

*Blueprint Proposal for*  
**Global Girmitiya Society (GGS)**  
**or International Girmitiya Society (IGS)**

## Contents

- Introductory Remarks
- Definition
- Objective
- Goals
- Preamble
- The British Empire 1815 & British India 1860
- Places of recruitment
- Indian Indenture Labourer Contract
- Indian Indenture Labourer Passes
- Indian Arrival Dates per Country
- Second Journey Countries
- Global Girmitiya Society (GGS)
- International Girmitiya Day (IGD)
- The Global Organization Structure
- Leadership & Vision
- Standing & Ad Hoc Committees
- The Global Organization Membership
- Global Headquarters
- Regional or Country Chapters (Affiliates)
- International Recognition & Accreditation
- Partnerships
- Announcements and Engagements with Governments
- Registration & Trademarks
- Resolutions
- Website
- Newsletter
- Media
- Press & Media Releases
- Funding
- Publications
- Films, Documentaries, Music and Work of Art
- Preservation
- Recognition, Prizes & Scholarships
- Webinars, On-Line Interactive Conferences
- Petitions
- Indemnity
- Disclaimers
- Programs 2017-2021
- Steps to Take
- Appendix

*Blueprint Proposal for:*  
**Global Girmitya Society (GGS)**

**Introductory Remarks:**

It began as a discussion among an interested group of descendants of Indian indentured labourers residing in various countries (and a few interested person from India) to have consensus on an international day of recognition and commemoration for descendants of Indian indentured labourers. March 20, 2017 marked the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the abolition of Indian indentureship and sparked this vibrant discussion with a high level dialogue among the group with similar interests. It soon evolved into a more intense discussion on the need for more than just an international day of recognition and commemoration, a reflection on the need for a single more comprehensive global platform to represent the interests and concerns of the almost 15 million descendants of Indian indentured labourers residing in the countries Indian indentured labourers were sent as well as those countries to which descendants of Indian indentured labourers made their second journeys.

I feel privileged to be tasked to compile the overwhelming responses of input, suggestions, recommendations and proposals into this proposal, and I trust that it can be the catalyst for a long overdue global platform.

**Definition:**

While it is generally known that a Girmitya is a descendant of Indian Indentured labourers to Fiji, for this proposal and onwards, a Girmitya would be defined as a descendant of **all** Indian Indentured labourers who were taken from India to several British, Dutch and French colonies during the periods 1826-1920 under the system of indenture labour.

**Objective:**

To develop, launch and maintain a vibrant global Girmitya society representing the interests, issues and concerns of worldwide Girmitya based on shared history, heritage, journeys, aspirations and common goals in comprehensive and meaningful ways deserving of Girmitya as a unique population among the Indian Diaspora and among peoples of the world.

**Goals:**

- To actively promote and advance Girmitya interests globally and in respective countries of birth and domicile;
- To document, publish, preserve and promote Girmitya history, journeys and achievements;
- To effectively champion Girmitya interests, issues, causes and concerns, including seeking apologies, atonement and reparations for pain and suffering inflicted on Indian indentured labourers;
- To efficiently and effectively use technology and modern means of communications to engage, embrace and enhance the Girmitya among its population and with others;
- To establish representative working Girmitya groups to actively monitor, address and advance current, critical matters relating to social, cultural, political, economic, academic, women, infants, children, youth, professions, sports, philanthropy, entrepreneurship, technology, mobility, human rights, inter-ethnic relations, and other related matters;
- To actively pursue preservation of Girmitya history, documents, artifacts, sites, publications, works of art and develop means of electronic access for interactive viewing and participation;
- To obtain recognition of Girmitya as a unique population among Indian Diaspora and among peoples of the world by respective governments, government of India and international agencies;
- To develop long term roadmaps, policies and pathways for advancement and sustainability of viable institutions, foundations, associations and chambers of commerce which would engage, outreach, embrace and enhance Girmitya diasporic development and positioning in all sectors of society including economic, political professional advancement locally, regionally and globally;
- To establish a non-conflicting date as International Girmitya Day (IGD), distinct from established Indian Arrival Day in several Girmitya countries, to be recognized and observed annually by commemoration and celebration of Girmitya shared history, heritage, journeys and aspirations.
- To pursue acceptance by the Government of India of alternate authenticated documentation for PIO Cards provided by those who are unable to obtain original documents due to lack of records or poor quality records in Girmitya countries impacted by Indian indentureship.

*Blueprint Proposal for:*  
**Global Girmitiya Society (GGS)**

**Preamble:**

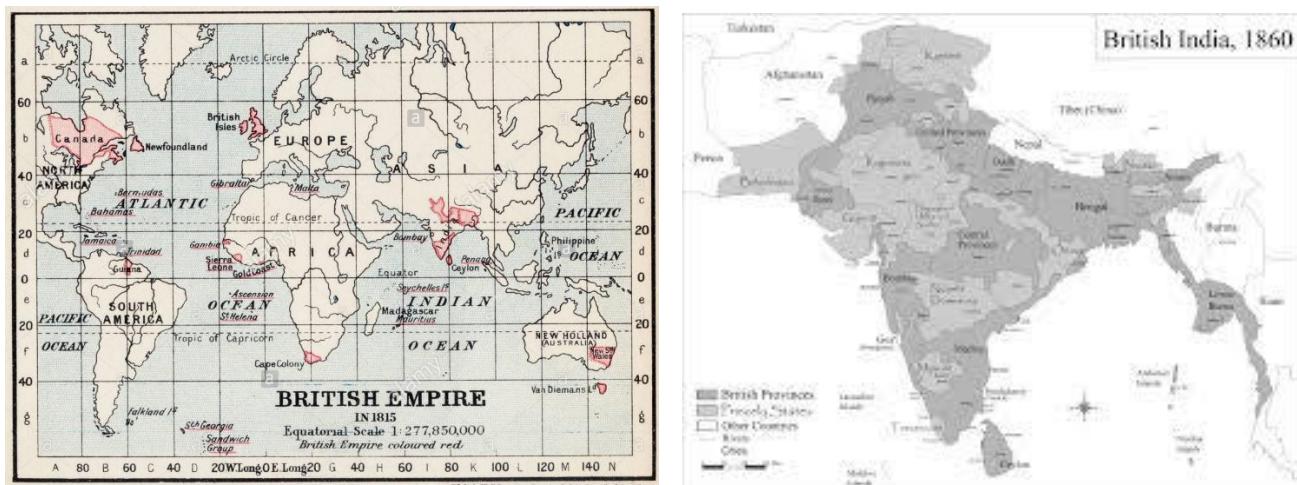
“The **Indian indenture system** was an ongoing system of indenture, a form of debt bondage, by which 3.5 million Indians were transported to various colonies of European powers to provide labour for the (mainly sugar) plantations. It started from the end of slavery in 1833 (Slavery Abolition Act) and continued until 1920. This resulted in the development of large Indian diaspora, which spread from the Indian Ocean (i.e. South Africa, Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, Madagascar, Zambia, Zanzibar, Uganda, Malawi, Seychelles, Réunion and Mauritius) to Pacific Ocean (i.e. Fiji), to the Atlantic Ocean (i.e. the Caribbean, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Suriname, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, Belize, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Grenada, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Jamaica) as well as the growth of Indo-Caribbean, Indo-Fijian, Indo-Mauritian, and Indo-African population.” *Wikipedia*

Indian Indentureship was an intense and harrowing period of Indian labourers from several Indian states to far away lands of then British, Dutch and French colonies to replenish desperately needed labour after the emancipation of slavery in 1834. The majority of those labourers were taken from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry.

March 20, 2017 marks the centennial of official abolition of Indian Indentureship, an era spanning the years 1834-1917. The history and consequences of Indian Indentureship are deeply embedded with tremendous significance, importance, meaningful history and reflections to millions of descendants living in many countries which were the recipients of Indian Indentured labourers seeking better livelihoods. These countries included: Mauritius, Fiji, Malaysia, South Africa, East Africa, Guyana, Trinidad, Suriname, Jamaica, Belize, St. Vincent, Grenada and other countries of the Caribbean, as well as former French colonies of Reunion Island, Seychelles, Guadeloupe, Martinique and French Guiana.

