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KAHE GAILE BIDES – WHY DID YOU GO OVERSEAS? AN INTRODUCTION IN EMOTIONAL ASPECTS OF MIGRATION HISTORY: A DIASPORA PERSPECTIVE[1]

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The historiography of former colonies was until recently predominantly based on official records created by the government or the colonial elite, including Christian churches and missionaries. In addition to this, for centuries, the history of colonized people was dominated by the view of the imperial and colonial ruling classes. An important feature of recent historiography has been that many writers are keenly interested in what happened to migrants from the time of their recruitment to that of their settlement in the new countries of destinations. This is a logical response to the colonial historiography, which focused on the system and how it worked in practice to facilitate the colonial agenda and dominant classes. Much attention has been paid to the general working and living conditions of the laborers. Scholars have also found it necessary to compare indentured labor with slavery. This discussion certainly began with the introduction of indenture labor migration, but acquired new impetus following Hughes Tinker's *A New System of Slavery* in 1974. The discussion is on-going, and will undoubtedly continue well into the future. A new dimension in the discourse is the question of reparations or compensation. This has been influenced by discussions on reparations to be paid by colonial powers for the injustices meted out to enslaved Africans[2].

In the colonial historiography of migration there is no room for the perception of the laborers' themselves. Since scholars from the Indian Diaspora began pursuing their own research we have seen a change regarding the historiographical approach, as they have been attempting to reinterpret the history from the point of view of the laborers themselves. They have been attempting to acquire information from conventional as well as other sources which have not been adequately explored or were insufficiently utilized in the past. A good example of the new scholarship is the work of Brij Lal of Fiji, who has conducted research using statistical material. He argues that while statistical analysis provides valuable details about trends and tendencies, it does not provide insight into motives and perceptions of the emigrants themselves. Documents may not adequately yield new insights, except when considered in relation to new and sometimes little used sources. He advises the use of Hindi folk songs "which can movingly illuminate the feelings of the emigrants about various aspects of indenture" (Lal, 1980, p. 66).

In this paper I will focus on the emotional aspects of migration history of the people from the Bhojpuri area to foreign plantation colonies in general, and to Suriname in particular. The aim is to discuss methodological aspects of historiography of migration and the Diaspora, and to promote a new dimension in migration historiography. This dimension is the emotional aspects of migration history which has been neglected or underexplored in the historiography. According to Lal, the neglect of folksongs is surprising but not accidental because many scholars regard them as "soft" data prone to error and fallacy:

Their greatest value lies in the fact that they express and evoke attitudes and concerns that are important to the people themselves, and because of this they are generally representative of the human condition they portray (Lal, 1980, p. 66).

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What is the Value of Emotional Aspects of History?

I think that focusing on emotional aspects of history gives us the best guarantee of reconstructing the motives, thoughts and attitudes of the different actors in the migration process. History is not only a reconstruction of what people have done, but also what they have thought and felt. By studying their feelings and motives, we can better understand why they acted as they did.

Using this approach therefore opens new opportunities to use non conventional traditional sources, as oral traditions, life stories, songs, poems, dramas, folklore and stories told in a community, proverbs, expressions and historical novels. I was confronted for the first time with the necessity for this approach when I was asked to participate in the Bidesia Project (2005-8), initiated by Badri Narayan Tiwari of the G.B. Pant Institute in Allahabad[3]. Until then, I was interested mainly in the experiences of the migrants and their descendents who had crossed the Kala Pani and had built a new future for themselves and their children in their new homelands. I had little or no academic interest in those they had left behind. Additionally, I had met with any work that had focused on this aspect. As I became more interested in the experience of the migrants themselves, I began to realize that understanding this aspect could only have been half of the diasporic story. I was confronted with the necessity to learn more of the experiences, feelings and perceptions of the people whom the migrants had left behind in their country of origin - a new experience for me as historian, who himself is part of the Indian Diaspora.

A new approach always demands new questions, and this means that new themes and topics of migration history must be dealt with. But migration history itself is also the study of communities/society in the countries of origin. It involves automatically a comparison of the culture and societies in the countries of origin and destination. This is the subject of a multi-annual research programme which some scholars wish to realize over the coming years. In this research programme we would like to answer a number of questions, which have already been asked in the past, but which ought now to be through the incorporation of new sources and new approaches:

- What were the feelings of the people who were left behind, and how did they express these feelings?
- What were the experiences and feelings of the migrants? How did they feel about their separation from their beloved ones? How did they survive in their new environment? Why did they not return to the ancestral homeland? What are their perceptions about migration and indenture?
- What are the similarities and differences between migration during the indentureship period and present day migration waves?
- What is the relationship between the migrants and/or their descendents and the country of origin, and between these migrants and the country in which they live? What is their identity?

While conducting the Bidesia Project we were confronted with the expressions of pain and the feelings of loss, which resulted particularly from the separation of young male migrants from their beloved ones: wives, children, fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, other relatives, friends and people from the village community.[4]This aspect, the emotional dimension, is alluded to in several works, but, in my view, has never been received the structural attention required in the historiography.[5]For a well balanced history of migration we should study not only the experiences of the indentured laborers and their descendents, but also those of the people at the "home front." After all, for most of them the idea of the indentured laborer working in overseas territories was that these laborers would go abroad for a relative short period with the intention to earn money and returning home. History has shown that in reality a great majority of these migrants did not return. What effects did this change of outcome have on the migrants individually and collectively? And, for our purposes, what effects did this have on the individuals and communities in the home land?

The process of migration of Indian laborers reached yet another phase when during the second half of the 20th century a mass movement of people took place from the former colonies to the metropolis: the UK, Netherlands, United States, Canada and Australia. It is interesting to study the experience of this second major diasporic development, and to compare it with that of the first Diaspora. What are the common features and differences?

Our new approach undoubtedly raises many new and interesting questions. I will therefore use the Bidesia Project and migration to Suriname as a case study to explore some of the possibilities and challenges in this approach. The title of my paper is borrowed from the resource book of the above -mentioned project, *KaheGaile Bides* – Why did you go overseas[6]? I propose to discuss the approach as follows:

First, I will deal with some of the methodological or theoretical aspects of the study of migration history for people who are themselves member of the migrant community.

Following this, I will provide a short overview on the migration history of people from the Bhojpuri area to Suriname, and from Suriname to the Netherlands. Finally, I shall provide, through a number of samples of the data, evidence of the significance of source material which can help us to more adequately appreciate the emotional impact of migration on those who left and those who remained in the homeland.

Methodological Challenges

When I began the writing of this paper, there was a peculiar problem regarding where to begin. Was it more appropriate to begin with an introduction on the circumstances in the 19thcentury in the Caribbean/Suriname which led to the

introduction of indentured migrants from India, China and Indonesia? Or, should I start with the developments in 19th century India, to explain why people in India, especially in the Bhojpuri area, decided to migrate in large numbers? In other words which factors/circumstances where responsible for large scale migration of Indian laborers? In the first instance, this question looks very simple and not important, but it has in essence to do with the perspective of the researcher/writer who is trying to reconstruct a piece of the past of his community/country. The matter is about which perspective I should use to analyze and describe the phenomenon of Indian (indentured) migration: is it the perspective of the Surinamese national/citizen or the perspective of the country of origin? Is it possible to write the migration history from both perspectives at the same time? Does understanding the perspectives from both sides mean that as an individual you can use both perspectives in one and the same work?

In the need to write history from the people's perspective, I have been confronted with this dilemma: which people? Is it the people from India, or the people from Suriname, in which the Indians (Hindustanis) have integrated, and had become members of the Surinamese nation? There they have developed their own identity as Hindustanis, as well as fully fledged members of the Surinamese society, with its own characteristics, culture, goals and future or destiny.

