

## CHAPTER ONE

# Girmit, *History*, *Memory*

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*The past is in its grave  
Though its ghost haunts us*  
Browning

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS can be a long time in a community or a nation's life. It has certainly been a long and troubled time in the life of the Indo-Fijians. Twenty-five years ago — 1979 — marked the 100th anniversary of the arrival of the Indian people in Fiji. The event was celebrated nationally. High Chief and Deputy Prime Minister, Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau, headed a distinguished multiracial national committee to plan and supervise the two-day celebrations.<sup>1</sup> That kind of gesture, so generous and inclusive and accommodating, would be unthinkable now. At Albert Park on 13 May, the Royal Military Forces Band played a selection of religious music, and an inter-faith service of thanksgiving and dedication was attended by representatives of all the major religions. Fittingly, the next day, young school children assembled in the park, and a *meke* (Fijian action-song) was performed along with a ballet by the Indian Cultural Centre

depicting the arrival of Indian immigrants and their indenture experience. Rugby, basketball and soccer competitions were held in the afternoon and trophies were awarded to the winning teams. And, bathed in a rainbow of colours on the field, the military band played on.

The Prime Minister, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, presented commemorative coins to a small group of surviving *girmitiyas*,<sup>2</sup> all in their late twilight, partially deaf or blind or both, visibly ill at ease in the limelight, perplexed about all the fuss being made over them. In his message, the Prime Minister acknowledged the nation's debt 'to these pioneers who, with others in our multiracial society, have played a notable role in building a free, prosperous and independent Fiji'. The Governor-General, Ratu Sir George Cakobau, agreed. 'Our Indian friends and their forefathers have worked hard for themselves and for Fiji — they have had a big hand in shaping what we see in this country today. I sincerely pray that they enjoy living in their adopted home and that peace and prosperity will prevail in this country of ours in the next hundred years.'

Torika Baleimali, a Form Four student from Nabala Junior Secondary School in Labasa, wrote in an essay for a national competition on how children would see themselves in 2000: 'I am a Fijian. My parents feel that the Indians are a menace to our race but I feel otherwise. My mind is more flexible. I am able to see both the disadvantages and advantages of having the Indians in the country.' Fiji, she wrote, was a multiracial country, and 'will remain so'. 'I feel that it is useless to drive people out because we dislike them. We must adjust ourselves to social change and this is a challenge in itself.' Shahmaag Munam, from Form Six at Xavier College in Ba, wrote about *her own* children in 2000 'growing up with other youngsters who are not aware of racial discord, who have no qualms about sharing lunch with either an Indian or a non-Indian'. 'It gives me immense pride and satisfaction to be a part of Fiji's community,' she continued. It was

her home. Whatever happened, 'I would not leave Fiji for any other place. The overall atmosphere is one of tranquillity and amiability.'

These haunting words of youthful optimism speak to a different past, a past now vanished beyond recall. For the intervening 25 years have seen not 'tranquillity' and 'amiability', but violence and rupture, the pride of an Indo-Fijian being a part of Fiji replaced by despair and dejection, the sense of being at 'home' in the islands overtaken by a desperate desire to leave for some place else at the earliest possible opportunity. Since the coups of 1987, which deposed a government in which Indo-Fijians had appropriate representation for the first time in their history, some 80,000 people have left, the best and the brightest, taking with them skills and talents the country can ill-afford to lose. Emotionally uprooted, trapped and terrorised, more would leave if they could. The expiration of agricultural leases on native land is pushing people out and endangering the future of an industry — sugar — for which the Indians were brought to Fiji in the first place. And the glass ceiling stares back at them mercilessly in many areas of public life. One hundred and twenty-five years after arriving in the islands, the future for the Indo-Fijians looks almost as bleak as it did for their forebears when they embarked on their unpredictable journeys from Calcutta and Madras to destinations unheard of or unknown.

An important by-product of the 1979 centennial celebrations was the re-introduction of the word '*girmit*' into the general vocabulary of Fiji, especially Fiji Hindi.<sup>3</sup> For the first time, many people learned that the word derived from 'agreement', under which the indentured labourers had contracted to come to Fiji, that it covered the whole gamut of the indenture experience. Until then — and for some even now — the word was synonymous with shame. People recalled *girmit* — when they recalled the past at all — as a period of brutality and violence and debauchery, of poverty and degradation, of moral disintegration

and cultural and social chaos, altogether a dark period best left unexplored to the obscure pages of a fading history. The *girmitiyas* were said to have no agency, no individuality, nothing, other than being disposable cogs in the heartless wheel of a profit-driven plantation system. They had not come to Fiji of their own accord, but were tricked into migrating by wily recruiters — *arkatis* — preying on the gullible, the greedy and the desperate. And they were the children of the lesser gods, the flotsam and jetsam of humanity picked up from the streets of Indian towns and shipped like cattle to Fiji. In short, indenture was slavery.<sup>4</sup> The words of Browning's dying Paracelsus could well sum up their feelings:

*I saw no use in the past: only a scene  
Of degradation, ugliness, and tears  
The record of disgraces best forgotten  
A sullen page in human chronicles  
Fit to erase.*<sup>5</sup>

This *gimit-as-slavery* thesis has long been the dominant, popular rendition of the indenture experience in Fiji. And there is undeniable truth in it. Many were broken by work, claimed by disease or wrecked by human violence and greed. Suffering and pain and violence were an integral part of the *gimit* experience. All this is abundantly clear from the historical record. But it is not the whole story. Hindsight should not hound history nor the present prosecute the past. Nor is it wise to press a complex and contested past into a serviceable ideology to fight contemporary battles, however depressing the present might be. It is possible to acknowledge hardship while granting the *girmitiyas* agency. I have elsewhere sought to demonstrate that *gimit* was a complex, multi-layered experience that lends itself to multiple readings; that it was a limited detention of five or ten years, not a life sentence; that there was change over time; that the *girmitiyas* were not devoid of will and agency; that the plantation system

was not a 'total institution' everywhere; that the grip of the plantation hierarchy varied over time and place; that, for some, migration and indenture could well have been a liberating experience from a vicious cycle of poverty and degradation at home, with no possibility of improvement in either this life or the next; that painting the *giritiyas* as helpless victims does them and their legacy a grave injustice.<sup>6</sup> I shall not rehearse that debate here but provide readers unfamiliar with the Indian indenture experience with a broad survey of its main features.

