

Beyond the *Kala Pani*

Ruben Gowricharn

To cite this article: Gowricharn, Ruben, (2023), 'Beyond the *Kapa Pani*', *Indenture Papers: Studies on Girmitiyas*, Vol. 3: 25-37
<https://girmit.ac.fj/wp-content/uploads/ip-2023/gowricharn.pdf>

Date Published: 30 November 2023

Other articles in this volume: <https://girmit.ac.fj/current-issue/>

Editorial Board: <https://girmit.ac.fj/editorial-board/>

Notes for Contributors: <https://girmit.ac.fj/notes-for-contributors-2/>

Abstract

This paper questions whether the kala pani notion was a reason for Girmitiyas not to return to their homes in India. First, it delves into the history of the kala pani concept and outlines how the argument has been used in recent scholarly discourses about Girmitiyas. Second, the paper suggests a few counterarguments, including that the kala pani argument is inconsistent with the emergence of a migration culture, and that Muslims and some women 'on the run' had no intention of returning. Third, the paper suggests that the settlement of labourers can be more credibly explained by other conditions surrounding the Girmitiya labourers and peasants, such as having new partners and locally born children, loss of savings, and feelings of alienation from the home society. The paper concludes that there has been no empirical evidence to support the kala pani argument accounting for the settlement of Girmitiyas in remote plantation colonies.

Keywords: Kala pani; Girmitiyas; motives of settlement; Muslims; women; circular migration.

Introduction

In Girmitiya scholarship, the account of the settlement of indentured labourers in the receiving colony is a highly under-researched topic. One recurrent motive put forward when accounting for the permanent settlement of Girmitiyas is the argument of *kala pani*. According to this account, the labourers crossed the *kala pani* – popularly translated as crossing the ocean – and by doing so, jeopardized their position in the caste system. That would have prevented their return (Comins, 1892; Tinker, 1974).

The concept of *kala pani* has a long history. Bates and Carter (2021: 57) review and broaden the *Kala pani* concept – that it:

exists today largely as a creative device enabling poets, novelists and artists of the Indian labour diaspora to broach the sprawling subject of life-changing journeys. It is a powerful symbolic and metaphorical tool, and its transformations demonstrate how literature and art can be employed to build upon the excavation work of historians in archives, both to fill lacunae and to popularise narratives of subaltern agency for wider audiences.

The *kala pani* concept was subject to historical cycles and put to different uses by various actors ranging from higher castes, British colonial forces, the military and Indian nationalists, including its deployment by Girmitiya scholars of several generations.

To my knowledge, the *kala pani* argument was first launched in the context of the Girmitiya outside British India by the medical inspector Dr Comins in his report about the conditions of labourers in Suriname and Guyana. It is most likely that Comins picked it up from older Indian accounts. *Kala pani* was gradually turned into a doctrine. Since Comins, many authors, including Hugh Tinker, have assigned some credibility to this argument when accounting for the observation that many British Indian labourers did not return to their homeland. It has been routinely echoed by generations of scholars who studied the Girmitiya experience, sometimes alongside other forces that account for their permanent settlement.

This paper questions the validity of the *kala pani* argument. First, the paper outlines the *kala pani* concept and discusses how the argument has been used in recent scholarly discourses about Girmitiyas. Second, the paper suggests a few counterarguments. It is argued that the *kala pani* argument is inconsistent with the emergence of a migration culture displaying a floating population in the north and south of India; that many emigrants, including some

specific categories of women, had no intention to return, falling outside the scope of the *kala pani* argument; and that the settlement may have occurred after returnees engaged disappointedly in new labour contracts overseas. Third, the paper suggests that the settlement of labourers can be more credibly explained by other conditions surrounding the Girmityas labourers, such as having new partners and locally born children, loss of savings, and feelings of alienation from the home society.