Also of significance is the continuing migratory second journeys and/or duality of Girmitiyas from their respective countries of birth to Europe, North America, Australia, New Zealand, South Asia and South East Asia, as well as other dialogue among Girmitiya countries. This trend has certainly added to the dynamic of Girmitiya journeys to be added to the continuing dialogue among Girmitiyas and others impacted by this.

**The British Empire 1815 & British India 1860:**



*Blueprint Proposal for:  
Global Girmitiya Society (GGS)*

**Places of Recruitment:**

According to CO 384/107, the North Western provinces, Oudh and Bihar, furnished the largest number of recruits. The ships carried men (and women and children) from the following places:

Sailing From	Province	Districts of Recruitment
Calcutta and Bombay	Northwest Provinces	Allahabad, Azimfhur, Mirzapore, Benaras, Gahazeepore, Goruckpore, Meerut, Cawnpor, Barielly, Agra, Jansie, Jounpore
Calcutta and Bombay	Oudh	Oude, Lucknow, Seetapore, Sultanpore, Faizabad, Roy Bareily
Calcutta and Bombay	Central India	Indore, Nagapure, Jubbulpore, Raipore, Remah, Gwalior
Calcutta and Bombay	Bihar	Shahabad, Patna, Gya, Arrah, Sarun, Tirhoot, Chumparan, Monghyr, Bhagulpore
Calcutta and Bombay	Bengal	Calcutta 24, Pergunnahs, Howrah, Nuddea, Burdwan, Moorshedabad, Jessore, Pubua, Rungpore, Cooch Behar, Purneah, Chota, Nagpore, Bankoora, Birbhum, Midnapore, Sonthal, Pergunnahs, Dacca, Mymensingh, Backergunge, Fureedpore
Calcutta and Bombay	Bombay Presidency and Orissa	Cuttac, Balasore, Pooree
Calcutta and Bombay	Punjab Dependencies	Delhi, Umballa, Jullunder, Amritsur, Lahore, Peshawar, Ferozepore, Gujarat
Madras	-	Salem, Combaconum, Tanjore, Cuddalore, Trichinopoly, Chittoor, Madura, Chingleput
(To Mauritius)	Telugu District	Ganjam, Vizagapatnam, Godavari, Guntur
(To Mauritius)		Pondicherry and Cochin

As men and women travelled significant distances to take ships from Calcutta, Bombay and Madras, it is very difficult to pinpoint where one might have originated. Especially during famine periods in India, a substantial proportion of the 'hill coolies' travelled from far places. After a certain period some families joined their men in the land of their indentured service

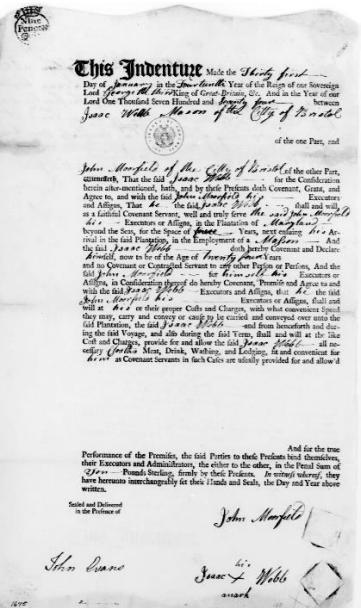
<https://sharresearch.files.wordpress.com/2011/07/indian-indentured-labour.pdf>

**Blueprint Proposal for:  
Global Girmitiya Society (GGS)**

**Indian Indenture Labourer Contract:**

**Indian Indenture Agreement of 1912**

♦Period of Service-Five Years from the Date of Arrival in the Colony. ♦Nature of labour-Work in connection with the Cultivation of the soil or the manufacture of the produce on any plantation. ♦Number of days on which the Emigrant is required to labour in each Week-Everyday, excepting Sundays and authorized holidays. ♦Number of hours in every day during which he is required to labour without extra remuneration-Nine hours on each of five consecutive days in every week commencing with the Monday of each week, and five hours on the Saturday of each week. ♦Monthly or Daily Wages and Task-Work Rates-When employed at time-work every adult male Emigrant above the age of fifteen years will be paid not less than one shilling, which is at present equivalent to twelve annas and every adult female Emigrant above that age not less than nine pence, which is at present equivalent to nine annas, for every working day of nine hours; children below that age will receive wages proportionate to the amount of work done. ♦When employed at task or ticca-work every adult male Emigrant above the age of fifteen years will be paid not less than one shilling, and every adult female Emigrant above that age not less than nine pence for every task which shall be performed. ♦The law is that a man's task shall be as much as ordinary able-bodied adult male Emigrant can do in six hours' steady work, and that a woman's task shall be three-fourths of a man's task. An employer is not bound to allot, nor is an Emigrant bound to perform more than one task in each day, but by mutual agreement such extra work may be allotted, performed and paid for. ♦Wages are paid weekly on the Saturday of each week. ♦Conditions as to return passage-Emigrants may return to India at their own expense after completing five years' industrial residence in the Colony. ♦After ten years' continuous residence every Emigrant who was above the age of twelve on introduction to the Colony and who during that period has completed an industrial residence of five years, shall be entitled to a free-return passage if he claims it within two years after the completion of the ten years' continuous residence. If the Emigrant was under twelve years of age when he was introduced into the colony, he will be entitled to a free return passage if he claims it before he reaches 24 years of age and fulfills the other conditions as to residence. A child of an Emigrant born within the colony will be entitled to a free return passage until he reaches the age of twelve, and must be accompanied on the voyage by his parents or guardian. ♦Other Conditions-Emigrants will receive rations from their employers during the first six months after their arrival on the plantation according to the scale prescribed by the government of Fiji at a daily cost of four pence, which is at present equivalent to four annas, for each person of twelve years of age and upwards. ♦Every child between five and twelve years of age will receive approximately half rations free of cost, and every child, five years of age and under, nine chatacks of milk daily free of cost, during the first year after their arrival. ♦Suitable dwelling will be assigned to Emigrants under indenture free of rent and will be kept in good repair by the employers. When Emigrants under indenture are ill they will be provided with Hospital accommodation, Medical attendance, Medicines, Medical comforts and Food free of charge. ♦An Emigrant who has a wife still living is not allowed to marry another wife in the Colony unless his marriage with his first wife shall have been legally dissolved; but if he is married to more than one wife in his country he can take them all with him to the Colony and they will then be legally registered and acknowledged as his wives



*Blueprint Proposal for:*  
**Global Girmitiya Society (GGS)**

# **Indian Indenture Labourer Contract:**

Depos No. 106.

COLONIAL EMIGRATION FORM NO. 5.  
FORM OF AGREEMENT FOR INTENDING EMIGRANTS.  
Particulars of Emigrant executing a contract for service in TRINIDAD.

REGISTRATION.		EMIGRANTS.		DEPENDENTS.		RESIDENCE.					SUCCESSOR TO ESTATE IN INDIA.								
Date.	Number.	Name.	Father's name.	Name.	Relationship to labourer.	Sex.	Age.	Caste.	Occupation.	District.	Thana.	Village or Town and Mahalla.	Name	and Residence.	District.	Thana.	Village or Town and Mahalla.	Father's Name.	Relationship.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
2.	6.	11	6			Mall	30	Khur	Chandola	Hans	Surat	Sanghera	Kishan	Bharodi	Surat	Surat	Surat	Surat	Surat

I agree to emigrate on the conditions of service specified on the reverse.

Executed in my presence.

*With*  
Registering Officer.

Dated at 2 the 6. 1906

N.B.—This form is to be filled up in the Office of the Registering Officer in English in duplicate.

Mark of Emigrant

fit to emigrate,  
Surgeon.

191

## **Indian Indenture Labourer Passes:**

*41211*

COLONIAL EMIGRATION FORM NO. 44.

**MAN'S  
EMIGRATION PASS.**

Health Class.

