

Girmityas' Portrayal in Ashwin Desai's Inside Indian Indenture: An Apprehensive Study

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Abstract

Indentured system was highly tormented form of slavery began when the Britishers faced the lack of labourers at the sugar, cotton and tea plantation due to the end of African slavery . In this system millions of Indians were contracted to work in the 19 British colonies included Fiji, Trinidad, Guyana, South Africa on low wages. Girmityas refers to those bonded Indian slaves who agreed to migrate to British colonies in order to escape from the poverty and famine of British India with dream of getting a life of roses without having any idea of difficulties that they were going to face .Some were also defrauded into Migration without any complete knowledge. They were recruited on different plantations by signing a contract of four to five years with the condition of providing the return amenities at the end of their contract however only seldom time it happened. Many died during the journey that took 10 to 20 weeks and many tried to return to their homeland however , failed. In Literature the representation of these tormented indentured labourers were first began in Caribbean literature by ARF. Webber, V.S Naipaul, Ashwin Desai etc. In Ashwin Desai's Inside Indian Indenture we get the realistic and authentic portrayal of the biography of indentured labourers who were ignored by the history. This book seeks to give voice to those unvoiced people whose stories still remained unknown to the masses . This book is a journey through all those silenced, ignored indentured labourers who were tormented by the hardships showered on them by the proprietors. This research paper purports to find out the different aspects of indentured labourers life experiences by thoroughly analysing Desai's Inside Indian Indenture.

Keywords: indenture, Natal, miserable, interpreters, women, torments, vibrant culture , proprietors, plantations, slavery, Indians, British colonies, embarkation, surgeons

Introduction

South African city Durban, Kwazulu-Natal is considered to be the little India holding millions of Indian demographic . South Africa is said to have half of the Indian diaspora that adds diversity to its vibrant culture. Durban, is famous for its ethnic combination of Indian and African culture, Indian festivals of Diwali, Holi, Eid are celebrated here with great enthusiasm. Many beautiful Indian temples are also situated in Durban and having seen that it become difficult to believe that this is somewhere outside India. Shree Radha Radhanath temple, Shree Mariammen temple, Shree Ambalavenaar Alayam are some of the Hindu temples in Durban. However, after witnessing such vibrant Indian culture in South Africa it makes us ponder about the origins of Indians in South Africa which lies in the Indentured system attributed to be the root of this phenomenal Indian culture residing in South Africa. Over 152,184 Indians migrated to South Africa as indentured labourers to work on sugar plantations most importantly to Natal between 1860 to 1909. In present time , around 1 million Indians lives in South Africa out of this 80% Indian community

resides in kwazulu- Natal which should be attributed to the Indian indentured . It is worthy to notice that although the indentured system was highly tormented, miserable for Indian immigrants however, some adjusted themselves there and remained to live in their newer abhor. Embarkation used to took 10 to 20 weeks from India to colonies and one of the most prominent factors of these embarkation is both higher and lower Indians had to migrate with each other. They shared same broad experiences and same torments , that ostensibly perish the differences lies between them. Thus , during the embarkation, new relations were being formed without any differences that takes the form of jhajibhais . Jhajibhais would treat each other like blood kins without any obligations and discrimination. However, Mehta examined that women were not the part of jhajibhais, it was a patriarchal system that being formed to ignore the dislocation, displacement, powerlessness of the male immigrants. Initially, indentured system seemed to be the ray of hope for the Indians caught up in the evils of Poverty, famine, debts. In order to escape all these evils Indians preferred to indulged into this system with the hope of having an impeccable life however, most of them died during the journeys, some who reached there couldn't bear the tortures and after the accomplishment of their contract returned. Here it is noteworthy, that most of the Indians who migrated to south Africa used to think of it as temporary one, however they got involved with other women and began their new families there. Here, in india there families perished while waiting for their return as we can see through the story of Maistry. Indians who didn't repatriate to their homeland turned themselves into a general labour force in Natal particularly farmers, railway workers, interpreters. After indentured, Indian passengers also migrated to south Africa and mostly of them were Hindus, Muslims. This fact can't be ignored that during the indentured Indians had to live in miserable conditions and the same remained to continue for those who decided to reside there even after indentured. There were discriminated against by the indigenous people of south Africa. There were not allowed to enter in clubs, there were given low education as compared to south Africans. Indians were also not permitted to walk on the sidewalk in Transvaal. Durban riots of 1949 leaded by Zulus was an anti- Indian riots that served as an example of miserable conditions of Indian diaspora. It was against the Indian people , 142 Indians died, 1087 got injured. Descendants of Indian indentured were described as ' coloured' in south Africa. It was in 1961indians were identified as permanent demographic of south Africa however, we can't remain oblivious of the fact that Indians lived a dejected lives in south Africa.Ashwin Desai's Inside Indian Indenture is a monumental work which gives insight into depressed history of indians in south Africa. It helps us to understand the lives of indentured labourers who got silenced by the system. This books is the storehouse of multiple journeys, of multiple begginings and multiple endings. This research paper aims to study the dejected history of indentured system , to give voice to all those people who got perished by the hideous system of indentured. How they were doubly marginalised by the system and their interpreters. Indentured was the only ray of Optimism for the dejected Indians that also turned out to be the oppressive one. How there families were vanished while waiting for their return , there parents died and most importantly they themselves didn't remain the same . What were the conditions of female migrants who thought of this system to be their opportunity of escaping the Indian patriarchy however they were disillusioned. All these questions are to be answered by throughly analysing the real life stories of Indian indentured as portrayed in desai's Inside Indian Indenture.