This matter of choice of an identity is a complex one. In my view, if I choose to start my story with the Indian scene, I think I implicitly make a choice for an Indian identity in the sense of part of the Indian nation. Within our research on identity of the descendants of the Indian migrants in Suriname our assumption has been reinforced that there are different identities for every individual, depending on the circumstances in which you have to make a choice (Bidesia Country report Suriname, 2006, unpublished).

I have decided to begin with the Caribbean scene and to switch to the Indian scene alternately. I am aware that during last decades we can speak about transnational communities or transnational identities, regardless of geographic boundaries which have been made after the rise of national states in world history in modern times. I believe that one can switch from one identity to the other, but still sometimes you struggle with multiple identities. I recognize the existence of an Indian identity of the people in the Diaspora, but Indianness has different contents/meanings in particular circumstances. I will come back on this issue later on.

Background of Migration of Indentured Laborers' in the 19th Century

After abolition of slavery there has been an introduction of the system of indentured labor in the tropical plantation colonies of the British Empire. The planters in the sugar colonies were in urgent need for cheap labor which they could control as it was the case with enslaved laborers. In the initial stage of Indentureship there were a number of shortcomings and abuses, reason why indentured migration was

temporarily terminated. After resuming indenture immigration, there were still serious shortcomings in the system as applied in practice in different colonies, such as Guyana and Trinidad[7]. One economic consequence of the introduction of indentured labor was the increasing production and export of sugar and other commodities.

Inspired by the "success "of indentured labor migration in the British colonies, the French government concluded a treaty in 1861 to recruit indentured laborers' in India. The Dutch planters in Suriname took notice of this and requested the government to negotiate the recruitment of Indians for work plantations in Suriname. After long negotiations since 1861, the Dutch concluded also an emigration treaty with the British government, as a result of which, indentured laborers' were transported to Suriname from 1873 until 1916, when the indentured emigration from India had been abolished[8]. During the period 5 June 1873 – 1916 a total number of 64 ships arrived with immigrants from Calcutta, with a total number of 34.304 immigrants (De Klerk, 1953).

In all the colonies together, more than one million indentured emigrants arrived in the period 1834 -1916. Most of them were young male migrants, who left their families and relatives in their home land with the intention to earn much money and to come back after expiration of their indenture. The real situation was however quite different: most of the emigrants settled in the destination countries which became their new homeland. The period of indenture was for most of them a hard time during which they lived and worked under conditions which were different from their expectations at the moment of the signing of a contract in India.

Notwithstanding this, most of them decided to stay or delayed their return to India until it was too late to return. In their new respective homeland they worked very hard and created a new future for themselves and their descendants.

The number of migrants in the different colonies varied from colony to colony. Mauritius received more than 453.000 immigrants, followed by Guyana (238.900), Natal 152,184, Trinidad (143,930), Fiji (60,965), Jamaica 36,400; Suriname (34,300) etc. The other British west India islands received smaller numbers (Brij Lal, Chalo Jahaji, 2006, p.75). According to Stanley Engerman, who is referring to Herman Merivale, most of the indentured laborers were introduced in countries where there was enough fertile soil available to cultivate. (Engerman, 1986, p. 225 ff)[9]. In countries were the former slaves did not have enough opportunities outside the plantations, there was no need for indentured emigrants, as the plantation owners could count on the availability of cheap labor. Where there was an abundance of uncultivated land, the ex-enslaved had considerable opportunities outside of the plantations, and were in a position to negotiate higher wages. This, in the planters' perception, meant that there was no guarantee of regular and continuous labor, and promised economic doom as a result of ever-increasing wages. According to the planter, former slaves were not given to regular working habits. They worked when

in need of money, and some completely rejected plantation labor. Through the introduction of indentured laborers the planters hoped to be guaranteed the availability of a cheap labor, dependable labor force on a long term basis[10].

Migration in and from India

In this section we will deal with the question of the circumstances that were the cause of migration of indentured laborers from Bihar and United Provinces. Many studies and publications have discussed the social and economic situation in India at the time of the start of emigration, and these are mentioned as the push factors for the outmigration from India. Firstly, there was the introduction of the Zamindari system which led to impoverishment of the peasants. Then, too, the *Lagan* (land taxes) was too high, and drove the people to famine or compelled them to sell their land[11].

An example of this, is to be located in the now documented experiences of Tota Ram Sanadhya, from a village in Agra, near Firozabad, a young man belonging to a Brahmin family, and whose father had died when he was 11 years old, with the result that his family became exceedingly poor. His elder brother had departed to Calcutta to work. His mother continued to suffer from poverty. According to Sanadhya, he could no longer continue to see the suffering of his mother, and so he decided to leave home in search of work. He went to Allahabad in 1893 and, while he was in a marketplace worrying about his financial problems, he was approached by an *arkati* who promised him work. The *arkati* brought him to his house where there were 160 men and women sitting separately in two rows.

> "The arkati said to the people: look brothers, the place where you will work you will never have to suffer any sorrows. There will never be any kind of problems there. You will eat a lot of bananas and a stomach full sugar cane, and play flutes in relaxation" (Sanadhya, 2003, p. 36).

Notwithstanding the poverty, his mother had decided to stay in India, probably because she belonged to a respected family of some means, although this too had been used up (Sanadhya, 2003, p. 34)[12].

The First Independence War of India 1857[13] as a Factor in Migration History

The Influence of the First Indian Independence War (1857) on migration of indentured labor has to be researched in a coherent way. Some work has already been published on this theme, but, as far as I know, there has not been any major study on how this war affected the migration of indentured laborers. As is well known, the war had its political and economic consequences which influenced the life of millions of Indians, apart from soldiers who participated in the fighting. Dirk Kolf mentions the relations between *naukari* belonging to the lascars, and the related consequences of the War of independence. According to him, many peasants had previously been able to find work as *naukar* among the armed forces, but after the War of 1857, the army was monopolized by the British Government. This meant

fewer jobs for the *naujavans* (young males) of the peasantry. In consequence, tens of thousands of them had to find employment elsewhere. Families who from generation to generation were traditionally employed in armies of kings and Raja's were now out of work. In addition, according to Kolf, the British government decided to employ people from the Punjab in their army. This proofed detrimental to the people of other regions, such as UP and Bihar (Kolf, 1998, p. 67- 82).

After the war, there were also changes regarding property rights in the rural areas. At the same time, peasants were being made to pay rent in cash rather than kind. There was also a decline of the indigenous handicraft industry because of competition from British products ((Lal, 1980, p. 61). The resulting economic hardships affected everyone, but the lower caste tenants and laborers suffered the most (Lal, 1980, p. 62).

In these circumstances, the effects of natural disasters and diseases were exacerbated and had important consequences for the level of migration from affected territories. Those who were undergoing deprivation or were on the verge of starvation had no choice but to migrate in an effort to earn a living in far away regions, such as the big cities and the plantations in Assam, Sri Lanka or South East Asia. In this respect long distance migration was not something new. For the people who proceeded to foreign territories, these destinations were all perceived in a similar way. Basically, in their perception, the migrants went to Calcutta or to *tápu*. For those who stayed behind, the destination, whether Calcutta, Assam, Mirich or Chinidad, was simply *pardes* .Similarly, those who went to far away regions/ countries and did not return, became *pardesi* or *pardesia*. According to Badri Narayan Tiwari, a folk culture developed in the regions of migration, and in particular women expressed their feelings in songs for their loved ones whom they expected to return they used the affectionate term *bidesia*. The country or place to which their loved ones had migrated was referred to as *bides* (Tiwari, 2001).

