



Introduction

‘Girmityas’, referring to all those who can trace their ancestry back to the Indian Indenture System (1834-1921), are estimated to number between 12-15 million worldwide, although no confirmed figures exist. These individuals, who now reside in nearly every country in the world, are bound together by a shared history.

While academic research on Girmitya and Girmityas dates back to the 1930s, it wasn't until the last decade that interest and prominence in the subject began to rise.

In 2017, the 100th anniversary of the end of indenture was commemorated globally, marking a turning point in the field. Since then, the number of conference papers, articles, books, and monographs on the topic has significantly increased, with two high-quality international academic journals also being launched. The Ameena Gafoor Institute in the UK began publishing the *Journal of Indentureship and its Legacies* in 2021 (<https://ameenagafoorinstitute.org/journals>), while the *Indenture Papers: Studies on Girmityas* (<https://girmitya.ac.fj/>), a journal by a consortium of six institutions, including the Global Girmitya Institute, the University of the South Pacific, NCIC-Heritage Centre, IIT Patna, BHU, and Tata Institute of Social Sciences, also began publication in the same year.

In Mauritius, following the *Slave Route Project*, UNESCO paid tribute to the 1.2 million displaced Girmityas through the endorsement of the *Indentured Labour Routes Project*. The ILRP has major projects focused on documenting, researching, and writing about Girmityas.

In 2023, the Fijian Government took a major step in recognizing Girmitya history; it has declared an annual public holiday to mark this, and allocated some funds to celebrate Girmitya lives. This conference's major sponsor is the Government of Fiji within the theme of celebrating Girmitya lives and identities in Fiji, and globally.

In light of the growing interest in Girmitya and Girmityas, and the recent Fiji Government's support for recognising Girmitya history and people, this transdisciplinary Conference will focus on documenting, researching, writing, and communicating the histories and lives of Girmityas, past and present.

Objective

The primary objective of the conference is to facilitate discourse on all aspects related to documenting, researching, writing and communicating the histories and lives of Girmitiyas. The conference aims to create a dialogue among scholars from different disciplines on the themes listed below, and to celebrate Girmitiya lives and identities.

Theme

The Theme of the Conference is: Celebrating Girmitiya Identities and Lives: Documenting, Researching, Writing, and Communicating Histories and Lives. The following core sub-themes are suggested within the overall Theme of the Conference:

Core Theme 1: Lives: Inclusivity & Diversity

Core Theme 2: Indenture Database

Core Theme 3: Documenting Families, Family Histories and Oral History

Core Theme 4: Academic Research on Indenture

Core Theme 5: Girmitiya Fiction

Core Theme 6: Publishing of Girmitiya Materials

Core Theme 7: Music, Dance, Drama, Movies, Languages as medium of Communication

Core Theme 8: Emerging Thoughts and New Directions

Core Theme 9: General – Other papers related to Girmitiyas

Core Theme 10: Binding Themes – Identity formation and Significance of Girmitiya Identity(ies), and Sustaining Girmitiya Identities.

Special Theme 1: Tribute to Late Professor Brij Lal, Girmitiya Scholar

Special Theme 2: Tribute to other senior (Late) Girmitiya Scholars

Special Theme 3: Hindi Panels – papers in Hindi

The themes listed above are not exhaustive. Researchers are welcomed to submit proposals for other themes, and/or panels on other topics related to Girmitiyas.

Book Launches: Books relating to Girmitiya lives and living, published between January 2021 and May 2023.

New/Emerging Researchers/Writers: New researchers/writers may register for workshops/clinics on researching and writing, conducted by senior researchers/writers.

Presentation Format

- Posters
- Full Presentation sessions (length: 15 mins)
- Student presentation sessions (length: 10 mins)
- Lunchtime lightening sessions (length: 5 mins)
- Films - Screened parallelly.
- Art/Artefacts, etc. - displayed in conference gallery
- Drama, Music, etc - performances during breaks and evenings.