Myth of Return

Through the first story of Maistry, quoted under First Chapter named " Shiva's Dance" Desai demonstrated the fact in front of us that the account of Indentured Labourers can never be accomplished

without including the experiences of the wives, family members, who were left behind by the migrants. How the life of these people changed when their husband, brother, fathers abandoned them and migrated to British Natal with the fantasy of a dream like life however they forgot those people who kept waiting for their return. These migrants ended up with having another families in their newer abode without a slight idea of the condition of their awaited wives. Maistry was a Telugu dhobi whose story was interviewed by Hilda Kuper in 1950s. He born in 1870 in Cuddupah in Andhra. He had five Siblings, among them he was the 2nd youngest. When his father died he was anticipated to fulfill the requirements of his family. So, he decided to migrate to Natal so that he could reach to the expectation of his family. Along with Maistry eight young waitresses, three cooks. Also migrated to Durban. Upon arriving at Durban Maistry got the job of dish washer in a hotel. He worked for at least five years there and during this time period he got married to another woman. In 1916 he joined the first world war as a stretcher bearer's job and did his job diligently. When the war ended he got recruited at Addington Hospital as a dhobi without having any idea of his wife's misery of waiting for his return. Our heart went out when we heard the heart rending cry of his wife for his indentured husband's arrival.

**All my Friends became mother's
And I remain lonely and childless
Again and again I pleaded with you not to go
For their live woman who will win your heart
For twelve years you haven't written a word
How shall I spend the days of Chait?**

How these left behind women spent the days of separation from their indentured husband who got up ended with another woman and another families. Without including these miserable waiting wives we can't accomplish the account of indentured labourers' life experiences. In 1947, after spending 40 years in South Africa, Maistry made the decision of return to his homeland however upon his arrival all of his dreams of meeting to his awaited wife, members were shattered into pieces. Everything was changed completely, his awaited wife died without seeing him, his infant daughter who he left behind became adult but having remembered him slightly. His villagers were departed. Through this story we got to know that who once migrated is not invariably going to return and the wretchedness of their families perpetuated.

Infidelity, criminality, distrust

Developing suspicion regarding your husband, wife's conduct due to the lack of accommodation is a dark aspect of indentured labourers. When these families doesn't get their proper accommodation and being compelled to live in a congested place with bachelors or spinsters it leads towards the suspicion, infidelity or even criminality also. Violence become the part of their life especially on the women's part. In both conditions she had to suffer. As we see in The story "Inside the hidden abode" Wootme got murdered by her husband just because of his baseless doubt on her character. He smashed her head with an axe and left her dithering in pain. Wootme and her husband Mulwa had to live with two unmarried men named Sahebdeen and Murgasen. Both of them asked Mulwa that if his wife works for them they will provide her clothing and rations also. Eventually Mulwa's spiteful feelings got congealed that turned him into a murderer of his own wife. It was Townsend who first found Wootme lying in the pool of blood with her veins coming out of her head. When Sirdar Baboo went out to find Mulwa, he got him in the cane field

and asked him about his wife's murdered. Without any delay mulwa accepted his crime of Killing Wootme . When he tried to tie him up in the meantime of calling the police Mulwa said " **you need not to tie me up, I will follow you**". From his statement in the court we got to know that This shows that how deeply his distrust has eaten him and made him devoid of any feelings of guilt, sadness etc. He testified in front of the magistrate:

I and the woman lay down. She said " go to work now" I did not go. Then I killed the woman . That's all. We loved with Sahebdeen and murgasen who said if the woman would cook for them they will give them clothing and gave us rations. The woman cooked food and took it to the field for them. She did not bring food for me. I wen to Townsend to give us house. He did not give us a house. I went to Sirdar he did not give us house. I killed her because she went with other men and I said I am not sufficient for her.

We researched and wrote about the Economic or the torments that laid down them by the proprietors however we never discussed these condition inside these indentured labourer house that got into their veins and compelled them to become the murders of each other's trust or even their life also. From wootme and mulwa 's story it got us realized that the lack of accommodation can be resulted into turning someone a murderer of his own wife . How tormented they were inside and outside the house especially the women who had to suffer the distrust, the blame of infidelity laid on them by their won husband's. In a small hut when both sexes has to love with unmarried women or unmarried man there arises a sexual imbalance , become ardous to survive with these sexual tension especially for the women. When the men being suspected of his wife to be unfaithful to him they went into violence by perpetuating their traditional patriarchal role that women has to bear. The jury that gave the verdict of Mulwa being guilty of the crime totally condemned this system by which both sexes mingled together with bachelor's or spinsters living in same hit and beseeched the proprietors to provide the sufficient accommodation for these employed indentured Indians.

Women, The Subalterns who can't speak

Muniyammah , passenger number 122 embarked on a journey to Natal on 1 October, 1882 along with 342 passenger got disappeared during the journey. Her story give the view that how the journeys of indentured women was full of hardships and how much bias, discrimination they have to endure just because of their gender. So many restrictions inflicted upon them for being woman. Journeys were ardous for these single woman especially those like Muniyammah who doesn't confirm the gender normative practices. Captain Charles reeve stated that Muniyammah got remonstrated by her husband for being talked to another sailors and captain. For this fact he chained her in order to control her so- called loose conduct. The night being chained by the captain , Muniyammah requested to go the closet and after being unchained she and her husband went on the deck. Suddenly they heard the sound of splashing into the water and it got clear that muniyammah commented suicide. They also got to know from the investigation that before her death she changed her new clothes with nearly slept woman's old clothes that congealed the fact that she made her mind of committing suicide previously. How she got silenced by the perpetuating patriarchy through the bias investigations. Just because she had this amiable nature and the habit of talking to other men she got vanished. Here the question strikes our mind that why these single women Migrated? Sometimes these women were fraudulently migrated to indenture system for being tempted to get better life however got caged in the chains of prostitution. Women were also blamed of being gold diggers, for being married just to get financial support. In the Feminist reading of Kaala Pani , Brinda Mehta states that these journeys of

migrating were too arduous for widows and adolescent girls. When they migrated from tradition gendered Indian societies to a newer abhor they just transformed their place not their conditions, they remained to continue. They had to suffer these gender biasness even in their journeys by the patriarchy. Kaala Pani or indenture system filled them with hope of transcending their marginalised, to get a new identity irrespective of gender however ended them without any transformation in their conditions. They marginalised continued. In the 19th century Hindu families women's role was just confined to their homes, and any woman who tended to violate these rules were outcasts. She said woman like Muniyammah took the opportunity of getting a new identity given by the indenture system, but that is not the romanticized view, it was all same and disillusioned as families got expanded and congealed in Natal so as the patriarchy and their dreams of ending their marginalised got shattered.

Awful embarkation:

H. Hitchcock was, a surgeon superintendent who embarked on The Umvoti from Madras on 26 October, 1882 and arrived to Natal on 1 Dec, 1882. His diary divulged in front of us all the Abominable conditions in which the indentured had to embarked. We get to know the issues pertaining the quantity of food or sometimes the inedible food being served to them, ignorance of the captain, invective used by the whites or the boatman, health issues and diseases they had to suffer with. He has explained in a detail all the problems of the indentured on the ship. He wrote that due to the stormy wind or bad weather the passengers got sea-sick. The problems related to weather were ubiquitous on the voyage. Mumps were normal, most of the people were suffering from diarrhea. Latchmanam, was the indentured passenger who got sea sick and in attempt to vomit he tried to throw himself into the ocean and after that captain handcuffed him and kept him sitting on the poop for few hours. This reveals that how awful were the punishments laid down by the captain on the indentured.