Against the background of the macro economic and social situation described above, however every family or individual would have had particular circumstances which influenced the decision to migrate at a certain moment in their live. One can argue therefore that in every case there were also personal circumstances and motives that were decisively important.

The question here is: how important were the personal circumstances? Where these more important than the general circumstances? If the general circumstances were positive as compared to the personal ones, would those individuals have taken the decision to leave their homes? Or, in case the prospective migrants were not deceived or misled, would they not take the decision to migrate? Why did they in some instances leave without informing their relatives? To answer such questions one has to use testimonies of the migrants themselves and also those of their relatives. The problem is, however that such testimonies are very rare. Generally speaking the migrants have not produced written documents. The same hold for

those whom they left behind. In the archives we find mainly the documents produced by colonial governments. Only in very rare cases we have been able to uncover the views from the laborers themselves. The general opinion is that most of them could not write, at least in the official language. However although some could have written in the mother tongue, this does not appear to have been common practice It is therefore difficult to reconstruct the perception of the common people. There are however a few cases where they have left written records. The emerging scenario regarding the availability of sources is as follows:

> There are colonial records in which we could find glimpses of the attitude and perceptions of the people themselves. These include, for instance, the reports of colonial officials (such as the reports of inspectors etc.) in which we can find some information about the people themselves, as recorded by the colonial officials (Grierson, Pitcher, West India Commission 1897, Report of the Inspection Commission for Guiana 1871, Sanderson Report 1911 etc). Secondly there are rare documents written by migrants and their relatives on both sides of the ocean. Thirdly, the range of written and unwritten sources which have not been traditionally used, but which now must be explored and collated for deeper and more far reaching interrogation.

What Follows in this Paper is an Indication of How These Sources Can be Incorporated in the Research Effort

In the report of George A. Grierson[14] (1883) we find sections on the feelings of the people in Bihar on the subject of emigration. There were, for example, objections to emigration. In his report he gives the view of the people, or, more properly said, he gives his reconstruction of their views. Although we do not have the firsthand accounts, his report is still important for reconstruction of the history of migration from below. We can draw our own conclusions, and we do not have to agree with the conclusions of the writer of the report. Grierson distinguishes between the views of the following groups:

- highly educated people,
- the zamindars and his servants
- the police and government servants
- the lower classes.

According to him, their feelings varied from one locality to another (Grierson, 1883, p. 16 ff.). He concluded, however, that the highly educated were everywhere in favor of emigration, with some reservations. This class included the “average “native Deputy Magistrate, and other “enlightened” native gentlemen. Grierson found that the zamindár and his servants were everywhere opposed to emigration. Further, that the zamindárs had the most influence on popular opinion as they shaped the ideas of the people under them. Moreover, to the zamindár, emigration of every coolie meant loss of property and tended also to result in a rise in wages. (Grierson, 1883, p. 16-17).

According to Grierson, the police was "actively opposed to emigration", except where, as was the case in Shahabad, "they [the police] were kept in order by their superiors." They regarded the plantation colonies, just as the indigo planters, as speculators who wanted to exploit India.

The feelings of the lower classes varied according the locality. In districts where there were return migrants, emigration was popular; in districts where there were none, their opinion was the reverse (Grierson, 1987, p. 18). Generally, feelings were also influenced by letters from emigrants in the colonies. Therefore communication with the colonies was important shaping perception[15]. The people who migrated belonged to all casts: the migrants were representative of the population in UP and Bihar. It is apparently a myth that only the lowest classes/ casts migrated (Lal, 1983 & Grierson, 1883).

Regarding the reasons why the people migrated and how migration took place, a popular dominant view among Indian communities everywhere, that the prospective migrants were lured away and that the false promises of the *arkátis* influenced their decision to migrate. Related to this there is the question whether or not there was free choice. Was the decision to migrate an act of free will? Is it a myth that most of the migrants were misled or lured away?

That migrants were misled and lured away was a view commonly expressed in the districts of recruitment by people who were against emigration. It is also common among immigrants who stayed in the destination countries and did not return to their homes and families. Bridget Brereton regards this as a part of the Indocentric discourse of migration history (Brereton, 2008 & 2011). First all of us, is it is necessary to consider whether the picture we get from the Indo centric is reliable.

Brij Lal who has conducted excellent research on migration to Fiji has concluded that a majority of the emigrants for Fiji were already migrants at the moment of registration as indentured emigrant. He has advanced statistical data per district in support of this claim. Many emigrants to Fiji were people who already left their homes and were recruited in other districts in India. (Lal, 1980, p. 66 & p. 59). The issue becomes more complex when we study some individual cases.

Take for example the cases of Totaram Sanadhya from Fiji and Munshi Rahmankhan from Suriname. Both were educated individuals who later documented their personal experiences on paper.

Experiences of Totaram Sanadhya (Fiji)

Totaram Sanadhya, who migrated to Fiji as indentured laborer and lived there for 21 years, published his story after his return to India in 1914 in "*My Twenty-One Years in the Fiji Islands*". He was born in Hirangau in Firozabad in1876. After the death of his father his elder brother left home to work in Calcutta, but the family remained poor, notwithstanding the remittances they received from Calcutta. .In 1893, Sanadhya left for Allahabad in search for work. After a few months there he

still was unable to find a job, thought of returning home, but did not do so, as he was wary of being a burden on his mother. Here is his story about his recruitment.

"One day when I was in a market near Katwali, engaged in this worrying about finances, a man I didn't know came up to me and asked, " Do you want employment?" I said "Yes". Then he said, "Good I can get you a very good job. It's the sort of work which will make your heart joyful." To this I said, "I will work but I won't be able to work for more than six months or a year." He said, "Good! You should come. When you wish, then quit working. Nothing will happen. Come, you should visit JagannathJi." My mind was not mature. On these words I came along! Deceived in this way, high class Indians come and bear hardships for their whole lives."

Sanadhya eventually registered in Allahabad as a *thakur*, although he was a Brahmin, and was taken to Kolkata (Sanadhya, 2003, p. 10 & p. 34 ff).There, the immigration officer explained to the emigrants that they were going to Fiji for five years and that if they choosed to return after 10 years they were entitled to a free return passage. Further, that they would earn much more money than 12 annas a day. Sanadhya was ultimately taken to Fiji. He contends, however, that he never had done field work before, did not want to go to Fiji, was taken away and isolated from the other emigrants until he was forced to agree to go to Fiji (Sanadhya, 2003, p. 37-38).

The Experience of Rahman Khan[16]

Rahman Khan was born in the year 1874 Bharkharipur in Hamirpur, as the only son of the *Pathan* Mohammed Khan, who held an important position as the assistant of the zamindar. Rahman Khan received a good education and worked as schoolteacher. He, however, felt restless and decided to take leave of his home and his job for a while. In consequence he went to Kanpur to view the *ramlila*[17],after the *ramlila*, on his way back to his sister's house; he met two decent looking men while waiting for the train at the bridge near the railway station. They greeted him politely and started a conversation. They informed him that the schedule of the train had changed and that the next train would be at 12 o' clock in the noon, instead of 8 AM. He believed them because he thought that as they were from the city they would know better. In words of his here is the story.