These counterarguments raise the question: what does the *kala pani* notion explain? The paper concludes that there has been no empirical evidence to support the *kala pani* argument that accounts for the settlement of Girmityas. The *kala pani* notion should, therefore, be regarded as a mythical concept without historical or sociological relevance.

Concept and uses of *kala pani*

Kala pani literally means ‘black water’ but in context, referred to the crossing of the sea. By crossing the sea, a Hindu is considered to have jeopardised his position in the caste society or have lost his castes. The causality is sometimes related to distance from the holy river, Ganga, a point of reference that suggests that the *kala pani* only applies to labourers originating from north India. However, Hindus from the south allegedly were also subjected to the *kala pani* ban (Gillion, 1962). How the crossing of sea jeopardises the position in the caste society remains unclear, only that the *kala pani* doctrine is at odds with voyages. Nevertheless, it is generally believed that the *kala pani* causality holds in religious textures and, later, in historical studies (for a brief overview, see Bates and Carter, 2021).

One may suggest that the alleged distaste of the Indian population for spatial mobility was enforced by the notion of *kala pani*. But an equally credible explanation is that peasants and agrarian labourers were tied to the land and were, therefore, less mobile compared to other categories of the working population. However, during the Moghul period, there was already an emigration of peasants, labourers, traders, sailors, soldiers, prisoners and slaves to different destinations in Asia (Alexander et al., 2018: I; Northrup, 1995: 60).

The outmigration was sometimes temporary and sometimes permanent. The term ‘outmigration’ presupposes formal borders which were not present at the time; India, with defined borders as known today, did not exist. The migrants came from local communities. Any location outside one’s own community could be as considered as ‘foreign’, especially if the people in the new place of residence looked physically different or if the destination was located

overseas (Van der Veer, 2021). This mobility accelerated in volume during British colonial rule, with significant increase in transport of soldiers, officials, traders, scholars and indentured labourers.

A number of long-term developments detached the agrarian population from the land. These included ecological and demographic pressures, commercial transformation of agriculture, the need for money, and British economic and tax policy. The spatial and economic mobility had created a floating population in various regions (Alexander et al., 2018; Yang, 1979; de Haan, 2002). These developments contradicted the view that the British-Indian peasants were not willing to migrate. De Haan (2002) notes that British colonial officials debated the idea that the British Indian population was not very mobile. In this regard, Alexander et al. write: ‘Keen to challenge the colonial shibboleth that Indians were a “stay-at-home race”, influential historians have shown that, on the contrary, before 1800, perhaps half of the total population of the subcontinent was habitually itinerant for much of their adult lives’ (2018: 20).

Despite the *kala pani* doctrine, labour mobility from both north and south India continued to swell as manifested in a drifting population and a culture of migration (Gillion, 1962; Kumar, 2017; Lal, 2000). The *kala pani* doctrine served as an account of why the labourers did not return home. More specifically, in the context of indentured labour, the *kala pani* account emerges in the report of medical inspector Dr Comins, who wrote:

Their [the labourers’] belief is that no man call himself a Hindu who has crossed the sea, so they lose their respect for the caste and religion of their fathers which they neglect and acquire no other in their place. They still wear amulets and charms and believe in the evil eye, ghosts and devil innumerable, but in no God. One of the reasons for not returning to India is that they would be despised and mobbed in their villages or have to spend too much money for their re-admission to their caste (1892: 17).

Comins’ wording (‘their belief’) suggests that he spoke of indentured labourers who settled in the colony, but it cannot be ruled out that he was echoing religious and political sources from previous observers.

Similarly, de Klerk (1953: 88-99) linked the *kala pani* to imprisonment, thus referring to the policy of the British to confine Indian political prisoners on the islands of Andaman and Nicobar. Although involved with the Girmityas prior to the Second World War in Suriname when large sections of first-generation were still alive, he did not report to have heard the *kala pani* trope from the labourers or peasants. The frightening story was that when transporting prisoners oversea to the islands of Andaman and Nicobar, the chance to return was slim. Hence, it is conceivable that the *kala pani* exerted a horrifying

connotation, but it is not clear if and to what extent the trope was used to keep the (labouring) population in line.