Derby No. *2985* PROCEEDING TO FU.  
For Ship *SANTHA - 1910*

No. *2985* At Government Emigration Agents,  
Gadipet, Madras, 21, Gandy Road,  
MADRAS (1910) 191

**PARTIC-  
IPANT'S  
DATA &  
REGIS-  
TRATION.**

Place, *Tiruchirapalli*  
Date, *2-2-20*  
No. in Register, *2*

**NAME.** *Balaji Chempa*

Father's Name, *Chempa*  
Age, *20*  
Caste, *Brahmin*  
Name of Next-of-kin, *Kothiy, Cousin*  
If married, name of Wife, *Devi*  
District, *Melambadi*  
Taluk, *Bachar*  
Village, or Town & Mahalla, *Sur on right bank*  
Body Marks, *Culicidane*  
Occupation in India, *2 Fem*  
Height, *The Index.*

Certify that we have examined and passed the above-named Man as fit to emigrate; that he is free from all bodily and mental disease; and that he has been vaccinated since engaging to emigrate.

Dated *1910* *E. Marie Brown.*  
*The* *H.M. M.R.C.V.*

*Surgeon Superintendent.*

Certify that the Man above described has appeared before me and has been engaged by me on behalf of the Government of FUJI as willing to proceed to that country to work for hire; and that I have explained to him all matters concerning his engagement and return. I also declare that the above is a true copy of the registration by the Registration Officer appointed by the Indian Government.

Dates *1910* *James de*  
*The 2* *Government Emigration Agent for FUJI.*

Permit to proceed as in a fit state of health to undertake the voyage to FUJI.

Dates *1910* *Chandru*

The MAR 2 1910 *191*

Protector of Emigrants.

<b>WOMAN'S EMIGRATION PASS.</b>		HEALTH CLASS.
Driver No. <u>Q229</u>		
For Ship	<u>Africa</u>	PROCEEDING TO BRITISH GUIANA.
No.	<u>369</u>	British Guiana Government Emigration Stamp.
	<u>169869</u>	SALEMSTON, Oct. <u>27</u> , 19 <u>94</u> - 1894
PASSENGER'S NAME,	<u>Sarah Brown</u>	
PLACE OF BIRTH,	<u>B 10. 94</u>	
DATE OF BIRTH,		
TRADE OR REGISTER NO.,	<u>5</u>	
NAME,	<u>Healy</u>	
FATHER'S NAME,	<u>Sheehan</u>	
AGE,	<u>24</u>	
CASTE,	<u>Rapput</u>	
NAME OF next of kin,	<u>Rob. Healy</u>	
If married, name of husband,	<u>Gormaphor</u>	
DISTRICT,	<u>Bansdroni</u>	
THREE,	<u>Paradesi</u>	
VILLAGE OR TOWN & MAHALLA,	<u>Paradesi</u>	
BAPTISMAL MARKS,	<u>Scar left arm</u>	
HEIGHT,	<u>5 feet 5 inches</u>	
<u>Emigration Certificate</u>		
Certified that we have examined and passed the above named woman as fit to emigrate; that she is free from all bodily and mental disease; and that she has been vaccinated since emigrating to emigrate.		
<i>Surgeon Superintendent.</i>		<i>Deputy Collector</i>
<p>Certified that the woman above described has reported before me and has been engaged by me on behalf of the Government of British Guiana as willing to proceed to their country to work the mine; and that I have examined her and satisfied myself that she is fit and courageous and fit.</p> <p>This has also been done by the registering officer appointed by the Indian Revenue at the time of registration.</p>		
<i>Government Emigration Agent for British Guiana.</i>		
<p>I warrant to proceed as in fit state of health to undertake the voyage to British Guiana.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>John P. Fletcher, Inspector of Emigrants.</i></p>		

**BOY'S  
EMIGRATION PASS.**

HEALTH CLASS.

Desir No. 6260 *Armen* PROCEEDING TO BRITISH GUIANA.

For Ship. No. 372 58 *Calcutta 29/10/1894*

Place Borakhpur  
Date 13 10 1894

British Guiana Government Emigration Board.

Passenger  
Last of  
Regis-  
tration.  
Name.....  
Father's Name.....  
Age.....  
Caste.....  
Name of next-of-kin.....  
District.....  
Thana.....  
Village or Town & Mahalla.....  
Body Marks.....

*Rajput* *mother & wife* *Borakhpur* *69869*  
*Bangaram* *Parcia* *none*

Certify that we have examined and passed the above named boy fit  
to emigrate; that he is free from all bodily and mental disease; and that he has  
been vaccinated since engaging to emigrate.

Surgeon Superintendent.

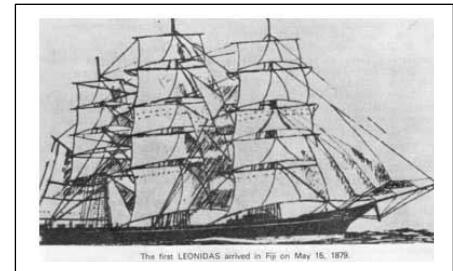
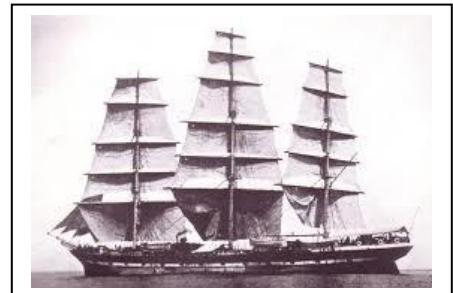
D. C. Deputy Surgeon.

*R. M.*  
Government Emigration Agent for British Guiana.

*Blueprint Proposal for:  
Global Girmitiya Society (GGS)*

**Indian Arrival Dates per Country:**

Country	First Arrival	Ship	Arrivals/ Returnees
Reunion Island	April 13, 1828	<i>Yangon</i>	
Mauritius	November 2, 1834	<i>Atlas</i>	
Guyana)	May 5, 1838	<i>Hesperus</i>	
Trinidad & Tobago	May 31, 1845	<i>Fatal Razak</i>	
Jamaica	May 12, 1845	<i>Maidstone</i>	
Martinique	May 6, 1853	<i>Aurélie</i>	
Guadeloupe	December 24, 1854	<i>Aurélie</i>	
French Guiana	June 2, 1855	<i>Sigisbert Cesar</i>	
Grenada	May 1, 1857	<i>Maidstone</i>	
Belize	1858 – exiles 1872 labourers		
St. Lucia	May 6, 1859	<i>Palmyra</i>	
South Africa	November 16, 1860	<i>Truro</i>	
St. Vincent	June 1, 1861	<i>Travancore</i>	
St. Kitts	June 3, 1861	<i>Dartmouth</i>	
St. Croix	1863		
Suriname	June 5, 1873	<i>Lalla Rookh</i>	
Nevis	March 30, 1874	<i>Syria</i>	
Fiji	May 15, 1879	<i>Leonidas</i>	
Seychelles	1898		
Malaysia			
Kenya			
Tanzania			
Mozambique			
Madagascar,			
Zambia			
Zanzibar			
Uganda			
Malawi			



Compiled from various sources; (*to be completed with additional information*).

**Second Journey Countries:**

Second journey countries include but not limited to:

Destination Country	From Girmitiya Countries
United Kingdom (UK)	Primarily from former English speaking colonies
United States of America (USA)	Primarily from former English speaking colonies and includes significant numbers from other former colonies
Canada	Primarily from former English & French speaking colonies
Netherlands	Primarily from former Dutch speaking colonies
France	Primarily from former Francophone colonies
Australia	Primarily from Fiji
New Zealand	Primarily from Fiji
Hong Kong	
Singapore	

Compiled from various sources; (*to be completed with additional information*).