Then he wrote about the day when a woman was compelled by the captain to sift the rice and free it from the gravel by sitting in the outside area of the ship where the wind is stormy and it was also the bath area for fellow passengers (men). Hitchcock wrote he asked the captain that it's not a suitable place to clean the rice as she will have to face problems due to the stormy wind however captain took no notice of it and refused to agree. After that when the meal got prepared everyone complained of the rice full of gravels and sand. Captain said the woman has to repeat sifting until he asked to stop. How torturous and ignorant was the captain's attitude towards the woman got exposed from this anecdote.

Karruppai was a pregnant lady and was in labour pain. She got operated however she gave birth to a stillborn child and was thrown from the ship. One day when the compounder was serving the water, the boatman asked him to serve the rice however he said when the water will be served he would do that. The boatman started abusing him, using invective against him. Later on the case was taken to the captain, captain warned the boatman for their behaviour however no action was taken by him.

So, Hitchcock through his diary, demonstrated the awful embarkation in which the indentured were indulged. How they had to suffer the torments laid down by the captain on them. Travelling conditions of the voyages were afflictive. Journeys were too long with the risk of diseases that can broke out, the adjustments with the habits of fellows made it arduous for the indentured. Normally it took 40 days to reach to Natal, and to travel incessantly for 40 days with the bad quality food, abusive fellows makes us realized the torments of the indentured.

Dr. Johnson's courageous account revealed the real faces of the surgeons, captains, Appointed on the ships for the sake of indentured's welfare from which they were fully neglected. According to the rules

surgeons had to examine the passengers on daily basis, kept an eye on their habits of cleanliness and then he had to make a report that will be approved by the captain's log and will be given to the practitioner at the end of the voyage. But doctors and captains were often ignorant of their duties. Sometimes they even misbehaved, assaulted the indentured. He said because of the ships irregular timing most of the time government Appointed the lower rank doctors for the labourers who didn't pay any attention to the coolies. From Dr. Johnson's account we acquainted with people like Dr Bowrie who was indifferent and neglectful of his duties. He never examined the coolies and never pay attention to their sickness. Compounder Pedroza found 4 chicken pox cases however Dr. Bowrie asked the coolies to do whatever they want to and remained oblivious of the danger of the diseases. A woman got fever on the ship and instead of examining her he kept on sleeping and also the ward boy kept asleeping.

Through Johnson's valiant account of the realities of the ignorant, disdemeanor, abusive doctors, captains we can ponder of the difficulties the coolies had to dealt with during the embarkation.

The abuse of woman was a common recurring problem on the voyage. Married or unmarried woman travelled in the constant fear of sexual abuse by the fellow passengers and crew. Some of This we got to know from the conversation of Roland Mitchell, the immigration agent at Calcutta and Indian immigration trust board in Natal. He talked about the woman who got suffered with venereal diseases because of sexual abuses by the whites however board said it was because of the ignorant examination prior to the embarkation. Mitchell said that the recruitment of lascars were prohibited so it was impossible to be raped by the Indians. Most of the women were found with white's seamen. However Mitchell's claimed didn't go under scrutiny they got vanished by the European predators. From the Statement of a Sirdar on the Pangola this made clear to us that how the fellow passengers and crew demanded for the woman to fulfill their immoral purposes. He explained an incident in which he got the bribe of 2 rupees to bring a woman to the man who beckoned at him. At that time he did not realized why he was being given 2 rupees by that man however after got slapped by him he got to know his immoral purpose.

Dr. George Peterson allegedly raped several women on the Umvoti during the embarkation. Manikkam, passenger no. 53 testified that she got raped by Peterson at the hospital. She said **“ I screamed, he was on top of me and having connection with me. Baboo Naidoo saved me but the defendant raped me second time in the quartantine ”**

Women also had to face torturous punishments by the officers for the slight mistakes. They got beaten up by them for refusing to do anything. They had to live on the margins even on their journey of new life. There Tragedy never got ended. W.J Jackson, surgeon on the Congella was such a brutal and vicious person who felt pleasure in giving pain to others. He was notorious for his unusual punishments. He gave Chinnammah passenger no. 243 six strokes of cane for refusing to take bath. The officials attributed this refusal to her unhygienic attitude however, from the investigation it got cleared that because of the lack of bathing facilities she refused to bath in public. Ramlinam passenger no. 315 wet her bed and for that Jackson painted her face white and marched her in the vessel to set an example.

The 'Duped':

It became transparent from the study some of the Indians by their own will to escape poverty, famine, hardships entered into the system of indentured however, some were given the false representations of indentured and were defrauded into the system. That was a common recurring phenomenon that many Indians were living their lives happily in their homeland were deceived by the recruiters through their fallacious promises of improving their conditions.

The flabbergasted story of Govindsamy Suppan exposed the betrayal of the recruiters in the colonial india before us. Govindsamy suppan arrived in Natal in Nov, 1884 and he was Appointed on the Muckle Neuk Estate in La Lucia. After being assigned he then filed the complaint to the protector that how he was leading a good life in Natal while drawing plans for the railways in Madras and simlalteneausly he was also pursuing his matriculation examination. The recruiter told him that he can continue this in Natal on higher wages however it left him dumbfounded when he got this work of loading bricks, rocks on lower wages. He said he would prefer to die rather than continue to do this work. He pleaded to the protector: “ by doing this base work, I was reduced much and my senses become much confused. If I stay few months in this place, my body will become prey to this ground. It will better I die than loading rocks, stones, and doing menial works. I pray God honour will be kind enough to send me anywhere as schoolmaster”

Govindsamy got paralyzed by the extreme labour work and after that he got deported to India. From Govindsamy’s beseeching statement to the protector the betrayal of the recruiters got revealed . How they used to do fraud with people by giving them the false ray of hopes for getting a better life there suppan ‘ story was not the one however , there are several stories of fraud migration and jawak sing, jaimangar , Puran sukke ‘s story is also alike. Three of them remonstrated to the protector that they are Brahman and they never worked as labourers and never will. The recruiters forged their eateries as lower caste in which sing was listed as Thakur and rabilal and sukke were listed as Thapar. Initially, the protector paid no attention to their complaints however, after their constant protest they returned to their country back.

While examining these stories of deception , we shouldn’t ignore Marina Carter’s point of view that these cases of betrayal were too common in those early years as people didn’t have sufficient knowledge of the system of indentured that’s why they got into those false representation of the indentured however he also said that many of the migrations were due to the social and economic hardships of the Indians that were also intentionally produced by the British governments by laying down on them the arduous system of taxation, zamindari that compelled the Indians to go for the migration. Initially, the Indians were not much burdened by the land and revenue system however , british then reorganized it in significant ways and most importantly in selfish ways that turned the situations of Indian peasants. The landlord class was introduced through the system of zamindari whose task was to collect the revenues from the working class. These landlords intensified the exploitation, torture of the working class. Economic conditions and emigration is an interlinked phenomenon. In their dire need of economic betterment Indians indulged into the migration. This became clear through le febor, surgeon on Pongola’s statement regarding the link between economy and migration” **the reason that shipments are better in numbers Is an account of severity of food. I asked several what they wanted to go to Natal for. They put their hands on their stomach”**

Nature was also harsh on the Indians at that time. Natural disasters, famines were destructive. Nine famines were recorded in madars presidency between 1850 to 1900. During those intruding famines the taxation system was just giving hipe to the problems of Indians. Lieutenant general Lytton stricted the land revenue system and one of his officers called this policy as Suicidal. In those extremely difficult times when Indian were attacked by both nature and politics , they looked for an alternative employment and indenture system seemed to them the ray of hope. There life became a long term struggle by staying in Poverty stricken villages , jobs were hard to find. In that time of darkness, indenture seemed to them the only light. They though of it as an escape from all the difficulties of Poverty, famine, politics and thought to be a short term absence however, it became the permanent departure from their homeland.

Remonstrations of the Indian Returnees and the term Kaala Pani : This is not a hidden phenomenon that Indians were not being well treated on the plantations by their lords however, it just got transparent through the complaints made by the returned Indians. Through their complaints pertaining the abusive, torturous demeanor of their Masters towards them got more translucency. Their complaints are the authentic account of their own indentured experiences. The cases revealed that how Sometimes they got beaten up to death for skipping the work due to their bad health, sometimes had to bear those invectives of their masters', they also claimed of getting lower wages than promised to them, extending working hours from nine to more, how tormenting the punishments of the Masters too got divulged through these complaints.

**“ Girmitya, my maker
Your journey break my heart”**

The Red Hiding Hood set to sail back to India on 12 Feb, 1871 with 387 indentured who completed their 10 years in Natal and now returning to their homeland. However, the ship was not full with enthusiastic Indians excited of their return however, it was loaded with enraged Indian Victims of the torments laid down them by their Masters. This we got to know by J.W mathews elaboration regarding the passengers on the Red Riding Hood. He explained how heart-breaking it was to see the entitled free passengers whose physical conditions were louding about the torments they had to suffer with. He said they were shipmating with lames, blinds, paralytic, epileptic, lepers without toes, without fingers. The protector at Madras told the chief secretary to Government that the returning Indians are full of complaints regarding how they had been treated on the plantations by their masters. From being beaten up to getting low wages, getting inedible food all these tortures they had to bear there. Balkistana Doorasamy from chittor passenger no. 336 testified on 1871 that his recruiters Mr Collins as well as Dr Holland and Edward tatham promised him that on their return to India after the accomplishment of their contract they would receive 10euros and everyone on the plantation confirmed that they had been promised 10 euros. He explained that how awful were the conditions on the plantations. If a coolie did not work for one day they would reduced 2 days pay and also tied them and used to beat them with a sjambok that they used to carry in their pockets. In addition to this, they also sprinkle salt on their wounded backs. Moonesawmy chinyamma (841) of Hydrabad explained his indentured experiences as the most hideous one. He called his recruiters Lister as very bad man he said If the cattle wandered into the coffee plantations lister would beat him with sjambok and then used to pour salt water on his wounds. Veeran (280) returned from Natal also had a dejected experience of indentured. He worked for Mr. Greig as a field worker and cook. He remonstrated that how when sometime he could not light the fire Mr Greig would beat him with an iron and also cut his forehead off. After those torments when it became intolerable he ran off into the bushes. Then he returned and worked for almost three months but didn't get his pay. He was also promised of getting 10 euros which was also a false one.

These cases of abuses, torments were not just limited to the Indian returnees however, there were cases which got registered in the meantime of the contract. Such as one is the case of Sirdar Baloomookund's assault of Nabbe Saib on 1866 described by Dheen Mahomed. Saib was being tortured till his last breath. Sirdar tied his hands and then beaten him with sajambook. Blood was dripping from his back. Due to the pain deceased cried out loud Amon, amon which refers to mother. However, no sympathy was being paid to him by Sirdar he then tied him to his own hut till his death. Dr mathews told the court that saib was suffering from the heart condition and was incapable of any hard work. Sirdar was well aware of the fact still he used to allot him the work that requires hard labour. They took away saib 's body before any post

mortem and in the lack of proper investigation the court gave the verdict that saib died due to his heart ailment.

Our heart throbbed on hearing all the anguish, misery afflicted on the indentured labourers by their merciless Masters. They lived in those monstrous, callous conditions due to their own circumstances that were intentionally roped by the British governments as we discussed above. It is through these complaints and cases that we became aware of the fact that where, indentured was considered to be the bounce of opportunity for the Indians on the other side it was just a Demonic system in which they were being pressurized to enter. The term Kaala Pani got rationalized through these heart-breaking accounts of life experiences. As we all know that sea was considered to be the Kaala Pani in ancient Indian and to cross it means to impure your soul. People also had this idea in their mind that beyond Kaala Pani, Hindus have to eat beef, Muslims have to eat pork and in Kaala Pani they will be converted into Christians and this imaginative idea got a congealed form after reading all these miserable life accounts of indentured labourers. However, after the continuous complaints of the Indians at last the Indian indentured refused any further migration without any proper investigation by the government. In order to investigate the remonstrations Coolie Commissions was being formed in 1872. It was also another illusionary committee formed by the Britishers which was highly biased. It is revealed from the fact that it's 30 members were employers, 3 were officials and 3 were Indians. Lister was identified as one of the main culprit by the indentured but he gave his statement in his defence as he said Balkistana used to cause every mistake. He was the one who could speak English and he also stated that he could hire kaffirs for 11 shillings which was much lower than the colliers' payment. He said Balkistana used to remain absent from work on daily basis and it is stated in the law that absent coolie must be presented at the court however, he never did that.

Lister's defence statement was heard by the commission and no action taken by them against the accused employers. It revealed partiality of the commission who were just formed to quench the demand of Indian government ostensibly.

The 'interpreters'

coolies were insufficient of making the magistrate or judge to understand their issues of indentured therefore the interpreters worked like mediocres between the coolies and the magistrate. Interpreters were chosen from the colonial India on the ground of their communication skills, language proficiency. As they worked like the mediocre so both Indian indentured and magistrates depended upon them and that added to their haughty attitude in the colonies. They enjoyed a privileged place in the system because of their special status and the dependency of Indians upon them for justice. They were also being paid high wages like 120 euro per annum and most of the interpreters had properties, their children used to study in good schools. The availability of interpreters were also short in number that added to their superior status for instance in 1909 where the number of Indians in Natal was around 100,000, there were only 26 interpreters. However, it is not that they used to do their work diligently, they were accused of taking bribes and extortions. Sometimes they misinterpreted the coolies' statement to magistrate that led them to their defeat. For instance, Rangasamy blamed the interpreters for their injustice not the magistrate. He stated in front of the commission that there were not proper interpreters. They did not properly interpret their statements to the magistrate and the communication gap between them continued to remain. He cited that if an Indian said "my wife was ill-treated" it got translated as "my wife was kicked" and after hearing this kind of false statement the magistrate would get furious and accused the complainant of lying.

According to him Most of the time the injustice was laid on the Indian because of the false interpretations. The interpreters, however not proficient in both north and south dialects. Most of the Interpreters had the knowledge of northern dialects and that eventually became the issue during the cases of Tamil and Telugu speakers. As in one case the complainant was Telugu speaker and the interpreters did not know Telugu instead he spoke hindi. The magistrate was familiar with some words of Telugu and due to that he came to realize that the interpreter was trying to force the complainant to give his testimony in Hindi. Some of the interpreters were also not proficient In English spoke pigeon, absurd English, making it difficult for the magistrate to understand.

Though, the interpreters were selected from the Indians however, they used to discriminate and abuse the Indians by calling them of lower classes. As we discussed above that interpreters enjoyed a superior status in the colonies, that made them proud of their selves. One such instance is, in Oct 1906 the train got arrived late in Ladysmith just because of the interpreter's refusal to sit in the coloured compartments. He sat in the reserved compartment of Europeans and refused to move from there as he said he is as good as any white man and therefore he couldn't sit with kaffirs or lower classes Indians. So, interpreters were another blow on the faces of indentured who were already suffering from too many problems and their own brothers who were positioned to translate their problems to the court, were the one to increase their complications. They used their privileged position to abuse, to torture the vulnerable, fragile Indians immigrants. Language barrier remained to be the most significant phenomenon in the indentured system that made the justice an arduous thing to achieve to the coolies.

Conclusion:

indentured system introduced by the Britishers for their own selfish purposes of getting labourers on low wages in their colonies. Indians were not well aware of the mercenary purposes behind this system and the lack of knowledge indulged them into this. Indians migrated to colonies with the hopes of escaping the difficulties of Poverty, torments however these evils never left them even in the foreign land. These evils followed them in the form of their stonehearted Masters. Inside Indian indenture by Ashwin Desai entered into the agony of Indians through its 21 chapters holding the real life experiences of dejected Indians. In this research paper I have taken the first five chapters to get the insight of indentureds. Shiva's dance, the paglaa samundar, from the Raj to Raju, 'master coolie' arrives, the interpreters of indentured. Through these five chapters we got the better understanding of different aspects of indentureds. From the story of Maistry quoted under First Chapter, we became familiar with the myth of Return. Indians migrated to foreign land thinking of it to be the temporary one and one day they will return to their homeland with success stories. The account of Indentured experiences can never be completed without examining their families. When one person migrates, the whole life of family changes and heart throbbed when that person forgets about their families and starts a new one. This is what happened very commonly in those days of indentured. Families kept waiting for their loved ones' arrival however, they died without having any sight of them. Those who returned, they never remained the same and re-entered into the system. Like maistry, many Indians began their new lives in south Africa and on their return their families perished, parents died, children got adult and not capable of recognizing them. This was the one aspect of indentured which not only changed the life of migrants' however their whole family life got changed.