Fokken (2017) and Tinker (1974) also observed the relationship between imprisonment and *kala pani*. This link – with its horrifying connotations – was raised as an association (rather than as an argument) against the indentured labourer system. In British Indian nationalist circles in particular, supported by the remnants of the abolition movement, indentured labour was increasingly associated with captivity, described as a new form of enslavement (Tinker, 1974).

More recently, Nayar (2015: 97) claimed that the concept of *kala pani* was created in colonial times, specifically when transporting indentured labourers: ‘It refers to the metaphoric black waters of the Atlantic which indentured Indians crossed en route to the Caribbean. The term, therefore, is irreducibly linked to colonialism and indentured labour’. This position can easily be discarded. The *kala pani* concept originated long before colonial times and even if there was a ‘classification error’ in time periods, it is erroneously linked with the Caribbean. Scholars dealing with Mauritius and Fiji also refer to the *kala pani* to account for the settlement in the colony (Kumar, 2017: 244; Lal, 2000: 122). The concept is older and broader. To have been used to immobilize the Indian population, the labourers must have had knowledge of this religious ban. However, the argument seems to have been circulating among the British Indian religious and political elites rather than the labourers and peasants.

***Kala pani*: Counterarguments**

I will leave aside that in no study the migrants involved voiced *kali pani* as a reason not to return. The argument was raised and discussed by religious and historical scholars without attempting to ground it in revelations of the migrants. That is to say, the *kala pani* argument represents an outsider perspective. Counterarguments, therefore, can only consist of logical inferences from or references to situations that are inconsistent with the *kala pani* argument not to cross the sea or not to return home.

Granting some credibility to the *kala pani* argument, the first question to address is why large numbers of Hindus crossed the *kala pani*. If the *kala pani* represented such a powerful blockade, it is surprising that most recruits left their home society. True, as in the subdepots, there were cancellations in the main depot in Calcutta. The extent of this drop-out is difficult to determine because the figures are incomplete and/or because they were consolidated with migrants destined for different countries. Despite the presence of a ‘culture of

migration’, sometimes recruits were misled or had wrong expectations. This was most often the case in the early days as labour legislation was regularly amended (Tinker, 1974).

For various reasons, not all recruits left for the colonies. Emmer (1986: 191) described the various reasons for dropping out prematurely, including deaths, desertions, rejections, unwillingness, claimed by relatives, and detained. Between the first registration in the subdepots and entry into the Calcutta depot, the percentage of desertions was 1.14%, and between entry into the Calcutta depot and departure, the percentage was 2.48. In addition, persons were claimed by the family (0.29% and 0.4% respectively in subdepots and main depots) and rejected (7.19% and 13.5% respectively). The total percentage of workers who did not leave for the colonies was 15.5% and 17.9% respectively; these add up to about one-third of the number of registered recruits. But the reasons for not departing were highly disparate.

Considering that the bulk of the recruits left to work on overseas plantations, they violated the *kala pani* rule and by doing so, their behaviour suggests that all Hindus intended to stay in the overseas colony. While the predominantly individual recruitment in the north of India could relatively easily step over objections related to the *kala pani*, that would be difficult for groups of people in the *kangani* system, where bands of relatively homogeneous groups of families, people from the same village or region, religion and ethnicity were recruited (Bates and Carter, 2017). In this case, a whole band of people would have to agree to violate a religious or social rule. Since it did happen, and the flow to the plantation was determined by the demand for labour rather than the supply (Carter, 1995), the fear of *kala pani* cannot have been a significant hindrance to this mobility. Although there were upheavals (most spectacular among soldiers), and Indians of all castes, including brahmins, who frequently travelled by sea ‘the texts which forbade or discouraged ocean voyages cannot have been followed by more than a small section of the population’ (Basham, 1964: 162–3).