"I believed them. As I had some more time left, I decided to visit the marketplace once again and take some breakfast. "Are you interested in doing a job?" one of them asked. "What kind of job?" I inquired. "A government job", one said and then asked me if I had any education. I told them that I passed middle school. They responded happily and said that I could be made *sardar*. "You shall be paid 12 annas each day and your work would be to supervise laborers in the sugar business. You will travel on a government ship loaded with sugar once in 3-4 months. If you have any doubt regarding the payment you may come and get registered yourself

at the government office. If you follow me then I can show you the laborers who would be working under you. If you agree then your boarding and lodging will be free from today onwards and the chief will bear your expenses. (…) Such sugary talks swept me off my feet and I forgot everything: my family, my country and myself (…)

Rahmankhan admits that he started daydreaming and counted that 12 annas a day meant Rs 24 a month:

> "I started to convince myself and said to myself: "Why not work for some time? If it does not suit me, I would quit. If I am registered with the government, everything should be all right and my salary would also be ensured." With this one-sided thought I consented to go with them."(Rahmankan, 2005, p. 74-75).

Rahman Khan accompanied them to BabuRamnarayan Singh's depot and got thereafter registered at the magistrate's office. Following this he was asked by RamnarayanBabu to stay in the depot. He obliged.

Ramnarain Babu turned to me and said "Stay here and look after these men while I am away'. I agreed and began to stay in the depot. The bird was trapped and caged. I asked myself: "What can be done now? If I would have had the guts to cancel my agreement in front of the Magistrate, I could have come out of that mess.

But Rahman Khan believed in destiny. Listen to the following:

> But I did not know about this possibility and even if I had known I still would have remained there because Holy Allah had picked me out and I was destined to leave Hindustan and earn a living in Suriname. I was to become the black sheep of my family in Hindustan. Very sad indeed[18]!

The Following is Most Instructive

"I lived in Kanpur for three months during which I did not even write a letter to my father fearing that he might come and take me back. When we were about to leave for Calcutta, I sent him a letter saying that I was well and on my way to Calcutta. I did not mention my admission into the depot and my whereabouts in Calcutta" (Rahmankhan, 2005, p. 76).

From Kanpur the emigrants were brought to Faizabad, and from there to the Suriname depot in Calcutta. Rahman Khan reminisces that from this point onwards all immigrants lived together and caste rules were difficult to observe, and that of relationship of solidarity developed on the voyage to Suriname .He alluded to the fact that single males and females began to couple with each other at the Suriname depot in Calcutta. He paints an instructive picture of live at this depot. After their arrival in the depot, the people were told to take a bath in the river Bhagirati. They got soap and oil for this purpose.

According to Rahman Khan, during the bath in the river "The Brahmins, kshatriyas, vaishyas and others laughingly began to throw off their threads and

necklaces into the river saying: "Mother Ganges, we offer you our belongings, if we ever return, we shall adorn them again". They then oiled themselves and took bath and thus became one with the sudras." (Rahmankhan, 2005, p. 78). According to Rahman Khan, from then on there were no caste distinctions anymore.

Analysis of the Text

If we analyze the stories as narrated by Sanadhya and Rahman Khan, we see different things with some contradictions. Firstly we can say that these personal experiences give us a nice picture of the perceptions of these people. At the same time we have to be very critical about these sources. We have to know more about the back ground of these authors and their aims and goals: for which reasons they wrote their respective books. Sanadhya wrote his book with the purpose of influencing the intellectuals and leaders of the nationalist movement of India, in order to stop emigration of indentured laborers (Kelly, 1991). Sanadhya was an activist in the movement for abolition of indentured labor. Rahman Khan migrated after he was married and had a child. He left his relatives without informing them. Since his arrival in Suriname he lived with a woman in one room, according to him, against his own will (see note 19). Later he re-married and established a family. He became, in his own words, the black sheep of the family[19].

The question is whether Munshi Rahman Khan and Sanadhya were recruited and registered against their own will. Rahman Khan tells us that in first instance he was not well informed to refuse to proceed with his registration, but admits that even if he was, he would have registered notwithstanding as he felt that this was his destiny. Is this an effort to justify his act of migrating, and leaving his relatives behind and not returning home? Rahman Khan acted after all as a kind of *sardar* for the sub- agent and even helped them to recapture an emigrant who had escaped from the local emigration depot. Sanadhya registered himself as a member of a lower caste than that to which he really belonged. He does not mention that he was compelled to do so. His only resistance before boarding the ship was that after arrival in the Fiji depot in Kolkata he did not wanted to go to Fiji, because he did not envision himself as a field worker. He did not mention where he wanted to go.

Plantation Life

After they arrived in the colony, the migrants were allotted to different plantations, Families, however, were kept intact. Sometimes a single woman was assigned to a single man[20].

The laborers had right to free housing, free drinking water, free medical treatment and a minimum wage of 8 annas (40 cents) for women and 12 annas (60 cents) for men.

Working hours: 7 hours of field work or 10 hours in the factory. There was a possibility to work on daily tasks, but this would be negotiated. For task work

there was a tariff of tasks and wages from 1861, which should be used as a basis for the tasks and wages. In the daily practice, the planters used the task system without the consent of the laborers. They decided also about the tasks and its volume. The laborers had no choice. New laborers were very often not able to complete their tasks. They got during a period of three months a ration, which was deducted from their wages. The task system was from the point of view of the employer a guarantee to get enough output. For some laborers it was also beneficial, because they could earn more than the minimum daily wage, but many laborers were not able to finish their allotted tasks in time. In that case they earned less, while there was a possibility to be prosecuted for neglect of work. They could be fined or put in jail.

When we see the daily wages on the plantations, than we see that according to the colonial authorities, the indentured immigrants completed in 1919, 187 tasks (male) and 134 (female). According o the contract they had to work six days a week, which means 312 working days a year, minus the recognized holidays. When surgeon Major W. Comins visited Suriname to inspect the conditions of the indentured laborers, the Immigration Department produced figures about the number of working days and earned wages. Comins concluded from the figures that the number of working days in 1890 were as follows:

Working Days		*Official Daily Wage as counted by Comins)*	*Real Daily Wage (Counted by author)*
Male	182	fl.0. 69.6	fl 0.40
Female	120	fl.0. 59.1	fl. 0.24

Source: Comins, 1892 Appendix, p. 12.

Based on these calculations, Comins concluded that the wages were fair and that many laborers were able to save money. The reality was, however, quite different. The number of working days in his table did not reflect actual working days, but rather the number of completed tasks. If we consider that laborers had to work 312 days a year, then we see that the average daily wages were. fl. 0.40 for male and 0.24 for female. This means that the wages were much lower than the minimum wage as prescribed in the immigration convention of 1872, namely 60 cents for male and 40 cents for female. This is an example of how you can draw different conclusions on the basis of the same data, depending on perspective. It is interesting is to ask why Comins did not examine the statistic figures more carefully and critically. Might this have been a consequence of the fact that he was treated very well by the colonial authorities and the planters? Or, did his calculations result from the fact that he did not have sufficient time for more careful or incisive analysis? More extensive research is needed on this matter Comins made the important suggestion that to attract migrants and effort should be made to encourage

them to settle in Suriname following the expiration of their contract. He suggested that subsequently they should be offered a piece of land and without losing their right to a free return passage. (Comins, 1892) Further, that they could be induced to abandon their right to a free return passage by offering them a premium or bounty. This suggestion was adopted by the colonial authorities in Suriname in 1895, with the result that many immigrants settled as small farmers and ultimately abandoned their free return passage.

