Girmitiya Culture and Memory

Navigating Identity, Tradition, and Resilience across Continents

Edited by
Priyanka Chaudhary · Neha Singh

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Editors
Priyanka Chaudhary
Department of Languages,
Literatures and Cultural Studies
Manipal University Jaipur
Rajasthan, India

Neha Singh
Institute of Management
Nirma University
Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India

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To the enduring legacy of the Girmitiya, whose heritage, courage, perseverance and collective memory illuminate paths of resilience and courage for future generations.

Foreword

When Bharata decides to bring back Rama from his banishment and reinstate him as the rightful king of Ayodhya, he takes with him a veritable entourage of workers. Valmiki refers to them as jewellers, master potters, weavers, weapon-smiths, workers in peacock feathers, sawyers, bauble-makers, plasterers, blanket cleaners, bath attendants, washermen, fishermen, headmen of villagers, among many others (*Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* II. 77, 12–15). The Adi-poet does not refer to paddy planters, graziers, ploughmen, labourers, cane cutters, sweepers, toilet cleaners, and other workmen and women quite possibly because the presence of these underclass workers would have dampened the descriptive power of an elitist epic genre. But imagine another journey, this time not a journey in search of a king who had been denied his kingdom but a sea voyage, more like a parody of the voyage of Aeneas (in the *Aeneid*), that promised these workers an escape from the wretchedness of life in nineteenth-century Ayodhya, an Ayodhya no longer of horses, elephants, colonnades, broad walkways, palaces, and exceptionally beautiful women. What term would one give a journey, historically post-slavery, certainly not world shattering but one that nevertheless created for the voyagers a singular narrative? What name would one give to the wretched of the earth, a primarily illiterate mass of workers with varying expertise, castes, beliefs, and eating habits all thrown into the hull of sailing and later steam ships? This book gives the people who undertook that journey a name and the name is 'Girmitiya', from 'Girmit', the latter a vernacularisation of the English word 'agreement' that they had to sign, more correctly thumb marked. It was also an agreement that through accompanying Emigration Passes endowed them with

'subjecthood' for the first time in their history. The word girmit and its common noun derivative girmitiya have yet to enter the hallowed lexicography of the *Oxford English Dictionary*. But it should as is clear from any close reading of the chapters collected in this volume about this motley crowd who in spite of their divergent professions were overnight recast as an undifferentiated unit of labour. Girmit and Girmitiya, the two key words found throughout this volume, capture the emergence of a social imaginary that makes sense of their lives. Although these two terms are not in common use throughout the Indian indenture plantation diaspora—they are not to be found in V S Naipaul, for instance—they nevertheless invoke connections to the primal voyages with their kalapani (the black waters) and jahaji-bhai (ship brother/sisterhood) associations. They connect, intergenerationally, experiences across all the nations of the old Indian plantation diaspora. And this has been possible because the motley crowd that came—a human cargo individuated along work, caste, and religious lines—were redefined and reconstituted by capitalism into a unified work force who did the same labour and were also paid the same wages. If we add to the girmit experience other aspects of their lives examined in this volume—a common weekly food ration, subjects of a common form of corporal punishment, and livelihood in barrack accommodation—it is easy to understand girmitiya culture and its post-memory. Prince Bharata's entourage may have been varied and reflected an advanced urban culture, the later entourage as human cargo on ships, although equally varied at a lower level of work and labour, underwent a dramatic change the moment they entered the hulls of ships. That dramatic economic transformation produced a unified (albeit 'false') consciousness that explains the social imaginary of girmit peoples captured in the chapters in this volume.

College of Arts, Business, Law and Social Sciences Vijay Mishra
Murdoch University
Murdoch, WA, Australia

Preface

Displacement, movement, then relocation is the journey of *Vaasi* of India to *Pravasi Bharatiya*. The story of migration in India is not a newly arrived concept. Global repercussions ensued the British abolition of slavery and the slave trade. Under the indentured system, millions of Asians and Africans were transported to work on sugar plantations throughout the British-ruled Caribbean, Fiji, Peru, Mauritius, and South Africa, among other regions. Many indentured labourers also known as *Girmitiyas* from all over India arrived in the British-ruled sugar colonies between 1860 and 1911.