The return to British India raises similar issues. If the *kala pani* has some credibility, its workings are difficult to reconcile with the observation that the labourers returned and crossed the *kala pani* again. That was hardly incidental or marginal, as the proportion of returnees varies from 20 to 40% of the arrivals in the different societies. These percentages should be taken as an indication as migrants returned and re-indentured for another round of work, often in other colonies. Moreover, studies indicate that some returnees incurred disappointing experiences (Kumar, 2017; Narayan, 2017), but none of the stumbling blocks in the reintegration process have been empirically related to *kala pani*. In addition, violation of rules could be compensated by rituals. So, if returnees

could neutralise the effects of *kala pani*, why is it raised as a reason for not returning?

Moreover, the *kala pani* argument could not apply to non-Hindus, such as Muslims. It can be inferred from this argument that the returnees should have consisted predominantly of Muslims. That is unlikely, as the proportion of the Muslim arrivals is close to the present size of Muslims in the Girmitiya population. That still does not rule out that Muslims returned in larger numbers and it leaves open the option that the lower number of settled Muslims was compensated by a higher population growth in later years.

The working of the *kala pani* also evades ‘women on the run’. These consisted predominantly of women who were runaways, widows, dissolute, unruly or mostly from lower castes – all categories that overlapped in the perspective of the officials and the middle and upper castes at the time. Women had different motives for emigrating than men, in particular cultural restrictions and lack of future prospects in British India (Emmer, 1985; Lal, 1983, 2000; Tinker, 1974). These women had no reason to return and to worry about *kala pani* considerations. Many of them married men in the colonies and settled there with their children (Carter, 1995; Emmer, 1985; Laurence, 1994; de Klerk, 1953). So whatever consequences crossing the *kala pani* may have entailed, these women had no concerns regarding their overseas emigration. This validity of the *kala pani* workings calls for further research on the religious affiliation and gender composition of the returnees.

Additional reasons to stay and leave is the distance from the colony to British India. Distance mattered, and so did time. In the beginning, a higher percentage of the arrivals returned. As British Indian communities took shape in the colonies, it became easy and attractive for new arrivees to settle (Carter, 1994; Gillion, 1962; Laurence, 1994). One may argue that the closer the colony to British India, the easier it was to emigrate and return. And the longer ago the people emigrated, the greater the chance that new arrivals were absorbed by a vibrant Indian community (Gowricharn, 2022). From this perspective, the permanent settlement had little to do with *kala pani*.

After the termination of the indentured system, the flow of labourers crossing the *kala pani* did not stop. Most of this flow of labour migrants was voluntary and directed to plantation colonies relatively close to British India. Sometimes the migrants involved had family and property built up in the destination societies, and sometimes they went there because of the presence of family and the Indian community (Carter, 1994; Lal, 1983).

The relatively isolated societies in the Caribbean were at a disadvantage. In Suriname, the settled British Indians sent a delegation to British India plead-

ing to allow further emigration, strongly motivated by shortage of women (de Klerk, 1953). The British Indian government declined these requests. Emmer (1986: 201) mentions that representatives of the British West Indian colonies (and Fiji) repeatedly met to put forth proposals to aid colonisation. These included free passage to the colony of choice without the obligation to sign a contract beforehand, the assignment to a planter for six months, the handing out of plots of land after three years of employment in agriculture, and recruiters receiving a fixed salary. British Guiana even circulated an ‘an idyllic memorandum’ in India, stating that there were 130,000 East Indians there, some of whom owned sugar estates or cattle farms, and others who were doctors, lawyers and merchants! The Legislative Council of India declined it, stating it was unclear what the recruits could expect under a new labour system in the colonies (Emmer 1986: 202).