Control, Accommodation and Resistance

The indenture labor system was introduced to guarantee the extraction of what in the view of the planter was a satisfactory amount of work from the immigrants. Therefore penal sanctions were also introduced. This meant that breaking the labor law could be punished with fines, imprisonment or both: imprisonment would be with or without hard labor. As already mentioned, given the nature of the task system, many laborers were not able to finish their tasks within the prescribed time. In consequence, their wages were deducted, or the planters ensured that they were simply not paid: all of this, in addition to the fact they could be prosecuted for laziness or "neglect of work." The number of complaints against employees was very high and the normal rate of conviction was about 98%. At any point in time a considerable proportion of the laborers would have been behind the prison bars. On the other hand, the number of cases against employers was low, while the rate of their convictions was almost negligible. The laborers were of the perception that planters, government and judicial officials colluded with each other. They did not believe that the system aimed to protect them.

To reconstruct the laborers' side of the story, we have to look critically to the conventional sources and reinterpret them. We have to read against the grid as some scholars have argued. We have to search for the testimonies of the laborers in the existing records. We have to examine what officials have said about the laborers. For this aspect, the reports of inspections committees and the testimonies of the laborers are very important. These apart, we have to search for oral and other testimonies produced by the laborers themselves. In this respect are the letters and testimony of Bechu from Guyana.

Another important source should be the reports of the court cases against the laborers. Unfortunately, in Suriname, most of these records have disappeared. We have available to us the abstracts of court sessions of the Ommegaande Rechters (Itinerary judges) for only a few years. These were judges who visited the large plantations and held court sessions there. Overall, these documents provide some impression of the perceived value of the testimonies of different actors in the indenture system. Generally, the judges perceived that of the planters to be more reliable than that of the laborers.

Another challenge is to examine the correspondence between government officials and other official documents which were treated as confidential. One can also acquire further insight into the functioning of the indenture system from informal documents produced by public officials. A typical example of this is an informal letter written by a District Commissioner to his friend, a judge, regarding the wages of indentured laborers, their uprising in 1902 on Mariënburg estate, the largest plantation in Suriname. The manager of the plantation was killed by the laborers during the uprising, while more than 20 laborers were killed by the police. In the above mentioned letter, the District Commissioner was convinced that the wages were below the legal level. However, the system of investigation and the legal procedures did not allow the judge to convict the plantation manager, although he was convinced that the latter was wrong and the laborers were right (A. A. Breen to Amice, dd. 28 Feb. 1902, National Archives Suriname).

In the perception of the immigrants the life during indenture was a period of hard work and oppression by the employer, during which they endured much suffering. They compared indentureship with ***narakh*** – (hell) - or they used the term "***girmit kate***" – to endure hard times[22].

There was, however, always the belief that there would be light at the end of the tunnel, on the day of the expiration of their contract. On that day they expected to be free and to be provided with new opportunities. They could sign a new contract; decide to return to their homeland, or to settle in the colony. From 1895 they were able to acquire a piece of land and a premium of fl 100 ($40) for the abandonment of their right to a free return passage.

We know the success story of the Indians in all destination countries. They are proud of their achievements, history, culture and identity. Their achievements were the result of a long journey of struggle to survive in the new environments, to adapt themselves and to reconstruct their social and cultural institutions. They started off as second class people who were foreigners, and had to integrate in the new society. From the beginning, they were proud of their cultural heritage which they tried to preserve. In this regard, they were probably more conservative than the people in India: their culture was that of UP and Bihar from the period of indenture, and they wanted to keep this intact.

A critical part of their culture was their religion. That religious heritage included not only Hinduism, but also Islam. An important aspect of the religions and culture were the religious festivals such as Ramlila and Muharram or *taziya*. Muharram, originally a religious festival, became a popular cultural happening in which Muslims, Hindus and non-Indians participated. It became also a form of cultural resistance, which sometimes led to violent confrontations with the authorities. It is no surprise that the colonial authorities tried to control and suppress the festival[23].

Many immigrants who initially came for a temporary stay, postponed their return, until, ultimately, they decided not to go back. Which consequences had

departure of these people for their relatives and their country of origin? We only have some glimpses which we find in the scarcely available sources.

There are some letters which are kept in the archives, and there are others which we find among the families. To give an idea about the feelings of those who were left behind, I will quote from a few letters and folksongs.

Between 1898 and 1908 there has been correspondence between Rahman Khan and his relatives in his village. Unfortunately we have only the letters which Rahman Khan received from his relatives. These letters are very touching and emotional.

In a letter from Rahman Khan's father, dated 4 September. 1899, and written by the schoolteacher Brij Lal from the village of Biwár, we find the answer to a letter from Rahman Khan to his father. His father is optimistic and asks his son to return home and make his parents happy: God will bring us together certainly, but keep sending letters always and don't forget your parents. (…)Your knowledge and capacities will only be praised when you will come back within four years and make your parents happy by showing your face. They are just alive by their memories about you[24].

The relatives in India were very worried about the idea of Rahman Khan settling in Suriname. They suggest that he bring his second wife to India, and indicated that his first wife would accept this: "We are happy to learn about your marriage but were perturbed by the thought that you might decide to settle there. If your newlywed wife agrees, do bring her here. Your wife here is eagerly waiting for your return. When do you plan to come back? Which year? Which month? How many days are left for your return?" (S. Hira, p. 11).

Sometimes afterwards Rahman Khan received a letter mentioning that the family in India was experiencing problems with their land. There was a possibility that they could lose it because they could not pay the taxes. In the last letter dated 1 May 1908, his parents complain that they are very old and that it is very difficult to obtain food

"We are all from the opinion that instead of sending money, you have to come at least once. Everyone is waiting eagerly to meet you, but it depends on you. The expectations of the parents about their children are the highest when your mother is suffering and everyone feels the same. In the eyes of God it is a sin to let your parents suffer in distress, but if you have decided not to return, send money for your mother through Shivlal Marwari and we shall receive it". (S. Hira, p. 35-36).

After 1908 there are no more letters from the family. According to a daughter in law of Rahman Khan, he had a letter from his father, who had stated that if he (Rahman Khan) had decided not to return, he (the father) would not write him anymore. Much later, in 1980, some family members visited India, and the family was reunited.

Letters from Emigrants in the Archives

In the archives of the former colonies there are still some letters sent by relatives from India, which could not be delivered to their destination, the migrants. These are quite useful to reconstruct the feelings and perceptions of the immigrants. As mentioned above, there are also letters, petitions or other written documents from immigrants which are very useful. Very well known are the newspaper articles of the immigrant Bechu which appeared at the end of the 19th century, and were concerned with the treatment of immigrants in Guyana. Bechu wrote a petition to the West India Royal Commission (Norman Commission) which visited Guyana in 1897, and was also interviewed by the commission (see Clem Seecharan, Bechu, 1999)[25].

A special kind of sources is the correspondence between the Immigration Department s of the different colonies and their respective Emigration Agencies in Calcutta. An essential part of these letters has to do with remittances sent by the migrants to their relatives in India. Among these letters there are also reports of police officers or other government officials who were entrusted with the responsibility of searching for these family members, so that the remittances could be delivered to them. Among the related correspondences between officials, one can find sometimes very interesting information about both the migrants and their relatives. This category of sources is yet to be explored, at least in the case of Suriname as the material has only recently made accessible for the public. In Guyana I have located similar types of material. However, at present, at the National Archives of Guyana only the minutes of outgoing correspondence are available[26].

In the case of Mauritius, Marina Carter has documented letters from immigrants to colonial authorities and also letters from those who were left behind and were enquiring on the whereabouts of their relatives in Mauritius. Among these there is also a letter of a woman with a child. She wrote to her husband:

> "Respected sir, after greetings this is to say that I and your child are well and we pray for your safety. This is also to say that after your departure your father looked after us for a while but has now relinquished that responsibility and my child is starving. I feel very distressed. Let me know of your whereabouts and send me something for my day to day living expenses. Goodbye" (Marina Carter, 1996, 177).

