

Indentured Labourers from India to Mauritius: A Christian Perspective (1834 – 1920)

Kosam Ramroop

Email: kosamsanda@gmail.com

Abstract

This article takes an autoethnographic approach to the author's family story related to the Indian Indentured Labourer System, implemented by the British after the abolition of slavery. The period researched is from 1834 to 1920, in which indentured labourers were brought from India to Mauritius.¹ Was the 'semi-slavery' as J. C. Jha (1999, p. xiii) described it, a curse or a blessing in disguise? The author's journey in receiving that information and interpreting it is not only an exploration of historical documents, but also a consideration of a biblical perspective of redemptive history. In other words, how does God view that history? This paper affirms that the God of grace always has a redemptive plan. This article pursues a better understanding of what it means that God was at work in the lives of people even amidst the history of the Indian Indentured Labourer System.

Key words: Indian Indentured Labourer System, Sahabad, Bihar, Mauritius

“Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy; and gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south.” Psalm 107: 2 (KJV)

As I reflect on these words, I am encouraged to share the marvelous deeds God has done in the past. Born and raised in Mauritius, of Indian origin from the northern part of India, I thought about getting the Overseas Citizen of India card (OCI) [previously the People of Indian Origin Card (PIO)] from the Indian Embassy in Mauritius. In the process of getting the right documents, I visited the National Archives of Mauritius² as well as the office of Indian Immigration Archives (MGI)³ and the Head office of Civil Status.

I wanted to know more about my great grandparents' village, not so much out of curiosity but rather to know how I could be a blessing to the Bihar province of India from which my ancestors came to Mauritius many years ago.

When I heard that the University of the Nations was offering the School of Redemptive History (SRH) in Bihar, India, it seemed like the perfect opportunity to help me explore more of my background and God's redemptive hand in my family genealogy. My final project for the course led me into this renewed journey to search for the truth about how, why, when, and where the Indians left their country and chose to come to Mauritius. Were they happy about making such

¹ Emigration started in 1834 to Mauritius, first as a prototype and then in 1838 the system was extended to other countries.

² <http://nationalarchives.govmu.org/> Readers interested in further discussion of the research process are invited to write the author at the email address noted above.

³ <https://www.mgirt.ac.mu/index.php/indian-immigration-archives>

a decision? Were they forced or abused? From what I had heard and learned in school, it had been painful for the people from India that came to Mauritius. Why was it so, what really happened?

Background

History always fascinated me, especially oral history, which my parents and grandparents shared. I remember as a teenager wanting to know the history of my church, which motivated me to visit elderly people and hear their stories. Some of them gave me old pictures and documents about the beginning of my church.

I love to see how God has been faithful in history. As a family, at the end of the year, we used to reflect back on how good God had been to us during the year. As I researched my roots in Bihar, I continued that tradition, considering especially God's goodness to previous generations.

Bihar is a district of India situated just below Nepal, the source location from which most indentured labourers came from 1838 – 1917. The famous Ganges River passes through the district, the crossroads of four major religions: Jainism, Hinduism, Sikhism and Buddhism. It had been considered a missionary graveyard by many people not only because of its physical challenges, but also the spiritual ones. One missions research report states:

“I had a vision that the spirit of darkness sits on a throne and waits to see your weakness,” a missionary writes about Bihar. “This is different from anywhere in India. This spirit is shrewd and cunning. You can't tell when it will hit or where it may come from.” (AAPC, 1993)

Bihar played a key role in shaping the society of other countries through the Indentured Labourer System. Many historians, researchers, and writers from different countries have written about what is often called 'modern slavery,' the Indentured Labourer System. However, there are few facts about the number of Christians that emigrated, and I did not discover any Christian writings about these specific events. Even though there are many descendants of Indentured Labourers who turned to Christianity in their place of resettlement, few opted to return or be a blessing to their homeland in India. Could this returning of Christians to Bihar be part of God's redemptive purpose in this story?

I remember vividly how God led my family and I back to India. After we arrived in India, one significant event for us was the visit of the President of Mauritius to Bihar (G. Jha, 2013). The fanfare in the city while he was there affirmed my own sense of the significance of our presence - that our influence in Bihar would be not only for this generation but for those yet to come.

Today, it seems as though there is little reflection on our people's history. The inaugurated statue of the father of the nation of Mauritius – Right Honorable Sir Seewoosagar Ramgoolam - lays in ruins in the city of Patna. My hope is that this research will influence future generations to consider our collective history as a people from a redemptive perspective.