Alternative Accounts

The major question in the *kala pani* discourse is why workers who left their homes to earn money and planned to return did not do so eventually. In the Girmitiya diaspora communities, the feeling predominates that the labourers left their home to settle permanently in remote colonies. This feeling, also very current in popular discourse, could be qualified as *thank goodness* and detailed by the Trinidadian novelist V.S. Naipaul in his *Area of Darkness* (1964). The feeling is lamented in the statement that the first generation Girmitiyas has made the ‘right choice’ to leave British India to settle in another society. If they had not, their descendants would still be living as the descendants of contemporary poor and destitute peasants in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar (extensively discussed in Gowricharn, 2020). Granted the intention to settle permanently, only a small fraction of the total number of emigrants would have returned which was not the case. Moreover, it is difficult to account for ongoing circular migration from the *thank goodness* perspective. It would be unfair however, to attribute the permanent settlement solely to *kala pani*, for many scholars raised other explanations, even when mentioning the *kala pani* argument.

Prior to the emergence of indentured labour, there was a mobility of labour in British India. This migration dates back to the pre-colonial period and was mainly within Asia. For Bihar, de Haan (2002) points to a migration flow that goes back to the Moghul period. He summarises this migration propensity as follows:

...historical evidence ... seems to point out rather convincingly that most of the South Asian rural population has been highly mobile. Studies on the early colonial period show that large groups of

people moved over large distances. In the second half of the nineteenth-century large number of people moved into agricultural activities, and ... the early-colonial period also indicates that population movement was the rule rather than the exception (de Haan, 2002: 123).

This early mobility was typical of north-eastern India and south India (Alexander et al., 2018; Washbrook, 2004). In actual fact, the *kala pani* argument did not prevent the swelling of this labour flow.

Dr Comins (1892: 11–2) suggested another explanation for the settlement: the British-Indians' propensity for 'making money and passion for land-holding'. Similar explanations for settlement can be found by authors like Bisnauth (2000), Choenni (2016), Emmer (1985) and Ramdin (2000). However, making money and returning to British India are not mutually exclusive. After having made money there were good reasons to return. From the Caribbean, between 30 and 40% of the immigrants returned, whereas in Mauritius and Fiji, crossing the *kala pani* did not prevent an ongoing circular migration (Carter, 1995; de Klerk, 1953; Lal, 1983; Laurence, 1994). The most powerful case against the 'passion for land holding' argument was the situation in Fiji, where practically all land was legally owned by the indigenous people (Lal, 1992). Nevertheless, the majority of the immigrants settled down as labourers and as peasants.

Comins also reports that labourers were sometimes forced to settle because of lack of transport:

The position of those who, having declined further contracts, leave the estate and wait for the ship is not an easy one, and if this period is prolonged until their means are exhausted and there is still no news about the ship, there is little for them to do but to return to the estate or to be sent to the Poor Asylum (1892: 32).

Note that Comins speaks in the plural, so it was not a single case. Surinamese agricultural consultant Leys (1925) pointed out that during the First World War, many workers could not return to India because the shipping industry was virtually at a standstill, and for that reason the workers who had served their time settled as peasants. Fokken (2017: 203–4) claims that the passengers were obliged to pay for clothing and other necessities, despite being entitled to it. Moreover, the Surinamese Immigrants Association and colonial authorities spread the rumour that the situation in British India had become unfavourable. Thus, return was discouraged by fellow group members and authorities (Fokken, 2017: 204).

Gillon (1962: 191) points out for Fiji that 'few made a conscious deci-

sion to remain in Fiji permanently'. Workers did not go back because they did not want to spend their savings on the return trip, as they could get a free return trip through the ten-year stay. He summarized reasons for staying in Fiji as follows:

The Indian who put off their return, even after becoming entitled to their free return passages, did so for a variety of reasons, including new kinship ties in Fiji and the superior social and economic status most of them enjoyed there after they had been five years as free men ... many of the migrants had been alienated from their villages or families in India, others had lost touch with them in the meantime. The shared experiences of ten years gave the immigrants a common bond. Many had married in Fiji, and most of these marriages were across caste boundaries so that it would have been difficult to secure acceptance for the wife and marry daughters in India (Gillon, 1962: 192).