It goes without saying that these kinds of sources should be explored systematically. In this regard I would like to suggest the setting up of collaborative research projects between different countries, some of which appear to be considerably linked by the immigration process, among them Trinidad and Tobago, Suriname, Guyana, Fiji, Mauritius and South Africa.

I wish to conclude with some focus on the Bidesia folk culture as source for the reconstruction of migration history. Within the Bidesia folk culture there are songs in which the feelings on sides of the migration trajectory are expressed. In this respect in the Bhojpuri region, people often asked why their beloved one left home to go bides. Sometimes they themselves provide the answer;

Bidesia Songs

The folklorist Ramnaresh Tripathi, on his way from Jaunpurto Priyag (Allahabad), recorded the following song from women:

Puruba se aai reliya pacchim se jahajiya
Piya ke ladi lei gai ho.
Reliya hoi gai mor sabatiya piya ke ladi lei gai ho.
(the train came from the east and the ship came from the west
And took my husband away
Railway has become my co wife who has taken my husband away
Rail is not my enemy, ship is not my enemy, money is my enemy
Which makes my husband go from country to country.
I have no hunger I have no thirst, I feel very loving towards him
When I see his face I feel very affectionate
I will make one seer of wheat last one year but I won't let my husband go away
I will keep him in front of my eyes and no let him go away[27].
(*Kahe Gaile bides, p. 22*)

Listen to another song of a despaired woman:

All my friends have become mothers,
And I remain lonely and childless
Again and again I pleaded with you not to go east.
For there live women who will win your heart.
For twelve years you haven't written a word:
How will I spend the days of Chait?
(Lal, 1983 (1), p. 115; Carter, 1996, p. 177)

Here is a song of a desperate agricultural laborer, fed up with a life of constant drudgery and degradation, in which he says that anything in the colonies would be preferable to the life in India;

Born in India, we are prepared to go to Fiji
Or, if you please, to Natal to dig in the mines.
We are prepared to suffer there,
But brothers! Don't make us agriculturalists here.
(*Brij Lal*, 1980, p. 67).

In the destination countries, the laborers sung also the same kind of songs, in which they expressed their feelings or gave their perception. In Brij Lal (1980) we find a number of such songs from Fiji, Mauritius, Guyana and Suriname. Here is an example from Mauritius:

Having heard the name of the island of Mauritius,
We arrived here to find gold, to find gold.
Instead we got beatings of bamboos,
Which peeled the skin off the back of the labourers.
We became kolhu's bullock to extract cane sugar,
Alas! We left our country to become coolies.

In the Bidesia project we collected a huge number of songs, poems and stories in which we can find the perception of the migrants. Sometimes they sing about their sorrows.

Chhor aili Hindustanwa babwa, petwa ke liye
Padli bharam mein, chhutal Patna ke saharwa
Chhut gaily ganga maiya ke ancharwa
Nahi manli egobaba bhaiya ke kahanwa
Babua petwa ke liye.
[We left Hindustan to satisfy our stomach. We were convinced by the sweet words of the *dalal*(arkatiya), and in the process were separated from Patna and the Ganga River. We did not listen to our elders, but came here because of our stomach.] (Kahegaile Bides, p. 158)[28]

There are many songs and poems in which the migrants give their view of Indian history from the period of recruitment until present. This is a story of misleading by the *arkátis*, the hardships during the sea voyage, and the girmit period. After girmit comes the period of settlement and pioneering, making progress for themselves and their children. These are the commemorative ballads in which the success story is given[29].

There are also songs, poems and stories which deal with the second migration, say, for example, from Suriname to the Netherlands. Sometimes the writers and performers criticize those left the country for free allowances from the Dutch government. The migrants from their side answer in song by blaming the government for corruption[30]. During the 1960's and 1970's it was the popular culture to broadcast Bollywood movie songs through radio stations as the so called "khásfarmáis" – (special request). With the songs the relatives or the migrant himself expressed their feelings of affection or feelings of pain as a consequence of separation from their beloved ones[31].

Within the Bidesia project we executed a small research in Suriname based on a questionnaire and we interviewed a few people about different aspects of social cultural life, their relations/perceptions with/on India etc. This had to do with identity. The outcome was that the people see themselves as Hindustani and as Surinamese citizen. Their country is Suriname, but their culture is Hindustani culture. The Indianness of the Hindustanis in Suriname is Hidustániyat, which is identification with the people and culture of India, the land from whence they

came, but more particularly the Bhojpuri/Avadhi region. Many of them admire India as the land of their ancestors, from where their culture originates. Most of them would like to visit India, but a number of them would like to go only for holidays if they would have the opportunity (Bidesia, Country report Suriname).

My provisional conclusion with respect to identity of the Indians in Suriname is that the Hindustani identity is not the same as the Indian identity. They see a difference between themselves (PIO's) and Indians or NRI's or OCIs[32]. More research has to be done in this field. Why do they make a distinction between themselves and Indians from India? I think that there is something which can be identified as "the indenture experience", with some common characteristics, regardless the inland territory one came come from, and whether or not one lives in Guyana, Suriname, Trinidad or Fiji. Is there something like a *girmitya* culture or a *girmitya* identity? If yes, what is that? My personal experience and perception, based on conversations with descendants from indentured emigrants from different countries, is that Indians from India seem to regard themselves as the pure Indians and view PIOs as having a corrupted culture, on which they frown. Further research is needed to test whether this impression is right or wrong.

The situation regarding Indians in the Netherlands, the twice migrants or belonging to the second diasporic wave, is a bit more complex. What is the country of origin for Hindustanis in the Netherlands? For many of them, there are two countries of origin. Suriname is the land in which they or their parents were born. Migrants from the first generation of Indians from that country maintain strong ties with Suriname, even if they live in better economic circumstances. Many of them would like to return to Surname during interviews they became very emotional about this matter (Video Interviews, Bidesia Project, Netherlands). For the second and third generation, Suriname might be perceived as the country of origin, but many are going to India, as the airway ticket is often cheaper than the ticket to Suriname, and they can also buy cultural products such as dresses in the ancestral homeland[33]. Many go to India to do shopping for wedding parties. Another aspect of identity of the Indian Diaspora in the Netherlands is the perception of India as the land of the original Indian culture, the land of their ancestral past. In India, they expect to find the holy places of the Hindus. More in-depth research is needed to answer questions regarding identity and the relations with the country/countries of origin.

In the age of globalization with fast and cheaper communication, it is easy to go to India and have contacts with relatives and others. Many people are combining a visit to India with their own search for roots. A related aspect of migration and Diaspora is the existence or development of transnational communities. The migrants in the Diaspora are members of their new homeland. However, at the same time they are members of a transnational community based on ethnicity, culture, language etc[34]. We see, for instance, the establishment of the Global

Organization of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO), which has branches or chapters in many countries. Currently, there is, for example, both a "GOPIO, Suriname" and a "GOPIO, Netherlands." GOPIO Netherlands has been very active during recent years and one sees, for example, more contacts between GOPIO Netherlands and India than with Suriname. To what extent will this influence the relations between the Hindustanis in the Netherlands and Suriname, their home country?

This existence of the "twice Diaspora" presents a challenge, not only for the government of India, but, first of all, those of the countries of direct origin of the PIOs: Suriname, Guyana, Trinidad, Mauritius etc. These countries are required to formulate developmental policies that incorporate the Diaspora as an integral part of their development. One is, therefore, inclined to agree with Minister BhoehendradathTewari of Trinidad and Tobago, that the migration of high skilled people ought not to be seen merely as a form of brain-drain, but also as a long term investment [35]. As reflection of some of the new thinking, the Surinamese government has announced recently that the country develop a Diaspora policy[36].