*Blueprint Proposal for:  
Global Girmitiya Society (GGS)*

### **Global Girmitiya Society (GGS):**

The recommendation is that the global Girmitiya society be named:

- **Global Girmitiya Society (GGS)**  
*or*
- **International Girmitiya Society (GGS).**

### **International Girmitiya Day (IGD):**

Recommendation to mark an historical milestone in Indian indenture journeys from India as follows:

- Designation: **International Girmitiya Day (IGD).**
- Date of Annual Observance: **March 20.** (Some discussion have been made to support 12 March which can be designated should the support documents substantiate it).
  - Ref article in Appendix below:  
“The order was issued 20 March, and the announcement was made in the Legislative Council on the same day.” *National Consciousness and Imperial Conscience: The Abolition of Indian Indentured Emigration* – by Karen Ray Hill
- International Girmitiya Day (IGD) can be observed in several ways: global and country-wise commemorative and celebratory with meets, symposia, exhibitions, recognition, discussions and deliberations on pertinent issues for tangible results. IDG encapsulates the totality of a day to recognized and observed annually. It is international in nature and to be commemorated by descendants of Indian Indentured labourers (Girmitiyas) and others as well.

### **The Global Organization Structure:**

GGS can be structured as follows:

- Board of Directors
- Secretariat (Executive)
- Standing and Ad Hoc Committees
- Country Chapters or Affiliates
- Advisory Board
- Patrons & Benefactors

### **Leadership & Vision:**

GGS can best achieve its objectives by being served with good leadership with suitable experience, management skills and abilities to lead and collaborate with Girmitiya in all countries, interface and interact with officials, agencies and institutions globally, as well as formulate ideas and plans in visionary ways to make GGS a vibrant and responsive international organization.

Leadership at all levels of the organization should be changed on a regular basis via elections to provide new energy and vitality for the organization to grow, thrive, adapt and advance with changing times and demographics.

### **Standing & Ad Hoc Committees:**

Constitution & By-Laws	Academia	Science & Technology
Membership	Health & Wellness	Medical & Bio-Technology
Budgets & Finance	Media	Entrepreneurship & Economics
Partnerships & Collaboration	Philanthropy	Tracing Our Roots
Events	Human Rights	Cultural
Youth & NextGen	Recognition	Environment & Sustainability
Women	Publications	Archival Documents
Infants & Children	Legal	Inter-Ethnic Relations
Films & Documentaries	Girmitiya DNA Bank	Registration & Trademarks

*Blueprint Proposal for:  
Global Girmitiya Society (GGS)*

### **The Global Organization Membership:**

GGS membership can be organized as follows:

- Permanent (life) members
- Annual paying members
- Student, Youth, NextGen members
- Patrons & Benefactors
- Honourary Members

### **Global Headquarters:**

GGS headquarters shall be located in a democratic country (outside of India) with established laws which allow CGS to function without persecution or hindrance as a registered international not-for-profit, non-political and secular organization with constitution and by-laws operating within that country's laws governing NGOs.

GGS shall have the freedom to function with ease, using the country and international banking system for its operations, publish articles, proceedings and press statements, even when critical of a government, agency or entity, and peacefully protest any country or entity with good reason and justification, hold its conventions, conferences, meetings and press conferences without impediment, and recruit members, patrons, supporters and sponsors.

Depending on funding and level of activity, it may become necessary to establish a permanent secretariat office.

Recommendations include the following in order of priority:

- United States of America (USA) – close to United Nations (UN)
- United Kingdom (UK) – close to British Commonwealth
- Switzerland
- Netherlands
- France

### **Regional or Country Chapters (Affiliates):**

With the proposal that GGS be organized as an international organization with country wise chapters (affiliates), it would be appropriate to have regional (5-7) or larger country locations of the chapters (affiliates). This would have to further defined and can gradually evolve as become necessary.

Depending on funding and level of activity, it may become necessary to establish one or satellite offices.

### **International Recognition & Accreditation:**

GGS shall pursue international recognition and accreditation by (among others):

- Respective Girmitiya country governments
- Overseas Indian Affairs (OIA) department of India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)
- Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR)
- Commonwealth of Nations (British Commonwealth)
- United Nations (UN) as global non-governmental organization (NGO)
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
- United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF)
- United Nations Women (UN Women)
- World Health Organization (WHO)
- Other international agencies, institutions and foundations

*Blueprint Proposal for:*  
**Global Girmitiya Society (GGS)**

## **Partnerships**

GGS shall enter into partnerships and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with (among others):

- Ministry of Culture of respective Girmitiya country governments
- Overseas Indian Affairs (OIA) department of India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)
- Pravasi Bharatiya Kendra (PBK) of India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)
- Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR)
- Commonwealth of Nations (British Commonwealth)
- Other international agencies, institutions and foundations
- International archives, repositories and museums
- Academic institutions in respective Girmitiya countries and second journey countries
- Civic, community and philanthropic organizations in respective Girmitiya countries

## **Announcements and Engagements with Governments:**

GGS should make every effort promptly and thereafter to inform and engage the governments of all Girmitiya countries and second journey countries, Government of India, Indian High Commissioners in all countries, as well as international agencies and institutions such as ICCR, United Nations, UNESCO and British Commonwealth:

- Press Release - Announcement of establishment of Global Girmitiya Society (GGS)
- GGS letters to Prime Minister of India and Minister of External Affairs (India) requesting meeting around September - October 2017 update and engage on Girmitiya matters.
- GGS letters to prime ministers of all Girmitiya countries and second journey countries requesting meeting to update and engage on Girmitiya matters.
- GGS letter to ICCR, United Nations, UNESCO and British Commonwealth requesting meeting to update and engage on Girmitiya matters.

## **Registration & Trademarks:**

GGS should be registered as international not-for-profit, non-political and secular organization in its headquartered country. GSC chapters (or affiliates) should be registered as local not-for-profit, non-political and secular organizations affiliated with GGS international in their respective countries.

GGS name and logo(s) should be trademarked in headquartered country as well as respective Girmitiya, second journey countries and in India.

All GGS publications and intellectual property should be copyrighted in in headquartered country as well as respective Girmitiya, second journey countries and in India.

## **Resolutions:**

The concluding session of all GGS conferences and conventions would adopt a set of resolutions focusing on open discussion, recommendations, future programs and projects and plans of action for present and future. The adoption of appropriate resolutions is a crucially important as it highlights those issues of interest and concern to Girmitiya and others. The adopted resolutions would then be used as road maps for GGS to chart pathways and encourage others to participate in a continuing series of progressive actions re: Youth, social issues, education, science and technology, investments, entrepreneurship, economic empowerment and connections for improving social, political progress and significant dates and milestones. In addition, the adopted resolutions would be promptly brought by GGS to the attention of respective officials, institutions and agencies in various countries, bringing awareness and seeking redress where appropriate.

*Blueprint Proposal for:  
Global Girmitiya Society (GGS)*

**Website:**

GGS must be represented by a highly visible and prominent website which should include contents to promote Girmitiya and actively engage the Girmitiya world and others on a single digital platform. Contents should include GGS mission, organization structure, officials, global chapters and affiliates, partners, events calendar, audited financial information, articles, publications, history and postings, constitution/by-laws, resolutions, press releases, petitions, readers/members feedback and commentaries, links, etc.

The GGS Website team should comprise a webmaster, 2-3 website coordinators representing various global regions, 2-3 interactive commentary/feedback coordinators, and others as needed from time to time.

It is envisioned that the GGS Website be fully supported by selected advertising and patrons.

**Newsletter:**

GGS should produce a regular newsletter, starting on a quarterly basis and advancing to monthly on a gradual basis. The GGS Newsletter should reflect current news of interest to Girmitiya, upcoming events, press releases, regular columns on Girmitiya issues and commentaries. It is recommended that it should be a digital newsletter and immediately posted on line after emailing to a worldwide list of members, individuals, officials, agencies, organizations and institutions.

The GGS Newsletter team should comprise Chief Editor, several Editors and news coordinators as needed.

It is envisioned that the GGS Newsletter be fully supported by selected advertising and patrons.

**Media:**

GGS should organize its own media team for disseminating GGS printed, digital and on-line information, announcements and press releases efficiently and effectively. The media team would also be responsible for obtaining information and news affecting Girmitiya in timely manner so that GGS can respond accordingly.

It is recommended that the media team represent all regions or major Girmitiya countries.