For academic papers: Preference is for papers to be circulated to participants on the first day of the Conference, and presentations to be largely interactive.

Language: English for all sessions, except for the panels which are in Hindi.

Who Should Attend?: All researchers, writers and activists whose interest is on Girmitiyas and/or on research, publication and production of expressive arts materials.

Academic Paper Submission

Abstract details: Word limit for abstracts - no more than 300 words, including keywords. Abstracts must include the proposed title of the paper, author full name(s), address(es) and email address(es) of all authors. Authors are encouraged to indicate the session in which they wish their paper to be placed. The final decision on paper placement shall be that of the Conference Convener.

File type: Word for Windows.

Full paper: This is required for papers whose abstracts are accepted. Selected papers shall be published in our journals ***Indenture Papers: Studies on Giritiyas*** or ***Fijian Studies: A Journal of Contemporary Fiji***. There is no word limit for the papers, but papers must be of publishable standard. Those not able to submit full papers, but whose abstracts have been accepted can still make presentations at the conference as long as they are registered; these authors will need to make their own arrangements for copying and circulating their speaking notes, ppts or completed papers.

Abstract and Paper Reviews: A selection panel shall assess all abstracts received and advise authors of the outcomes. The key criteria would be relevance to the theme of the Conference. All final papers shall be blind reviewed to ensure standards.

Submission Address: **giriti.conference@gmail.com**. An electronic submission board is being established; details shall be circulated.

Film, Art, Drama Proposal Submission

Proposal details: Submitters should provide an abstract of the activity they propose in no more than 300 words. Details to be included are: (a) creator (s); (b) copyrights, (c) censor details (if films), (d) formats, and (e) equipment, etc., requirements if accepted for the conference.

Important Dates:

The following are the critical dates (these are the last dates; earlier submission is preferred):

1. Submission of Abstract: 31 March 2023
2. Notification of acceptance: 2 weeks from submission
3. Full paper submission: 1 May 2023
4. Early Registration: 1 May 2023
5. Late Registration: 12 May 2023
6. Daily Registration: 12 May, 13 May

Social Events

Networking Dinner: 12 May 2023

Conference Dinner: 13 May 2023

Related Events: 14 May 2023: Excursions (self-funded).

15 May 2023: Launch of Giriti Day at Albert Park, Suva (funded by participants). This is a major event, worth participating in. There is no cover charge for this, but participants need to fund their own costs.

Music/Drama: 12 & 13 May 2023

Registration Fee:

- Pacific Island, Giritiya Country Residents/India/Third World Residents: \$F50 (USD25)
- Other Residents: \$F200 (USD100)
- Students, Unemployed, Retired: \$F5 per day (excludes dinners and transfers)
- Observers from Pacific Island, Third World Residents: \$F50 (excludes dinners/transfers)
- Observers - First World Residents: \$F100 (excludes dinners and transfers)
- Day Rates: \$F40 (excludes dinners and transfers)
- All participants must register.

[Full Registration Fee allows for conference materials, session fees, cocktail, and all teas and dinners. (The rates are subsidised by sponsors). Dinner tickets for participant guests and others would be available.]*

Venue

The Conference shall be held at the University of the South Pacific, Suva, Fiji.

Logistics

The conference city, Suva, is located at about 4 hours drive from the Nadi International Airport, or a 20 minute local flight from Nadi Airport to Nausori Airport and a 40 minutes ride by road to the City. There are two international airports in Fiji: Nadi and Nausori. International participants are advised to consider travel by road from Nadi to Suva, and back. Organisers may arrange of special transportation if numbers and arrival/departure schedules permit.