In the globalizing world in which national boundaries are fading away and in which people are continuously on the move, we are seeing the evolution of transnationalism. This is emerging not only through corporate and other enterprises that are using modern communication facilities (including outsourcing) to conduct business across borders. We are also witnessing the emerging of transnational families. At any point in time individuals belonging to or many members of such families reside in two or more countries or continents. The transnational ties of families across continents and nations have to be engaged in a positive way for the benefit of the people in the wider Diaspora and, at the same time, their respective countries of origin. In this regard, we should pay closer attention to matters such as remittances, investments and tourism. Apart from the economic aspects, however, it is also necessary to consider the philosophical and non-materialistic wellbeing of the people concerned.

Notes

1. I would like to thank my colleagues Jerry Egger and Michael Toussaint for useful suggestions for improvement of the paper. Additional thanks to Michael Toussaint for spending much of time in editing this product and for the very stimulating discussions.

2. In the framework of my paper, I will not deal with this discussion, because it is a complex issue which does not form a fundamental part of the question raised in this paper. In addition, at many levels that discussion is more an ideological and political matter, than a one of historical debate.

3. Bidesia Project: an exhibition and research initiative on the dynamics of migration, social development and cultural identity in Indians of the Bhojpuri region, following their migration to Suriname and the Netherlands. The aim was to document the common cultural heritage of these groups of migrants. (Kahe Gaile Bides, p. 13-14). As a result of the project, a permanent exhibition has been set up in the G. B. Pant Institute and Museum in Allahabad.

An exhibition was also mounted in Paramaribo during 2007-8. In addition, a meeting of artists from the three countries was held in Allahabad. Further to this, a documentary was produced. Moreover, very interesting material on the history and culture has been collected, and will constitute the basis of further research. This material consists of interviews regarding life histories, and stories, poems, dramas. It includes audio-visual material, consisting of songs, music, pictures and various other types of their documentaries. There are also three separate country reports, reflecting the related research done on India, Suriname and the Netherlands. Additionally, a resource book, under the title KaheGaile Bides, was published in 2010.

4. See for instance the correspondence of MunshiRahmankhan which are mentioned later in this paper.
5. Brij Lal mentioned already in 1983 (Lal, Brij V, 1983 {1}) songs of women in UP and Bihar, while Marina Carter (1995 - Voices from indenture), deals with these songs and letters from indentured Laborers and their relatives. See also Brij Lal, 1983 (2), p. 46 – 47.
6. I thank Badri Narayan Tiwari from G.B. Pant Inst. Allahabad and Susan Legène from Royal Institute for the Tropics in Amsterdam to give me the opportunity to participate in this project. I thank also all members of the Bidesia research team in Suriname, India and the Netherlands for the enthusiasm which they had during the execution of this project. The project inspired the Surinamese and Indian counterparts to initiate a multi annual follow up programme on Indian migration and Diaspora. In the project participated also Nivedita Sing (India), Gajadin (Netherlands), Narinder Mohkamsing, and SahinshaRamdas (Suriname).
7. In Guyana there have been serious charges regarding malpractices in the indenture system, and after a Commission of Enquiry has been sent to Guyana, a new Immigration law has been introduced in 1873, which was supposed to be a model for other colonies in the Caribbean, even for Suriname. (See for instance K. Laurence, 1971, p. 53 and K. Laurence, 1994, chapter one).
8. During the negotiations the British were ready to give permission to the Dutch government on the condition that indentured migration would be a responsibility of the government. The Dutch government promoted at that time a liberal policy of non-interference in the economy, and said that immigration should be a private enterprise. The negotiations ended in 1867 without positive results for the Dutch. (National Archives Netherlands, Foreign Affairs, Legation Great Britain, Inv. Nr. 197). In 1869 the Colonial Legislative Body adopted a law under pressure of the planters and the colonial Government in Suriname sent a request to the Dutch government to introduce Indian indentured Laborers, otherwise the economy would collapse. (See KoloniaalVerslag 1868, Appendix 22, p. 5.). The immigration treaty was concluded in 1870 and ratified in 1872.
9. Engerman refers to Herman Merivale, Lectures on Colonization and Colonies, London, 1861.
10. This is the main reason why the Indian indentured immigrants arrived in a hostile environment. The former slaves regarded them as competitors, whose fault it was that the wages were reduced.
11. In the Bollywood movie Lagaan one can get an impression about the misuse of lagan by colonial officials.
12. Totaram Sanadhya went to Fiji where he worked as indentured laborer, and became a leader of the Indian community. He spent 21 years in Fiji and returned to India in 1914. In India,

he became a member of an ashram of Mahatma Gandhi and he was active in the movement for the abolition for indentured labor system. He worked closely with Banarsidas Chaturvedi, a school teacher and publisher of his own newspaper and journal. According to John Kelly, the publication "Fijidwip Men Mere ikkis Varsh - My Twenty-One years in the Fiji Island", was written by Chaturvedi, as narrated to him by Totaram Sanadhya. in 1914. (John Kelly, Introduction in the 1991 English translation of the Book, Totaram Sanadhya, 2003, p. 1-7). According to Kelly, this book was a sensation and was especially written for the Indian intellectuals in order to convince them about the need for abolition of the coolie system or indentured labor system (John Kelly, 2003).

13. From the Indian perspective the so called Mutiny of 1857, is called Revolution of 1857 or the First Independence War of India, while in British colonial history it was called Mutiny. On the occasion of the commemoration of 150th anniversary of this event, a lot of research projects and publications about different aspects of the war were generated.
14. Grierson was a colonial official and scholar in India who was appointed by the Government of Bengal in 1882 to enquiry on the recruitment system "in which aspects the system was defective and to advise how the defects could be remedied"He submitted his report&diary in February 1883. Grierson refers frequently to a similar report submitted by Major Pitcher in 1882 on the recruitment system in the United Provinces. Pitcher's report seems to be very important, but surprisingly it is not very known among historians or other scholars. Main reason for this is probably that it has not been catalogued separately in the archives in India or in Great Britain. Even in India Office Records of the British Library, the National Archives of India in New Delhi and in the state archives of Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar I did not find it in the respective inventories. Hughes Tinker (1974) has used the report and mentioned that is with the Emigration Proceedings of 1883. With the help of Leela Gajadhur from Kolkata, who has published extensively is publishing emigration records and sources, I have seen correspondence in which the Pitcher's report has been submitted to government authorities in India in an amount of 40 copies, but the report itself is missing in the specific file. At the moment of writing this article (August 2011), there are two initiatives for publication the report & diary of Major Pitcher on Emigration from the United Provinces. The first initiative is from the well-known Guyanese scholar Basdeo Mangru, who announced in the publication of this report with an extensive introduction under the title Kanpur to Calcutta (Mangru, 2010). According to a private conversation with Basdeo Mangru in July 2011, the manuscript is in the stage of screening by the editor op the publisher, and that the book will be published in 2011. The second initiative is from Leela Gajadhur Sarup from Kolkata, who has published already the Annual Reports from the Port of Calcutta to Foreign Countries, and is now engaged in the publication of a series on the Emigration Proceedings. Within this series she is planning to publish both reports cum diaries, i.e. the Pitcher report and the Grierson Report in one volume. According to her this volume of the Emigration Proceedings will be ready in September/October 2011. The Pitcher report she is planning to publish has been found in the national Library in Kolkata.
15. Grierson did the recommendation that the estate managers should be compelled to send every year a postcard with information about the immigrant to his relatives in India. (Grierson, 1883, corr. Indian gov. – see copy of Grierson Report in Patna Archives) The Indian government welcomed this idea, but I don't know whether it had been implemented.
16. Rahman Khan emigrated in 1898 to Suriname and worked as indentured Laborer on theplantation Rust en Werk. After expiration of his contract he settled in Suriname as a farmer, but soon he got a job as overseer on the plantation where he formerly had been