Methodology

My research started by visiting one of the oldest archival libraries in Patna, India with the SRH students. Arriving at the center, I spoke with the library director and he showed us one of the most inaccessible documents that had been preserved for hundreds of years. During that same visit, he called a researcher friend of his and introduced me to him, telling him that I was doing some research about my Indian origin. We met several times after that first meeting, and I was able to access more documents in the library. I had a few informal interviews with these two gurus of

history. The researcher showed me other libraries where I could get access to old books, related to my research. I sat for hours researching and documenting what happened during the period 1834 – 1920. I was told that some of those library books had never been borrowed or read by anyone. After some dusting, I was able to read all those treasured books.

I also exchanged emails with the Indian archives office in Mauritius, which provided valuable additional information about my ancestors. Internet research was a key tool in defining the location of the village my ancestors came from, and to access some digital books. Interviews also played a key role in understanding the history, and how people interpreted it.

Research and Analysis

A Brief History of Mauritius

The Dutch were the first permanent settlers in Mauritius, ruling the country from 1598 to 1710 (History, n.d.). During a prayer meeting, I remember the leader told us that the Dutch discovered Mauritius after having drifted in a storm to the southeast of Mauritius. While mooring in the lagoon, half of the crew came to shore, had a church service, and dedicated the island to God. In the afternoon, the second batch of the crew came, held another church service and again dedicated the island to God. As we see the history of Mauritius unfold, we see how God was omnipresent in every period on the colonization of the island.

After the Dutch left, the French took over and developed the island from 1710 – 1810. Considerable development was made by the French. They brought slaves from the continent of Africa and skilled workers from different parts of the world, which included Indians. Saha (1970) notes that very few came from the Bombay (Mumbai) harbor as it was a burden for the master to have them.

In 1810 the British defeated the French and ruled over the island until 1968 when Mauritius gained independence (History, n.d.). It was during the period of British rule that the abolition of slavery happened, and the new form of slavery started - the Indentured Labourer System.

After the abolition of slavery, sugarcane production dropped from 112,500 tons to 65,000 tons and could have gone even lower to 39,000 tons if factories had not been mechanized (Saha, 1970, p. 8). As Tinker (1974) says, “employers found new ways to bend even their own laws more completely to their own purposes” (cited by Bhana, 1987, p. 9). Free slaves were now employed as ‘apprentices’ and had a lot of conflicts with the employers. They asked for more wages and their work was not properly done. They stopped working for their employers and chose to become self-employed as poultry farmers or do other work not connected to the apprentice work duty.

The sugar cane estates, especially in the British colonized countries which included Mauritius, faced a drastic shortage of cheap labour for day to day work. Overseers considered bringing labourers from Europe and China, but the cost to bring them was too expensive. Africa was not an option for them as it was linked too much with slavery. Therefore, the planters turned to India for cheaper labourers. Mauritius was the first place to experience the new system, called the Indentured (contract bound) Labourer system. Labourers were neither slave nor free but halfway between the two; just a camouflage of slavery. According to Saha (1970) the first labourers who emigrated from India were ‘hill coolies’ from Chota Nagpur, formally part of the Bihar district, now in the district of Jharkhand. The hill coolies were experienced in working the jungle land, were docile by nature, lived a simple lifestyle, and due to ignorance were easily manipulated through the false promises made to them.

After the success of the ‘experimental’ period from 1834-1838, more workers were brought from different parts of India to the British colonized countries. Peerthum (2017) maps the different areas of India from which workers came. My ancestors came from the area Peerthum identifies as area number 8 (see also List of Districts of Bihar, n.d.). I will elaborate on that later in my report.

Factors for the Emigration

The factors that convinced Indians to opt for immigration to the colonized countries varied regionally across India, including political, social, and economic reasons. However, regardless of the situation they faced, I believe that God had a plan of restoration for the Indian people.

The Kamiatee System. During those days in the area of Bihar, there was a form of slavery called the ‘Kamiatee system’ (J. C. Jha, 1999; Saha, 1970). The system affected mainly the lower caste and tribal peoples who were from the southern part of Bihar, which at that time included the district of Jharkhand. In the Kamiatee system, people addicted to wine and unable to pay back a debt were forced to remain in service to the creditor. Additionally, they had to pay a tax for their harvest, which was too much for them so that they went into debt with the landlords. As a result, many became bound servants to the creditors and were considered property. In reality, it was a form of slavery in which the workers had no rights at all such that they had to sell even their children to pay back their debt. They wanted to flee those situations and were easily manipulated to be brought to the British colonized countries. It was redemption for them to be freed from their bondage of slavery and thus to have a chance at a decent life and build a new family. The recruiters took advantage of their vulnerabilities to exploit them.