### *Origins of a Journey*

The introduction of Indian indentured labour into Fiji in 1879 was a direct result of the cession of the islands to Queen Victoria five years earlier. The new colony, remote and reluctantly acquired, needed rapid economic development to sustain itself, but the conditions for it were lacking. Local capital was unavailable, with the European planters reeling from the collapse of the cotton boom of the previous decade after the end of the American civil war. And Fijian labour had been effectively prohibited from commercial employment by Fiji's first governor, Sir Arthur Gordon, whose native policy required the Fijians to remain in their own traditional surroundings under the leadership of their chiefs, protected from the harmful effects of external contact.<sup>7</sup> Bold and imaginative and impressively connected to London, Gordon decided on a line of action that was to set the foundations of modern Fiji. Having settled on the plantation system as his preferred mode of economic development and sugar as the main crop, he invited the Australian-owned Colonial Sugar Refining Company (CSR) to establish the industry. The CSR arrived in Fiji in 1882 and left in 1973, effectively running the colony's economy for nearly a century.<sup>8</sup> To work on the plantations, Gordon chose Indian indentured labour whose success he had seen in Trinidad and Mauritius, where he had been governor before his Fiji

assignment. European capital, Indian labour and Fijian land underpinned the Fijian economy in the century between cession and independence.

Indentured emigration was government controlled. The conditions of employment were stated on a form of agreement – *girmit* — in English, Hindi and Urdu in north India and in Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam in the south. The terms varied in detail according to time and place, but they all specified the conditions of work, pay, accommodation and provision of basic facilities. Typical conditions offered to the Fiji migrants stated that they would be engaged in work related to the cultivation and manufacture of agricultural products; that they would work for nine hours each week day and five on Saturdays, with Sundays and public holidays being free; that men would be paid one shilling daily and women nine pennies for time as well as task work. The labourers could return to India at their own expense after five years or at the Government's after 10 years of 'industrial residence'. There were gaps between what was promised and the practice on the ground, between the rhetoric and the reality of contractual obligation. The exploration of the gap has been the main thrust of modern indenture historiography.

Forty-five thousand of Fiji's indentured labourers were recruited from north India and 15,000 from the south when recruitment began there in 1903. For the southern Indians, neighbouring Malaya and Ceylon were the favoured destinations. Most of the southern indentured *girmityas* came from such poor and migration-prone districts as Vizagapatnam, North and South Arcot, Chittoor, Trichnipoly, Chingleput and Kistna.<sup>9</sup> In the north, United Provinces (UP) was the main recruiting ground in the late 19th century, replacing Bihar, whose migrants went to local destinations. The province, once the 'garden of India', had by the late 19th century become its 'moth-eaten' basketcase. Within the UP, the majority of the recruits came from the impoverished, desolate districts in the east: Basti, Gonda,

Faizabad, Azamgarh, Bahraich and others like them.<sup>10</sup> The emigrants in the colonies, however, mythologised the province's cultural and historical importance as a land littered with the ruins of great vanished empires ruled by noble kings and nobler emperors, home to great, glittering cities and the place of great pilgrimage sites; in short, a land flowing with milk and honey.

In the late 19th century, rural India was unhinged by increasing British revenue demands. The introduction of notions of private ownership of land caused large-scale subdivision of holdings and property rights, making them agriculturally uneconomic.<sup>11</sup> The traditional bases of agrarian relationships were undermined, removing the cushions which had once protected people against abrupt change. Landlords demanded more rent more promptly, deepening poverty and indebtedness in a rapidly growing population. Famines and droughts wrought their own havoc on a people already in distress.<sup>12</sup> With local employment prospects waning, people moved about in search of jobs. Ghazipur's experience was typical, where 'immense numbers of people leave their homes every year to find employment in or near Calcutta and in the various centres of industry in Bengal and Assam, while many weavers and others report to the mills of Bombay. The extent of this migration is astonishing and its economic influence is of the highest importance since these labourers earn high wages and remit or bring back with them large sums of money to their homes.'<sup>13</sup>

Indentured labourers to Fiji and other sugar colonies came from this desperate mass of uprooted peasants. Most of them registered for emigration in the province itself rather than in large distant cities such as Calcutta. Within the province, most enlisted in their own districts rather than in large provincial cities such as Kanpur or Lucknow. But not all who registered emigrated. In Gonda, for example, 52.4 per cent did not emigrate to Fiji and in Basti 48.5 per cent remained. In most other places, about one-third of those who registered were left behind either

because they were rejected or because they refused to go.<sup>14</sup> The high failure rate gives some agency to the recruited. This is not to say by any means that the unscrupulous *arkatis* did not ply their trade and snare the gullible and the timid into their net. They did, but perhaps not to the extent often uncritically assumed.

The movement within India was seasonal and circulatory. Perhaps emigration to the colonies was viewed this way. For peasants already uprooted from their homes and out and about in search of jobs, going to the *tapus*, the islands, was like going to Assam or some other similarly distant place. Many probably had not heard of Demerara or Trinidad or Fiji before, but they all knew — or hoped — that they would return. Most did not. Much has been made of the notion of *kala pani*, the dark dreaded seas, as an impediment to emigration because it brought contact with *mlecchas*, polluting barbarians, and imperilled caste purity. Its importance is exaggerated. The injunction against sea travel applied only to the twice-born (*dvija*) and then only to the elite of the highest castes; and it was often obeyed more in the breach than in observance.<sup>15</sup> *Kala pani* was in truth more a metaphor for a hard journey to a distant or dangerous place, a journey of pain and permanent separation, than a strict prohibition against foreign travel.

The indentured recruits were a much maligned lot, disrespected by their contemporaries and despised by their employers. They were assumed by everyone to be an unrepresentative sample or, alternatively, a rotten sample, of rural India. If men were bad enough, women were assumed to be worse: individuals with light morals from broken homes, cast adrift by society, beyond the pale of salvation. Indians were often reminded of their lowly origins by the colonial officialdom as part of the ideological underpinning of European dominance in Fiji. The situation was, of course, much more complex.<sup>16</sup> The recruits were, in fact, a representative sample of rural India, comprising all castes and social groups, not only the lowly ones. More

importantly, most of the migrants were dispossessed cultivators or labourers, down on their luck or down and out, looking for a better future. Migration provided a way out.