This volume delves into the multifaceted dimensions of the Girmitya diaspora and their post-memory. The intersections between dislocation and relocation have always been a subject of scholarly interest and in this volume envisage to understand the roots of migration, life stories, narratives, and personal anecdotes. This further accentuated various propositions such as the struggles of the indentured labourers, the politics of displacement, relationships with the homeland and host land, liaison with indigenous Fijians, folktales and oral traditions, repercussions of migration, and retention of the archives and museums. It reinforces the idea of how collective remembrance is important in the field of migration. The critical interrogation of memories helps in building a framework to study the varied experiences of the girmitiya community. In this volume, through a blend of historical analysis, personal narratives, and scholarly discourse, we embark on a journey to unearth the layers of meaning embedded within the Girmitya experience.

This is a key volume on Girmitya diaspora, indentured labour, and bequest of indentureship; this book encompasses the saga of Girmitya migration: re-engaging the homeland, culture, history, and memory that challenges preconceptions, amplifies marginalised voices, and illuminates the enduring legacy of Girmitya. By chronicling the experiences of the Girmitya diaspora, we pay homage to the pioneers, recognize the intricacy of their reality, and commemorate the enduring legacy they left behind for posterity.

May this book be a source of inspiration and recollection, a celebration of the eternal legacy of the Girmitya diaspora, and an ode to perseverance that enriches and educates all of us.

Jaipur, Rajasthan, India — Priyanka Chaudhary
Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India — Neha Singh

Acknowledgement

Migration is a universal phenomenon and it has become a universal trend. This anthology, which consists of sixteen pieces authored by authors from different nations, is not meant to be read aloud to readers. However, we also acknowledge the limitations of our individual knowledge bases, given that this volume is reliant on collaborative effort that has evolved after a series of discussions.

First and foremost, we are indebted to Hon'ble Mr. Avinash Teeluck, Minister of Arts and Culture Cultural Heritage, Republic of Mauritius, who accepted our invitation to deliver presidential remarks. He highlighted the importance of the conference's theme and talked about the hardships and contribution of *girmitiya mazdoor*. We had been working on *Girmitiya* Culture and Memory for a while; it started as a Call for Papers (CFP) in 2021 and an International Conference in 2022 on *The Saga of Girmitiya Migration: Re-engaging the Homeland, Culture, History and Memory*. Therefore, one of our published books is actually an addition to this volume: Neha Singh and Sajaudeen Chapparban (*Literature of Girmitiya: History, Culture and Identity*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2023). While the main idea for this volume arose from conversations among its editors, the seed developed shape through a collaborative effort by a large range of researchers focused on the subject of migration in India. In order to be as inclusive and as ambitious as possible, we personally reached out to and contacted potential contributors in addition to putting out an open call for chapter proposals. Numerous excellent proposals were received. We had to disappoint a lot of people because of the volume's main objective. We owe a great deal to the researchers and academics whose work is

not included in this volume but whose passion and support have inspired us as editors to continue this endeavour.

We also acknowledge Mr. Satyendra Peerthum, Senior Historian at Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund (AGTF) and our contributor, for crucial conversations throughout the workshop that changed the theoretical framework of the volume by making scholarship on the *girmitiya* migration accessible. We are indebted to Prof. Amit Mishra (Ambedkar University, Delhi), Prof. Crispin Bates (University of Edinburgh), Prof. Richard Allen (Framingham State University), Prof. Irudaya Rajan (University of Kerala) who agreed to share their insights on *girmitiya* migration from India. We are grateful to the academic members of UNESCO's World Heritage Sites Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund, Mauritius, International Scientific Committee-Indian Ocean Committee, Indentured Labour Route Project (ILRP), Gathari Girmitiya Research Foundation (New Delhi), Mahatma Gandhi Institute (Mauritius) for their academic support which made the conference possible. We are highly obliged to Vijay C Mishra, Emeritus Professor from Murdoch University, Australia, for carving 'foreword' for this edited volume.

