Between 1837 and 1917 more than 400,000 Indians arrived in the British Caribbean colonies under the indenture system. Indian indenture in the Caribbean began in 1837 in British Guiana at the behest of the sugar industry and was supported by the British colonial government. Following Emancipation in the same year, the sugar plantations lost their hold over an enslaved labour force that could be coerced and controlled. In order to resolve this problem, initially sugar planters, and later the British government, began importing Indian, Chinese, and other workers under the indenture system. The Indians, and other nationals, brought to the British West Indian colonies not only not only provided a cheap and renewing labour force, but also formed a barrier between the white colonists and the freed black subjects. This interactive timeline project maps the forces which shaped indenture in Trinidad, one of the colonies where the largest number of Indian emigrants were sent, from 1845 - 1917. The project begins, however, not with the sugar plantocracy, colonial authorities in the metropole, or Indian nationalists, who attempted to structure the lives of Indian indentured workers, but rather with the workers themselves. This project begins with a selection from Dabydeen's poem, Coolie Odyssey, which highlights the hopes of the newly arrived Indian indentured workers in British Guiana. For these workers, In 1837, in anticipation of emancipation, John Gladstone asked that 150 workers be brought from Bengal to British Guiana for a period of five years. On Dec 2, 1838, the bill which abolished slavery in the British Colonies became effective in Trinidad. In that same year, the two ships, the Hesperus and the Whitby, carrying the first indentured Indians arrived in the Caribbean, in British Guiana, for what is later known as the Gladstone Coolie Experiment. 396 workers would be sent to six sugar colonies in Guyana in 1838. Complaints about abuse emerged immediately from this group. A Commission of Inquiry later investigated the high mortality rate among the workers, and complaints about severe physical abuse. Despite these abuses, an Emigration Ordinance passed in Guyana allowing the use of public funds to introduce Act XXI was passed in India repealing the prohibition of emigration to the West Indies. The Act also stipulated that a number of women should be recruited to emigrate,
In 1845, the Fatel Rozack brought 225 Indians, the first indentured workers to Trinidad. Among these, 21 workers were female (Reddock). In this first 5 year period, 5568 immigrants arrived in Trinidad. Between 1845 – 1917, about 143,900 Indians would arrive in Trinidad under the indenture system (Niranjana). While planters’ opinions of their new workers varied over the years, ranging from praise for their hard working nature to complaints about their excessive drinking, the system of indenture created a set of oppressive practices and rules to govern the lives of the indentured workers. Through most of the period of indenture, and especially in the early years, the workers lived and worked in extremely poor conditions. Labourers lived in cramped and unsanitary conditions, accumulated debts due to poor wages, and could not leave the plantations without The passage of the Sugar Duties Act in this year makes it evident to the British metropole government that an indentured labour force was imperative for the profitable existence of the sugar plantations. Look Lai also identifies a change in policy focus after the passage of this bill. Instead of policy driven by humanitarian ethics, the colonial government became increasingly aligned with the economic imperatives of the West Indian plantocracy (57). Thus, the need for indenture, and controlling the indentured labour was reaffirmed and carried out through a series of local immigration ordinance, “which outlined in much more rigorous detail the nature of the duties and obligations of both employee and employer and which governed their relations throughout the indenture period” (62). These ordinances further explicated the original indenture contract, and defined the power relations between the indentured worker and the plantation. One example of how the ordinances reveal the alignment of the colonial authorities and sugar plantocracy in regulating and controlling the lives of the indentures workers is seen in the 1846 attempt to introduce the pass-law regulations in Trinidad. This regulation, intended to reduce absenteeism and vagrancy, substantially limited the physical movements of the indentured workers. Workers could not leave their assigned plantation without a pass, and workers caught outside the plantation without a pass could be arrested and imprisoned, sentenced hard labour, or fined. While this specific regulation was repealed in 1847 following protests by the Anti-Slavery
Emigration to the West Indian colonies was again suspended between 1841 and 1851 due to fraud and coercion in the recruiting process in India, and the abuses experienced by emigrants in the West Indian India 77428 647

Once emigration was allowed again, ships once again began bringing indentured workers to Trinidad. In total, 16,262 indentured workers migrated to Trinidad in this decade. There was a 5 year rise in migration between 1856 and 1860. During this 5 year period, 11,208 migrants arrived in Trinidad. In the two 5 year periods before and after, the number falls to 5,054 (1851-55) and 7,474 (1861-65). 80% of the emigrants who left India under the indenture system came from twenty one districts of Bengal and the United Provinces (Sanderson Commission quoted in Look Lai 34). These statistics also hold for Trinidad. Between 1875 – 1917, 92,243 came from the United Provinces, 13% from Bihar, less than 4% each from Central India, Nepal, and Punjab, and 4,78.6680 647