Deception about the Location of the Island. “They were told that they would find gold beneath the rocks there...” (G. Jha, 2013). These words, quoted by the President of Mauritius in his speech in Bihar in January 2013 after visiting his ancestor’s village, were from oral stories passed down through the generations. I had heard those same words many times before. The Indian people were deceived in many ways. They were fooled by the beautiful words that were told about Mauritius. They were told that the work in Mauritius would be light jobs, necessities of life were cheap and above all else, the journey to the island of Mauritius only lasted two days. At the beginning of the Indentured Labourer System, transport was by sailing ships that took months to reach the colonial countries, and for workers to return back to their own country after the contract finished was almost impossible. The recruiters (Arkhatiyas) made false promises, motivated by the commission being paid according to the number of people recruited.

The Economic Crash. There was an economic crash in India during the time of the East India Company. Textile factories faced big issues and were being closed. The landlords demanded 89 percent tax from the farmers, who were also being paid way below the minimum wage. The birth-rate rose drastically in that time and it was a huge burden to raise children and provide for their daily food. Some statistics indicate that India’s population increased by 150 million in 70 years (J. C. Jha, 1999, p. xvii). The soil became unproductive and food was rationed. People decided to migrate from one city to another in search of a better life. That is why we see an increase in the registration of people who chose to go to Mauritius, registered not in their own village, but in a different village. The Bihari people were in the Kolkata, Bengal district in search of work and since they did not find employment, they became prey to the colonial recruiters. This affected mainly the district of Saran, part of western Bihar and a major point of colonial emigration (J. C. Jha, 1999).

The Famine. There had been a sequence of nine disasters striking India, including a huge famine

from 1876-1878 (Bhana, 1987). That famine affected all the castes in India, especially in the northern part of the country. Sahabad, which is actually the district from which my ancestors came, suffered a 75 percent decrease in rice production. Approximately 3.75 million people lost their lives during the great famine (Bhana, 1987, p. 46). Many more were enslaved by their landlords and money lenders. This resulted in land, house, and cattle mortgage. During that same time, the British demanded the planting of more commercial crops than food crops. This benefited the rich people but crushed the lower workers and the landless people.

During that same period, railway lines were introduced across India that helped with employment and facilitated the movement of people and materials. Around 1900, there were more than 1.5 million internal migrations from the Uttra Pradesh district (Bhana, 1987, p. 73). Moving out of India to survive became more attractive, predominantly in search of food. The recruiters took advantage of the difficult situation to lure people as indentured labourers.

Sonepur Fair. While I read the book written by J. C. Jha, I came across this line: “Sonepur, famous for its annual fair, became a well-known centre for recruitment of labourers, usually belonging to the lower castes” (1999, p. xix). That really caught my attention and since the Sonepur Mela⁴ was happening during the time of my visit, I made it a must to attend the fair and see if I could get more information about it. Off I went in search for the truth. While walking the streets, I sensed the strong spiritual bondage that was prevailing in that town. There a hub of idols receive worship all along the streets. In another part of the fair, there was a street of live shows. One of my friends visited that same road, and shared with me that during those shows, some people were involved in human trafficking. The buying of girls for a one-year contract for dancing eventually led to more than just dancing. During my visit, I also came across a tourist booth occupied by the Bihar Government. I was very curious to find out more about the history of Sonepur Mela. After the officer attending the booth handed me some pamphlets and gave me a well detailed explanation of the fair, I asked him if I could interview him and record the conversation. He agreed. He made some interesting points about buying and selling of people – human trafficking. After asking him if the practice of human trafficking still exists today, he eventually said “No,” but he mentioned that this was a practice in the past, especially for the men who could not find a bride. Men would come and buy a girl and take her for a wife. This was mainly done by upper caste people and the rajas. I concluded that if human trafficking was happening among low castes, it does not surprise me to see that the recruitment for indentured labourers was also done from the lower castes, especially during the first period when the system was started and recruitment was not well monitored.