**Press & Media Releases:**

GGS must be responsive to current events as well as inform about GGS news items, events, programs and press releases efficiently and effectively in a timely manner.

**Funding:**

GGS would need funding to fulfill its mission and achieve the goals on annual and long term basis. Sources would include: membership fees, patrons, advertisers, grants and funding from various governments, agencies, foundations, institutions, businesses, and individuals. The GGS Budget and Finance Committee should plan accordingly and all financial information disclosed on the website.

**Publications:**

GCS should be publishing and/or coordinating and collaborating with publications related to Girmitiya history, research, studies, surveys, books, novels (fiction and non-fiction), documentaries, and magazines – in print, digital and on-line. These publications should be listed among the proposed GCS listing of all publication related to Girmitiya.

**Films, Documentaries, Music and Work of Art:**

GCS should be promoting on its website and in its newsletters films, documentaries, music and works of art produced by Girmitiya and others about Girmitiya.

*Blueprint Proposal for:  
Global Girmitiya Society (GGS)*

**Preservation:**

GCS should be actively pursuing preservation of records, logs, histories, news accounts and other information relating to Girmitiya and collaborate with repositories such as museums and digital storage and dissemination facilities such as Pravasi Bharatiya Kendra (PBK) in India, museums in Girmitiya and other countries such as United Kingdom, Netherlands, USA, Australia, France.

**Recognition, Prizes & Scholarships:**

GGS should recognize outstanding achievements in selected categories and good standing in the Girmitya community. Recognition can be at annual conferences or conventions and must be done with approved criteria and selection process.

Recognition should be for: Current and posthumous achievers

Categories can include: Academician, writers, historians, diaspora researchers, film & documentary, music; Media – television, radio, print, Periodicals, Journalists; Women; Youth/NextGen Achievers; Philanthropy & Charity, Cultural, Civic, Community Service, Human Rights Advocates; Medical, health, wellness; Science & Technology; Business – entrepreneur, retail, Infrastructure, economists; Friend of the Diaspora, Inter-Ethnic Relations; Patrons of the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

Depending on activity level and support, GGS can provide prizes for recognized high achievers and scholarships for youth based on a strict criteria and selection process.

**Webinars, On-Line Interactive Conferences:**

GGS should efficiently adopt and utilize technology and modern communications to advance GGS agenda with regular interactive communications among its membership and by hosting on-line conferences, webinars and interactive discussions, meets and hang-outs. These means would further engage many more on the GGS digital platform for real time engagement and responsiveness.

**Petitions:**

GGS should petition for various approvals, recognition and accreditation crucial to its prominent global standing and activities representing the interests, issues and concerns of worldwide Girmitiya based on shared history, heritage, journeys, aspirations and common goals:

- Recognition and accreditation as outlined above “International Recognition & Accreditation”
- Postage stamp in various countries commemorating 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of abolition of Indian indentureship.
- Proclamations in various countries commemorating 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of abolition of Indian indentureship.
- Seeking redress in respective country or countries for actions taken with adverse impact on Girmitya.
- Seeking redress at international agencies and institutions for actions or situations adversely impacting Girmitiya.

**Indemnity:**

Indemnity in form of appropriate insurance for actions and activities of the GGS related to actions taken, content, disseminated information, printed and on-line documents and materials.

**Disclaimer:**

Disclaimers should be clearly stated in print and on-line for inadvertent errors:

- Content at conferences, conventions, meetings and discussions
- Speeches
- Press releases
- Publications
- Website.

*Blueprint Proposal for:*  
**Global Girmitiya Society (GGS)**

### **Programs 2017-2021:**

Recommended major programs and events 2017-2020:

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Date(s)</b>	<b>Venue</b>
Launch Global Girmitiya Society (GGS)	September <b>2017</b>	To be determined
GGS Inauguration, IDG Commemoration at Indian Diaspora World Convention 2018	March 17-20, <b>2018</b>	Durban, South Africa
IDG Commemoration by GGS Chapters & Affiliates	March 20, <b>2018</b>	Girmitiya and 2 <sup>nd</sup> Journey Countries
GGS Launch in India	May/June <b>2018</b>	Lucknow or Kolkata
GGS to partner with Regional PBD2018	To be announced	To be announced
GGS at PBD2019 (India)	January 7-9, <b>2019</b>	To be announced (India)
GGS Inauguration, IDG Commemoration at Indian Diaspora World Convention 2019	March 17-20, <b>2019</b>	Port Louis, Mauritius
GGS Inauguration, IDG Commemoration at Indian Diaspora World Convention 2020	March 17-20, <b>2020</b>	Paramaribo, Suriname
IDG Commemoration by GGS Chapters & Affiliates	March 20, <b>2020</b>	Girmitiya and 2 <sup>nd</sup> Journey Countries
GGS to partner with Regional PBD2020	To be announced	To be announced
GGS at PBD2021 (India)	January 7-9, <b>2021</b>	To be announced (India)
GGS Inauguration, IDG Commemoration at Indian Diaspora World Convention 2021	March 17-20, <b>2021</b>	Suva, Fiji
IDG Commemoration by GGS Chapters & Affiliates	March 20, <b>2021</b>	Girmitiya and 2 <sup>nd</sup> Journey Countries

### **Steps to Take:**

Recommended steps to be taken:

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Estimated Date(s)</b>
Review of the proposal for GGS	
Approve the fundamental formulation of GGS	
Establish an initial GGS team	
Establish an initial membership format/scheme	
Approve GGS formulation proposal (main sections)	
Registration of GGS in headquartered country	
Approve International Girmitiya Day (IGD)	
Issue a Press Release announcing the establishment of GGS	
Formulate basic working committees	
Approve series of major events 2017/2018/2019/2020	
Establish schedules/time lines	

*Issued on 22<sup>nd</sup> May, 2017 by:*

**Ashook Ramsaran**

*President*

**Indian Diaspora Council International**

[AshookRamsaran@gmail.com](mailto:AshookRamsaran@gmail.com)

Mobile (USA) +1 917 519 5783



\*\*\*\*\*

## Appendix

### Date of Abolition of Indian Indenturedship

from: Basdeo Mangru  
to: Ashook Ramsaran  
date: Tue, Aug 9, 2016 at 6:47 PM  
subject: RE: Date of Abolition of Indian Indenturedship (CCAI)

Hi Ashook,

The info previously sent is reliable.

The indenture system was temporarily suspended on 20 March, 1917 by an Order in Council of the Govt. of India on a motion by Madan Mohan Malaviya, an Indian nationalist. The system was finally abolished 3 years later (March 20, 1920) by the Indian Emigration Bill which became Act vii of 1922. The best documents to consult are the India Emigration Proceedings, 1917 1nd 1920.

Best wishes  
Basdeo  
(Basdeo Mangru PhD)

**From:** Ashook Ramsaran  
**Sent:** Tuesday, August 09, 2016 7:51 AM  
**To:** Basdeo Mangru  
**Subject:** Date of Abolition of Indian Indenturedship (CCAI)

Dear Basdeo:

Greetings and hope all is well.

As you may be aware, the Indian Diaspora Council (IDC), in collaboration with several organizations and institutions in various countries, is coordinating a series of high profile global events to mark the centennial of abolition of Indian Indenturedship. Refer to PRESS STATEMENT below.

You had previously informed me that 20 March 1917 was the date of the Abolition Act.

In order that we do not err on the exact date when the Abolition Act was enacted while planning these global events, we request your guidance on the exact date when the Abolition Act was made into law and any other date(s) which may be relevant. We also request any reference which pertains to the Abolition Act.

With kind regards and best wishes,  
Ashook

--

Ashook Ramsaran  
*President*  
**Indian Diaspora Council**  
[AshookRamsaran@gmail.com](mailto:AshookRamsaran@gmail.com)  
Mobile (USA) [+1 917 519 5783](tel:+19175195783)



\*\*\*\*\*

-----Original Message-----

From: Ashook Ramsaran  
To: (Various)  
Sent: **Wed, Nov 10, 2010 2:57 pm**  
Subject: Proposal: International Indian Emigration Day

### **International Indian Emigration Day**

The first arrival of indentured laborers to each major colony is designated as “Indian Arrival Day” and observed annually with cultural events, etc. Countries such as Guyana, Mauritius, South Africa, Suriname, Fiji, Trinidad, Guadeloupe and others with significant population of PIOs, holding major events marking their respective “Arrival Day”. In some cases, the population of PIOs is small and their respective “Arrival Day” is hardly observed -- although there is a desire to mark the date in some way.

The respective dates of “Arrival Day” of individual countries are different because the date of arrival of the first ship was designated as the “Arrival Day” for each country.

My proposal is to designate a single, universal date that would appeal to all PIOs as a common date that can be observed by all and used in a significant way to better connect the diaspora.

That date could be called **International Indian Emigration Day**

Sincerely,  
Ashook Ramsaran  
Executive Vice President  
GOPIO International  
[www.gopio.net](http://www.gopio.net)  
[Ramsaran@aol.com](mailto:Ramsaran@aol.com)  
November 10, 2010

\*\*\*\*\*

[http://digitool.library.mcgill.ca/webclient/StreamGate?folder\\_id=0&dvs=1495376040341~110](http://digitool.library.mcgill.ca/webclient/StreamGate?folder_id=0&dvs=1495376040341~110)

*National Consciousness and Imperial Conscience:  
The Abolition of Indian Indentured Emigration – by Karen Ray Hill*

#### **Excerpts:**

“On 20 March Malaviya duly introduced his bill strengthening his argument against indenture with points made by Andrews and Pearson on violation of religion, fraudulent recruitment, the high cost of living in Fiji and, especially, the status of women. The indenture system was a “source of advantage to the capitalist only who uses labour as a tool. Malaviya pointed out that the British Government had spent £25 million to abolish slavery. The Government of India had “sacrificed their opium revenue in order to save the Chinese people from its demoralising effects.” .....

“Harding, admitting he had always “felt an irreconcilable prejudice against the system,” gladly allowed the bill, which passed overwhelmingly. His warning, required by Chamberlain, that “the existing system of recruitment must be maintained until new conditions … have been worked out, with the Colonial Office and the Colonies concerned,’ was almost lost in this country … the consequences are not very alluring to contemplate.”

“Chamberlain finally yielded and the Government of India issued orders under the Defence of India Act to stop recruiting. The order was issued 20 March, and the announcement was made in the Legislative Council on the same day. There was jubilation throughout India. Gandhi congratulated himself on the vindication of his tactics to secure justice for Indian emigrants.”

<http://www.lemauricien.com/article/heritage-reclaimed-commemorating-centenary-dismantling-indian-indentured-labour-migration>

“This decision, published as Notification No1227-ED and Gazetted on the 17 March 1917, read: “No native of India shall depart by sea out of British India for the purpose of or with the intention of laboring for hire in any country beyond the limits of India.”(quoted by Vahed G. 2017). This was the knell of the indentured emigration, even though the system officially ended on 1 January 1920 following the pressure from the Indian Nationalists from the platform of the Indian National Congress. It must be highlighted that Pandit M.M.Malaviya’s moving speech at the Legislative Council against indenture impressed Lord Hardinge, the Governor General of India. The nationalist poet MaithaliSharan Gupta praised Hardinge for abolishing the Indenture system in a poem published in his book. Below is a short extract.”

[https://books.google.com/books?id=C52fDgAAQBAJ&pg=RA1-PT134&lpg=RA1-PT134&dq=India+Notification+No+1227-ED&source=bl&ots=joLUW6zeMJ&sig=WHZFKGjNhfoo1CldItneEVW-lyo&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiO8vj-vf\\_TAhWGSCYKHbBtCLMQ6AEIJzAB#v=onepage&q=India%20Notification%20No%201227-ED&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=C52fDgAAQBAJ&pg=RA1-PT134&lpg=RA1-PT134&dq=India+Notification+No+1227-ED&source=bl&ots=joLUW6zeMJ&sig=WHZFKGjNhfoo1CldItneEVW-lyo&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiO8vj-vf_TAhWGSCYKHbBtCLMQ6AEIJzAB#v=onepage&q=India%20Notification%20No%201227-ED&f=false)

“...actual permission to halt the system of indentured emigration was given in Secretary of State to Viceroy (Commerce and Industry), 10 March 1917, Judicial and Public, 1074/17, IOR, and published as a “gazette Extraordinary”, *Pioneer*, 14 March 1917. Notification No. 1227-ED and noted, Government of India, Commerce and Industry, Emigration, 12 March 1917, Judicial and Public 4522/15. IOR. For a blow-by-blow account of the end of the system, see Karen A. Ray, “The Abolition of Indentured Emigration and the Politics of Indian Nationalism, 1894-1917, PhD thesis, McGill University, 1980.

---

### Excerpts:

*Finally on March 20, 1916 Madan Mohan Malviya moved a resolution in the Indian Legislative Council for the abolition of the indenture system. While the British government accepted the resolution and formally banned the system in 1917, migration for indentured labour went on till at least the third decade of the 20th century. The last ship carrying indentured labourers arrived in Mauritius in 1924.”*



<http://indianexpress.com/article/research/indenture-system-ended-a-century-ago-but-indians-still-face-racism-in-british-colonies-4596378/>

### Indenture system ended a century ago, but Indians still face racism in British colonies

The nature of the labour recruitment was such that only those from the lowest castes and poor economic backgrounds were approached for the practice.

Written by [Adrija Roychowdhury](#) | New Delhi | Updated: April 2, 2017 2:56 pm



The Indian indentured labour system enforced by the British empire, in the mid nineteenth century led to the displacement of close to 3.5 million Indians to other colonies of the British for meeting with labour requirements there. (Wikimedia Commons)

“Growing up, my connection with India was fairly abstract. It was only through Bollywood and religion and the fact that there were segregated housing and schooling for Indians,” says Brij Maharaj, a third generation immigrant to South Africa. Maharaj’s grandfather had moved to Tongaat, South Africa at the age of 16, to work as an indentured labourer on sugar estates there. His family started prospering when the indentured labour system of the British regime was banned by the beginning of the 20th century and his grandfather procured some land. His father and uncle later moved to Dublin where he along with his siblings were brought up in an atmosphere that marked them apart from the whites and the indigenous population.

Maharaj is currently engaged in conducting research on the nature of the Indian indentured labour system enforced by the British empire, in the mid nineteenth century that led to the displacement of close to 3.5 million Indians to other colonies of the British for meeting with labour requirements there. The hardships and discrimination faced by the Indian community in places like South Africa, Trinidad, Mauritius, Fiji and several others have been documented by several historians, sociologists and writers of popular literature such as Amitav Gosh and Nathacha Appanah.



Last month, India celebrated 100 years of end of the Indentured labour system that took place in March 1917. As part of the commemoration, the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library in collaboration with the “Becoming coolies” project organised a two-days conference to dwell upon the nature of the Indian indentured system. Attended by prominent scholars on the subject like Dr. Andrea Major, Dr. Crispin Bates and Dr. Satnarine Balkaransingh among others, the conference discussed issues of racial discrimination and identity formation faced by Indians and the struggle for ending the institutionalised form of labour dispensation, that a large number of scholars have equated to slavery.

The system that started soon after slavery was abolished in 1833, required Indians to sign a legal agreement stating the consent to move abroad for a minimum of five years to work mainly on sugar estates. Incidentally, the nature of the recruitment was such that only those from the lowest castes and poor economic backgrounds were approached for the practice and the famines that had taken place in the recent past were ideal justifications framed by the British to persuade Indians to look for opportunity abroad. However, the miserable conditions in the sugar estates and the conflicts with both the white community there and the indigenous population soon led to widespread protests against the colonial government.



The Mercury 20 Apr 2017

<http://www.pressreader.com/south-africa/the-mercury/20170420/281724089428371>

## End of a dehumanising system

**Indentured labour migration was brought to an end 100 years ago, but the cost in lives and dignity must not be forgotten, writes Goolam Vahed**

MARCH 2017 marked 100 years since the dehumanising system of indentured labour migration was terminated.