Travel

Fiji is well serviced with international flights. Airlines which fly to Fiji include: Aircalin, Air Kiribati, Air New Zealand, Air Vanuatu, Jetstar, Korean Air, Virgin Australia, Fiji Airways, Qantas, Air Niugini, Solomon Airlines, United Airlines (code share with Air New Zealand). There are multiple flights a day from Australia, New Zealand and the US. Fiji Airways also flies to Singapore and Hongkong. Korean Airlines flies to Fiji from Seoul twice a week. Air Niugini, Vanuatu Air and Solomon Airlines fly to Fiji from Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. Other countries in the Pacific are serviced by Fiji Airways and a number of regional airlines.

Conference Committee

National Conference Committee Members:

Ganesh Chand, Chairperson, Global Girit Institute
Professor Pal Ahluwalia, Vice Chancellor, University of the South Pacific
Professor Unaisi Nabobo-Baba, Acting Vice Chancellor, Fiji National University
Mr. Satya Shandil, Head, School of Business, Pacific Polytech
Ms. Mohini Devi, University of Fiji
Dr. Rohit Kishore, Director, Fiji Higher Education Commission (co-opted member).

Committee Chair & Conference Convener: Dr. Ganesh Chand

Conference Organising Secretary: Mr. Satya Shandil

Conference Advisory Committee

Dr. Amba Pande, JNU, India.

Dr. Baytoram Ramharack, Guyana & New York
Dr. Farzana Gounder, New Zealand.
Dr. Kumar Mahabir, University of Guyana
Dr. Mosmi Bhim, Fiji National University, Suva
Dr. Mumtaz Alam, Fiji National University, Lautoka
Dr. Neelesh Gounder, University of the South Pacific, Fiji
Dr. Primnath Gooptar, NCIC-Heritage Centre, Trinidad.
Dr. Rajni Chand, University of the South Pacific
Dr. Ramchandra Joshi, A.P.J A Kalam GCol, India
Dr. Sofia Ali, Fiji National University, Lautoka
Dr. Subashni Kumar, Fiji National University, Lautoka
Dr. Subhash Appana, University of the South Pacific
Dr. Vishnu Bisram, Commentator, New York
Ms. Bhavika Naidu, Fiji National University, Lautoka
Mr. Nadesa Goundar, Unitec, Auckland, New Zealand
Mr. Naresh Chand., Fiji National University, Lautoka
Mr. Praneil Chandra, Broadcaster, New Zealand.
Mr. Ravi Dev, former MP, Guyana
Mr. Robin Nair, Member of Council, Fiji National University
Ms. Romina Singh, Fiji National University, Suva.
Mrs. Sarita Chand, Fiji National University, Lautoka
Mr. Vijendra Prasad, Chairman of Girmit Museum Committee
Professor A.B.M. Shawkat Ali, University of Fiji, Lautoka
Professor Anand Chand, University of the South Pacific, Fiji
Professor Brinsley Samaroo, UWI, Trinidad & Tobago
Professor Dharmendra Sharma, University of Canberra, Australia
Professor Gurmeet Singh, University of the South Pacific, Fiji
Professor Lomarsh Roopnarine, Guyana/USA
Professor Satish Chand, School of Business, UNSW Canberra, Australia
Professor Subramani, University of Fiji, Lautoka
Professor Vijay Naidu, Suva.

Conference Contact Details:

Chief Convener: Ganesh Chand: girmit.conference@gmail.com

Organising Secretary: Satya Shandil: snshandil@gmail.com; m: 9353369

Offices:

Pacific Polytech, Suva Campus, Nabua Road, Suva

Pacific Polytech, Lautoka Campus, Ajodhya Prasad Road, Lautoka

Global Girmit Institute, Saweni Shopping Centre, Queens Road, Lautoka

Website: www.globalgirmitinstitute.org ; <http://girmit.ac.fj/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1326540524106022>

Financial Support: Limited funds are available for partial financial support for travel and/or accommodation for international and local participants. The extent of support depends on financial sponsorship secured by the date of conference, and the submission of quality papers.

Sponsors: Government of Fiji; University of the South Pacific; Fiji National University; Pacific Polytech; Global Girmit Institute, and the University of Fiji.