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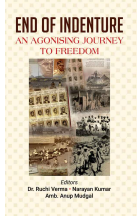
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DESCRIPTION

Growing public outrage finally forced the abolition of the curse of slavery starting with the year 1833. An immensely welcome step soon brought to fore another major challenge of severe labour shortages in the plantation colonies. The colonial rulers devised another deceptive tool of engaging large scale cheap labour for their plantations under the so-called 'Indenture system'.

The British carried out the largest such operation and mobilised close to 2 million workers from India and carried them to far off lands in the Caribbean, Africa and the Pacific. On the face of it, these workers were taken under a mutually agreed contract, called the 'agreement' which also led to the popular folklore of 'girmity'. However, in terms of protection of the workers' basic rights, this system was really no different from the erstwhile slavery. Generation after generation these workers struggled in agony for achieving the eventual liberation from this de-facto bondage. The plight of the indentured workers also demotivated the Indian leadership especially Mahatma Gandhi who personally witnessed their sufferings in South Africa and Mauritius.

Rising and loud criticism started demanding the abolition of indentureship in the plantation colonies, India and elsewhere. There was another unexpected pressure for able-bodied men for the First World War operations in Europe. These factors together forced the colonial powers to finally abolish the indenture system in the year 1917. Hence, the year 2017 marked the centenary of this landmark development widely celebrated along the 'indentured route' namely Mauritius, Fiji, Trinidad & Tobago, Guyana and Suriname. As in most of these countries, the majority of the populations are of Indian origin, this was also a cause for celebration in India.

The Antar Rashtriya Sahayog Parishad with its 40 years of outreach with the Indian diaspora, especially the Girmitya countries organised a special commemorative International conference on 20-22 April 2017 in collaboration with Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) and Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR). In addition to being addressed by Indian leadership, the conference was attended by over 100 experts from India and abroad. This book is a compilation of the proceedings, presentations and the outcomes of this important event. We hope that this publication would be useful to academics and scholars dealing with diaspora and history of the indentured system.

THE AUTHOR

Narayan Kumar

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The Keepers of the Jahaji Past

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Germany



A Study of Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) to Engage Indian Diaspora: Problems and Prospects

—Dr. Santosh Kumar Singh

Introduction

The Indian diaspora is the world's second largest diaspora, after China. It has been estimated that over 25 million Indians are spread over more than 200 countries. Most of the Indians are concentrated in the West Asia, America, Mauritius, Malaysia, South Africa, Australia and Western Europe countries. They are playing a significant role to boost India's growth and social development (FICCI, 2013).⁵⁵ This diasporic community has played a significant role for the home as well as the host country. This community performs important role in terms of economic, political and social situations in the host country. If we look at them from a global perspective, they are seen to be performing as a strategic resource for both the home and the host country.

The nature of Indian diaspora can be majorly divided into two—'old' and 'new' diaspora. The old diaspora is considered as the first wave of the Indian diaspora. The roots of Indian diaspora began in the British rule and continued till the end of the independence of India. During this period, the Britishers have founded the system of 'indentured labour system' from the Indian subcontinent to their colonies. In contemporary period, this old diaspora represents sixty percent of the Indian diaspora—around 18 million People of Indian Origin (PIO) (Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, 2014).⁵⁶ This diaspora primarily settled before pre-Second World War. On the other hand, the new diaspora consists of Indian migrants migrated after the 1960s and onwards in large numbers—primarily to developed countries, mainly to

United Kingdom, United States of America, Canada, Australia, and other Western European countries.

During the 19th century, there were around thousand Indians were there in both the United Kingdom and the USA, but, by after the Second World War, the number of Indian diaspora have increased to 6,000 in each country (Siddique, 2013).⁵⁷ The Indian origin people majorly found in countries like Mauritius—Indians are the single largest ethnic group here and in other countries like Fiji, Suriname, Trinidad & Tobago, Guyana and Nepal—constitute a significant proportion of the host country's population and in the Middle East countries where they have a significant presence (Dutt, 2006).⁵⁸

The old diaspora is mostly present in the Caribbean, Africa, Mauritius and Oceania region. The unique characteristic of this diaspora is that they have retained the Indian tradition, culture, practices and heritage in their original form. They have retained the culture like food, language and clothing even after facing segregation and harsh living conditions. During this period, the diasporic community maintained a sense of belonging and closeness, affection and bonding. The Indian diaspora is moulded by customs, traditions, habits, norms and values. It has played a strategic role in influencing the host country's features in through noticeable and invisible ways—culture, language, living system, norms, values, and (Ramsaran, 2013).⁵⁹

The new Indian diaspora have two forms—first, it includes technically advanced professional workers and students. Most of them migrated to developed countries, especially to the America, Britain, Western Europe Countries, Canada, and Australia. This migration has taken momentum after the liberalisation of Indian Economy and the end of Cold war 1990s. Secondly, it has also been found that the migration of semi-skilled and unskilled workers has taken place mostly to