We greatly appreciate all the contributors' efforts, patience, and superb cooperation, but we would especially like to emphasise the enthusiasm of numerous 'young' academics who worked relentlessly to improve their chapters. Sincere thanks are also due to everyone, both close and far, who offered their effort and knowledge to the review of all the individual chapters in this edition. Finally, we want to thank the Palgrave Macmillan production crew, especially Camille Davies, Ramesh Kannan for their editorial assistant.

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Notes on Contributors

Anisha Badal-Caussy is a lecturer from the Department of Mauritian Studies in the School of Mauritian and Area Studies at the Mahatma Gandhi Institute. Her field of interest is literature, feminism, and culture. She teaches Mauritian Literature and English Language skills to undergraduate students. She has a bachelor's degree in English Studies, a Post Graduate Certificate in Education in English, and a Master's in English Studies. She has participated in national and international conferences, and she has published research articles in national and international journals. She has currently undertaken research on female narratives in Island Literature.

Priyanka Chaudhary is Professor of English in the Department of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies of School of Humanities and Social Sciences at Manipal University Jaipur, Rajasthan, India. She teaches to undergraduate and postgraduate literature students. Her research interest lies in Gender Studies, South Asian Writings and Cultural Studies with multidisciplinary approaches to literary studies. She has supervised seven research scholars so far. She has published numerous articles and reviews in Scopus, Web of Science and UGC journals. She has co-authored books such as *South Asian Literature and Culture: Social Inclusion and Exclusion*; *Gender, Culture, South Asia: Marginalization and Self in Contemporary Narratives*; *An Anthology of Verses*; and *Technical Communication*. She has presented academic papers in several national and international conferences. She has attended many FDPs and workshops.

Amita Esther David is a professor at Isabella Thoburn College, Lucknow, teaching History for over twenty years. Her doctorate is on Socio-cultural Advancement, Nationalism, and the Christian missionaries in the twentieth century (with special reference to UP 1858–1900). She is keenly interested in diaspora studies and has presented papers at conferences in Trinidad, New Zealand, and Mauritius. Her paper on Phagwa was published by the Global Girmit Institute in 2022. She is a co-author in a book called *People Called Lucknow*, published by Penguin-Random House in 2019.

Jayganesh Dawosing enrolled as PhD student at the Open University of Mauritius 2nd Year-Bhojpuri Intangible Cultural Heritage and Mass Media. He obtained a MRES (Master's in research methodology) at the University of Mauritius in 2010. He did a BA (Joint) Humanity in Hindi and French at the University of Mauritius in 2003. He is an active researcher in the field of Bhojpuri and Folklore. He currently offers lectures pertaining to his field of enquiry at the Mahatma Gandhi Institute, Moka, Mauritius. He has published extensively in renowned journals.

Ruben Gowricharn is Professor of Indian Diaspora Studies at the Vrije Universiteit of Amsterdam, the Netherlands. His recent books include three edited volumes about the Indian diaspora (all Routledge) and *Miskend Verleden. Hindostaanse boeren in Suriname 1880–1980* (2020), *Multiple Homemaking. The Ethnic Condition in Indian Diaspora Societies* (2021), *De Goudsmid* (2022) and *Ongezien Ongehoord. Hindostanen in de Nederlandse koloniale geschiedenis* (2023, co-authored with Jaswina Elahi). Gowricharn is also a managing director of a doctoral program for adult migrant students in the Netherlands. At the moment, he is finishing a book on *Girmitiya Peasants* and on *Ethnogenesis in the Girmitiya diaspora*.

Krishna Gubili is a volunteer for the Indentured Labour route project focusing on building a database to help people search for their ancestors and researchers to understand labour migration patterns. His book, *VIRIAH*, is an amazon best seller, based on his lifelong search for his ancestor, who was an indentured labourer in South Africa. He is a graduate from the Indian Institute of Management, Lucknow, and an undergraduate from the JNTU, College of Engineering, Hyderabad. He was born in Hyderabad, India, and migrated to the USA in 1998. He lives in Easton, PA.

Nidhi Jha is a PhD research scholar of English in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at the Indian Institute of Technology Patna. Her area of research is Postcolonial Literature and Indentured Literature.