In 1857, the first Indian War of Independence broke out when Indian soldiers mutineed against the British. The war led to the dissolution of the British East India Company, and brought India under the direct rule of the British Crown. Following the rout of the mutinying forces in 1858, 27,779 Indians left from Calcutta during 1858, and 25,337 Indians left in 1859. Walton Look Lai writes that this dramatic exodus was primarily from areas affected by the mutiny, including Shahabad, Ghaziapur, Meerut, and Officio_35.png

Between 1861 and 1870,19,337 migrants traveled to Trinidad. The 5 year span from 1866 - 1870 shows another spike in migration. 11,836 migrants left India in that span. For the next few decades, the number of migrants leaving India would continue increasing untill 1896. The (undated) image from the UK National Archives shows indentured workers on arrival at the depot in Trinidad. 1866 also marks the year of the Orissa at-depot1.png

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The Act of 1864 created further safeguards to protect the emigrants, and created new rules to be applied to recruiters. The indenture system in India depended on paid recruiters who could visit villages and seek out suitable and physically fit emigrants. In the early years of indenture, indentured workers were sometimes inaccurately informed about the destination of the ship, and the length of journey. There were also instances of kidnapping, and coerced boarding. Due to these instances of fraud in the recruiting system, the 1864 Act set rules for the pay of recruiters, the conduct of the recruiter, and grounds for dismissal or imprisonment. Before the emigrant was allowed to leave, a magistrate would verify that the emigrant understood the conditions of indenture, including the voyage, pay, period, and contract. Later, it was also stipulated that the Protector of Emigrants ask the emigrants some questions, in their native language, to ensure they were not being coerced into leaving. (quoted in Weller from pp 1852 [Cmd. 1499], XVIII, Appendix No. 53, 12th General Report on Colonial Land and Emigration Commission, p. 188). Despite these rules, fraud in the recruiting system continued throughout the period of indenture. Moreover, Walton Look Lai identifies a larger issue of systematic institutional.

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1868 saw two important events in the system of indenture: 1) The Canadian Presbyterian Church began proselytizing in Trinidad. The church particularly targeted Indian emigrants and started schools for children, and took steps to train Indian girls in housework and Christian ethics. 2) The minimum sex ratio for emigrants was revised once again and set at 50 women to 100 men. This meant that before a ship could leave India, it had to fulfill this ratio. However, recruiters argued that this ratio was too high, and in an effort to meet it, ‘immoral’ women of lower classes or prostitutes may end up being recruited. Due to these arguments, the ratio was revised once again and set to 40 women per 100 men. These were not the only changes in the sex ratio. According to Rhoda Reddock, between 1857 and 1879, the ratio would change six times, and these changes occurred due to concerns about recruiting the right kind of women. In the entire duration of migration, there was always a greater proportion of men to women emigrants. Initially, the planters were not keen on importing women because they preferred men who could do physically demanding labour. However, by the 1890s, planters and colonial authorities were realizing the importance of women in creating stable communities of workers who did not want to return to India. The Canadian Presbyterians were particularly interested in reforming the apparently immoral Indian women emigrants, who were to be the backbone of the Indian immigrant community. The Mortons, who were some of the first missionaries to arrive in Trinidad, and who feature prominently in Anna Mahase’s autobiography left many accounts of their view of Indian women. In one instance, they note that “the

MIGRATION TO TRINIDAD BETWEEN 1871-1880

Reliable data on women’s migration is available from 1871 onwards. As the graph on the right shows, the sex ratio remained skewed for the entire duration of the indenture system. Total migration in this period: 24,631

THE WOMEN QUESTION

1868 1868

Source: http://indianindenture.files.wordpress.com/2013/12/mahase-poetry.png


Source: Jack Harewood, The Population of Trinidad and Tobago

Source: Autobiography of Anna Mahase Snr.

Source: The

http://indianindenture.files.wordpress.com/2013/12/mahase-poetry.png


In this period, the murder of wives by husbands rose dramatically in Trinidad. Between 1872 and 1898, 63 of the 109 murders in Trinidad committed by Indians were wife murders (Look Lai 144). Although good statistics are not available, oral testimony and anecdotal sources (see accompanying writing from the Morton’s) suggest that wife murder afflicted the system of indenture throughout its existence and was attributed by colonial authorities to cultural, psychological, demographic, and other reasons.

CONCERNS ABOUT WOMEN AND MARRIAGE 1878-1882
The immoral character of women was also blamed. The instability of marriages between emigrants was a particularly vexing matter to missionaries and colonial authorities alike. While women were often forced to

THE GREAT INDIAN FAMINE OF 1876
This was one of the most devastating famines in Indian history. More than 5 million people died in this period.

