



# The Voyage Of Indentured Laborers Leads To The Formation Of A Diasporic Community

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**Abstract :** The indentured labourers' voyage brought them into contact with a new phenomenon known as the feminist age, and the new term is now known as the "Diaspora". Our ancestors gave us the name Diaspora, as they gave their lives to ensure the survival of their family. This historical event has changed the traditional and conservative view on the identity of women. It has changed the whole narrative of patriarchal society. It got rid of the gender prejudice. The new phenomenon known as Diaspora has helped our nation establish strong and positive connections with a number of nations that are benefiting us on a worldwide scale and are also contributing in a unique way to our country's growth.

**Keywords:** Feminist, diaspora, revolutionary, patriarchy, phenomenon.

## I. INTRODUCTION

History says that India's culture is very vast and mixed of the variety starting from the top of the Himalaya to Kanyakumari means North part to the South and Bay of Bengal to the Dwarka means East to West. This is the cultural country in the context of the life-style, food, education, language, literature, music and emotion and feelings etc. The ancient time of India proved the prosperity and richness of our culture. In every field we are the first who has given the precious value of the zero by inventing to the world. Apart from this we are considering ourselves as the "Vishwa Guru". Our ancient education system and our literature, mythology, way of living, food, culture and thought process biomes the motivation for others, our holy book 'The Gita, The

Ramayana and The Mahabharata” are available into various languages and always teach the lesson of peace, harmony, trust, concentration and non-violence to each human being that is why our culture is recognised all over the world. India has faced a very difficult time in the past as many castes invaded, destroyed temples and its livelihood and caused destruction of India. Lastly India was enslaved by the Britishers.

In the History after the abolishment of the slavery system Britishers had brought up the new contract system for Indenture labourers. Initially it is the slavery system in the module form by changing the name with some changes in the rules. First Britishers had established various colonies all over the world as their main motto to gain their business and make their country more prosperous. They had brought Indenture laborers from Africa and India at low wages in their colonies mainly in sugar cane plantations to work by signing a five years contract system; after completing the contract few were able to return their own country and some were settled themselves in the colonies and later on mixed with local people permanently stilted down there. Later on, their upcoming generation was known as the Diasporic generation or people.

## II. ORIGINS OF INDENTURESHIP WITH ITS EXPERIENCES

The beginning of indentureship in India and the experiences of Indian individuals working as indentured laborers abroad is important for us to know about the upcoming generation who is later known as Diasporic people, it is noteworthy that Mauritius island is the first island where our people had gone first as indenture laborers from the northern part of the India especially from the Bihar. This island had no local inhabitants until it was colonized. The shortage of laborers likely became a significant challenge for the imperial powers by the end of the era of exploitation. During this period, laborers were not entirely free until they were trained by new workers. Although a new training phase began, it was not sustainable, as the enslaved individuals sought freedom without any obligations, making this arrangement unlikely to endure. The enslaved had essentially purchased their own bondage, and the new laborers were not particularly committed to addressing the lack of trainers. Nevertheless, the tradition of exploitation of individuals led to the rise of indentured labour. Bonded labour is similar to indentured labour, as these individuals were often uneducated and faced poor living conditions.

They were also quite naïve. Recognizing this situation, the British took advantage of it under a well-planned scheme. Under this scheme, all indentured labourers had to give their thumb impressions on documents stating the conditions of their service without the presence of a magistrate.

Looking at the history of Mauritius, the Dutch were the first settlers in 1598, naming the island after themselves. However, they were eventually driven out due to their destructive practices, such as deforestation and hunting the dodo bird and Javanese deer, which were sources of food and entertainment for later inhabitants. The Dutch abandoned Mauritius in 1710. Subsequently, the French took control of the island, which became a prime location for piracy and plundering ships at sea. The French renamed the island "Ile de

France" and worked diligently to develop it, appointing Captain Maha de la Bourdonnais as the first governor in 1735. With French ownership, a new era of progress began, marked by cultural, social, and economic advancements on the island. All these events took place during the colonization period.

The new governor was the first to redesign the island, establishing new communication networks and setting up sugar factories. The population of Mauritius was made up of people from various origins, primarily of Indian descent, along with some enslaved individuals brought from Zanzibar, Senegal, Madagascar, and Mozambique. By 1788, the island's total population was 43,000, including 36,000 enslaved people. Artisans from Pondicherry and Chandernagar were encouraged to help develop Port Louis and the harbor.