Praveen Mirdha is currently a professor in the Department of English, Government Girls' College, Ajmer. She has authored a book *Madness: Perspectives and Representations in the Fiction of Joseph Conrad* (2016) and published book-chapters, book reviews and articles in International/ National journals. Her book-chapters pertaining to Indian perspectives on Kala Pani Crossings and indentured female diaspora have appeared in two companion volumes on *Kala Pani Crossings* published by Routledge, London, and IIAS, Shimla. She has presented papers in International Conferences/Seminars organized by institutions acclaimed for academics and research including IIAS, Shimla, Central Universities of Rajasthan and Pondicherry, and Thanatic Ethics.

Nalini Naidu, originally from Fiji, attended Waikato University (New Zealand) with a Sociology major and Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. She has an established career in Information Management and Information Technology. She currently resides in Sydney. In 2019, her book *Annapurna: Gastronomic Delights from my Fiji Indian Childhood* was the winner in the South Pacific category for the Gourmand World Cookbook Awards, in 2021; the book was a finalist in 25 years of the Gourmand awards. She is also an indentured labour researcher and museum enthusiast. As well as international conferences publications, she has published papers in literary publications and anthologies.

Kamala Lakshmi Naiker is a dedicated academic at the University of Fiji. She writes reviews on a range of subjects such as women's writing, postcolonial literature, and creative writing in Fiji and internationally. Her papers have been published in peer-reviewed journals. She has attended conferences, nationally, regionally, and internationally. She inhabits a prominent place at the University of Fiji where she has served since the University's inception in 2006. *A Fijian Reading of Bharati Mukherjee* is her first major book. She is a Primary Supervisor for PhD and master's students. She is a PhD adjudicator for foreign students.

Vandana Vikashni Nath is a passionate scholar in the department in School of Humanities and Arts at University of Fiji, with a research

interest in Gender Studies. Fuelled by a desire to challenge societal norms, her research delves into representations of women in diverse media, uncovering power dynamics and advocating for marginalized voices. Currently, she examines the portrayal of female characters by a South Pacific female writer to analyze her impact on social change narratives. Beyond research, Vandana ignites young minds as an educator in English Literature at the University of Fiji. In her free time, she enjoys engaging in discussions through symposiums and community outreach, bridging the gap between academia and lived realities.

Satyendra Peerthum is a Mauritian Historian and In-Charge of Documentation/Member and Coordinator, writer, and lecturer. He is the former Acting Head of the Technical Unit; he is a historian and responsible for the Documentation Unit, who is permanently based in the Research Unit of the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund (AGTF) which manages the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site in Port Louis, Republic of Mauritius. He is a well-known international historian of indentured labour, slavery, and the working-class movement in Mauritius, and he is a member of the International Scientific Committee and of the Secretariat of the Indenture Labour Route. He is also the Coordinator of the Indentured Labour Route Project's (ILRP) Indian Ocean Regional Committee and also a part-time lecturer in history at the University of Mauritius and the Open University of Mauritius. Over the past twenty-two years, he has specialized and published several books, booklets, academic articles, conference papers, and newspaper articles on the study of indentured labour, slavery, the Mauritian working class, and cultural heritage issues in Mauritius and numerous other themes in several countries around the world.

Rohitashwani is an author, artist, educator, and storyteller from Hisar, Haryana, India, with a PhD in English literature. Her contributions to literature extend beyond creative writing, encompassing impactful scholarly pursuits. Focused on ecofeminism, women's issues, and disability studies, her research explores the intersectionality of societal concerns. She has presented many research papers at numerous National and International conferences. Her scholarly journey includes publishing research papers in esteemed journals and contributing insightful chapters to various books. Her artworks and poetry get space in various magazines at times.

Ouma Seebaluck was born in Mauritius at a time when the island was still under British rule. For over 25 years, she worked as an airline

executive for Air Mauritius, the national carrier, and rose to senior positions in the organization through hard work and determination. She has been largely responsible for popularizing Air Mauritius in every destination where she was posted. She has travelled to several destinations across the globe, and this has given her deep insight into the richness of different cultures. In keeping with her father's vision of education, she completed her MA in Diplomatic Studies from the Diplomatic Academy of London, Westminster University, UK. She did PhD in International Studies from Jamia Millia Islamia University, New Delhi, India. Her first book *Bollywood and Its Global Impact* was launched in Mumbai, India, in March 2023 by eminent producer and filmmaker, Mr. Mahesh Bhatt.