Adventurous Spirit. The Bhojpur speaking people, in the district of Sahabad (during the time of British rule) were more adventurous than their neighbours in other parts of Bihar (Saha, 1970, p. 74). This played a very key role in deciding to accept challenges and try new ways to be prosperous. When they were being proposed to cross the *Kala pani* (the Bay of Bengal sea), they positively accepted the proposal bearing in mind that the condition would be that they would return back to their homeland to have a better life. This is still a practice in Bihar. The father will leave the family and work for months outside of Bihar and send money to the family. I recall my childhood stories that before I was born, my father had been doing the same. He was working far from home and would come after a month for a few days.

⁴ Sonepur Mela is an annual fair to which people came from far away to buy things. History tells us that from 340 BC -298 BC during the Maurya Empire, the Mela already existed and was famous for the selling of wild elephants.

British Army During the Period of 1857-1858. During the Indian Revolution in 1857 which started in Bihar, many freedom fighters were sent by the British as prisoners to remote Port-Blair, in the Andaman Islands (Verma et al., 2019). A lot of people in the area of Sahabad, Bihar had been recruited by the British army to fight. High caste people were not recruited. They came voluntarily to the emigration depots to get jobs as they were denied jobs to join the Sepoy (the British soldiers). In those days, there were also some private agencies that recruited them. The high castes (Brahmins and Kshatriyas) were even ready to declare themselves as a lower caste to escape compulsory deportation to Port-Blair as they had opposed British rule.

Kidnapping. Before the Act V of 1837, kidnapping was the saddest part of the contract labourer system (Saha, 1970, p. 80). Emigration stopped for a while before the matter was solved by new amendments. Before the amendments to the laws, some people were kidnapped and placed on the boat to be sent to Mauritius where even the captain of the boat did not know about it. The registered amount of people when the ship departed from the port, was much lower than upon arrival in Mauritius. The kidnapped passengers did not have a pass from the police to travel. The kidnapped were actually being put in the boat as it was moving down the Ganges River. Some statistics indicate that two-thirds of the people did not possess the travel pass in October 1836 in the Sophia ship (Saha, 1970, p. 80). I tried to look if there were underage children in that process, but I did not find any information about it. However, a lot of children were brought to the colonized country, some coming with both parents and some with a single parent.

The Recruitments

The recruitment of the native builders was on a signed contract agreement basis. The agreement had been amended a few times for the dignity of the immigrants to the colonial countries. Even if done before a Judge of Court, things were not as beautiful as portrayed. Saha (1970, pp. 28-77) categorizes the transfer of the contract labourers in two parts. The first part was from the 1834 to 1839 and the second part from 1839 to 1900. Even though the earlier period was considered a great success as an experimental prototype, this had not been the case for the first few years.

Endeavors to allure by pointing out to them the great benefit to be derived by a trip to Calcutta, where employment is said to be easily procured from government to work on roads, cultivate gardens etc. and according to each man capacity will receive high wages, get plenty to eat and drink and in short, have every enjoyment at command; at the same time pointing to them the folly of remaining in their jungles to starve. (Saha, 1970, p. 79)

After being brought to Calcutta, they were guarded (like prisoners) so as not to mingle with other people so that they did not change their mind and return back home.

The Arkatis. The ‘*Arkatis*’ (recruiters) were the heartbeat of the recruitment (see Bhana, 1987 for this section). The success or failure of the system depended on them. Even though there was a hierarchical system requiring approval for persons to emigrate (including Emigration Agents, Subagents, Heads of Recruitment, and the recruiters), the Arkatis were the ones in contact with the recruits. Their work was to fool and manipulate the locals to choose to go as Indentured Labourers. There were many court cases filed against them mainly over misrepresentation of the destination. Some recruiters never mentioned the sea journey to the people. The Arkatis were normally also the guards and record keepers. They were from different castes and included Muslims. They were actually illegal operators known by the locals.

The Arkatis also instructed recruits about what to say to the magistrate. The subagents appeared in court to testify that recruits willingly chose to emigrate. The recruits did not realize they were being subverted in their own process of protecting themselves. Even though recruits were not well informed, and with better awareness might have changed their decision, they were driven by the social economic situation.

Since the Arkatis were paid according to the number of people that agreed to be indentured, they looked for weaknesses like the financial distress of the people or their desire to get money easily. The main places of recruitment were public places like stations, temples, and marketplaces. After accepting the proposal to emigrate, recruited workers were sent to the sub-depot where they received good care regardless of their castes. They were also examined by doctors to see if they were fit to travel and work.