Indentured was not a pleasurable experience, it affected the lives of Indian in many aspects. When Indians got migrated to foreign land despite other problems they also had to go through the problem of accommodation. Government, intermingled the married with unmarried in the congested places and this

petty problem of accommodation became the cause of devastated lives. Due to the lack of accommodation, when married couple had to resided with unmarried men or women, it roped the seed of distrust, infidelity among them which eventually led towards the bigger issues of criminality. Sometime the coarse of distrust turned the Indians into criminals. Like, we see in The story of Wootmee who got murdered by her own husband due to his suspicion over her character. Just because wootme brought food for their roommates, her husband got suspicious of her loose character and murdered her. Indenture was even worse for women migrants. They were everywhere marginalised. Single women, widows, or even married women indulged into this system with the flicker of hope of getting the opportunity of uplifting their miserable lives afflicted with gender discrimination however, they were disillusioned. Women migrants had to face these gendered discrimination, sexual harassment, assaults even on the sailing ships by their shipmates, crew members. For instance, we see through the story of Muniyammah, who got disappeared one day suddenly from the ship. Captain Charles reeve tied her hand and her husband remonstrated just because she talked with everyone. After her disappearance from the ship no proper investigation was taken up by the officials. Surgeons like Dr Bowrie, who were appointed for the indentureds' well being they sexually harassed the women migrants. Ship Journeys were too long, it took 10 to 20 weeks and in the meantime of their embarkation, Indians had to face too many health problems. Many of them even died during the journeys due to their ailments of embarkation. Many got sea-sick, diseases like diarrhoea, mumps were normal. Indifferent and neglectful surgeons like Dr Bowrie who paid no attention to the health of migrants made it even worse. Sometimes due to the pressure of loading the ships with definite number of immigrants, compelled the recruiters to pass the unhealthy immigrants for the migration. Most of the Indians migrated by their own will however, some got deceived by the false promises of the recruiters. People like Govindsamy, who were doing well in their homeland ended up in getting paralyzed because of the trickster or scammer recruiters who showed them a totally contradictory image of indentured. Jawak sing, jaimangar, Puran sukke were the other victims of the betrayer. It is noteworthy that those who migrated by their own wish, were also duped by the tormented system of zamindari introduced by the Britishers. They intentionally made it hard to live in India by introducing the torturous systems of revenue. Landlords even in the time of famine compelled the Indians for the revenue and made it arduous for them to live in their homeland. When Indians migrated and reached to foreign land, assigned on the plantation, there also the conditions were too heart-rending. Their masters would beat them if they couldn't do work due to their bad health. This we got to know by the complaints filed by the Indian returnees who exposed the countenance of their ruthless masters. People like Monassamy, Balkistana's protest against their masters' pitiless treatment of them made heart-rending for them. They used to beat them, then sprinkled the salt on their wounded bodies to make them suffer more. Indians were not only the victims of their masters' however they were the victims of their own brothers, the interpreters. The interpreters worked like a mediocre who, is the one could change the decision of the magistrate by the right interpretation however, they used to mould the statements of the victims sometimes intentionally or sometimes due to their less proficiency in languages. They were the chain between both the Indians and the magistrates however, they were also torturous. They were blamed of demanding bribes from their own brothers and also discriminated against them as lower classes and thought of themselves as Europeans. Though they were Indians, but they were privileged and they used their superiority for their false means. There are evidences in which it is demonstrated clearly that because of the wrong translation the victims got the verdict of being guilty. After examining all these aspects of Indian indentured, we can say that it was the hideous system that made the Indians suffer a lot. Even after indentured, the one who never

repatriate they also lived a depressed , sorrowful life. Indentured seemed to be the flicker of hope however, it just made the lives of Indians even more darker through the tortures. By analysing the five chapters of Inside Indian Indenture, I tried to cover the real or tormenting side of indentured through the real stories of Indians. Lastly , I am concluding this paper by quoting the lines from the last chapter of Inside Indian Indenture taken from Satandra Nandan

**“ A Man’s destination is not his destiny
Every country is home to one and exile for another”**

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