Following the abolition of slavery in 1833, plantation owners were faced with a labour crisis, and between 1835 and 1917, around 1.3 million migrants were sent to British, French and Dutch colonies to work on sugar plantations.

Conferences, literary festivals, film festivals, and cultural events were held in places like Fiji, Trinidad, Suriname, India, and the Netherlands, where many Indian Surinamese have settled since the 1970s, to mark the centenary of the abolition of indenture.

Sustained pressure for abolition began in the early twentieth century by Indian nationalists like Gokhale and Gandhi, and various women's organisations in India.

Indentured labour migration to Natal ended in 1911 but continued to some other colonies. Indian nationalists calling for self-rule in India highlighted the terrible working and living conditions of indentured labourers and their descendants in various colonies and stressed the abuses to which women in particular were subject.

They wrote articles to the press and held public meetings.

One of the outstanding figures in this movement was Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, who, on March 20, 1916, gave in the Legislative Council what is regarded as one of the best-argued and most moving speeches against indenture. In it, the Pandit stated:

“Judgment is entirely against the system. It is one under which simple... village people, belonging largely to the poorest classes, are inveigled into entering into a very solemn agreement which compels them to leave their homes, to leave their kith and kin, and to go to a distant country, of the conditions of existence in which they are entirely ignorant, to work in circumstances in which they are practically at the mercy of their employers, for a continuous period of five years, to work under men who do not understand their language, custom and manners, who have no sympathy with them, under conditions in settling which they have no voice, without being informed that they will be liable to be punished criminally, the punishment extending sometimes to two or three months’ hard labour, if they fail to perform the tasks which are assigned to them, tasks in the fixing of which they have no voice, and in making complaints against which they find but little support.

“A system like that, my Lord, is an utterly unfair system. It ought not to be called by the name of a contract as the word is known to legal minds and the legislative codes of the Government of India. Under this system, these simple village people go out to distant lands, and are tied down to work there for five years. They cannot buy their freedom, because they have no means to do so.

My Lord, the evil results of this outrageous system are too easily discernible in the lives of the people... My Lord, what a horrifying record of shame and crime is unfolded here? My Lord, it has been shown that the indenture system is thoroughly indefensible. It begins, as Mr Gokhale observed, in fraud and is maintained by force... It does not benefit the labourer. It is a source of advantage to the capitalist only, who uses the labourer as a tool, and the sooner a system like this, which permits such heartless exploitation of human beings, is put to an end, the better it will be for all concerned.”

Pandit Malaviya moved a resolution for the abolition of the indenture system. Lord Harding accepted the motion and announced that he had “obtained from His Majesty’s Government the promise of abolition in due course”.

Despite pressure from Indian nationalists, the end of indentured emigration did not result from legislation specifically passed for this purpose, but from the labour and military needs of the British, who were desperate for men to supply the front line and support services during World War I. Section 2 of the Defence Act of India of 1915 gave the Indian government the power to introduce any legislation to safeguard war interests.

The Secretary of State for the Colonies sent a message to the government of India on March 10, 1917, that recruitment for indenture was illegal under the Defence of India Act of 1915 since labour was needed in India itself.

On March 12, the (Indian) Imperial Legislative Council signaled its intention to suspend the movement of people out of India for unskilled work for the duration of the war and for two years afterwards.

The decision, published as Notification No 1227-ED and Gazetted on March 17, 1917, read: “No native of India shall depart by sea out of British India for the purpose of or with the intention of labouring for hire in any country beyond the limits of India.”

That, effectively, was the end of indentured emigration even though the system officially ended on January 1, 1920, as a result of Nationalists’ pressure in India.

I ATTENDED the conference in Fiji. The packed programme included academic papers, documentaries, a book fair, an artefacts exhibition, and a carnival that included food stalls and music.

The conference was officially opened at the Girmit Centre in Lautoka. The idea of a centre honouring indentured migrants was mooted in 1979, during commemorations of the centenary of the arrival of the first indentured workers in Fiji.

The Fiji Girmit Council oversaw the building of the centre, which was made possible by a land grant from the Fijian government and financial assistance from the Indian government. Girmit is a corruption of the English “agreement”, which the migrants signed, and the indentured are known as “girmityas” in many countries.

Fiji’s recent history is marked by tension between Indo-Fijians and indigenous Fijians, which has resulted in large numbers of Indo-Fijians emigrating to Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Indo-Fijians, who made up more than half the population in the 1980s, now comprise 35% of Fiji’s population of around 900 000.

One of Fiji’s most eminent historians, Brij V Lal, who has written extensively on indenture and is an outspoken critic of the government, is banned from the country of his birth and could not attend the conference. Yet the Fijian government gave its full support to the commemorations and what struck me was the attempt on all sides to build bridges.

A moving feature of the conference was a visit to the shipwreck of the Syria, which, with over 400 passengers on board, struck the Nasilai reef on the night of May 11, 1884 and eventually broke into pieces.

Local indigenous villagers began rescuing the passengers long before the official rescue party arrived.

About 56 indentured migrants died and 35 of them were buried by the villagers in the district of Noco, Rewa.

We were taken to the fishing village, where we were formally welcomed by the chief, served a lunch of freshly-caught fish and locally-grown coconuts, taken out to the shipwreck in fishing boats and then taken to the burial site on an adjoining island.

The warmth and hospitality of the villagers left an indelible impression on us. The British had tried to occlude the involvement of villagers in the rescue efforts, but historians have brought their role to light.

A thanksgiving plaque from the Fiji Girmit Foundation, New Zealand, presented to villagers of Nasilai on October 14, 2015, is seen by many as a way to open a new chapter in the relationship of Indo- and indigenous Fijians.

Vahed presented a paper (this is an extract) on the system of indenture in Natal at the conference in Fiji last month. The conference was held to mark the centennial of indentureship, at the Girmit Centre in Lautoka, Fiji.

COLONIAL EMIGRATION FORM NO. 44.

**MAN'S  
EMIGRATION PASS.**

HEALTH CLASS.

Deposit No. 388  
For Ship S.S. BRITANNIA  
No. 150.

PROCEEDING TO BRITISH GUIANA.

British Guiana Government Emigration Agency,

61, GARDEN REACH,

CALCUTTA, the 24 JUN 1912 1912.

PARTICU- Place.....  
LARS OF Date.....  
REGIS-  
TRATION, No. in Register.....  
NAME.....  
Father's Name.....  
Age.....  
Caste.....  
Name of Next-of-kin.....  
If married, name of Wife.....  
District.....  
Thana.....  
Village, or Town & Mahalla.....  
Bodily Marks.....  
Height.....  
Occupation in India.....

lars of Birth: 1. 6. 12.  
Toga Singh,  
Jai Singh,  
60.  
Hakim,  
Bawali Singh, Bro,  
Divorced,  
30,  
Plaidih,  
Sear off - three 6 17 18,  
" 3 4 " with the 5 15 6,  
5 feet,  
3 1/4 Inches  
Labourer

CERTIFIED that we have examined and passed the above-named Man fit to emigrate; that he is free from all bodily and mental disease; and that he has been vaccinated since engaging to emigrate.

DATED  
The

1912

(m.p.c.p.)  
H. H. COXON, I.M.S.  
Depot Surgeon

Surgeon Superintendent.

CERTIFIED that the Man above described has appeared before me and has been engaged by me on behalf of the Government of British Guiana as willing to proceed to that country to work for hire, and that I have explained to him all matters concerning his engagement and duty. This has also been done at the time of registration by the Registering Officer appointed by the Indian Government.

DATED  
The

1912

R. P. Zelzen

Government Immigration Agent for BRITISH GUIANA.

PERMITTED to proceed as in a fit state of health to undertake the voyage to  
BRITISH GUIANA.

The system that started soon after slavery was abolished in 1833, required Indians to sign a legal agreement stating the consent to move abroad for a minimum of five years to work mainly on sugar estates. (Pinterest/ Romola Lucas)

## The nationalist battle to end indenture

The origins of the movement to end the indenture labour system lay in fact, not in the concern for the labourers, but rather for the discrimination faced by wealthier Indians, particularly from Gujarat, Bombay and Madras who moved to these colonies later to make a fortune as traders. The biggest proponent in this regard was [Mahatma Gandhi](#) whose 1906 satyagraha campaign in South Africa marked the beginning of the struggle against British rule in India.