Smriti Singh is a professor in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at the Indian Institute of Technology Patna. Her areas of research are Diasporic Writings, Postcolonial Literature, and Indian Writings in English. She has three books and numerous articles to her credit. She is the former Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant Program (FLTA) to the University of Texas at Austin for 2005–06.

Neha Singh is an assistant professor at Institute of Management, Nirma University, Ahmedabad, India. She is a member of the International Scientific Committee-Indian Ocean Committee, Indentured Labour Route Project. She has published research papers in reputed international journals as well as in UNESCO's World Heritage Site Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund's newsletter. She has co-edited a book *Literature of Girmitiya: History, Culture and Identity*, Palgrave Macmillan (2023). She is a recipient of ICSSR (Indian Council of Social Science Research) data collection abroad award and has been awarded an ICSSR-funded research project in 2023. Her major interest lies in migration and diaspora studies, slaves' narratives, gendered migration, and cultural production.

Anjali Tiwari is a PhD Research Scholar in the Department of Western History at University of Lucknow, India. Her topic of research is "Indenture Women from Awadh to Jamaica 1845–1917". She has keen interest in exploring the Girmitiya past beyond Archives, through folk songs, folk traditions, folk culture, monuments, subaltern domains where subaltern speaks for themselves. She has participated in conferences related to the topic and presented papers. She also writes articles for various web-platforms like Indo-Caribbean Forum, fortnightly Indo-Caribbean World and Caribbean Studies Association (CSA) Newsletter.

Aditi Tiwari is a PhD Scholar of English in the Department of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies of School of Humanities and Social Sciences at Manipal University Jaipur, India. Her research area is based on Mythology and Indian writings in English. She did her postgraduation from Maharaja Sayajirao University, Baroda. She has published articled in Scopus journals and also the book chapters. She also participated in national and international conferences.

Aparna Tripathi is a PhD candidate and the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) Doctoral Fellow at the Centre for Diaspora Studies, Central University of Gujarat, Gandhinagar. Her doctoral research aims to study the India Caucus, a unique and influential congressional advocacy group within the United States Congress, which has risen as a cornerstone in the edifice of India–U.S. relations. She holds MPhil in Diaspora Studies from the Central University of Gujarat, and MA and BA (Hons.) in Political Science from Banaras Hindu University, India. She has published articles and book chapters in Scopus and other reputed journals. She has attended many national/international conferences. She has worked as a field investigator/research assistant in an ICSSR minor project titled "Geopolitical Implications of CPEC Extension into Afghanistan" for four months under Professor Manish, Dean School of International Studies at the Central University of Gujarat.

Shalini Yadav An avid poet, writer, humanitarian, ambassador of peace and professor, she holds a PhD in Post-colonial Literature and MPhil in English Language Teaching (ELT) from the University of Rajasthan. During her tenure as an educator in India, Libya and Saudi Arabia, she has participated and presented papers at conferences, chaired sessions and delivered key speeches. She has written scholarly research articles for various National and International refereed journals and edited volumes. She is an active member of various literary societies. She is also an efficacious member of the editorial boards of various qualitative journals and magazines. She has authored and edited thirteen books till now. She is recipient of Savitribai Phule Excellence Award-2023, Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam Award-2023 and Acharya Mahaveer Prasad Dwivedi Award.

Abbreviations

IILD	International Indentured Labour Database
AGTF	Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund
ILRP	Indentured Labour Route Project
PTSD	Post-traumatic Stress Disorder
UN	United Nations
MEA	Ministry of External Affairs
ICOM	International Council of Museums
GLAM	Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museum
VM	Virtual Museum

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Girmitiya Culture and Memory: Theorizing Its Culture and (Post)memory

Priyanka Chaudhary and Neha Singh

> In our midst today, there are less than a handful of surviving Girmitiyas left, but their voices remain with us, and their memories will remain forever.
> —Tej Ram Prem, Introduction to the *Girmit Gāthā* series, 1979