Women probably migrated for economic as well as social reasons. More than 36 per cent of the women from north India came as members of families, three-quarters accompanied by their husbands only, 15 per cent by their husbands and children and 12 per cent with their children only. Smaller numbers came in the company of cousins, brothers or other relatives.<sup>17</sup> Most women migrating as members of families had left as part of a family unit from their own villages, which contradicts the conventional wisdom about fraudulent depot marriages arranged by the recruiters to expedite registration. Perhaps among the women were widows with children, women whose husbands had left for service abroad and did not return, young brides who had not brought sufficient dowry with them and were taunted and punished. Perhaps there were domestic hands who had never married. Kept during times of prosperity, they were tossed out when things became difficult. The recruiters' consoling voice sealed their fate: they left. The fact that the women were prepared to leave the familiar for the completely unknown suggests that they must have been individuals of remarkable courage and self-respect. These were certainly the values they nurtured in Fiji and other colonies.

From their local sub-depots, the recruits who had passed medical tests and interrogation by officials were taken to the ports of embarkation. There, they were once again questioned about the terms of the contract which they were signing or affixing their thumb prints to and were admitted when the Surgeon Superintendent and the Depot Surgeon certified that the recruit was 'free from all bodily and mental disease and has been vaccinated'. By the time they finally left for the colonies, a remarkable 40 per cent of the original recruits had not embarked: official inspection was not a formality. Cleaned, inspected, and

numbered — on a tin circle worn around the neck — the emigrants boarded the ship, in parties of six at a time, single women first, followed by married people with children and finally the bachelors, all ‘pleased and amused by the novel experience’, ‘decked out in their brightest corals, beads and ornaments’.<sup>18</sup> Some wept and wailed as the reality of rupture dawned on them. But calm soon returned as the ship was tugged out to sea and duties were assigned: sweeping the deck, cleaning toilets, washing clothes and utensils, preparing food.

In the 19th century, sailing ships took up to three months to reach Fiji, a month with the advent of steamships after 1904. Whether one month or three, the voyage was traumatic for a land-locked people, most of whom probably had never seen the sea before. In the crowded confines of the ship’s cabins, old rituals and ways of doing things could no longer be sustained. People ate, cleaned, washed and played cards or *kabaddi* together, bound by a shared destiny and a common destination. From the fragments of a common past and a mutual predicament, other bonds emerged. The most notable and enduring of these was *jahajibhai*, the brotherhood of the crossing, as emotionally powerful and intimate as real blood kinship, which men cherished well into their twilight as a memory of a shared ordeal and as a bond of solidarity against the alienations and asperities of a hostile new world.

### *On the Plantations*

Once in Fiji, and after quarantine on Nukulau — where, in sweet irony, 2000 coup leader George Speight is serving his life imprisonment — the labourers were allocated to plantations around the country, the majority of which were owned by the CSR. Care was taken not to separate families, but men from the same village or district or having some other distinctive common attribute were separated to prevent trouble – ‘ganging up’. The earliest areas of Indian settlement were Rewa and Navua in

south-eastern Viti Levu and Ba and Rakiraki in the north-west, but, as cane settlements spread, so did the Indian population. Conditions varied across the colony. The wet and humid areas of southern Viti Levu took a heavy toll on the workers' health, with hookworm, dysentery, diarrhoea and anaemic fever wreaking havoc on a new and unsuspecting population. Disease was, in fact, the worst enemy of indentured labour in Fiji, its greatest source of misery and mortality, far more than anything inflicted by the human hand.

The working experience of the *gimitiyas* on the plantations in all its excruciating detail — absence from work due to infirmity or illness, punishment for the breaches of the contract or insubordination, the heart-rending infant mortality rates, the accidental deaths, the men the *gimitiyas* murdered in revenge — all these are preserved in the records.<sup>19</sup> The routine was quickly mastered. After a hasty breakfast, the workers gathered their knives, forks and hoes and marched off to plough and weed the fields, dig drains, feed the horses and milch cows, cut and transport the cane to the mills, keep the road and bridges and tramlines serviceable. This was the routine for five years. In the early years, the tasks were excessive and were rarely completed on time. Nor did labourers always achieve the minimum statutory wage. Underpaid workers lived on inadequate diets, which caused sickness, which led to absence from work, which in turn led to reduced pay. Disease and violence extracted their own price. Still, the *gimitiyas* understood the constraints under which they worked and the reality of power relations on the plantations. They learned early from ill-fated strikes in Koronivia and Rewa in the mid-1880s that an open challenge to authority was futile. And so they chose to express their grievances through a variety of everyday resistance techniques and through the strategy of accommodation. They understood indenture not as a life sentence but as a limited detention.<sup>20</sup>

The plantation was a peculiar cultural institution, with its own complex set of rituals, routines, demands and expectations.

For five years, in some cases more, it defined the purposes and limits of the *girmitiyas*' lives. It was also the site of massive social transformation. Men and women of different ages, different social, economic and religious backgrounds, often speaking a variety of mutually incomprehensible tongues, with contrasting expectations of life, met and mingled. Out of that enforced interaction in the confined and constricting space emerged a new culture. In that new environment, old habits, patterns of thought and association, and understandings about the world and their place in it were shaken. The trauma had started much earlier, but the plantation experience etched the reality of the new world on the *girmitiyas* more sharply. Plantation work did not respect social boundaries or divinely sanctioned hierarchies. It rewarded personal initiative and enterprise. The plantation management saw the *girmitiyas* as 'coolies', little more. The absence of social and spiritual leaders compounded the problem. The *girmitiyas* seemed, then, to be caught in a barren, disorienting cul-de-sac of cultural fragmentation.

Things collapsed, but not abruptly. Fragments of old institutions and practices which fractured during migration and indenture were restored in a variety of ways and imbued with novel meanings incorporating the old and the new. The process of retrieval and reconstruction was vital for the immigrant community, as an instrument of survival as well as a tool of resistance. The new culture that was forged during indenture was complex and dynamic. Let me illustrate the patterns and processes of change by focusing on the caste system, marriage and gender relations.

Indenture dealt a mortal blow to the caste system as a social institution of practical relevance in the everyday life of the migrants, although vague notions of distinction and difference survived. Each *girmitiya* was individually contracted to the plantation, and was paid according to the amount of work he or she accomplished, not according to social status. People lived and worked together, slept under the same roof in the lines, shared

the same well and toilet facilities. Even if they wanted to, they did not have the cultural resources to sustain the caste system. Most immigrants were young and illiterate and ignorant of the rituals and ceremonies associated with the caste system. The disproportionate sex ratio on the plantations produced cross-caste marriages. Breaches of caste rules could not be punished. As Chandra Jayawardena puts it: 'Since everyone had the same rights and duties, co-ordination of behaviour in matters of common concern was achieved by voluntary co-operation and the recognition of the self-interest of equal and free agents.'<sup>21</sup> Culture and religion rather than caste became the basis of identity in the new community.