MIGRATION TO TRINIDAD BETWEEN 1881-1890
25,539 workers left India for Trinidad in this decade. The 5 year span from 1886-1890 also marks the peak of migration. 13,988 people traveled to Trinidad in this period, and 13,565 people migrated between 1891 and 1895.
is not given, Anna Mahase Snr writes in her autobiography that she was in the first batch of girls taken in by the Mortons in Tunapuna. The date for the Morton's arrival in Tunapuna is given as 1881. Anna Mahase Snr reminisces about the story told her by her mother of her leaving India: "She had been married as a child as was the custom in India, but was not sent to her husband's home until she was twelve. Then the day arrived with all its drum beating and pageantry and the young bride was actually carried in an enclosed carriage (doli) to the in-laws' home. When she saw who her husband was, he was old with heavy moustaches - she was afraid of him and decided to run away. The description she gave of that home was that they were a wealthy family, a large house, with small earthenware jars put up on the ledges, with money and gold filled in them. So one night Rookabai got up quietly, took one of the jars and walked out. She tipped the watchman by at gate, and began walking not knowing where she was going. She heard every few hours special men who were paid to call out the hour of the night. She walked and The Hosay or Hoserin riots of 1884 occurred, and further mobilized the Anti-Slavery Society in English and Indian nationalists against the indenture system. The riots occurred when a religious procession was conducted against official restrictions on public processions left 22 dead in a clash between members of the procession and Resistance to emigration was becoming more vocal among the now emancipated classes. The Trinidad Workingmen's Association asked for reduced levels of migration as there already was existing labor pool in Trinidad (Weller 115). The sugar planters no longer occupied a central role in the Trinidad Legislative Council.
The total number migration in this decade numbered 20,979 people. The 5 year span from 1891-1900 marks a peak in migration (13,565), but in the latter half of the decade, migration would fall drastically and only 7,414 migrants left India. The image shows newly arrived emigrants in 1897.

GANDHI TAKES ON THE ISSUE 1894, 1896, opposition to emigration was also articulated in South Africa, he and other nationalists would also protest migration to the British colonies in the Caribbean. In 1896, opposition to emigration was also articulated in South Africa, he and other nationalists would also protest migration to the British colonies in the Caribbean. In

ROOKABAI GIVES BIRTH 1897 (date unknown) in Caroni. Her first son, Charles, is born before Dorcas

FREE WORKERS 1899 1900 elected to become small independent farmers

RETURNING EMIGRANTS 1900 1900 characterized long term emigrants or return emigrants as characterized long term emigrants or return emigrants as returning emigrants. In 1900, sixty four strikers from the Harmony Hall estate were sentenced to hard labor for 21 days following disruption of work at the estate over wage issues. Many of the leaders of these strikes were return emigrants. Colonial authorities and planters characterized long term emigrants or return emigrants as returning emigrants.

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ROOKABAI MARRIES 1891, 1891 Rookabai, baptised Elizabeth Burns, marries Chandisingh, baptised George Washington at Aramalaya Church, Tunapuna, in 1891 (Autobiography vi)

GANDHI TAKES ON THE ISSUE 1894, 1896, opposition to emigration was also articulated in South Africa, he and other nationalists would also protest migration to the British colonies in the Caribbean. In 1896, opposition to emigration was also articulated in South Africa, he and other nationalists would also protest migration to the British colonies in the Caribbean. In

ANNA MAHASE SNR 1899 1899 School.

A series of strikes broke out in the 1900s, which colonial authorities associated with the increased number of returning emigrants. In 1900, sixty four strikers from the Harmony Hall estate were sentenced to hard labor for 21 days following disruption of work at the estate over wage issues. Many of the leaders of these strikes were return emigrants. Colonial authorities and planters characterized long term emigrants or return emigrants as returning emigrants.

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THE CHANDISINGH S MOVE 1901 1903 a basket on one side of a donkey and my sister Dorcas
MIGRATION TO TRINIDAD BETWEEN 1901-1910

During this period, 24,980 indentured workers were imported to Trinidad and Tobago.

1901-1910

In 1904, Anna Mahase Snr.'s youngest sister, Hannah, was born in Arouca. Soon after that, her father was sent back to Guaico, and the family moved back. Her father was now paid $24.00, and he also owned land at Guaico. The three older children attended the Guaico Canadian Mission School. During this time, Anna Mahase Snr recalls her parents telling the children stories in Hindi, which they continued to speak at home. Although they spoke English in school, their Religious Instruction and singing in school was also carried out in Hindi. She also recalls that her mother continued to celebrate Hindu traditions.