Indenture and Girmit

Indian migration is ubiquitous. It can be bifurcated into 'Old Diaspora' that emerged from the colonial migrations and the 'New Diaspora' that emerged from the 'postcolonial migrations' (Amba Pande, 2017). Indian Indentured Labour migration is an old diaspora at the time of the British

P. Chaudhary (✉)
Department of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies, Manipal University Jaipur, Rajasthan, India
e-mail: priyanka.chaudhary@jaipur.manipal.edu

N. Singh
Institute of Management, Nirma University, Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India
e-mail: neha.singh@nirmauni.ac.in

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colonial period, where Indians were lured and sent to work on the sugar agricultural estates in the far-off British colonies to curb expenses. It is also known as *Girmitiya* migration, which is one of the poignant chapters in the annals of history in the Indian context where thousands of Indians were transported to the Pacific archipelago, as a substitute after the abolition of slavery in 1833. *Girmit* is the corrupt form/mispronunciation and demotic form of the word 'agreement' that Indian labourers signed before voyage, and a *Girmit* going under this agreement was called a *Girmitiya* by uneducated Indians. Under this system, approximately 1.5 million men and women were uprooted from their native India between 1838 and 1916 and sent to colonies such as Mauritius, Suriname, Guyana, Tobago, Trinidad, Fiji, and other island nations. These Indians left their homes in the hope of a better future (Lal, 2004a, b, c, p. 34).

The crossing of the black sea was taken as shattering and dissolving one's cultural and religious beliefs in terms of caste and eating habits due to proximity on shipboard (V. Mishra, 2015; DeLoughrey, 2011). The atrocities were noticed on the indentured migrants, such as inadequate food, sexual harassment of women at plantations, housing problems, and physical punishment (S. Mishra, 2005; Lal, 2000; Naidu, 1980; Ali, 1979), which hiked the suicides (Lal, 1993: 187). The narrations of less pay, poor food, health conditions, and marginalized behaviour from both the colonizers and indigenous people can be observed from the testimonials of the surviving Girmitiyas. Women were no exception; rather, they were doubly marginalized, constantly abused, and victimized. Their stories of resistance, resilience, and agency are recorded in the works of Margaret Mishra (2012, 2013, 2016). The period of Indentureship in history has been acknowledged as a period of collective trauma and hell (Gillion, 1962; Ali, 1979, 1980).

Colonialism has immensely affected Indian trade, capital, human lives, and mobility across the cultures, borders, boundaries, and identities whose remnants left ineffaceable signs and dark shadows on the lives, ethos, literature, and identity of colonized subjects even in the postcolonial epochs. Despite numerous challenges and the exploitative living conditions of both colonizer and indigenous populace, Girmitiyas still maintain memories of their homeland and ancestral culture in the form of festivities, language, and rituals, which propagated the exclusive Indian diaspora culture in host-lands. Many written literary narratives and oral traditions have emerged to map lived experiences and struggles, which are crucial for understanding their culture and memory. Girmitiya migration is one of

the biggest colonialist enterprises that compelled billions of Indians to abandon their dear family, homeland, memories, ethos, culture, and other belongings behind. Even though these indentured migrants reconstructed and established numerous possessions at the lands of their arrival that they left behind but they are still associated with their homeland culture, rites, rituals and food. However, those devastating partings led to hyphenated identities and substantial impacts on their lives by fragmenting their self, beliefs, and psyches. The (in)voluntary (im)migration on the shores through *kalapani* forced the Indians to leave their country, and they survived in harsh conditions in a new cultural boundary. The Girmit descendants carry their own history and heritage as a legacy from the fore-bearers who forsook India by 'contracting' to toil in a foreign nation.