The institution of marriage also suffered during indenture. Marriage for Hindus and Muslims was (and still is) more than a simple contractual matter. Traditionally, marriages took place within a narrow, restricted circle prescribed by custom. These were difficult to maintain on the plantations. But the most important cause of the havoc was the paucity of women, which led to inter-caste marriages of a type unthinkable in India. The crowded conditions in the lines created their own problem. There was no privacy, and close proximity between the houses of the unmarried and the married encouraged illicit relationships. Furthermore, marriages conducted according to Hindu and Muslim customs — the only ones the immigrants knew — were not recognised in colonial law.<sup>22</sup> This encouraged the unscrupulous and the criminally opportunistic to exploit the situation to their advantage, disavowing relationships and obligations when it suited them. Officials commented on the practice of some fathers 'selling' their daughters to several prospective husbands for financial gain.

Men devised means to deal with the shortage of women. Some, out of pity or greed, agreed to their wives providing sexual services to a small number of men. In some places, casual polyandry became a major source of tension in the lines, the

cause, officials believed, of many suicides. Sometimes, several men 'kept' a single woman for domestic help. After a while, she attached herself to, or was taken over by, one of the men, to whom she was eventually married and bore children. On the whole, the plantation system undermined a stable family life — but not completely, for marriages continued to take place and families were raised. The symbolic importance and the comforting effect of the family during a time of turmoil in the life of the community cannot be overstated. Joint families were revived after indenture to meet agricultural needs, but eventually gave way to the new realities of greater individualism, independent incomes, and occupational and educational mobility. Its gradual disappearance was welcomed as a sign of changing times.<sup>23</sup>

Women everywhere were blamed for murders and suicides on the plantations and sometimes even for the high infant mortality rates. To the overseers and planters, the women were 'immoral' and 'socially unredeemable'.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, so low was their esteem for the indentured women they met in Fiji, some men regarded marriage with them as a temporary convenience to be discarded on returning to India. The difficulty of understanding the predicament of women is compounded by the absence of their voice in the records.<sup>25</sup> Men evaluated women's roles on the plantations in stereotypes. Some measured them against the ideal of Sita, the paragon of Hindu womanhood, who gave up everything to accompany her husband, Lord Rama, into exile. The ideal Indian woman accepted her fate without complaint, glorified the virtues of motherhood, deferred to male authority and, above all, worshipped her husband. On the plantations, men sought to reassert the patriarchal structure of agrarian Indian society, wanting to own the means of production as well as the labour of the women. When they failed, they blamed the women for their own misfortunes.

Indian men failed to appreciate that emigration and indenture had dramatically restructured the women's positions

and thence their relationship with men. The institutions that sanctioned and enforced women's subjection had little jurisdiction in the domestic sphere of the indentured population. Indenture promoted a new egalitarian ethos and a freer society, which respected individual initiative. Women were employed on the plantations as individuals in their own right. Control over their own hard-earned income gave them a measure of power and economic and social independence. So, if circumstances demanded, they left their husbands when their life became constantly embroiled in tension and torment or was otherwise endangered.

Contrary to conventional wisdom, women were not disrespectful of marriage and family and other institutions of Indian society. They were themselves at the mercy of the overseers and Indian *sirdars* (foremen), who allocated and supervised their daily work, harassing, even assaulting, those who refused their sexual advances. The women could not refuse partners chosen for them by the overseers, nor the solicitations of influential men on the plantations. Powerless and vulnerable, they had little choice in the matter of morality. Their world was turned upside-down, and they were caught in confusion about roles and obligations. The new experience and new opportunities widened their horizons. They wanted greater respect and recognition within the parameters of recognised cultural and social institutions, not outside or in breach of them. They, too, wanted the security and the comforting cushion of culture – minus its excessive patriarchal prerogatives.

### *Life in the Lines*

'One of the saddest and most depressing sights, if a man has any soul at all, is a coolie "line" in Fiji. Vice, wickedness, and abjectness abound. Personal filth is ever in evidence, and life seems to have turned rancid. Coarse, evil-looking women throw their jibes at criminal-faced men, or else quarrel with one

another in high, strident voices, accompanied by angry gestures. Little children, naked save for a sacred piece of string, sores, and flies, play cheerlessly in the squalid places. The beholder turns from the scene debating whether disgust or pity is uppermost in his mind.<sup>27</sup> This is culturally conditioned, self-interested missionary talk. Nonetheless, a mixture of disgust and pity informs virtually all outside accounts of plantation life.

*Girmitiyas* lived in basic accommodation provided by their employers. The wooden and iron buildings in the lines were divided into rooms of 12 square feet, each separated from the other by a partition topped by a gauze wire to allow for ventilation, and housing three single males or a family of husband, wife and two children. Cooking was done inside on an earthen *chulha* (stove). The room contained all the worldly possessions of the *girmitiyas*: their clothes, cooking utensils, firewood, farm implements. Cramped and sooty at the best of times, they became worse in the rainy season, dimly lit by *dhibri*, wick lamps, the earthen floor becoming soggy and the air damp. There was little privacy in the rooms, and not much more outside. Close to the dwellings were open trenches where people defecated. Many used the neighbouring fields for toilet as well, which bred deadly diseases such as hookworm and contaminated water for cooking and bathing.

Amid all the drudgery of the daily routine, though, the *girmitiyas* found time for rest and recreation. During weekends the *girmitiyas* could visit their friends on neighbouring plantations or seek the permission of the overseers to visit free Indians with whom they might have worked in the past. They could go to the bazaars. Or they could entertain themselves in a variety of ways. There was a plentiful supply of tobacco, *paan* (betel nut) and even *ganja*. Wrestling (*kushti*) was a favourite pastime, especially if it involved wrestlers from other plantations. Some managers encouraged inter-plantation competitions to maintain the morale of their workers. Sports was played, especially *kabaddi* and football.