Before British control, in May 1809, the British navy launched an attack on Rodrigues under the command of Lt. Colonel Keating. To expand their influence, the British brought 4,000 people from Madras, India. Additionally, they successfully captured Reunion Island in July 1810, which was subsequently designated as an official base for British forces following the French surrender. The British took full control of Mauritius, but the situation for African bond servants remained dire until they were emancipated by the British government in 1835. Initially, 8,000 sepoys played a significant role in providing labor instead of enslaved groups. This marked the beginning of the Indenture labor system, which operated as a contract system. The British sought skilled farmers to replace the labor shortage caused by the abolition of slavery, recruiting workers primarily from the northern plains of India, including Uttar Pradesh and West Bihar. The Indenture labor system began in Mauritius around 1834. By 1810, India was already under multicultural rule and was well-known for its skilled farmers and hard workers, prompting the British to recruit a large number of Indenture laborers from both northern and southern regions, including Madras, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Maharashtra. Additionally, some merchants from Gujarat made their way to the island.

After finishing the contract system of five years some were unable to come to their own land because they suffered from the rules and regulation of colonizers therefore, they settled down in the host country by settling down with their family. Some were remarried there and formed their own family in spite of already having family in the home land. They were merged into the local people and established the relationship between those people. They followed the culture of the host land and tried to give their own culture to the local people. The upcoming generation of the Indenture labourers was known as Diasporic people.

The word Diaspora is made from the two words "Dia" and "Speirein" that means "scatter" and "away" these words mainly come from the Greek which is first used for the Jews tribe who moved outside from the Israel with their own culture, heritage, religion and many other things. Today it has been used for all kinds of the tribes in reference to the displacement, migration, resettlement of the group from many countries. Distinct human groups, defined by religion, lifestyle, language, race, and geography, have migrated to find

better lives, leading to a broader understanding of the term "diaspora. " This concept includes new terms like Indian, Chinese, and African diasporas. For example, the Indian Diaspora can be seen as a tree with branches representing various sub-groups like Bhojpuri, Punjabi, and Bengali. Factors shaping diaspora include the need for livelihoods, racism, and human desires for innovation and better living conditions. During the 21st century, industrial changes and political issues have influenced these communities. Currently, around 16 million Indians live abroad, with Mauritius having the largest share of this population.

### III. THE CULTURE OF DIASPORIC PEOPLE

Culture is deeply ingrained in an individual's personality, identity, and individuality, providing a way to live life and leading it. It is not just a garnishing material for food, but a fundamental aspect of human existence. Culture is derived from the Latin root "Cult or Cultus," meaning "to cultivate" or "to till" or "to nurture." It is essential for the survival of any society and involves nurturing a person according to the needs of the society. Culture encompasses various aspects of life, including language, food, clothing, and worship. It is a pattern of thought, behavior, rituals, beliefs, and customs inherited from ancestors. Culture is made by humans for society and is transmitted from one generation to another. It consists of both material and non-material components, with material culture relating to material aspects like dress, food, and household goods, and non-material culture referring to ideas, thoughts, ideals, and beliefs. Culture varies from place to place and country to country, and is developed based on historical background.

“Culture” involves nurturing and refinement, while “Civilization” signifies improved societal living. Culture is inherent, evolving through generations, influencing language and customs as cultural heritage.

The diasporic community is made from the various cultures, lifestyles, languages, literature and different thought processes. In ancient times, the indentured laborers who moved from various parts of India initially from North and South are considered as our forefathers. Bihar which lies in the north part of India is recognized as the root of the diasporic people. During the journey, they believed themselves as the “Jahaji bhai Behan” meaning “Jahaji” brothers and sisters. They brought their culture with themselves in the form of clothes, language, food and songs etc. On the ship they used to converse into the Bhojpuri language with each other, they sang the Bhojpuri folklore to remove their monotony and entertainment amongst themselves. After reaching the British colonies in the sugarcane plantation they continued to converse into their mother tongue because they were completely unfamiliar with the new languages. They were starting a new family in the host country by establishing new relations and they used to celebrate their festivals together and tried to follow all rules and regulations. They made their children study in the missionary schools although they faced many difficulties regarding their identities of having different religions and casts. Having varied personalities, they might have faced racism, criticism, bifurcation of being a breed of other country, some were not admitted in the school of being a Hindu personality if admitted then everyday became the prey of the management and other human localities. However, they became part of the mixed cultures believed to be our ancestors. By

following the new culture language is playing a significant role in the host-country. As the times flew the situations and terms were changed, many Indians were valued by their original identities, they were playing the major roles in various factors such as political, economic, geographical, educational and many other. Thus, this is how by doing hard work they became successful to establish their own personal identities by playing a major role in the development of the host-country.

People from the various communities and various places mingled with the locals of the host land and started their own new cultures in this culture language is the most efficient part of it. Two different people from varied languages converse with each other without understanding anything. With the respect of indenture laborers who were treated as the servants by their masters mean the colonial officers. In the case of communication, the same situation should have been created by the officers which was recognised as master and servant languages further it had been known as 'Creole and Pidgin' languages.

#### **IV. ABOUT THE TWO MAJOR ANCIENT PLANTATION LANGUAGES**

Creole languages developed at specific points in time and have native speakers. They originated in the 17th century when missionaries translated texts for slaves and created dictionaries. The first recorded use of a creole language was in the Virgin Islands in 1739, where J. M. Magnes wrote the first grammar. Early creoles included Negro-English and Negro-Dutch. The term "Creole" comes from French, Spanish, and Portuguese, relating to the idea of "breeding" or "raising," with roots in the Latin word "Creare," meaning "to create." Creole languages are stable and have unique grammatical rules, serving as first languages for many speakers. They play important roles in national and official contexts and help define the identity of their speakers. Creoles can undergo "Creolisation" and "Decreolisation". "

Creoles are the primary language of native speakers and the newer generation. They are commonly used in urban areas by colonists and officials and are linked to immigrant populations and colonial workers. There are fewer speakers of Creole languages compared to French and English, and Creole speakers often feel insignificant about their language in comparison. Creolisation involves the development of word and sentence structures, phonetics, and vocabulary systems. Creole languages are mostly found in equatorial regions and coastal areas. They are often referred to as 'master languages' used by those in authority. Many different Creoles exist across various cultures around the world.

Creole languages are important in education and are taught globally in various institutions. They were initially used by plantation owners and missionaries, and many people learned them to connect with the local culture. Fort creoles developed among European traders in West Africa and were spoken by local Africans. Plantation creoles served as a means of communication between European masters and African slaves, while maroon creoles evolved from plantation creoles in communities of escaped slaves. In migrated societies, both workers and educated individuals learn creole languages. This leads to linguistic traditionalism and facilitates



language transfer between generations, allowing each new generation to adapt and evolve their own creole language.

Language is essential for communication in society, and each person has their own way of expressing themselves. When people from different communities meet, a new language can form to make communication easier, known as pidgin language. Pidgin is a simplified speech developed from one or more existing languages and is used by groups who do not share a common language. It allows quick communication between people, like immigrants and locals. Pidgin has unique characteristics, and its grammar is often less complex, making it adaptable. Overall, pidgin emerges when speakers of different languages need to understand each other without a shared language.

In Caribbean countries, indentured laborers created their own pidgin language by mixing words from the local native languages. This pidgin language is used in daily life and for formal communication by Overseas Indians. In Fiji, two pidgins developed during the colonial period: one based on Fijian and the other on Hindi. Pidgin serves as a trade language, helping traders communicate during the indentured process. It has become the common language, especially among mixed marriages, but may become extinct if not preserved when its social need ends.

## **V. LITERATURE**

The history said about the culture of indenture laborers, while they were moving from their native land to host-land they brought their own culture in the varied form and after moving in the British colonies, they made alive their own culture in the reference of food, music, songs, language, literature and, life-style. Though they were not very literate, they were still fond of the music and songs. While they were sailing on the ship, they used to sing a song in their own Bhojpuri song which gave them entertainment, this song made them memorize their own country and gave them satisfaction in the plantation.

Human life is largely shaped by cultures, customs, traditions, and beliefs rather than by natural behaviors. For instance, while eating is natural, dining at a table is a cultural practice that reflects a specific lifestyle. Folklore encompasses cultural, traditional, narrative, variable, and oral elements. Culturally, it connects to natural and human habits like eating and talking. Traditionally, folklore reflects ongoing ways of thinking within a certain time. Narratively, it includes stories with characters and plots, while variability indicates slight differences from standard forms, and orality refers to spoken traditions.

In the diaspora, the literature written by and about Indian indentured laborers provides a rich tapestry of experiences, hardships, and cultural preservation. Folktales, ballads, performing arts, myth and artistic works that depict the viewpoints of the laborers are included in this literature, along with scholarly and historical narratives that detail their travels and the effects of indenture on host nations.

Modern culture and folklore have distinct relationships. Rural life is closely tied to folklore as it includes beliefs, rituals, customs, and languages. Understanding literature requires some knowledge of folklore, as modern folklore can challenge past rules and traditions. Folklore serves communities by making culture accessible to everyday people. It helps shape community identities through modern media, culture, and education. Folklore embodies unity and diversity, reflecting human connections. It often teaches people how to live and interact socially.

Folklore is deeply interwoven with religious life and is best studied in its social context, requiring an understanding of regional influences. The study of folklore interacts with capitalism, maintaining its survival through intelligence, literacy, and scientific methods. Disciplines like history, sociology, psychology, anthropology, and linguistics significantly contribute to folklore studies. Folklore reveals insights about mythic heroes in Indian history and encompasses diverse stories influenced by different social and cultural contexts

The term "folklore" was first introduced by William Thomas in 1846 as an alternative to "popular antiquities." Various scholars, including the Grim brothers, have explored folklore's significance. Folklore is often viewed critically as myths or superstitions, yet it remains a crucial foundation of cultural heritage and a subject of academic inquiry since the 19th century. Many Indo-Caribbean countries become the work place afterwards and become the permanent residential for the indenture labourers. Such countries are Mauritius, Trinidad, Guyana, Fiji etc.

To preserve their culture in a foreign land, they rehearsed their local folk songs. These songs reflect various cultural facets. These facets include their regional, religious, traditional, nostalgic, cultural, social, and agricultural practices. For example, the Bhojpuri folklore of Mauritius and Fiji are the best example of this:

***PITTI PITTI CHOKRI MAURITIAN BHOJPURI SONG:***

*... Shahar ke lijinava me joli, joli chokri. Shahar ke lijinava me joli, joli chokri, Zubeda loto leke jaai, Zubeda loto leke jaai, Chun, chunk e maare najariya. Zubeda loto leke jaai, Zubeda loto leke jaai...*

The song highlights the cultural perspective of the Indian homeland from the viewpoint of diasporic individuals. It celebrates the beauty of an urban girl named Zubeda, who captivates those around her as she walks with a pot. Zubeda adorns herself with various ornaments, including a lovely nose ring, emphasizing her beauty. The song also introduces a new bridegroom and his family, showcasing the charm of his grandmother and the vibrant colors that symbolize love and beauty. Through this cultural lens, the song reflects on the longing for one's roots and traditions. It expresses how the woman remembers and cherishes her homeland's culture while living in a new country. **(Mauritian Folklore)**

*...Bidesia Pee Kaun Nagria me. Tohra Baserava ho, Kaun Nagria, Tohra Baserava ho. (1) Hamre, gayal kab aave re, batuhiya ho. Hamre, gayal kab aave re, batuhiya ho. Fijia ke tapuha, rupiya hee, rupiya ho...*

This Bidesia song focuses on the experiences of indenture laborers known as Girmity, who left their homes under an agreement to work abroad. They reflect on their feelings of being wanderers in an unfamiliar city and express a longing to return home. While in Fiji, they earn money but endure harsh conditions. They sail for months with only basic supplies, knowing their agreement lasts five years. They left their families behind, promising to survive as indentured laborers. The song highlights their mistreatment by British masters, who forced them to work hard in sugarcane fields, often beating them and treating them poorly. **(Fijian Folklore)**

## VI. CONCLUSION

The history of indenture labourers gives us comprehensive knowledge about the ancestors of the diasporic people and their journey stated their tolerance power, their unity, the power of staying connected to our culture and keeping it alive for our new generation despite many difficulties. The conservative tradition and narrow-mindedness towards women and discrimination between male and female identities forced the revolutionary-minded women of that time to raise their voices against injustice. This is the result of which today, expatriate feminist writers are being born. Rajkumari Singha, Shani Mootoo, Ramabai Espinet, Lakshmi Persaud and Janet Naidu, Gaiutra Bahadur, Niala Maharaj and Joy Mahabir. These women writers have spoken out against the concept of female identity, whereas in the past, women may not have been as conscious of their self-identity; any attempts to oppose the injustices faced by women were largely overlooked. As time passed, some male authors who received higher pay concentrated on women's equality and their role in patriarchal society. These male authors recognized that the role of women is equally significant as that of men due to their education and progressive mindset. The contributions of these female authors significantly influence the current state of affairs.

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