The Journey

The beginning of the journey to the unknown was not easy. It took the sailing ship up to 70 days to reach Mauritius (Bhana, 1987). The average number of passengers on the ship was 300 to 550 passengers. Sickesses and deaths onboard were so high that a doctor was assigned to be onboard each voyage. There were precise rules about vaccinations, sick bays, rationing scales, and daily baths. Bhana states that out of 40,318 passengers who travelled, 1,251 died during the travel, 293 died on arrival and 6,107 died when they started to work (1987, p. 18). Missionary organizations and Christian lawyers played a part in the protest to raise the alarm to the British authorities about the mortality rate (J. C. Jha, 1999). After the introduction of the steamship, the mortality rate reduced drastically because the time of travel was reduced. In the beginning, workers were sleeping on the platform, but later two-tier bunk beds were added in the ships.

In reading the reports of the journey I recalled my time serving on the floating library, the MV Doulos, built in 1914 (Remember Doulos, 2020). As in my experiences on board ship, the long voyage for the workers had some good things in it as well. Being in community lessened the fear of the unknown, strength was found in helping one another, and the feeling of a new identity created such great friendships among the labourers that they called each other *Jahaji-Bhai* (ship brotherhood) irrespective of their religion or caste. Bhana quotes one as saying “I have taken off my caste and left it with the Port Officer. I won’t put it on again till I come back” (1987, p. 18). Even when the anticipated opportunity looked so beautiful in itself, the real reality took a lot of time to adapt to once in Mauritius. Three or four generations afterwards, even though it is fading away, the ideology of being separated according to caste or people group, for example, persists when it comes to marriage or mingling with the black African (of slave origin). Marrying an African from Madagascar as I did, I was the talk of the town for many because they could not digest that cross-cultural relationship. Interestingly, from the document I received from the Indian archive office from Mauritius, there is a high probability that my ancestor too was a mixture of Muslim and Hindu. Unfortunately, the bondage of exclusiveness of people groups still prevails nowadays in Mauritius.

Life on the Estates

Reaching the estates, the contract labourers realized they had been duped (Verma et al., 2019). The scheme of service was not what was promised, the housing and facilities were different, and they had to work more hours than expected, at a minimum salary. The daily food allowance was also minimum and unhealthy. During the research, I discovered the food allowance they received included dried fish (J. C. Jha, 1999). Even now that we have other varieties of non-veg food, dried

fish is one of the favorite meals of Mauritians. In those days it was an expensive and special meal for them.

The five-year return agreement whereby the labourer should have received a free return ticket to India was not honored (J. C. Jha, 1999). Most indentured labourers opted not to return as they had to work to pay the return voyage, and they did not want to relive the traumatic experience of the journey.

Food issues related to pork and beef were raised between Muslims, Africans and Hindus. Verma et al note that “disunity and divisiveness amongst Indians led to what is described as the ‘Indian Crabs in a Barrel Syndrome.’ When interpreted, it says that like crabs in a barrel – whenever one crab tries to raise or elevate himself, he is ‘pulled down’ by several of his type.” (2019, p. 73). In my research I found no mention of Christians coming from Bihar, though some came from the southern part of India. In any case, Christians remained the minority people group. Indian families of all backgrounds experienced a lot of alcohol and substance abuse, suicide, domestic violence and family dispute. Bhana reports that the owners used to provide workers with alcohol and narcotics to keep them happy (1987, p. 100). This transferred to future generations and still affects many Indian families today.

Challenges in the estates included health issues like cholera, small-pox, and malaria. The hospitals were not always an option for them because of distance and the cost was too high.

Religious activities prevailed among the communities in the estates. Weddings were celebrated as in India, starting with the arranged marriage and the Tilak (dowry) system. Funeral services, temples, and main festivals were celebrated.

End of the Indentured Labourer System

The Indian Indentured System was banned in 1917 and abolished in 1920 (Verma et al., 2019, p. 40). There had been a lot of pressure from the Indian legislative council to end the system as it was not benefitting India. This is captured in the lines of Jawaharlal Nehru. On March 18, 1946, while addressing a predominantly Indian gathering in Singapore, Nehru said “India cannot forget her sons and daughters overseas today, the time is soon coming when her arm will be long enough to protect them” (Verma et al., 2019, p. 116). The overseas labourers were heart-broken when Nehru advised them to stay in the countries to which they had gone. The impact of that decision became a key turning point in the development of Mauritius. Bilateral relations between India and Mauritius had definitely strengthened in those years and as mentioned by Sir Anerood Jugnauth in his speech in 2018 (Verma et al., 2019, p. 22), Mauritius is even called the ‘Chhota Bharat’ (little India). As an example of bilateral relations, in 1975 after Mauritian independence and the boom in sugar, Chandigarh (India) was considered as the ‘*Mauritius Garh*’ as thousands of poor Mauritian students came to study at university there (Verma et al., 2019, pp. 161-162).