In the lines, people played *bujhauni*, the Indian game of riddles. In the evenings, or on special occasions, they would play music and sing. The people prepared simple musical instruments such as *dholak* and *khajadi* from local wood and leather, and *dandtaal* and *tambura* from local iron and wires.<sup>28</sup> Special occasions for celebrations included pivotal moments in the life cycle. The birth of children, especially boys, brought great joy not only to the parents but to the community. The sixth day after birth held special significance. If a child survived its first few days, its chances of survival were good. So, on the sixth day, the *chattai*, the child was introduced to the world amid great celebration, singing and feasting. Later, a similarly joyous celebration would accompany the head-shaving ceremony, *moodan*.

Migration and indenture disrupted the *girmitiyas'* religious and cultural life. There were few shrines and sacred places, few *murtis* or images, few learned men, *pandits*, *sadhus* or *maulvis*, versed in the scriptures to impart moral and spiritual instruction. Their absence facilitated an essentially emotional, egalitarian and non-intellectual moral order among the *girmitiyas*. Nonetheless, as Jayawardena has observed, 'Religion was an important mechanism in promoting social solidarity among the plantation coolies [during indenture]. The powerlessness of the coolies made it necessary for them, in order to protect their interests, to form a tightly knit group which, as far as possible, spoke and acted as one united and unanimous body.'<sup>29</sup>

Most northern Hindus were followers of the orthodox Sanatan Dharam, the eternal religion (without beginning or end).<sup>30</sup> For them, the *Ramayana* of Tulsidas (1532–1623), written in 10,000 lines of verse, became the 'primary written source for standards of social and personal morality'.<sup>31</sup> Many *girmitiyas* came from Rama's birthplace — in Ayodhya near Faizabad. They knew the story. And it was a wonderful story full of drama and pathos and tragedy. Sung to the accompaniment of elementary music,

the recital provided spiritual enlightenment as well as social entertainment. The *Ramayana* addressed themes of enduring human significance: the importance of righteous conduct in the face of the sternest adversity, the obligations of duty and loyalty and honour. To the *girmitiyas*, cut off from the source, their cultural fabric threatened by the violence and vagaries of the plantation system, the *Ramayana* must have represented eternal truths and certainties in times of crisis and uncertainty. The message of hope and redemption was unmistakable.

Sanatanis were not the only Hindus in Fiji. There were also smaller numbers of Arya Samajis, followers of a reformist branch of Hinduism, founded by Swami Dayananda Saraswati. They rejected the more ritualistic aspects of the faith and revered the *Vedas* as the principal texts of Hinduism. The Samajis' great contribution to Indian education came later.<sup>32</sup> At the beginning of the 20th century, a number of smaller sects dominated the main areas of Indian settlement — Kabir Panth, Ramnadi, Dadu Nath.<sup>33</sup> They were popular because they rejected the hierarchical system of Brahminical Hinduism, stressing the importance of devotion and the equality of human beings, which appealed to people from a non-literate background.

We know about the 'higher forms' of Hinduism, but little about the 'lower forms', which were probably more important in assisting people to make sense of their lives in an alien place. Most castes had their own deity or a set of deities — Dhi, Bhavani, Phulmati — which had to be appeased through animal sacrifice.<sup>34</sup> I vividly recall being told by old-timers of this practice being in existence well into the post-indenture period. An element of shame and secrecy surrounded animal sacrifice. For instance, the animal was always slaughtered at night and the meat eaten only after the chanting of some mysterious verses in incomprehensible Indian dialects. The practice was discontinued as *girmitiyas* died, the caste system disintegrated, knowledge of specialist rituals was forgotten and 'sanskritised' Hinduism

with its established body of literature and inclusive ritual infrastructure took root.

Unlike Hinduism, which is amorphous and un-prescriptive, Islam, the other significant faith on the plantations, has a book, the Koran, a prophet, Mohammed, and a well-defined creed.<sup>35</sup> Every devout Muslim is required to observe them whenever possible. The five pillars of Islam are: a public declaration of faith — ‘*La Ilaha illa Allah, Mohammed bin Rasool Allah*’ — that is, ‘There is no god but God and Mohammed is the Messenger of God’; the prescribed five prayers a day; the giving of *zakat*, alms, to the poor; fasting during the month of Ramadan; and the *hajj*, pilgrimage, to Mecca at least once in a lifetime. A<sup>8</sup>singular code and creed gave Muslims cohesiveness and unity of purpose. Most Muslims in Fiji were (and still are) Sunnis, who believe in Mohammed as the last prophet of Allah and the Koran as the revealed word of God. There were also a small number of Sufi Sunnis, a mystical sect of Islam, most of whom came from southern India. They held *Milad* to celebrate the life and teachings of the Prophet Mohammed and observed *Ratib*, a quasi-mystical ceremony, in which devotees cut themselves with a knife late at night without spilling blood, and with the *maulvi* promising a healed wound before the next morning as a demonstration of God’s power.<sup>36</sup>

A minority of Muslims also belonged to Shia sects which, while recognising the supreme authority of Mohammed, also acknowledged the legitimacy of later messengers. The two sects also disputed who should have succeeded the Prophet, the caliphs or members of his own family. Sometimes, these differences caused friction (even violence) in the community, just as the debates between the more reform-minded Arya Samajis and the orthodox Sanatanis did among Hindus. During indenture, there were occasional conflicts between Hindus and Muslims in Rewa and Navua. These occurred when Muslims slaughtered cattle in the vicinity of Hindu homes or when

Hindus played loud music near mosques during Ramadan. But these were localised affairs brought quickly under control by community leaders and the colonial administration. Religious harmony rather than discord marked the indenture period. And that remained the pattern for the 20th century.

The *girmitiyas* came from a land full of festivals. Virtually every month had some festive occasion. The plantation regime did not permit the celebration of all the festivals the *girmitiyas* knew as children, but some were regularly celebrated in the colonies, especially those which involved group activity. Among the most popular was *Ramlila*, play-acting the life of Lord Rama. *Diwali* was also celebrated, although it gained its present popularity much later.<sup>37</sup> It was the same with fire-walking performed by south Indian *girmitiyas*. Perhaps the most popular Hindu festival during indenture in all the colonies was *Holi*, or *Phagwa* (named after the last day of the lunar month of Phagun), which celebrated the defiant deeds of god-fearing Prahalad over his power-drunk father, Hirana Kashyap. The following song, a specially composed *chautal*, indicates the spring festival's joyous mood:

