigration to Trinidad, and consequently 85 per cent of the present Indian population is colonial-born. Although they formed a considerable part of the total population they took little active part in any political controversy. In 1939, out of the seven elected members on the Legislative Council, only three were Indians, and no Indians sat on the Executive Council. The report of the Franchise Committee recommended the abolition of the property and income qualification in 1944, and the Secretary of State for the Colonies wanted the abolition of the language test. The abolition of the language test was rejected by a narrow majority in the Trinidad legislature, meaning that many Indians would be deprived of voting rights. The language test was finally abolished in June 1945 and Trinidad gained universal adult franchise. In the 1946 elections under the new constitution some Indians were returned to the Legislative Council.

UGANDA

As with Tanganyika and Kenya, Indian emigration started at the end of the nineteenth century. The immigrants were used to build the East African railway, and many stayed to become prosperous merchants and businessmen. Although immigration was subject to severe control this was not carried out on a racial basis, and the main aim of both the Immigration Restriction and Removal of Undesirables Ordinance of 1913 and the Immigration Rules of 1934 was to prohibit those who could be regarded as undesirable or were likely to become a charge on public revenues from entering the country.

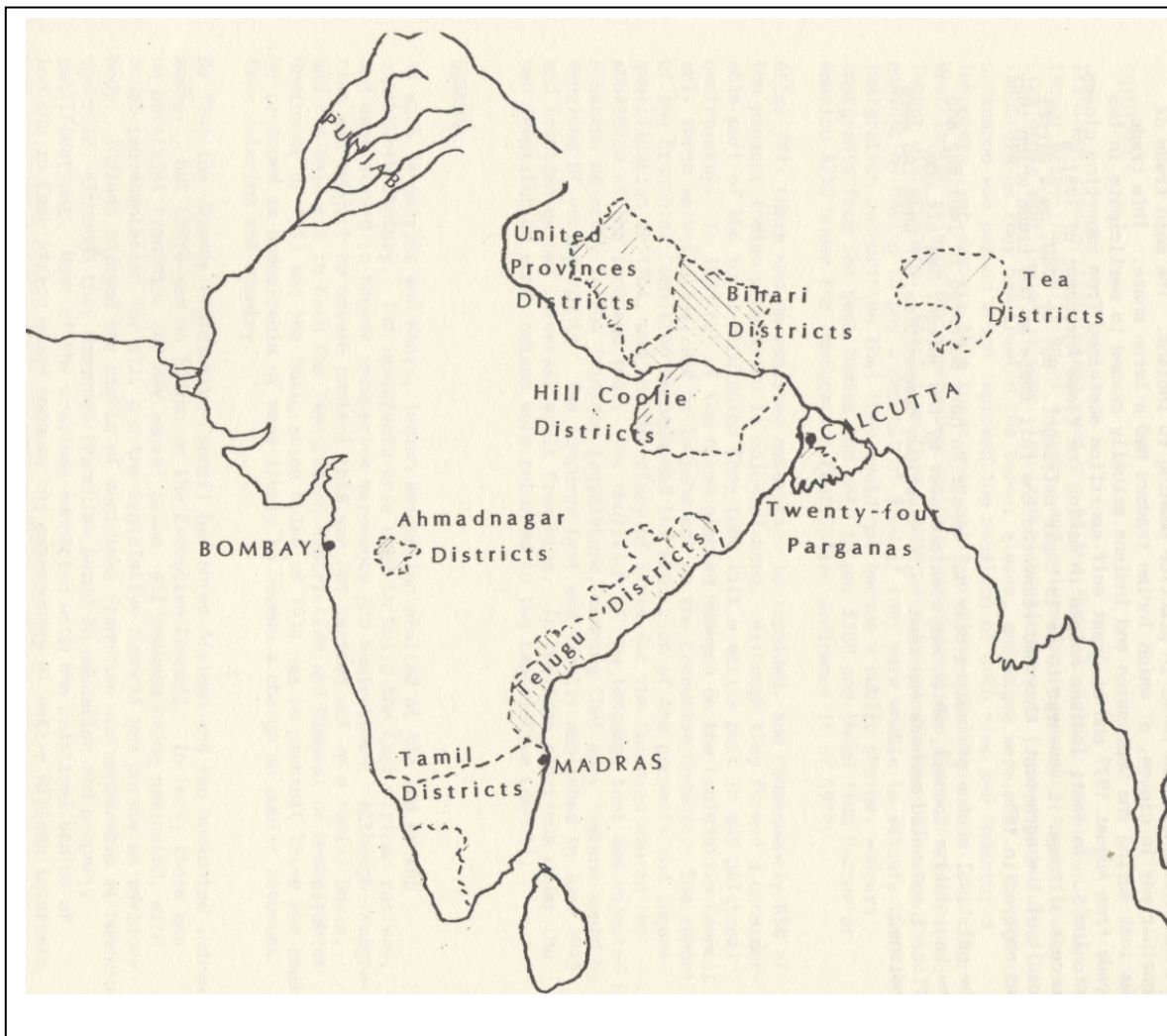
By 1946 the Uganda Legislative Council had three African and two nominated Indian members, but there was no Indian on the Executive Council. In fact, there was no political franchise for any racial group, all members being nominated, with equal representation for all, and the Legislative Council was purely an advisory body. Indians enjoyed the rights of municipal franchise and membership of municipal councils, although they demanded franchise based on education and property qualifications. Most of the problems connected with the political status of Indians in East Africa arose because the paramountcy of native African interests had always to be taken into consideration.

ZANZIBAR

Indian merchants had traded with Zanzibar from the earliest times and the community was of the merchant class rather than indentured labourers. Hence the problems facing Indians here were concerned with trade and land. This can be seen in the Alienation of Land (Restriction and Evidence) Decree of 1934 which was intended to prohibit transfers of agricultural land from Arabs and Africans to non-Arabs and non-Africans, both terms in practice meaning to Indians. The main trade of Zanzibar was in cloves, of which Indian traders had a large share. This trade was lost during the Depression and Indians actually ceased to participate in the trade from August 1937 and at great self-sacrifice abstained from importing cloves into India. In fact, Indians helped in making the Clove Agreement of 1937 a success although it appeared to be to their detriment. But by 1940, as a direct result of the agreement, they had recovered the full share of the trade which they had enjoyed in 1934.

The political status of Indians does not appear to have suffered in Zanzibar and the Legislative Council, which was presided over by the Sultan, had six non-official nominated members representing the various communities, of whom two were Indians.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY



These works have been selected mainly on the basis of their use of original material and their extensive coverage of the period under consideration. Most of them also contain useful guides to further reading on the subject.

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Chakravarti, Nalini Ranjan	The Indian minority in Burma: the rise and decline of an immigrant community (Oxford University Press, 1971)
Cumpston, I.M.	Indians overseas in British territories 1834-1854 (Oxford University Press, 1953)
Gillion, Kenneth Lavell Oliver	The Fiji Indians: challenge to European dominance 1920-46 (Australian National University Press, 1977)
Gregory, Robert Granville	India and East Africa: a history of race relations within the British Empire 1890-1939 (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1971)

Huttenback, Robert Arthur	Gandhi in South Africa: British imperialism and the Indian question 1860-1914 (Cornell University Press, 1971)
Hazareesingh, Kissoonsingh	A history of Indians in Mauritius (Macmillan Education, 1977)
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Kondapi, Chancala	Indians overseas, 1838-1949 (New Delhi, 1951)
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Rajkumar, N.V.	Indians outside India: a general survey, with resolutions of the Indian National Congress on the subject from 1885 to the present day (New Delhi, 1951)
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Tinker, Hugh	A new system of slavery: the export of Indian labour overseas 1830-1920 (Oxford University Press, 1974)
Tinker, Hugh	Separate and unequal: India and the Indians in the British Commonwealth 1920-1950 (London, Hurst & Co. 1976)

Records of Indian Emigration

INDIA OFFICE RECORDS: GENERAL DESCRIPTION

From the administrative and archival point of view, the official records relating to Indian emigration and Indians overseas during the period 1830-1947 fall into two broad divisions:

- (1) Records of the principal London offices responsible for British government in India and Burma (the East India Company, the Board of Control, the India Office and the Burma Office)
- (2) Proceedings of the Government of India and the provincial governments, which were copied to London for information.

Each of these divisions consists of a number of main groups or sections, which in turn are made up of various separate series of volumes or files. The following are only summary details of these records, but more detailed descriptions of most of the individual files belonging to the first broad category for the period 1920-1947 are given in the following sections of this guide.

(1) RECORDS OF THE PRINCIPAL LONDON OFFICES

E East India Company General Correspondence 1600-1858

The series included here are general in the sense that they comprise letters received and issued by the East India Company on all subjects and relating to almost all the departments in which Company business was transacted. They also cover both correspondence with India as well as with individuals and institutions within the United Kingdom. As far as correspondence about emigration from around 1830 to 1858 is concerned, the main relevant series are those brought together under the reference E/4, as follows:-

E/4/130-288	Letters from Bengal and India, 2 series, 1830-58
E/4/361-448	Letters from Madras, 1830-58
E/4/513-611	Letters from Bombay, 1830-58
E/4/727-855	Despatches to Bengal and India, 2 series, 1830-58
E/4/938-991	Despatches to Madras, 1830-58
E/4/1052-1112	Despatches to Bombay, 1830-58

During the period covered by these series, Indian emigration usually falls within the scope of the Public or General Department letters and despatches but to some extent also in the Legislative Department and other correspondence (see **also** under L/P&I). The best approach to these voluminous records is through the modern indexes in the despatches to Bengal, India, Madras, and Bombay, using the index headings for 'Emigration', "Mauritius', etc:

Z/E/4/12-33	For Bengal and India
Z/E/4/42-50	For Madras
Z/E/4/60-72	For Bombay

F **Board of Control Records 1784-1858**

The Board of Control was the British government department which supervised the affairs of the East India Company, and its records are general in the same sense as those of the Company described above under F. That is to say, they consist mainly of correspondence dealing with various administrative subjects including Indian emigration. For the latter subject the principal series to be consulted are:

F/2/1O-20	Board's Letter Books, c1830-58
F/4/1107-2730	Board's Collection, c1830-58

The Board's Collections are important because they sometimes contain enclosures to and other papers cited in the letters received from India noted above under E. The contents of the Collections are briefly described in the original Registers (Z/F/4/3-18), though these are gradually being superseded by a new list and index.

L/P&J **Public and Judicial Department Records 1795-1858**

This group of records includes those of the several Public and Judicial departments of the Company, the Board and the India Office, and of related departments and committees. The subject of Indian emigration, including the working of the indentured labour system and the general position of Indians in overseas colonies and dominions, fell within the scope of these departments from c1830 to 1921 and again from 1934 to 1947 (for the intervening period between 1921 and 1934 *see infra* under L/E). Particularly relevant series are mentioned below:

L/P&J/1 **Committee Records 1826-60**

All the records of the Company's Revenue, Judicial and Legislative Committee (included here in Minutes, Reports, References and Miscellaneous Papers) contain material on emigration. Especially useful are the Miscellaneous Committee Papers: Correspondence about emigration, 1845-58 (L/P&J/1/84-89).

L/P&J/2 **Home Correspondence 1837-79**

The two overlapping series of Public Home Correspondence (ie. correspondence between the India Office and individuals or departments within the United Kingdom, eg. the Colonial Office) for the years 1858-79 should be consulted (L/P&J/2/1-184). These document emigration to various colonies and include instructions to agents etc. For a useful index and register of these volumes, see Z/L/P&J/2/4-7.

L/P&J/3 **Correspondence with India 1795-1947**

The series noted below are especially informative on subjects such as the treatment of indentured labourers on their way to the colonies, instructions to Emigration Agents and Protectors of Emigrants, and the examination of emigrant ships:

L/P&J/3/17-77	Public Letters from Bengal and India, 2 series 1830-79
L/P&J/3/200-225	Emigration Letters from Bengal and India 1880-1912
L/P&J/3/712-756	Public etc Letters from Madras, 2 series 1830-79
L/P&J/3/830-835	Public etc Letters from Bombay, 2 series, 1830-79
L/P&J/5/1007-1124	Public Despatches to Bengal and India, and Collections to Despatches, 3 series, 1830-79
L/P&J/3/1319-1359	Public etc Despatches to Madras, and Collections to Despatches, 3 series, 1830-79
L/P&J/3/1424-1462	Public Despatches to Bombay, and Collections to Despatches, 3 series, 1830-79

Most of these volumes contain indexes, especially those prior to 1859. For the period from 1858 to 1879 there is, however, a useful separate index and register in four volumes (Z/L/P&J/3/4-7) which clearly identifies letters about emigration. Three further points may be noted: (a) before 1858 copies of most of the letters and despatches listed above will also be found in E/4, Correspondence with India (see above) along with much other material. The value of the L/P&J/3 volumes lies in their indexes and the fact that they contain only Public Department correspondence; (b) some enclosures to the Public Letters listed above may be traced in 1-/4, Boards Collections (see above); (c) for most correspondence from 1880 onwards see below under L/P&J/6 etc, Departmental Papers.

L/P&J/4 **"Put By", "No Reply" etc Papers 1871-79**

These volumes contain Public etc letters from India, Madras and Bombay which were left unanswered. L/P&J/4/1-2 specifically contain letters about emigration (1871-79).

L/P&J/5 **Compilations and Miscellaneous Records c1860-1947**

A miscellaneous accumulation of India Office Records but including several items dealing with emigration, such as papers about emigrants to Reunion and other French colonies, 1860-82 (L/P&J/5/459-461) and the status of British Indians in other colonies and dominions, 1897-1911 (L/P&J/462).

L/P&J/6 **Departmental Papers: Annual Files 1880-1930**

These files of the India Office Judicial and Public Department assemble all the correspondence of the department with India and within Britain as well as notes and

minutes by officials. Files about most aspects of emigration etc can be traced via the separately bound annual indexes and registers (Z/L/P&J/6/1-45). Index headings to check include: "Emigration Rules", "Emigration to British Colonies and Possessions", "Indians Overseas", "Natives of India", "Destitute Natives Abroad", "Reports - Emigration" as well as colony, dominion and country headings. For files about emigration from 1921 onwards reference should be made to L/E, Economic Department Records, below.

L/P&J/7 Departmental Papers: Annual Files 1931-47

These include the files of the India Office Public and Judicial Department (to 1941) and thereafter of the Political Department. Files about Indians overseas from 1934 onwards may be traced through the contemporary annual indexes and registers (Z/L/P&J/7/5-26) under the headings "Emigration", "Natives of India", "Indians Overseas", and also under colony, dominion and country headings. **See also** L/P&J/8 below.

L/P&J/8 Departmental Papers: Collections c1930-47

The Collections of the Public and Judicial and Political Departments ran parallel with the L/P&J/7 Annual Files described above. Essentially the Collections consist of papers on particular subjects, usually covering several years. They differ from the Annual Files in being arranged and referenced not by a file register number and a year but by means of main collection number representing the subject concerned followed by a serial number representing an aspect of the main subject. The main collection in this series which relate to Indians overseas and emigration is Collection 108, consisting of parts or files I 'P&J/8179-349) for the years 1941.

L/E Economic Department Records, 1786-1947

This group is made up of records of the various departments of the Company, the Board and the India Office which were jointly or successively responsible for economic and other specialist topics. Between 1921 and 1947 these consisted of the following departments:-

Industries and Overseas (1921-24)
(Commerce and Revenue (1921-24)
Economic and Overseas (1924-46)
(Communications and Overseas (1946-47)
Economic (1946-47)

The subject of Indians overseas was assigned to the Industries and Overseas Department and later to the Economic and Overseas Department between 1921 and 1934. Thereafter it returned to the Public and Judicial Department. A complete list of the individual Industries and Overseas, and Economic and Overseas files dealing with Indians overseas during this period is given on pages These files are particularly informative for the problems faced by Indians overseas during the 1920s and early 1930s in the form of the laws and acts passed by various colonies and dominions

etc. They also have a great deal concerning Srinivasa Sastri's Dominions Tour of 1922.

LPO Private Office Papers c1904-47

These papers, which were kept by the private secretaries of successive Secretaries of State for India and were not registered in the ordinary India Office departments (eg. Judicial and Public etc), relate to those areas where the Secretaries of State acted personally. They include about a dozen files dealing with the position of Indians in East Africa and other colonies during the 1920s and 1930s.

M. Burma Office Papers 1932-48

The papers for the years 1932 to 1937 deal mainly with the separation of Burma from India. In 1937 this separation was finally completed, and from then until 1948 records pertaining to Burma came under the Burma Office. They should be consulted for material concerning Indians in Burma during this period. The original indexes and registers (Z/M) are being superseded by new lists.

(2) P. PROCEEDINGS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA AND OF THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS c1830-1936

It had been the practice of the East India Company to send fairly full manuscript copies of correspondence and resolutions of the Government of India and the provincial governments, known as Consultations or Proceedings, to London, and this was maintained by the India Office.

From 1860, however, the Proceedings were classified according to their importance and divided into two parts: 'A' and 'B'. The more important or policy matters were designated Part 'A' and the more routine subjects Part 'B'. The Part 'A' records were printed in full and sent to London while Part 'B' only came in the form of brief printed summaries, both at monthly intervals. The Proceedings indexes note alongside a specific item whether it is 'A' or 'B', and this will indicate if the complete papers were sent to London or else remained in India (where they may now be traced in the National Archives of India and the relevant state archives).

The Proceedings are of considerable importance for Indian emigration to the colonies and Dominions. The main relevant series held in the India Office Records are listed below.

In consulting the records, the following general points should be noted:-

- (a) The names of series used here are those given in the existing India Office Records press lists. These are in some cases abbreviated versions of the full names of the departments concerned with emigration within the secretariats of the Government of India and the main provincial or Presidency governments. It should also be kept in mind that, particularly in the case of

the Indian government, the subject of emigration shifted from one department to another during the period c1830-1947.

- (b) Prior to 1899 there are separately bound press lists in the IOLR for the Proceedings from India, Bengal, Madras and Bombay. From 1899 to 1936 the Proceedings for all these governments are listed in a single volume called "India etc Proceedings".
- (c) No Proceedings concerning emigration are available in the IOLR after 1936.

India

Public Proceedings, 1834-71 (332 vols)

(From 1843 these are properly called Home: Public Proceedings)

Emigration Proceedings, 1871-1931 (69 vols)

(ie the Emigration branch of the following departments: Revenue, Agriculture and Commerce (1871-79); Home, Revenue and Agriculture (1879-81); Revenue and Agriculture (1881-1905); Commerce and Industry (1905-20); Revenue and Agriculture (1921-23); Education, Health and Lands (1923-31).

Confidential Commerce and Industry Proceedings, 1915-22 (10 vols)

(ie mainly the Confidential Proceedings of the emigration branch of the Commerce and Industry Department.)

The topics covered in these series of Proceedings deal mainly with the emigration of Indian indentured labour to different colonies, and the Government of India's concern with the treatment and well-being of the labourers during the outward passage, as well as their living conditions in the colonies to which they had been sent.

They also cover subjects such as the recurring question of whether to allow emigration to Mauritius and certain other colonies, and also whether guaranteed return passages should be granted. Reports of the emigration officials in both India and the colonies also appear in these records.

In the earlier volumes the headings to be checked for information on Indian emigration are those of the colony or country concerned rather than the general heading of emigration. The other headings are "Emigration Agent" and "Protector of Emigrants", which also appear in the various Presidency Proceedings (see below). By 1926 "Overseas" is a further heading which should be checked for information concerning Indians, especially in South and East Africa.

Bengal

Public Proceedings	1704-1858	(902 vols)
General Proceedings	1859	(2 vols)
Emigration Proceedings	1860-85	(27 vols)
General Proceedings	1886-1913	(64 vols)

Financial Proceedings	1914-20	(32 vols)
Revenue Proceedings	1921-36	(53 vols)

These Proceedings deal with the indentured Indian labour sent to the various colonies and dominions from the Bengal Presidency, mainly through the port of Calcutta. They include reports from the various emigration agents at the depots in the Calcutta vicinity, where the labourers resided before embarking on their journey, giving details of the conditions in and the day to day running of the depots as well as information on the physical and medical state of the labourers themselves. These reports also cover the passage out of the colonies and give some idea of the conditions experienced on board an emigrant ship. When the emigrants arrived at their destination, reports were made by the protectors of immigrants in each colony, and these were sent back to the various Indian Presidencies and the Indian government.

Once again the headings to be checked concerning information on emigration are those of the colony or country concerned, but more particularly in the case of the Presidencies those of "Emigration Agent" and "Protector of Emigrants".

Madras

Public Proceedings	1705-1936	(956 vols)
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The series relate mainly to the native labour sent overseas from Madras and, as in the case of Bengal, consist of the reports of the emigration agents and protectors of emigrants. There are also reports on the conditions of emigrant ships, and statements showing numbers of Indian emigrants despatched to, and returned from, the various colonies. The Nominal Lists in the Proceedings also give names of those connected with emigration, but as far as can be seen there are no detailed nominal lists of native emigrants.

As with the India and Bengal Proceedings, the name of the colony or country concerned, as well as "Emigration Agent", are the headings to be checked in the early series. Later they are replaced by the general heading of "Emigration".

Bombay

General Proceedings	1823-72	(448 vols)
General Miscellaneous) Proceedings	1872-1931	(53 vols)

These series deal with the native labour sent to the colonies and Dominions from Bombay. As in the case of Bengal and Madras there are numerous reports from emigration agents and protectors of emigrants. There is also correspondence on the various Emigration Acts and whether certain aspects of them were being implemented to the satisfaction of the authorities: the use of Arab ships for Indian emigrants; efforts to persuade certain emigrants' wives and families to join their husbands, etc.

Throughout, the main heading to be checked in the Proceedings volumes is 'Emigration', but it should be noted that from June 1872 onwards 'Emigration' came under General (Miscellaneous) Proceedings which are bound in the same volumes as the Bombay General Proceedings. However the General Proceedings are still worth checking for the heading "Distressed British Indian Subjects" for Indians who became stranded abroad and sought aid from the Indian government.

¹ Cumpston **Indians Overseas in British Territories 1834-1854** (London, 1969) pp.3, 6

² Parliamentary Papers (H of C) 1840, xxxvii, no. 331, pp. 194-197

³ Secretary, Government of Bengal to Chief Magistrate Calcutta, 22 Sept 1834, quoted by Cumpston p.12

⁴ Nicolay to Glenelg, 27 Dec 1836 — Parliamentary Papers (H of C) 1837-38, iii, no.34 p.96

⁵ Public Record Office: CO 111/61, Minute of James Stephen, 10 Mar 1837 - quoted by Cumpston p.17

⁶ 3. Geoghegan **Note on Emigration from India** (Calcutta, 1873) p.6, IOR: Official Publications V/27/820/ 1

⁷ Parliamentary Papers (H of C) 1841, xvi, no.45 **Appendix** p.14

⁸ **The Times** 12 Jul 1838

⁹ Parliamentary Papers (H of C) 1837-38, iii, Bill 559, 4 Jul 1838

¹⁰ Hugh Tinker **4 New System of Slavery** (London, 1974) p.69

¹¹ John Scoble Hill **Coolies: a brief exposure of the deplorable conditions of hill coolies in British Guiana and Mauritius** (London, 1840)

¹² Tinker **New System of Slavery** p.79

¹³ Hugh Tinker **A New System of Slavery**, p.141

¹⁴ IOR: Bengal Public Consultations, P/424/10, 21 Oct 1858, p.50

¹⁵ C Kondapi **Indians Overseas 1838-1949** (New Delhi, 1951) pp.17-18

¹⁶ Graves, **Annual Report for 1877 on Immigration to South Africa**, quoted by Tinker, p.212

¹⁷ Sir Henry Bulwer to Secretary of Colonies, 7 Sep 1878, quoted by Tinker p.272

¹⁸ Throughout the period of indentured emigration the French colonies had a reputation for abusing the system. After banning emigration in the early years, the Indian Government lifted the ban in 1860. But from then until 1920 they were ever ready to suspend emigration to the French colonies should malpractice be detected, which it was through reports and eye-witness accounts.

¹⁹ **The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. 1** (Delhi, 1958) pp.116-28

²⁰ IOR: Hamilton Papers, MS Eur. 0.510/1, Curzon to Secretary of State for India, Lord George Hamilton, 30 Mar 1899

²¹ Tinker, p.299

²² Tinker p.319

²³ Cambridge University Library: Hardinge Papers, Hardinge to Crewe 29 Nov 1912

²⁴ Cambridge University Library: Hardinge Papers, Memorandum by H.E. the Viceroy upon questions likely to arise in India at the end of the war, pp.26-30

²⁵ IOR: Judicial and Public Papers, L/P&J/6/1412, file 4522/1915

²⁶ Parliamentary Papers (H of C) 1918, xvi, 9177, p.195

²⁷ IOR: Indian Emigration Proceedings, P/10898 p.47, no.31

²⁸ IOR: Judicial and Public Papers, L/P&J/6/1412, file 4522/1915

²⁹ **The Round Table** December 1922, "The coloured question in politics". - quoted by Tinker **Separate and Unequal** p.37

³⁰ IOR: Reading Collection - MSS. Eur.E.238/3 p.193

³¹ IOR: **Industries and Overseas Papers** - L/E/7/1242

³² IOR: Microfilm of the private papers of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru held in the National Library of India, Calcutta, B.31, 5 July 1922 (POS.4986-5020)

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- ³³ T.G. Fraser "The Sikh Problem in Canada and its Political Consequences 1905 - 1921" (**Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History**, vii 1, Oct 1978)
- ³⁴ Parliamentary Papers (H of C) 1923, xviii, p.141 Cmd. 1922
- ³⁵ Public Record Office: Cabinet Paper 22(26), Indians in South Africa, memorandum by the Secretary of State for India
- ³⁶ **The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi**, Vol. xxxiii (Delhi, 1958) p.214
- ³⁷ House of Commons Debates, Vol. 317, 17 Nov 1936
- ³⁸ IOR: Linlithgow Papers, MSS. Eur. 0.125/18, Telegram: Linlithgow to Zetland, 28 May 1939
- ³⁹ Tinker **Separate and Unequal** (London, 1976) p.220
- ⁴⁰ UI< High Commissioner South Africa to Dominions Office: Telegrams dated 20, 23 & 27 June 1944 - quoted by Tinker
- ⁴¹ Tinker *Separate and unequal*, p.252
- ⁴² British Commonwealth Conference on Nationality and Citizenship, London, February 1947 - Report and Minutes
- ⁴³ Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Riots in Durban, (Cape Town, 1949)
- ⁴⁴ Rhodes House, Oxford: Creech Jones Papers, Creech Jones to Menon, 17 Dec 1948