Although numerous academic works spotlight indentured labour migration/*Kalapani* studies, nevertheless, there is a need within the academic pool for exploration and documentation in this field from an Indian perspective in order to enrich Girmit historiography. Ashutosh Bhardwaj and Judith Misrahi-Barak in their edited volume on *Kalapani Crossings* rightly state that Indian indentureship has been well researched in the past forty years of time and "a new momentum has been gained, under the impulsion of a new generation of writers" (2022) in contemporary time. They implore more unheard voices to come forth from the Indian perspective. The preliminary setup of Girmit historiography has been established by Hugh Tinker in *A New System of Slavery* in 1974, where he draws parallels between indentureship and Atlantic slavery, and the ways in which Indians were lured through false promises into servitude. Both Hugh Tinker and K.L. Gillion stated that it was the 'push factor that was of prime importance in the migration of Indians' to foreign lands. Notable scholar and Girmit descendant Brij Lal's monumental work on indentureship includes *Girmitiyas: The Origins of the Fiji Indians* (1983), *Chalo Jahaji: On a Journey Through Indenture in Fiji* (2000), and *Bittersweet* (ed. 2004), where he touches upon their arrival, sufferings, and experiences through real-life accounts. Brij Lal's book *Girmitiyas: The Origin of the Fiji Indians* (1983) articulates concerning the painful Indenture System and its consequences for migrants. For the indentured labourers, life seemed to be one of hopeless degradation. The life of Girmitiyas was full of tension, turmoil, and uncertainty. The Girmitiyas survived all these struggles.

Marina Karter and Khal Torabully in *Coolitude*: *An Anthology of the Indian Labour Diaspora* (2002) convey the metaphysical connotations of

shared histories through the word 'Coolitude' to understand their real personal and shared experiences and the journey on board ship. All Coolies, irrespective of their destination lands, underwent an exile from their Indian homeland. Brinda Mehta (2004), in her *Diasporic (Dis)locations: Indo-Caribbean Women Writers Negotiate the Kala Pani,* discusses the involvement of Indo-Caribbean women in questions of nationhood, race, gender, and class. Ashutosh Kumar in *Coolies of the Empire: Indentured Indians in the Sugar Colonies 1830–1920* (2017) deliberates upon the ways "in which migrants managed to survive and even flourish within the interstices of the indentured labour system and how considerably the experience of migration changed over time". The heart-rending records of Vijay Mishra's *Rama's Banishment* (1979a) and *The Diasporic Imaginary and the Indian Diaspora* (2005); Subramani's *The Indo-Fijian Experience in Fiji* (1979b); Vijay Naidu's *The Violence of Indenture in Fiji* (1980); and Ahmed Ali's *Girmit* (1979), *Plantation to Politics* (1980), and *The Indenture Experience in Fiji* (1981) narrate the resistance, gaining agency, ways of adoption and resilience by these migrants.

Vijay Mishra affirms, "All diasporas are unhappy, but every diaspora is unhappy in its own way" (1996, 189). Amba Pande's *Women in the Indian Diaspora, Historical narratives, and contemporary Challenges* (2018) enunciates women's experiences predominantly and their struggles during indentured time through fictional and non-fictional writings. Totaram Sanadhya's *Fiji Dvip me Mere Ikkis Varsh* is an apt illustration for innovative restorations of the life-biospheres of the Girmitiyas to present an earnest expression of 'subaltern' antiquity through testimonies. It is valuable archival information. Satish C. Rai's thesis and film combinedly in *In Exile at Home: A Fiji-Indian Story* (2011) deliberate on the politics of sugar plantation industry and colonizers in denying the return of Girmitiyas to their homeland for continuing cheap labour. Doug Munro and Jack Corbett's edited volume *Bearing Witness* (2017) covers the trajectory of Brij Lal's life and his impact on indenture studies. It also discusses Fiji's politics. Radica Mahase in her book *Why Should We Be Called Coolie?* (2020) examines the abolition of a labour system that lasted from 1838 to 1920. The volume provides a comparative analysis of the abolition of the Indian indentureship system and shows the global interconnectedness of instances of abolition, with a strong focus on the perspective of subaltern groups.