*The sweet spring has come, in the month of Phagun  
 The beautiful festival of Holi has come today;  
 To love everyone is the wish of all,  
 And every house is filled with happiness,  
 Give hospitality to everyone, it is the month of Phagun.  
 The fragrant gardens are today blossoming everywhere,  
 Now we sing together the Phag of the virtues  
 Of all patriotic leaders,  
 May their fame spread! It is the month of Phagun.  
 In each village pleasant gatherings occur  
 And every brother sings praise of the country;  
 In the intoxicating month of Phagun.  
 All watch the gay colours; it is the month of Phagun.  
 The drums and cymbals play today in every house,  
 Today all sing with a united voice,*

*Ram Lakhan requests this,  
To call Jai Hind. It is the month of Phagun.*<sup>38</sup>

One celebration, which has now all but disappeared among overseas Indians, but which was popular with Hindus and Muslims during indenture, was *Tazia*, variously known as *Tajdah* or *Hosse* in the different colonies. On the 10th of Mohurram 61 AH (10 October, 1680), Hussain, the son of Ali and the grandson of the Prophet, was killed in a skirmish between government troops and a small body of supporters accompanying him to Kufa in Iraq, where his followers had invited him to lead them in a revolt against the Ummayyad caliphs of Damascus. His death was regarded by his supporters as an act of self-sacrifice in the cause of the faith, and the lesson was drawn that only through patient suffering and sacrifice was it possible to enter paradise. *Tazia*, or passion play, reached its climax on the 10th day when a procession designed as a funeral parade carried a structure representing Hussain's tomb to the accompaniment of drums and sad, mournful songs, such as this one:

*What rains down? Blood! Who? The eye! How?  
Day and night! Why?  
From grief! What grief? The grief of the monarch of Kerbela!  
What was his name? Hussain! Of whose race? Ali's!  
Who was his mother? Fatima! Who was his grandsire?  
Mustafa!  
How was it with him? He fell a martyr! Where?  
In the plain of Mariya!  
When? On the 10th of Muharram! Secretly? No, in public!  
Was he slain by night? No, by day! At what time? Noontide!  
Was his head severed from the throat? No, from the nape  
of the neck!  
Was he slain unthirsting? No! Did none give him to drink?  
They did!  
Who? Shmr! From the source of death!*<sup>39</sup>

There was something mysterious about the festival. People thought they saw blood in the tinsel mausoleum and heard soft wailing noises at night. A chicken or goat was ritually slaughtered to appease the spirits as men danced around the *tazia*, working themselves into a trance, while women took vows and gave donations in anticipation of some blessing (the birth of a son, removal of some affliction). The festival petered out as the old-timers passed away, other forms of entertainment reached the people, and the Sunni orthodoxy asserted its dominance.

### *The Free or the 'Khula'*

By 1920, when the indenture system was abolished, four years after all indentured shipments had ceased, the Fiji Indian community had come a long way from modest and uncertain beginnings. The most visible change was the increasing ratio of Fiji-born to India-born. In 1911, only 27 per cent of the 40,286 Indians were Fiji-born; in 1921, 44 per cent of the 60,634 were locally born. By 1946, the local-born constituted 85 per cent of the population. In physical appearance, social behaviour, thinking and world view, the local-born were different. Few wore *pagri* or *dhoti* — the typical dress of rural India — they had more wide ranging friendships across caste and religion, enjoyed a more relaxed lifestyle, were egalitarian in their outlook and ethos and were unconstrained by the ritual protocols and procedures so dear to the India-born.

Most Indians settled in the sugar cane-growing areas. In 1905, of the 15,997 free Indians, 4,926 were in Navua, 4,500 in Rewa, 1,460 in Suva, 1,270 in Ba, 1,250 in Lautoka (on Viti Levu) and 2,000 in Macuata on Vanua Levu. In time, western Viti Levu would claim the largest concentration of Indo-Fijians. More than 75 per cent of the Indian population was engaged in agriculture, mostly sugar cane and to a lesser extent rice cultivation, but small numbers were making a living as hawkers, mechanics, domestic servants, stable-hands and the like. This pattern would persist for much of the 20th century. Trade and

commerce in the Indo-Fijian community came to be dominated by free migrants from Gujarat (principally Surat and Navasari), who began arriving in small numbers from 1904 onwards. The urban-based Gujaratis remained a largely self-contained and self-absorbed community throughout the 20th century. The other significant group of free migrants was Sikhs from the Punjab (Jullundar, Hoshiarpur, Ludhiana), who excelled in agriculture. Many of their descendants migrated to Canada and the United States after independence in 1970.

The free Indian community developed early.<sup>40</sup> By the early 1880s, ex-indentured labourers were settling on land leased from Fijians around the sugar mills. The gradual development of free settlement was symbolically important as a beacon of hope and freedom to those still on the plantations. It also played a decisive role in defining the unique character of the Indian community in Fiji in contrast with, for example, the Indian communities in the Caribbean, where generations depended on the plantation system for their livelihood and were thus unable to recreate Indian cultural and social institutions to keep themselves together as a cohesive cultural and linguistic community. In Fiji, the free settlements kept the community intact. Out of necessity as much as choice, Indians cooperated in agricultural and social tasks, reviving festivals, building temples and mosques and roads and bridges, arranging marriages and sports and singing competitions, burying the dead, and making representations to the Government. Colonial indifference to the social and cultural welfare of the community forced people to rely on their own resources and on each other.

By the early 1900s, a cadre of leadership had developed of whom Totaram Sanadhya, Badri Maharaj and Manilal Maganlal Doctor were the most well known. Manilal, a lawyer, had come from Mauritius at the request of the local Indians to provide leadership to the community.<sup>41</sup> But there were others — ‘educated members of that [Indian immigrant] class’ — whose

names I mention only because they lie in faded memory: S. Mastapha, M. S. Buksh, Ramroop, Ganpath, Tribhuvan, Raghunath, Umrao Maharaj, George Suchit, Ratu Ram Samujh and Manoharananda Saraswati. They formed the British Indian Association (later the Indian Imperial Association) and made representations to Suva as well as to London. Badri Maharaj was chosen by the Colonial Government as the first Indian-nominated member of the Legislative Council in 1915, although many Indians preferred the educated and articulate Manilal. The Indo-Fijian demand for elected representation on the basis of a common, non-racial roll would begin in the 1920s and continue throughout the 20th century.

Within the community, social and religious organisations began to emerge in the major areas of free settlements: mosques and temples, community rest houses (*dharmashala*). The Arya Samaj was formed in 1904, the Anjuman-I-Hidayat Islam in 1915, Anjuman Ishait El Islam in 1916 and Anjum-E-Islam (1919). Then India Sanmārgyā Ikyā Sangam, the umbrella organisation of the southern Indians, came in 1926 under the inspiring leadership of the great mystic, Sadhu Kuppaswami. Religious leaders — Totaram Sanadhaya and Maulvi Murtza Khan — provided moral and spiritual guidance. After the 1920s, religious leaders from India came to preach. Some of them introduced disputes which were then racking the Indian subcontinent: conflict between the Shia and Sunni Muslims, and between Arya Samaj and Sanatan Dharam Hindus. But these eruptions, though intense and bitter at the time, were largely contained and left few permanent scars.

The Indian community grew in complete isolation from the indigenous Fijians. This was deliberate government policy. In 1893, Abdoon, an Afghan, lived in Deuba, dressing and wearing his hair Fijian-style.<sup>42</sup> He got annoyed when called a '*Kai Idia*', a pejorative term for a person of Indian descent. Roko Tui Nadroga said he did not object to the man living in the village, but Governor J. B.

Thurston, the self-styled champion of the Fijians, who regarded Indian indentured labourers as 'working men and nothing more', overruled him. 'I am quite sure that an idle renegade Indian will do the people of Sigatoka very considerable harm,' he said and asked the Colonial Secretary to order the man to leave. In 1895, an Indian man on the Rewa delta applied for a retail store licence which was refused by the Stipendiary Magistrate: 'These Indians speak good Fijian and are very undesirable persons to throw into the society of the natives inland and I wish they could be kept out entirely.' In another instance, a sandalwood paste-covered Hindu priest in Nadurulolo, Rewa, was threatened with prosecution for practising 'witchcraft' when he tried to preach to the Fijians. In Ra, Sulieman — Solomone to Fijians — was refused residence in the village by the Government even though he had married a chiefly lady and the villagers wanted him to remain. In 1887, Buli Sabeto was fined for 'harbouring' an Indian immigrant and the chief of the village (Natumuku) also fined six pounds for the same 'offence'. No doubt, there are many more such stories of thwarted intermingling in the sugar cane belts of Fiji.

Government policy hindered ethnic interaction, but ignorance and prejudice also kept the two communities apart. The Stipendiary Magistrate of Rewa, in his September report of 1884, said: 'In all the colonies where the coolies have been introduced, I think I am near the truth when I say that in landing they found the land destitute or practically so of any coloured race with whom they are likely to be brought into contact. Here on the contrary a very different state of affairs exists. Here they find a proud and arrogant race professing to be owners of the soil, regarding all others as on sufferance, merely as *vulagis*. The Fijians and Indians regard each other with unconcealed contempt and disgust. The Indians never by any chance speak of the Fijians other than as "*jungalis*" the meaning of which is understood and deeply resented by them all to a man.'<sup>43</sup> The Fijians genuinely feared about their future, especially the future of their land as the

number of Indian immigrants increased. They had no comprehension of who the Indians were, why they were coming to Fiji, whether they would return to India or settle in the colony when their contracts expired. The fear of dispossession, the Stipendiary Magistrate of Ba wrote in 1888, 'is probably at the bottom of the native dislike of the coolies'. So government policy as well as popular prejudice kept the two communities apart, with what tragic consequences we all know. Only if ...

*Footfalls echo in the memory  
Down the passage we did not take  
Towards the door we never opened  
Into the rose-garden.*

— T. S. Eliot

The world of the *girmitiyas* was a complex one, full of turmoil and tension and uncertainty, goodness, greed and curiosity. Old habits had to be discarded and unfamiliar challenges faced. New experiences posed problems requiring creative responses. A new vocabulary had to be learnt, an unfamiliar geography explored, a new terrain mastered, new pragmatic social relationships established. The *girmitiyas* dealt with the challenges in their own way, modifying thought and behaviour, incorporating resilient threads from an old and frayed fabric into a new and unique garment. They were ordinary men and women whose accomplishments were extraordinary. It was a difficult journey. Many perished along the way, but most survived: not only survived, but conquered the odds and triumphed. The triumph of the human spirit over limitless adversities: that is — as it has to be — the ultimate meaning and legacy of *gimit*. In that stupendous struggle, to use the words of Matthew Arnold, the *girmitiya*

*Pursued a lonely road,  
His eyes on Nature's plan;  
Neither made man too much a God,  
Nor God too much a man.*

## NOTES

- 1 Discussion of the 1979 celebrations is based on Ministry of Information. 1979. *Girmit: A Centenary of Anthology 1879–1979*. Government of Fiji.
- 2 *Girmit* comes from the word agreement under which Indian indentured labourers were brought to Fiji. Those who served *girmit* were called *girmityas*.
- 3 Two anthologies marking the occasion were Mishra, Vijay (ed.). 1979. *Rama's Banishment: A centenary tribute to the Fiji Indians*. Auckland. And, Subramani (ed.). 1979. *Indo-Fijian Experience*. St Lucia, Queensland.
- 4 See, among others: Ali, Ahmed (ed.). 1979. *The Indenture Experience in Fiji*. Suva. For an application of the slavery thesis derived from Tinker, Hugh. 1974. *A New System of Slavery: The export of Indian labour abroad, 1830–1920*. London.
- 5 Quoted in Lowenthal, David. 1985. *The Past is a Foreign Country*. Cambridge. p. 64.
- 6 See Lal, Brij V. 2000. *Chalo Jahaji: On a journey through indenture in Fiji*. Suva and Canberra. An early and, in some respects dated, account is Gillion, K. L. 1973, 2nd rep. *Fiji's Indian Migrants. A history to the end of indenture in 1920*. Melbourne.
- 7 See Legge, J. D. 1958. *Britain in Fiji, 1858–1880*. London.
- 8 See Moynagh, Michael. 1981. *Brown or White? A history of the Fiji sugar industry, 1873–1973*. Canberra. Also, Narsey, Wadan Lal. 1979. 'Monopoly Capital, White Racism and Superprofits in Fiji: A Case Study of the CSR.' In *Journal of Pacific Studies*, 5. pp. 66–146.
- 9 See studies in Brennan, Lance and Brij V. Lal (eds). 1998. *Across the Kala Pani: Indian Overseas Migration and Settlement*. Special issue of *South Asia: A Journal of South Asian Studies*, vol. xxi. The history of the south Indian indentured migration is desperately in need of scholarly study.
- 10 For north India, see Lal, Brij V. 1983. *Girmityas: The origins of the Fiji Indians*. Canberra.
- 11 See Whitcombe, Elizabeth. 1972. *Agrarian Conditions in Northern India*. Vol. 1: *The United Provinces Under British Rule, 1860–1900*. Berkeley. The best sources are the Settlement Reports, which contain reliable information about society, economy and civil administration.
- 12 See Robinson, Francis. 1973. 'Municipal Government and Muslim Separatism in the United Provinces, 1883–1916.' In *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. vii: 3. pp. 389–441.
- 13 For these, see the Settlement Reports. Also Gupta, Ranajit Das. 1973. 'Factory Labour in Eastern India: sources of supply, 1885–1946.' In *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, vol. xiii: 3. pp. 277–329.
- 14 For further discussion, see Lal, Brij V. *Girmityas*.

- 15 See Basham, A. L. 1964. 'Notes on Seafaring in Ancient India.' In Basham, A. L., *Studies in Indian History and Culture*, Calcutta. pp. 146–66.
- 16 See Lal, Brij V. *Girmitiyas*. pp. 68–90.
- 17 *Ibid.*, pp. 97–116.
- 18 For an eyewitness account, see 'Bound for the Colonies in 1905: A view of Indian indentured emigration.' Reproduced in *Journal of Pacific History*, 34: 3, 1999. pp. 306–9.
- 19 These are in the Agent-General of Immigration Annual Reports published as *Legislative Council Papers*. They are available in Suva in hard copy and in Canberra and other places on microfilm.
- 20 For further discussion, see Lal, Brij V. *Chalo Jahaji*. pp. 167–94, where these arguments are elaborated.
- 21 See Jayawardena, Chandra. 1971. 'The Disintegration of Caste in Fiji Indian Rural Society.' In Hiatt, L. R. and C. Jayawardena (eds), *Anthropology in Oceania*, Sydney. pp. 89–199 at p. 94. See also Schwartz, Barton. 1967. *Caste in Overseas Indian Communities*. San Francisco.
- 22 For a discussion of this, see Kelly, John D. 1991. *A Politics of Virtue: Hinduism, Sexuality and Countercolonial Discourse in Fiji*. Chicago.
- 23 See Mayer, A. C. 1954. 'Fiji Indian Kin-Group: An Aspect of Change in an Immigrant Community.' In *Oceania*, xxiv: 3. pp. 161–71. Also, Jayawardena, Chandra. 1983. 'Farm, Household and Family in Fiji Indian Rural Society.' In Kurien, George and Ram P. Srivastva (eds), *Overseas Indians: A Study in Adaptation*, New Delhi. pp. 141–79. For a comparative discussion, see Nevadomsky, Joseph. 1983. 'Changes Over Time and Space in the East Indian Family in Rural Trinidad.' In *ibid.* pp. 180–214.
- 24 Gill, Walter. 1970. *Turn North-East at the Tombstone*. Adelaide. p. 73.
- 25 The lone book-length exception is Carter, Marina. 1994. *Lakshmi's Legacy: The Testimonies of Indian Women in 19th Century Mauritius*. Rose Hill: Stanley.
- 26 For more discussion, see Lal, Brij V. 1985. 'Kunti's Cry: Indentured Women on Fiji Plantations.' In *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 22. pp. 55–71. And Lal, Brij V. 1985. 'Veil of Dishonour: Sexual Jealousy and Suicide on Fiji Plantations.' In *Journal of Pacific History*, 20. pp. 135–55.
- 27 Burton, J. W. 1912. *Call of the Pacific*. London. p. 108.
- 28 See generally Mayer, Adrian C. 1973, 2nd ed. *Peasants in the Pacific: A Study of Fiji Indian Rural Society*. Berkeley. For a comparative-specific case study, see Akal, Suky. 1998. 'Beauty is God's Smile, Music His Voice: Indian Music and its Influence in Surinam and the West Indies.' Paper presented to the International Indian Diaspora Conference: 'Charting New Perspectives.' Stardust Hotel, Paramaribo, 30–31 May, 1998.

- 29 See Jayawardena, Chandra. 1965-66. 'Religious Belief and Social Change: Aspects of the Development of Hinduism in British Guiana.' In *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. viii. pp. 211-40 at p. 230.
- 30 For an account, see Wilson, Jim. 1979. 'Fiji Hinduism.' In Mishra (ed.), *Rama's Banishment*. pp. 86-111.
- 31 See Barz, R. K. 1986. 'Indian Immigration and Hindu Literature in Mauritius.' In *Journal of Mauritian Studies*, 1: 1. pp. 57-89 at pp. 62-3.
- 32 See Billimoria, Purusottama. 1985. 'The Arya Samaj in Fiji.' In *Religion*, 15. pp. 103-30.
- 33 See Lal, Brij V. 2000. 'Hinduism Under Indenture.' In Lal, Brij V. *Chalo Jahaji*. pp. 239-60.
- 34 Jayawardena. 'Religious Belief and Social Change.' p. 228.
- 35 For a study of Fiji Muslims, see Ali, Ahmed. 1980. *Plantation to Politics: Studies on Fiji Indians*. Suva. pp. 107-29.
- 36 See Sandwith, George and Helen. 1954. 'Sufi Ratib.' In their *Research in Fiji, Tonga and Samoa*. Surrey. pp. 12-13. Also Ali, Ahmed. 2003. 'In the name of Allah.' *Fiji Daily Post*, 3 November, 2003.
- 37 See Kelly, John D. 'From Holi to Diwali in Fiji: An Essay on Ritual and History.' In *Man* (ns), 23. pp. 40-55.
- 38 See Mayer, Adrian C. 1952. 'The Holi Festival Among the Indians of Fiji.' In *The Eastern Anthropologist*, vi: 1, September. pp. 3-17.
- 39 From von Grunebaum, G. E. 1958. *Muhammadan Festivals*. London. p. 88.
- 40 For a general survey of the free community, see Mayer, *Peasants in the Pacific*. pp. 13-34. And Gillion, *Fiji's Indian Migrants*. pp. 136-63.
- 41 For further discussion, see Lal, Brij V. *Broken Waves*. pp. 46-8. Also Ali, Ahmed. 1978. 'Political Awareness Among Fiji Indians, 1879-1919.' In *Asian Profile*, 6: 5. pp. 477-91.
- 42 These quotations are from the files of the Colonial Secretary's Office, National Archives of Fiji.
- 43 Colonial Secretary's Office File 84/2140, National Archives of Fiji.