However, when Gandhi started his campaign, his priority was to fight against the Natal Assembly Bill passed to disenfranchise Indians. As penned down by professor Aushutosh Kumar, “though Gandhi’s campaign against such acts of the South African government was indirectly related to indenture as well but it was not until 1913 that he showed his concern towards indentured Indians.” In fact as pointed out by Kumar, Gandhi’s speeches showed that he himself had a derogatory attitude towards the indentured labourers, who were colloquially often referred to as coolies.



Gandhi in South Africa (Wikimedia Commons)

In 1901, while Gandhi addressed the issue of racism faced by Indians in South Africa, he came up with the following argument: “I may tell you that all the Indians, no matter who they may be, are classes as a coolie. If our worthy president [D.E.Wacha] were to go to South Africa, I am afraid; he too will class as a ‘coolie’.”

It was only when Gandhi and the Congress realised that their efforts were not resulting in equal treatment of free Indians that they decided to attack the indenture system, which they believed would be a drain out on the colonial economy.

Accompanying Gandhi’s call against racism were a large number of movements against the labour system that propped in India by the second decade of the 20th century. Kumar noted that the formation of the anti-indenture emigration league in Bengal, Bihar and UP “made colonial officials anxious as the league was analogous of ánti-slavery society’ of Britain, which was responsible for the abolition of slavery from British empire.” The pamphlets written by members of the league along with first person accounts of labourers stationed in sugar estates abroad were freely circulated around India by the 20th century, that resulted in bringing public notice to the plight of the immigrants. A pamphlet produced by an anti-indenture leader in Muzaffarpur read the following and had been reproduced by Kumar in his work:

*“ESCAPE FROM DECEIVERS.  
ESCAPE FROM THE DEPOT PEOPLE  
BEWARE ! BEWARE ! BEWARE !  
It is not service. It is woe.  
Don’t fall in to their snare. They will ruin you.  
You will weep your life along.  
Instead of rupees, rubbish will fall (on you).  
They are taking you across the sea!  
To Mauritius, to Demerara, to Fiji, to Jamaica, to Trinidad,  
to Honduras.  
They are not islands; they are hell.”*

Finally on March 20, 1916 Madan Mohan Malviya moved a resolution in the Indian Legislative Council for the abolition of the indenture system. While the British government accepted the resolution and formally banned the system in 1917, migration for indentured labour went on till at least the third decade of the 20th century. The last ship carrying indentured labourers arrived in Mauritius in 1924.

### **The indentured labour community in present times**

Ironically, despite the fact that it was the Indian indentured labour system that initiated the nationalist uprising against the British, it was not until the 1990s that the Indian government tried to regain its contact with the succeeding generation of Indian Indentured labourers in order to attract investments. According to Brij Maharaj, “the history of Indian indentureship reminds India of a less sophisticated past.” “Until 1990s, the Indian community in South Africa did not know what paneer was,” says Maharaj as he explains that the descendants of the labourers have a very abstract connection with India.



## **Resolutions Adopted at Indian Diaspora World Convention 2017**

The concluding session of Indian Diaspora World Convention 2017 on March 19, 2017 focused on open discussion, recommendations, future programs and projects, plans of action and adoption of resolutions. It provides a much needed forum in this convention for brief reflections on the past and more in-depth deliberations on the present and future.

The adoption of appropriate resolutions is a crucially important conclusion of the convention and highlights those issues of interest and concern to the global Indian Diaspora. The adopted resolutions would then be skillfully used as a road map or road maps for Indian Diaspora Council to chart pathways and encourage others to participate in a continuing series of progressive actions re: Youth, social issues, education, science and technology, investments, entrepreneurship, economic empowerment and connections for improving social and political progress.

In addition, the adopted resolutions would be promptly brought by Indian Diaspora Council to the attention of respective officials, institutions and agencies in various countries, bringing awareness and seeking redress where appropriate.

### *Resolution Committee Members:*

Dr. Satish Rai (Australia); Dennis Ramdahn (USA); Ashook Ramsaran (USA);  
Dr Piyush Agrawal (USA); Deo Gosine (Trinidad & Tobago); Vidur Dindayal (UK);  
Selvaraju Sundram (Malaysia); Harbachan Singh (USA); Farook Khan (South Africa);  
Prof. Frances Ponaman (France/Guadeloupe).

### *Session on March 19, 2017: “OPEN DISCUSSIONS. RESOLUTIONS, FUTURE PROGRAMS*

*Chaired by:* Ashook Ramsaran

*Co-chair:* Dennis Ramdahn

*Co-Chair:* Deo Gosine

- I. Convene the Indian Diaspora World Convention annually in different countries of the Indian Diaspora on rotating basis, following up on the resolutions and actions items adopted at each convention, and beginning with Indian Diaspora World Convention 2018 to be convened in Durban, South Africa in March 2018.
- II. Develop a practical, progressive and visionary road map for more engagement and progress in all segments of society globally: Science & technology, education, medical and professional, agriculture, economics, politics, human rights advocacy, gender equality, infants and youth, environmental

sustainability, health and well-being, inter-ethnic relationships, peaceful resolutions of conflicts; and other social improvements.

- III. Strengthening economic engagement among the Indian Diaspora and with India and other entities through regular results oriented forum, meets, trade shows, exhibitions which uplift social progress at all levels.
- IV. Recognize outstanding achievements in the Indian Diaspora in all disciplines to reward, motivate and encourage excellence.
- V. Scholarships for youth achievement to reward, motivate and encourage excellence.
- VI. Publications in print and on-line on specific topics such as: Women in the Diaspora; Country-Wise History and Census; Notable achievers in specific disciplines.
- VII. Erecting appropriate monuments in each of the Indian Diaspora countries in collaboration with India to recognize Indian arrival days and other significant historic events.
- VIII. Actively engage other ethnic groups for better understanding, education and collaboration.
- IX. Seek formal apology and economic reparations from Britain for Indian indentureship and its painful consequences to those impacted.
- X. Seek access of appropriation of available funding in New Delhi set forth by the British Gov't for development work in Bihar/UP.
- XI. Establishment of a global Girmitya Institute with objectives to educate, inform and advance the interests and concerns of Girmitya while highlighting the accomplishments and achievements.
- XII. Use of technology as an active platform to connect and network among the Indian Diaspora, to inform, advise, seek input and actively engage all groups and ages, as well as global digitalization of indentureship archives.
- XIII. Acceptance of alternate authentic documentation for PIO Card for those PIOs who are unable to obtain original documents due to poor records in countries where Indian laborers migrated from 1834-1920.
- XIV. Advance more coordination of educational exchanges between universities in India and among PIO countries.
- XV. Convey to the Government of India the issue of conversion of old currency to the new currency immediately and relief for PIOs with old currency.

- XVI. Use of petitions by PIOs to seek advance causes, promote issues of interest and seek redress for grievances.
- XVII. Consider establishment of regular forum for parliamentarians of Indian origin to assess, evaluate, update and review matters of interest and concern among PIOs.
- XVIII. Request to India's Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (Overseas Indian Affairs) for a new High Level Commission to make updates to the 2001 High Level Commission census and report.
- XIX. Seek government protection of religious groups.
- XX. Use of sports matches and tournaments among PIOs and India to foster a closer bonds.
- XXI. Adoption and maintenance of historic places to preserve and promote their intrinsic cultural values.
- XXII. Seeks ways for economic engagement among the Indian Diaspora and with India which would also foster closer bonds and enhance social and cultural advancement.

*Request to adopt the slate of resolution by:* Dr. Chandershekhar Bhat

*Motion approved by:* Dr. Gopal Arora

*Motion seconded by:* Dr. Mukesh Aggarwal

*Vote taken among all present:* All in favour, no dissent.

✓ Resolutions are adopted by unanimous vote on March 19, 2017