For Guyana, similar motives fostering permanent settlement have been cited by Laurence (1994). Up to 1891, immigrants who had served a ten-year contract were entitled to free passage. From 1893 male emigrants had to pay one quarter of the journey costs and women one-sixth, except for those who were exempt, disabled or destitute (Bisnauth, 2000: 135). In addition to the financial threshold to return, Laurence (1994: 428) points out that a growing second generation, which he calls 'creole borne Indians', convinced their relatives not to return to India. For Suriname, Kraijo (2022) suggests that for the period after indenture, familial relations, especially those formed in Suriname, had a strong effect on the relative share of Hindustanis settling.

Conclusion

The majority of Girmitiyas settled in remote colonies after serving their contracts. Many arguments have been raised to explain of this settlement, and most scholars raised the *kala pani* argument in addition to other forces that account for the settlement. This paper scrutinised one recurrent argument: that the *kala pani* doctrine prohibited crossing the sea and jeopardised the position in the caste system. If the Girmitiyas had a propensity not to return, it still stands to reason, why did they cross the ocean in the first place?

This paper argued that granted some credibility to the *kala pani* trope, it should have prevented the swelling flow of emigrants as well as a circular migration from the Mughal period onwards. The diverse experiences of the labourers not to return may have several causes, including the desire to extend

their emigration period in order to earn more money, the fear of sanctions, misunderstanding, loss of hope and anger from the community back home in British India. All these circumstances cannot be related to a *kala pani* crossing. Moreover, the argument did not apply for some categories of migrants, specifically Muslims and people (specifically women) 'on the run'.

These counterarguments raise the question, what does the *kala pani* doctrine explain? It may account for the resistance to cross the sea as occurred with sepoys and Indian soldiers serving in the British Army. But regarding Girmitiyas, there is little empirical evidence that they changed their minds because of fear of crossing the sea. After indenture, the labour migration continued, which indicates that *kala pani* was far from a significant force preventing the mobility of labour. The paper concludes that there has been no evidence to support the *kala pani* doctrine as accounting for the settlement of Girmitiyas. The *kala pani* argument should, therefore, be regarded as a mythical concept without historical or sociological relevance.