employed as indentured Laborer. Rahman Khan was educated in Hindi and Urdu. He knew much about Hinduism and according to oral sources, he has trained several pundits. He could read Hindi holy scripts and was very popular among Hindus and Muslims. He has written a number of poems and stories and is regarded as the founding father of Sarnami literature in Suriname. (Sarnami is the language spoken by the indentured Laborers and their descendants, and is a mixture of languages from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, such as Bhojpuri, Avadhi and Braj. Two booklets of him have been published in India in the 1950's. In 1943 he wrote his memoires or life history under the title Jivan Prakash, which has been published in 2003 in Dutch under the title Dagboek van Munshi Rahman Khan – Diary of MRK and in 2005 in English under the title Autobiography of Munshi Rahamn Khan. He used to call himself Hindoestaanseliterator (Hindustani literary man). He died in 1972. His descendants are living in Suriname and the Netherlands, and probably I India. During the period 1933 – 1943 he played an important role in a dark episode in the history of Hindustanis in Suriname, during which there were serious tensions between Hindus and Muslims.

17. Ramlila is a popular drama about the story of Lord Rama and his comrades. It Is very popular in India and among the Indian Diaspora, including in Suriname. It is a dramatic folk re-enactment of the life of Ram ending up in ten day battle between Ram and Ravan. It is based on the Ramayana of Tulsidas (Ramcharitmanas). UNESCO has proclaimed the tradition of Ramlila a "Masterpiece of the Oral Tradition and Intangible Heritage of Humanity in 2005." (Source: Wikipedia, accessed on 24 August 2011).
18. Rahman Khan is apparently ashamed of his behaviour that he left his wife and child, his parents, and other relatives, without informing them. See the further correspondence coming from his relatives.
19. See also the letters to Rahman Khan written to him during the period 1898–1908.
20. This happened to Rahman Khan. Single adults had to share their house/room with another single person. Rahman Khan was together with other four men and one woman allotted to plantation Rust &Werk, and the Hindu women was asked who her husband was. She nominated Rahman Khan as her husband. Rahman Khan did not want her but he was convinced by his friend to accept that. At the end he put up with the situation. If he had known what would happen with him, he would brought a beautiful brahmin or kshatri girl from Kanpur, because there would have been many f hem who wished to become Muslim and stay with him. (Rahman Khan, 2005, p. 91-92). It is not clear why he did not mention the possibility to bring a Muslim girl? Probably they were not available.
21. See Immigration Reports in the annual Colonial Reports, different volumes since 1896.
22. Girmit comes from agreement. Girmit kate means literally to serve your contract. Girmitkate has become synonym for endure hard times.
23. The most known confrontation is the Hosay Massacre of 1884 in Trinidad. We see that also in Suriname there was violent incidents during taziya festivals. One of the resulted also in a confrontation with the police and the military forces, namely on plantation Zoelen in 1891.
24. The original text in bhojpuri /Hindi gives a better impression of the feelings of the parents:" *Khuda jarur miláwenge, lekin khat hamesa bhejo aur apne má – báp ki yád ná bhulo"* … *"Tumhári ustádi ki tabhi tárif jab cár varsh andar á kar ke apne má-báp ko surat dekha kar ke khush karo. Tumhárei yád hi mein jindá hai."* = .(source: correspondence of MRK, copies received from Albert Rahman, transcribed from the original by pt. Patandin, 2006).

25. Bechu was a self-educated person who lived in Calcutta before he was recruited as indentured Laborer. According to him he was recruited for Trinidad, but because there was no ship for Trinidad available he had been sent to Guyana, where he arrived in 1894. Within a few years he became the "champion of the sugar plantation workers" (Clem Seecharan, Bechu, p. 13).
26. The Archives in Guyana have been in a very bad situation in the past, just as the case has been in Suriname. Archival material has been kept at different places in a chaotic situation, and under bad conditions. As a consequence much material has been lost or has been damaged in such a way that it has been destroyed from time to time, at least in Suriname. In Guyana, we had the situation that no all the material regarding indentured Labor was kept in the National Archives building. Since a few years, the National Archives of Guyana, named Walter Rodney Archives, has been accommodated in a new building and the archives are better organized than a few decades ago. I have been told that material which was scattered at several places, are being located organized and moved to the new archives building. Hopefully, more and more material will be located, identified and transferred to the National Archives. Fact is that not all material is available in the archives.
27. The same song has been recorded by Brij Lal in 1979 (Lal, 1980, p. 67):

    From the east came the rail, from the west came the ship,
    And took my beloved one away.
    The rail has become my sawat
    Which took my beloved one away.
    The rail is not my enemy, nor the ship,
    O! It is money which is the real enemy.
    It takes my beloved one from place to place.

28. See the full text of this song of Amarsing Raman, named PravásiViraha on p. 159 of Kahe Gaile Bides. In this song he says also that he has left his wife with a baby.
29. This Indocentric narrative of Suriname's history shows resemblance with the Indocentric narrative of Trinidad's history as described by Bridget Brereton (Brereton, 2007 and Brereton, 2011). There is however an important difference: in the Suriname's equivalent of the story the narrative gives a positive and optimistic picture of the immigrants and their descendants have achieved after the end of their indenture. In Suriname, the Hindustanis have played an important role in the political arena and have been in government several times. In contradiction with Guyana and Trinidad, Surname has a proportional electoral system and coalition governments. There has been a system of sharing of power between representatives of ethno-cultural groups. This system is known as consensus democracy. For a theoretical background of this system, see ArendLijphart, 1999.
30. The song in which the migrants were accused of abandoning their country was sung in Sranan (the lingua franca of Suriname) and not in the Sarnami (the language of the Hindustanis): "If WeeWee (WW) no ben de – If there was no unemployment benefits in the Netherlands). The answer came from a singer who lived in the Netherlands: "if corruptie no ben de, aaibradasa- e de mi ben gwe" – If there was no corruption, o brother why should I leave. (Bidesia collection, Suriname).
31. We have made a collection of these songs which we hope to publish in the future. An example is the famous Mohamed Rafi song "Vatan se pardes jaane waale, teri hifazat khuda karega –O you, who are leaving your country, going overseas, God will take care of you". A sentimental song was the request on behalf of children when their father was leaving

them going to the Netherlands: Saat samundar paar ke, guriyon ki bazaar se, papa jaldi a jana, guriya cahe la na la, Papa jaldi a jana – O papa who is staying across the seven seas (the ocean) and where there are a lot of dolls, please come back as soon as possible. Whether you bring dolls or not, papa come back soon".

32. PIO: person of Indian Origin; NRI: Non-resident Indian; OCI: Oversees citizen of India.
33. Indian dresses from are sold in the Netherlands and Suriname for high prices, reason why people from the Netherlands by a ticket to Delhi, stay there a week in a cheap hotel in carol Bagh, and do their shopping.
34. For an introduction on Diaspora and transnationalism regarding Surinamese in the Netherlandssee RubenGowricharn, 2001 and Ruben Gowricharn, 2006.
35. Speech of Honorable Minister Tewari at the opening session of the Indian Diaspora conference, 1 June 2011, St. Augustine.
36. Announcement of the Minister of Foreign affairs during weekly meeting with the press.

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