Sahabad, the Land of My Great Grandparents

Along with the research about the conditions the Indentured Labourers faced, I wanted to research about my origin. This led me to share emails with the person in charge of the Indian Archives of Mauritius. He had been very helpful to me in my research and even sent me additional documents that were important to find my genealogy up to the sixth generation back.

Sahabad was the area where my great-great-great grandparents originally came from. It was one area where the ‘Girmityas’ (English word ‘agreement’) Labourers were predominantly recruited. The district nowadays is divided into four districts – Bhojpur, Buxar, Kaimur and

Rohtas. These districts all form part of the Bhojpuri speaking belt. The people were more adventurous than in other parts of Bihar. As Saha (1970, p. 74) notes “Each man was ready to carve his fortune out of any opportunity which may present itself to him.”

While trying to locate the village of my ancestors, I realized that it is not easy to get the information. I managed to get an approximate location of the two villages I was looking for: Kissonpore and Pipara from the Choinpore area, part of the district of Arrah, in Sahabad. I had some informal interviews about the two villages with a few people originally from those areas. One person said there might be a few villages with the same name in those areas today. The best thing would be to go for a few days and look and talk with the old people of the villages. Another person I interviewed, a researcher, told me that he could help me look but the time limit I had was not enough for him. Because of the time constraint, I could not go further to visit the location. However, I now know the approximate place, and that is huge progress in my search for my ancestral village. I look forward to being able to go deeper in that research in the future and be able to locate the village more precisely.

Conclusion

In 2002, while I was in a youth camp organized by Youth With a Mission Mauritius, the word that came to me was to return back to the root. I believe that my perspective about the Indian Indentured Labourer System has changed after this research paper. The research journey started in one of the oldest archival documentation libraries in Patna, India. From there, I visited a lot of historical places in Bihar, interviewed people and read a lot of books where my passion for history grew even more. No matter what the people had faced, I enjoyed seeing God’s hand in history. The following Scripture says it well:

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so My ways are higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.” Isaiah 55:8-9 (KJV)

No matter how insignificant we might be, God can use us to be nation builders. A lot failed the race, many died from drugs, alcohol or greediness, but for those who took the challenge, they overcame and became conquerors. They did not find gold, but they made Mauritius a golden country. The famous Indo-Mauritian poet, Vishwamitra Ganga Ashutosh wrote “No gold did they find underneath any stone they touched and turned, yet every stone they touched into solid gold they turned” (Verma et al., 2019, p. 125).

Education was key to fight dictatorship, as Mahatma Gandhi stated on his visit to Mauritius in 1901. Gandhi encouraged Indians to take up education and participate in politics more actively (Verma et al., 2019, p. 28).

Who would have thought that those people who would try to get a better life were actually in the marvelous plan of redeeming the nation? Many of the labourers and the generations that followed struggled a lot to survive, and in trying to motivate themselves attended Satsang and spiritual gatherings. Many encountered Jesus in their search for freedom and turned to Christianity. Those people are now great influencers in the nation and are bringing blessing to the nations.

I also realized that workers brought a lot of wrong practices when they came, and those became strongholds from generation to generation. Even so, as I wrote this, I became even more convinced that the God I worship has a wonderful plan for everyone and we just need to be

connected with him. “The DNA of resilience that our forefathers have transmitted to us, we have always fought against all odds and attained our goals” (Verma et al., 2019, p. 25); it is up to us to use that in a proper way.

Hugh Tinker suggests the Banyan Tree as a symbol of the Indian diaspora, well rooted and spread around (Tinker, 1974, as cited by Verma et al., 1999, p. 110). The diaspora community is knitted together and that is how Christians need to be knitted together to make a difference in the lives of other people in the nations. We of Indian origin have the ability to influence others and it is us that need to take the step and show love to our Indian brothers and sisters.

There is hope to see the Indentured Labourers’ future generations return to India and be a blessing to the nation. There is hope to see those who experience God to rise up and come boldly to share their faith to this generation, which will eventually make an impact on many generations that follow. The time is coming when India will be blessed by the Overseas Indian origin people. I look forward to seeing it become a reality.

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