HINDU TRADITIONS IN THE NEW LAND

1904-1908

In 1904, Anna Mahase Snr.'s youngest sister, Hannah, was born in Arouca. Soon after that, her father was sent back to Guaico, and the family moved back. Her father was now paid $24.00, and he also owned land at Guaico. The three older children attended the Guaico Canadian Mission School. During this time, Anna Mahase Snr recalls her parents telling the children stories in Hindi, which they continued to speak at home. Although they spoke English in school, their Religious Instruction and singing in school was also carried out in Hindi. She also recalls that her mother continued to celebrate Hindu traditions.

TUMULTOUS YEARS FOR ANNA'S FAMILY

1908

1908 marks the beginning of a turbulent period in Anna Mahase Snr's life. Unfortunately, in 1908, her father had to leave his job as a Catechist in Guaico due to a misunderstanding with Dr. Morton. 1908 was also a memorable year for Anna Mahase Snr because she recalls the excitement of seeing the first car pass through the village in 1908 or 1909. Around the same time, her oldest brother, Charles, became a Pupil Teacher at the Guaico School for a salary of $2.00 a month (13). In 1909, her father sent Dorcas and Anna to Couva, where they were to live with a good friend of his, and lead housework from his wife. Dorcas, 12, and Anna, 10, were made to do a lot of work at the house, and were ill treated by the wife. While Anna was allowed to attend Couva Canadian Mission School, her sister was not sent.

THE FAMILY SEPARATES

1910

In June 1910, Dorcas and Anna arrived at the Iere Girls' Home with funding from the Canadian Mission. There the girls had Religious Instruction, and attended the Princes Town Canadian Mission School. Anna did very well in school, and also had an interest in music. In her autobiography, Anna Mahase Snr. writes that girls "graduate there by marriage, some were successful, others not" (27). Generally, girls were married after they turned 15. Anna herself would remain at the home till 1914, while her sister had been married off before that. The marriage it seems, was not a happy one. At the end of the year in 1910, when Anna and Dorcas went to Princes Town, Rookabai, their mother, moved to India.
During this period, 6670 indentured workers were imported to Trinidad and Tobago. Gandhi and Gokhale succeeded in imposing a ban on indenture in Natal, South Africa. By 1915, Indian indenture in other British colonies would become a major political issue in India. Historian Hugh Tinker argues that the campaign against indenture was not only Gandhi’s first major political campaign in India, but also the first major socio-political issue that concerned India, but was debated in India rather than the colonial metropole (Tinker in Niranjana 74). For the growing movement for independence, the system of indenture illustrated the rise of social issues that were important to India and its future. The World War created several reasons which would lead to a gradual close of the indenture system. There was anxiety about German attacks on emigrant ships, and villagers in India were also concerned about being recruited for military service instead of field work. The rising costs of the war efforts also created unwillingness among colonial authorities to continue supporting the indenture system. 1914 also saw the last major worker strike, which occurred at the La Reunion Estate over ANNA TRAINS TO BECOME A TEACHER. The sixteen year old Anna, still unmarried, began attending the Girls’ High School in San Fernando at the suggestion of Dr. Harvey Morton and Miss Archibald, her Principal from the lere Girls School. In San Fernando, Miss Outhit, the Canadian Principal, agreed to let Anna teach the girls Hindi so she could support herself. In her autobiography, Anna Mahase Snr, looking back upon this move to San Fernando, writes that it was a major milestone in her life. At school, she learnt Algebra, Geometry, and other subjects. It was at the high school, that she was joined by other female students who would become the "nucleus of the Women's Section of the The End of Indenture". This was an eventful year for the closure of indenture. Mahatma Gandhi travelled all over India to rouse support against indenture. Public outcry against the system grew rapidly, women were mobilized to speak out against the system, and large demonstrations protesting the system were held in Madras and Bombay. An Anti-Indenture League was formed in India to detract villagers from migrating to the colonies. A new report also proposed the

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http://indianindenture.e.files.wordpress.com/2013/12/gandhi-on-women.png India 77428

My Mother's Daughter: Anna Mahase Snr.

Trinidad and Tobago 10.86 12.573465

The End of Indenture 1917 1917
Although indenture ended in 1917, the lives of the workers who had been brought to Trinidad, and their descendants who decided to stay in Trinidad, continued. Anna Mahase herself continued to break down many barriers. She would become the first East Indian Assistant Teacher in North Trinidad in 1917, and later, the first East Indian qualified female teacher on the island in 1919. When she married Mahase in 1919, she would become the first married female teacher to remain on the staff, an unheard of occurrence prior. Their colleagues, and the students they taught, would later go on to play important roles in the Trinadian education system, and Trinadian society, in general. Some of the Indian indentured immigrants who had been brought to Trinidad and Tobago.