

ABSTRACT

INDIAN INDENTURED LABOUR IN TRINIDAD:
TOWARDS ABOLITION

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This dissertation analyses the historical process leading towards the termination of the recruitment of Indian labourers for the indentureship scheme in Trinidad in 1917, and the abolition of the system on 01 January 1920. It examines British economic interests in India and demonstrates how British imperialism resulted in the deterioration of economic conditions and acted as an impetus for the emigration of Indians to other parts of the world.

It discusses the ways in which dominance/oppression was contested in the everyday life of the indentured labourers and the extent to which various forms of resistance by the labourers led to immediate changes in the system. It traces the agitation which occurred in India and the manner in which the Indians in Trinidad (and other British West Indian colonies) were incorporated into the nationalist discourse which developed in India with respect to Indian emigration. It looks at the campaigns which occurred in the villages where labourers were recruited and the extent to which these forms of protests impacted on the emigration process.

Indentured labour in Trinidad was part of a wider labour scheme. As a result, the final termination of the indentureship system can be better understood in the

context of issues which developed outside of Trinidad – in other colonies such as South Africa, Mauritius and Fiji. Issues in these colonies were important in the movement towards the abolition of the system. This thesis evaluates the extent to which the pressure from the colonies influenced the attitude of the Government of India and the factors which forced the British imperial government to terminate the indentureship scheme.

Keywords: Radica Mahase; Indian indentured labour; abolition movement; British imperialism