The representation of the Girmit is also portrayed by literary writers through fictional writings. Abhimanyu Anat's Hindi Novel *Lal Pasina*

(2010) takes Mauritius location and depiction into account; Birbal Singh's *Jahaji Bhai: an Anthology of Indo-Caribbean Fiction* (1988) offers an illustrative interpretation of genres and themes employed by some Indo-Caribbean writers. Short stories by Samuel Selvon, Ismith Khan, Neil Bissoondath, and others give a unique glimpse of Indo-Caribbean life from the colonial to modern era. Satendra Nandan's *Girmit: Epic Lives in Small Lines* (2020) is a collection of poems that narrates the vicissitudes of lives of both men and women as coolies. Ramabai Espinet's *The Swinging Bridge* (2003) and Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies* (2009), *River of Smoke* (2011), and *Flood of Fire* (2015) are also based on indentured experiences and crossing black sea waters. Munsi Rahman Khan's *Jeeven Prakash: The Autobiography of an Indian Indentured Labourer* (2005) is the personal life account of a Muslim named Rahman Khan: how he became a plantation overseer and a teacher in Hindi and Hinduism in Suriname. In his Hindi hagiography *Pahla Girmitiya* (2000), Giriraj Kishor identifies 'the Mahatma as the first Girmitiya in the title of the novel' (Kishor, 2000). V. S. Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas* (1961) and *The Middle Passage: The Caribbean Revisited* (1962) and Olive Senior's *The Arrival of the Snake-Woman and Other Stories* (1989) discuss the ontological topics related to the indenture period and its aftereffects. A great testimony of culture, memory, and moral degradation can be phrased from Sanadhya's *My Twenty-One Years in Fiji*. Jogindar Singh Kanwal's novel *Savera* (The dawn), Abhmanyu Anat's novel *Lal Pasina* (Bloody sweat), and Subramani's *Dauka Puran* (Scoundrel's tale) tell the tales from the memory and the atrocities the Indians bore during that period throughout their lives.

A pool of academic scholars recorded their research discussing various aspects and topics of indentured migration. Nevertheless, the importance of documenting the culture, experiences, assimilation, archival history, individual and collective memory, the identity of the Girmitiya community and their efforts in tracing their ancestral roots, connection to India, and their relation and approach towards the ancestral homeland is understated. Articulation, projection, and production of their experiences of migration and life as immigrants, their narratives, tradition, culture, religion, and memory can always be further explored. The intriguing overlooked diverse historical legacy of colonial labour migration and its narrative should be brought into mainstream scholarly dialogue in the humanities and social sciences using a transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary approach.

The formidable images of Girmitiya experiences unravel the brutality of Britishers in their life stories, narratives, and postmemory. Girmitiyas expressed their pains and sorrows through poetry, music, and other forms of self-expression. It served to alleviate their despair, and it helped them to establish a newer identity. Their identity became fragmented by the feeling of 'half here' and 'half there' (Steven Vertovec: 1997). After leaving their homeland, most of them were in a constant struggle to make a connection with their homeland. Apart from the lures from *Arkatiyas*, some of the migrants left their family and home voluntarily. Most of the women were widows and prostitutes who wanted to eliminate patriarchal restraints. They were travelling to a place where they could not see anything that they could feel their association with. The pain of being away from home was living in their heart as though everything they knew had been snatched from them and they were put through unbearable pain. The concept of identity cannot be separated from the notion of 'homeland', where poetics of exile and identity discourse weave its rubric in the case of Girmit historiography. This omnipresent home is felt by all, but it marks its presence with a different connotation.

In this book, we conceptualize the idea of *Girmitiya* culture and memory, its history and power relations between the colonial and colonized, natives and hyphenated communities, and cultural transformations. It has been noted that 'third-world' countries emerged from colonial domination and the struggle against the same. The footprints of their history and past have also primarily been documented by Western scholars, which overshadow their own narratives. Therefore, Indian scholars should be given space to know their perspectives.

Girmit and (Post)Memory

Postmemory is particularly apt for the Indian diaspora. As Hirsch writes, "this condition of exile from the space of identity, this diasporic experience, is a characteristic aspect of postmemory" (Hirsch, 1997: 243). In addition, this doesn't go away: the "children of exiled survivors, although they have not themselves lived through the trauma of banishment and the destruction of home, remain always marginal or exiled, always in the diaspora" (Hirsch, 1996: 662). Memory is always recorded in personal and collective consciousness. "[A]ffective memory," Mishra writes, has in this instance "less to do with irrefutable statistical data and more to do with the traumatic negation of the [indentured worker's expectation]. It is