References

- Alexander, Claire, Joya Chatterji and Annu Jalais, (2018), *The Bengal Diaspora. Rethinking Muslim Migration*. London: Routledge.
- Basham, Arthur, (1964), *Studies in Indian History and Culture*. Calcutta: s.n.
- Bates, Crispin and Marina Carter, (2021), 'Kala pani revisited: Indian labour migrants and the sea crossing', *Journal of Indentureship and Its Legacies*, 1(1): 36-62.
- Bates, Crispin and Marina Carter, (2017), 'Sirdars as Intermediaries in Nineteenth-century Indian Ocean Indentured Labour Migration', *Modern Asian Studies*, 51(2): 462-84.
- Bisnauth, Dale, (2000), *The settlement of Indians in Guyana 1890-1930*. Leeds: Peepal Tree Press.
- Carter, Marina, (1995), *Servants, Sirdars and Settlers. Indians in Mauritius 1834-1874*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Choenni, Chan, (2016), *Hindostaanse contractarbeiders 1873-1920. Van India naar de plantages in Suriname*. Volendam: LM Publishers.
- Comins, D.W.D., (1892), *Note on Emigration from the East Indies to Surinam or Dutch Guyana*. Calcutta: Printed at the Bengal Secretariat Press.
- De Klerk, Cornelis Johannes Maria, (1953), *De Immigratie der Hindostanen*. Amsterdam: Urbi et Orbi.
- Emmer, Piet, (1986), 'The Meek Hindu: the recruitment of Indentured Labourers for Service Overseas 1870-1916', in: Piet Emmer (ed) *Colonialism and Migration: Indentured Labourers Before and After Slavery*. Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, pp. 187-207.
- Emmer, Piet, (1985), 'The great escape: the migration of female indentured servants from British India to Surinam, 1873-1916', in David Richardson, (ed.), *Abolition and its aftermath: the historical context, 1790-1916*. London: Frank Cass, pp. 245-266.
- Fokken, Margriet, (2017), *Beyond being koelies and kantráki. Constructing Hindostani identities in Suriname in the era of indenture 1873-1921*. Groningen: doctoral dissertation University of Groningen.
- Haan, Arjan de, (2002), 'Migration and livelihoods in historical perspective: A case study of Bihar, India', *Journal of development studies*, 38(5): 115-142.
- Gillion, Kenneth, (1962), *Fiji's Indian Migrants. A History to the End of Indenture in 1920*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press.
- Gowricharn, Ruben, (2021), 'Indian diaspora economics: the entanglement of economics with culture', in R. S. Gowricharn, (ed) *New Perspectives on the Indian Diaspora*. London: Routledge, pp. 143-159.
- Gowricharn, Ruben, (2020), *Miskend Verleden. Hindostaanse boeren in Suriname 1880-1980*. Hilversum: Verloren.
- Kraijo, Matthijs, (2022), 'Destined to Leave Hindustan for Suriname? Explaining the Motivation behind Repatriation and Settlement of Hindustani Labour Migrants in Suriname, 1873-1940', *Tijdschrift voor Sociaal-Economische Geschiedenis (TSEG)*, 9(3): 37-68. DOI: 10.52024/tseg.10894.
- Kumar, Ashutosh, (2017), *Coolies of the Empire. Indentured Indians in the Sugar Colonies 1830-1920*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lal, Brij, (1992), *Broken Waves. A History of the Fijian Islands in the Twentieth Century*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Lal, Brij, (2000), *Chalo Jahaji. On a Journey through Indenture in Fiji*. Canberra: Australian National University Press.
- Lal, Brij, (1983), *Girmitiyas. The Origins of the Fiji Indians*. Canberra: Australian National University Press.
- Laurence, Kenneth, (1994), *A question of labour: Indentured immigration into Trinidad and British Guiana 1875-1917*. Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers.
- Leys, J.J., (1925), 'De veeteelt in Suriname', in *Nieuwe West-Indische Gids*, 6(1): 405-418.
- Naipaul, Vidiadhar, (1964), *An Area of Darkness*. London: André Deutsch.
- Narayan, Badri, (2017), *Culture and the Emotional Economy of Migration*. London: Routledge.
- Nayar, Pramod, (2015), *The Postcolonial Studies Dictionary*. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell.
- Northrup, David, (1995), *Indentured labor in the age of Imperialism, 1834-1922*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ramdin, Ron, (2000), *Arising from Bondage: A History of Indo-Caribbean People*. London and New York: Tauris Publishers.
- Tinker, Hugh, (1974), *A new system of slavery: The export of Indian labour overseas*

1830-1920. London/New York: Oxford University Press.

Van der Veer, Peter, (2021), 'Indian and Chinese Networks in Indian Diaspora', in Ruben Gowricharn (ed.), *New Perspectives on the Indian Diaspora*. London: Routledge, pp. 17–26.

Washbrook, David, (1994), 'The Commercialization of Agriculture in Colonial India: Production, Subsistence and Reproduction in the "Dry South", c. 1870–1930', *Modern Asian Studies*, 28(1): 129–64.

Yang, Anand, (1979), 'Peasants on the move: A study of internal migration in India', *Journal of interdisciplinary history*, 10(1): 37-58.

Author:

Ruben Gowricharn is Professor of Indian Diaspora Studies, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Parts of this paper are based on *Girmitiya peasants in Suriname* (Gowricharn, 2020). Email: