

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF TWO FAILED INDENTURE EXPERIENCES IN
POST-EMANCIPATION CARIBBEAN: BRITISH GUIANA (1838-1843) AND
DANISH ST. CROIX (1863–1868)

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I. INTRODUCTION

From a reading of the contributions on Caribbean indentured historiography, one is struck by two fundamental factors. The first is that we have come a long way in the study of the Caribbean Indian indentured experience. Over the past forty years, historians have covered virtually every aspect of indenture – recruitment, immigration, transportation, plantation experience, resistance, repatriation, remittances, accommodation, settlement, cultural identity – in the Caribbean colonies – British Guiana, Trinidad, Jamaica, Suriname, French Guiana, Martinique, Guadeloupe, Grenada, Belize, St. Vincent, St. Lucia, St. Kitts, Nevis, St. Croix - that received indentured Indians (see Hassankhan 2011; Mahase 2008; Roopnarine 2007; Metha 2004; Ramdin 2000, Seecharan 1999; Hoefte 1998; Kale 1998; Laurence 1995; Look Lai 1993; Shepherd 1994; Dabydeen & Samaroo 1987; Haraksingh 1987; Mangru 1987; Moutoussamy 1989; Emmer 1986; Nath 1975; Tinker 1974; Weller 1968). Of course, analysis of some aspects of indenture still remains to be carried out. The second is the lack of any comparative regional study. Except for Asian Caribbean historian Walton Look Lai's comparative ethnic study on indentured Indians and Chinese and a few other studies on the overall Caribbean Indian indentured experience (see Northrup 1995; Dabydeen and Samaroo 1987; Tinker 1974), there appears to be no comparative study of Indian indentureship in the former British colonies with that of the Dutch, French, or former Danish islands. What has emerged instead from Caribbean Indian indentured studies is an insular focus on former western European Caribbean colonies. For example, Brinsley Samaroo, Radica Mahase, Keith Laurence, Kusha Haraksingh, Judith Weller, Clem Seecharan, Lomarsh Roopnarine, Basdeo Mangru, Madhavi Kale, Verene Shepherd, Dwarka Nath and Ron Ramdin have studied Indian

indentured experience primarily in the former British Caribbean while Maurits Hassankhan, Rosemarjn Hoefte, Peiter Emmer and Ernest Moutoussamy have studied Indian indenture in Suriname and in the French Caribbean respectively. Except for Kumar Sircar (1971) and Lomarsh Roopnarine's (2009, 2010) studies, Indian indenture in the Danish West Indies has not received any meaningful attention. The overall insular or regional Indocentric approach and attention is largely a result of the legacy of colonialism and language differences (Creole included) instituted by the various western imperial regimes in the Caribbean region before and during indenture. Except for rare cases, western European governments (British, French, Dutch and Danish) recorded indenture in their own national language. Unfortunately, since colonial times, there has been little effort to address language insularity in the Caribbean. The end result is that while language barriers permeate almost every academic area and stage in the Caribbean, including the study of Indian indenture, there have been in the past decades a surge of studies on comparative historical analysis around the world (see Mahoney 2004). The application of a comparative historical analysis is important to the study of Indian Caribbean indenture for two broad reasons. First, it can provide a more rounded view of indenture and perhaps erase the current notion that the entire indenture system was essentially a uniform experience. Second, it also can help to reconnect, resuscitate and restore events and images of the overall Caribbean indentured diasporic experience, which has been suppressed and subdued by insularity. To this day, descendants of indentured Indians have little knowledge of each other in the Caribbean despite an array of studies, conferences, and religious community connections.

The following article analyzes two failed indenture experiences in the early post-emancipation Caribbean: British Guiana (1838–1843) and Danish St. Croix (1863–1868). Both failed experiments lasted for five years and were the first indentured experiments in both colonies, twenty-five years apart, after slave emancipation. Slavery was abolished in British Guiana and Danish St. Croix in 1834 and 1848 respectively. Of course, indenture resumed in British Guiana in 1845 but the focus here is on the first batch of Indians that arrived and worked between 1838 and 1843. Both failed indentured experiments were managed by two different European governments – Britain and Denmark – as well as the colonial Indian government and the Caribbean governments/planters. Britain had total control of the indenture while Denmark had to negotiate for indentured Indians. The colonial Indian government managed the recruitment, immigration, transportation and the general welfare of

Indians in India, and to a lesser degree, in the Caribbean colonies but held a subservient and secondary position to the British and Danish governments. In the Caribbean, Protectors of Immigrants were appointed to supervise and report on the day-to-day action and welfare of indentured Indians. The Protectors were, however, subjected to planter class pressure. The planters' main objective was to use the indentured contracts to extract as much economic benefits as possible. The indentured Indians were subjected to signed contracts, which provided some protection and benefits but these incentives were manipulated by their plantation overlords.

The primary aim of the article is not merely to compare and contrast major indenture events in British Guiana and Danish St. Croix but to investigate how the British, Danish and the colonial Indian governments as well as the Caribbean planters administered the indenture system. The article also investigates whether or not any lessons were learned from the failed British Guiana indentured experience, twenty years earlier, from the St. Croix experience. Particular attention will be paid to the series of new rules and regulations introduced during the intervening years (1838-1863) to see if they had any effect on the Danish plantation indentured experience that started in 1863.

Structurally, the article will focus first on the British Guiana experience and then move onto Danish St Croix. Comparative historical analyses and arguments on both failed experiences are spread over four sections. Section two illustrates the early post-emancipation labour situation in British Guiana and Danish St. Croix and shows the planters' determination to substitute the loss of slave labour with indentured labour to ensure the survival of their plantations. Section three examines the recruitment, sea voyage, and distribution of Indians in both colonies and shows how these events were monitored or managed with the implementation of new reforms and regulations. Section four analyzes indentured Indians' plantation experience, remittances, repatriation and eventual abolition of indenture and portrays the planter's treatment of indentured Indians as well as explains the reasons for the uneven accumulation of indentured savings. The section also explores and documents why indenture failed in both colonies. A final section summarizes the findings.

II. POST-EMANCIPATION BRITISH GUIANA (1838) AND DANISH ST. CROIX (1848) AND NEGOTIATIONS FOR INDENTURED INDIANS

One of the most pressing concerns for British and Danish planters following the abolition of slavery (British Guiana in 1838 and Danish West Indies in 1848) was what would eventually become of their sugar plantations in the face of declining slave labour, continuing economic competition and deteriorating market conditions. The planters anticipated that upon gaining their liberty former slaves would depart the plantations en masse or even retaliate against them for injustices encountered during slavery. Towards that end, the planters began to prepare for the inevitable and eventual liberation of their slaves. Their main strategy revolved around the control and cost of labour through their powerful status and influence in the legislature. They were largely successful, and as a consequence, labour relations in early post-emancipation British Guiana and Danish St. Croix could figuratively be described as the lash of the whip being replaced by the letter of the law. In British Guiana and Danish St. Croix, the apprenticeship (1834 to 1838) and the Labour Act (1849 to 1879) were introduced to control labor. One requirement was that freed Africans had to work for forty hours per week and be paid a stipulated wage. While the main thrust of planters' plan was to use the new labour systems as a transitional mechanism from slave to free labour, they were a major disadvantage to the freed Africans. The planters' control and abuse of the labour systems in effect pushed many freed Africans back into slavery. Subsequently, the transitional experiments in apprenticeship and contractual labour collapsed in British Guiana (1838) and in Danish St. Croix (1878) (Jarvis 1938; Green 1973; Dookhan 1974; Jensen 1998).

The collapse of apprenticeship in British Guiana presented many problems for the planters but opened up options and opportunities for freed Africans. Freed Africans could remain on the plantations under a slightly modified system of apprenticeship, bargain for better wages, and continue to work on the plantations under fairer circumstances; or migrate from the plantations and form independent peasant villages. A majority of freed Africans grabbed every possible opportunity to migrate from the burdensome plantations to independent peasant village communities. This movement was most feasible in British Guiana largely due to plentiful unoccupied land and the freed Africans' familiarity with agriculture. The planters tried to stymie the freed Africans from migrating through restrictive regulations. They introduced more vagrancy laws, compulsory contracts, depressed wages and restrictive land purchase policies. Nonetheless, motivated freed Africans

did migrate from the plantations and bought abandoned plantations, using savings acquired during apprenticeship. The ensuing result was that thousands of ex-slaves migrated to other employment poles leaving a labour vacuum on the plantations (Look Lai 1993; Dookhan 1974). To counteract this labor challenge, British Guiana planters turned to foreign workers to replace the labour force on the plantations. Foreign workers were recruited mainly from within the Caribbean, Madeira, Europe, and from the ranks of liberated Africans from slave ships on the Atlantic Ocean bound for slave colonies in the New World. This source of labour supply, however, was not sufficient to meet the labor demand in British Guiana. British Guiana's planters eventually turned to India.

The post-emancipation situation was somewhat different on Danish St. Croix, although ideological differences between the planters and freed Africans on working conditions remained. Each group held on to their own polarized position: the planters wanted to retain a cheap labour supply while freed Africans bargained for better wages. The fundamental difference on Danish St. Croix was that the post-emancipation labour arrangement, namely the Labour Act, lasted for almost three decades (1849-1878). The main features of the Labour Act were the regulation and restraint of the movements of the freed people, and the virtual annulment of the bargaining power of these people in such matters as wages and accommodation (Roopnarine 2010a:248; Jensen 1998:96-106). The reaction of freed Africans to the Labour Act was migration to urban areas and settlement on vacant land beyond the confines of the plantations. Like in British Guiana, the planters on Danish St. Croix also attempted to block these avenues of independence for the freed people through a compulsory passbook system and a land regulation program. In spite of these measures, a significant number of the labour force still abandoned the plantations. In 1846, there were 15,328 plantation labourers and by 1853 that figure dropped to 12,865, of whom an estimated 3,000 were deemed unfit for work. Six years after emancipation, twenty-five per cent of the labour force was lost due largely to out-migration and deaths (Dookhan 1974: 226). The planters subsequently argued that the labour force was too small and unreliable to sustain the plantations. They pushed for the recruitment of foreign labour to resolve the domestic labour demand. Their argument was sufficiently persuasive to cause the Danish Government to allow the importation of an estimated 10,000 foreign labourers from 1850 to 1917 to work mainly on the sugar plantations (Tyson 1995; Jensen 1998). Over ninety per cent of these labourers came from the Lesser Antilles, with Barbados contributing an estimated seventy-seven per cent, mainly because of a

labour surplus in that colony. The other main suppliers came from the Spanish-, Dutch- and English-speaking islands. Only five per cent came from outside of the Caribbean, chiefly from Madeira, China, and India.

The above-mentioned post-emancipation challenges combined to induce the importation of the first batch of indentured Indians to British Guiana and Danish St. Croix. The usual push and pull factors inducing population movements were also operative in the sending and receiving territories. Poverty-stricken and socio-economically oppressed in their homeland, Indians were eager to migrate for better life opportunities while the Caribbean planters were anxious to substitute the loss of slave labour with cheap indentured labour to maintain high levels of production (Heije 1967). The negotiation for indentured Indians, however, was markedly different in both Caribbean colonies. In British Guiana, there was little government regulation, although private individuals and companies anticipating the movement of Indians to the Caribbean required some permission from the British Crown and the colonial Indian government. In spite of some government regulations, the ad hoc approach in the first stages of indenture attracted the attention of private planters such as the British Guianese planter, John Gladstone. In a series of letters to the private recruitment firm Messrs Gillanders, Arbuthnot & Company, Gladstone inquired if that firm would be willing to recruit one hundred Indians from India to work on his plantations in British Guiana. He explained that the former slaves were reluctant to provide labour on the plantations and wondered if the firm would send Dhangers (the tribal hill people), the very type of indentured Indians who were contracted in Mauritius, to his plantation. Apparently, Gladstone was aware that the Dhangers had a reputation for being docile, diligent, and easily manipulated by their employers. The firm replied in the affirmative but cautioned that there might be some problems trying to recruit women. Gladstone subsequently wrote to the Indian government inquiring what position that government would take in the movement of indentured Indians to British Guiana. He was told there would be no objections. The Colonial Office, under the leadership of Colonial Secretary Lord Glenelg, had to agree, however. Lord Glenelg was specifically concerned about how indentured Indians would be treated with regard to their recruitment, sea voyage, work load, wages, housing, medical care, contracts, family life and repatriation. He was asking for a stable family life among indentured Indians. Meanwhile, Gladstone was so confident that his proposal to import indentured Indians would be accepted that he instructed Messrs Gillanders, Arbuthnot & Co. to make preparations to dispatch the first shipload of Indians to British Guiana

(see British Parliamentary Papers 1837–38:LII, 180 and 232). The first shipload of Indians eventually departed India to British Guiana in 1837.

The British Crown was fairly comfortable in allowing the movement of indentured workers within its dominion with little or no state regulations. Irregularities with the first experiment of indentured Indians to British Guiana, however, caused the British Crown to be suspicious of indentured immigration. Critical published reports from the *Anti-Slavery Society*, *the Emancipator*, *Friends of India* and other concerned citizens in India, Britain as well as in the Caribbean on the unmanageable and abusive aspects of indentured Indian immigration pressured the Crown to reconsider whether the movement of indentured Indians over high seas without firm state control had replicated the African slave trade. The Crown eventually realized that the private administration of indenture was ineffectively and inefficiently managed to prevent ill-treatment of Indians, and in 1838, suspended indentured immigration, the same year it started in British Guiana. The five year indentured contract, the immigration of Indians over high seas, however, continued in British Guiana until 1843. The Crown eventually moved the management of indenture under direct state control. When the system resumed in 1845, several regulations were in place to weed out ill-treatment of indentured Indians. From the 1850s, anyone who wished to participate in the movement of indentured Indians from India had to comply with many regulations designed mainly to safeguard against the ill-treatment of indentured Indians.

The new state guidelines governing the entire indenture system meant that the negotiation for indentured Indians to Danish St. Croix was fundamentally different to that of British Guiana since Danish planters were not allowed to privately recruit Indians for St. Croix. Twenty-five years later from British Guiana planters' negotiation experience, Danish planters in the early 1860s, were required to negotiate directly with the British Crown and Indian government, mainly to avoid abuses and to ensure that indentured Indians would be fairly protected outside the Crown's jurisdiction. The British Crown and Indian government emphasized a sound recruitment process, a safe and secure transportation system, and a non-abusive plantation experience. They also insisted that a British Agent or a British Consular as well as a Protector should be stationed at the ports of departure in India and on the Caribbean plantation colonies. Finally, the British and Indian governments reserved the right to suspend and stop indentured immigration to the Caribbean colonies, if so needed at any time (British Parliamentary Papers 1874:29–32).

These stringent rules and regulations demonstrated that the British Crown was uncomfortable with indentured Indian labour in foreign colonies. The Crown was also reluctant to allow Indian indentured immigration to foreign colonies because it stood to gain economically from Indian indentureship since India was one of its colonies. Whatever might have been the reasons for not allowing the recruitment of Indians to foreign colonies, the British Crown eventually relented and allowed the French in 1860 to recruit Indians to the French Caribbean, fearing that the French would turn to Africa and recruit Africans under dubious circumstances and conditions. The deeper implication for allowing a foreign government, like the French, to recruit indentured Indians suggested that the British Crown would not have any serious reservations against the Danish Crown recruiting Indians for St. Croix. Actually, by 1860, when various western European countries had to come to see indentured Indians as the possible solution to the acute labour shortage in their former slave colonies, the most serious flaws of the indentured system had been remedied. The British government had already permitted the colonial governments in St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Grenada, Jamaica, and St. Kitts as well as in the French Caribbean to recruit Indian labourers.

Without a doubt, the Danish Crown was encouraged by these new developments, and in November 1861, the Danish Ambassador M. de Bille sent a proposal to the British government for permission to import Indian labourers to St. Croix under similar circumstances as the French government. The Ambassador stated that a slave insurrection in 1848 had altered labour relations on St. Croix. The native labourers practically abandoned plantation occupation, and continuation of sugar cultivation on the island depended largely on foreign labour. Despite these concerns, the proposal was rejected. Sir Charles Wood, the Secretary of State for India, asked for a more convincing legislation from St. Croix, namely more input from the Colonial Council of St. Croix. The Danish Ambassador handed in a hasty proposal replicating the restrictive 1849 labour regulations, anticipating that the recruitment season in India would end in early March. After a lengthy dialogue between the British government and the Colonial Council of St. Croix spanning over two years, the British government allowed Danish planters to import indentured Indians. The Indian government had to agree, however (British Parliamentary Paper 1874: 34). One immigration agent in India proffered that the subordinate Indian government accepted the proposal without any further serious consideration. Finally, Act VII of 1863 was

passed allowing Demark to transport Indians to St. Croix (British Parliamentary Papers 1874:34).

III. RECRUITMENT, SEA VOYAGE, AND DISTRIBUTION OF INDENTURED INDIANS

The previous section examined the labor vacuum emanated from the withdrawal of Africans from plantation agriculture and planters' desperation to cope with this post-emancipation labor challenge. Gradual reformation of indentureship also occurred, mainly the introduction of stricter rules and regulations to administer indenture especially to foreign colonies. This section will investigate the aforementioned subtitle themes to see how they were conducted to British Guiana. This section will also examine the reformation of indenture during the intervening years (1838-1863) to see if there was any change in policy, approach and attitude among the British, Danish, Indian governments and Caribbean planters towards indenture.

The first batch of Indians imported to British Guiana consisted mainly of 'Gladstone Coolies' since Gladstone was instrumental in negotiating for them and a majority went to his two plantations, *Vreed-en-hoop* and *Vreedestein*. More than seventy per cent of these Indians were recruited from the Chota Nagpur region, home to one of India's tribal peoples. A smaller percentage of them were recruited in Calcutta where they migrated from other regions to look for employment. Some Indians indentured themselves voluntarily, but a larger number of them were subject to deceitful methods of recruitment. They were told fanciful stories of indenture in the Caribbean by recruiting agencies and their fellow Indian recruiters that essentially concealed the harsh characteristics of plantation life. British colonialism also interfered and impacted the material, cultural and economic livelihoods of the tribal people in the Chota Nagpur region forcing out-migration and alternative ways of survival (Kondapi 1951). These tribal people (referred to as Hill Coolies) were subsequently brought into contact with recruiters to labor in British Guiana. Their limited knowledge of the world beyond their village made them vulnerable to indentured immigration (see Tinker 1974). The *Bengal Hurkaru*, a local Indian newspaper, printed a number of letters from the community expressing their views on the recruitment of Indians to overseas destinations. One stinging letter titled "Trade in Coolies" expressed that the natives of India were kidnapped, and put onboard ships against their will for the purpose of indentured labour overseas. The same newspaper suggested that the fraudulent recruitment of Indians was wider than thought, and practised at quieter coastal ports

in India. Indians were shipped and re-shipped from the island of Bourbon and Mauritius to British Guiana and places unknown. The report added that if the system were not checked, Mauritius as well as British Guiana would become the slave markets of the East (*Bengal Hurkaru*, July 4 and 15, 1838).

The criticism leveled against the transportation of the first batch of indentured Indians to British Guiana was instrumental in bringing some changes and improvements to the overall indenture system. By the 1860s, the recruitment of indentured Indians to St. Croix showed some improvements, although not completely free from bad practices. Chief among the improvements was state control of indenture accompanied by a series of regulations from recruitment to transportation to indentured plantation labor. The British government set up a hierarchy of immigration officials in India to conduct the recruitment of indentured labourers. The Indian government appointed immigration agents in regions and districts to monitor and manage the recruitment of intending indentured labourers. These immigration agents then employed provincial and district sub-agents, licensed recruiters and local judges to supervise the judicial aspects. Medical personnel were employed to oversee the holding depots and the sea voyage to ensure that Indians were well-fed and well-suited for the three-month journey from India to the Caribbean. As a result, intending indentured workers were not primarily deceived into serving indentured service abroad. Other factors accounted for their work service. Most of the Indians who were brought to St. Croix came mainly from Bihar and Bengal. These areas were affected by steady unemployment, caste exploitation, unexpected natural disasters and civil unrest. These factors created a significant pool of unemployed Indians who were anxious to indenture themselves overseas in the face of adverse conditions in their home districts.

The question to be asked at this point is whether or not the new regulations eradicated or extended fraudulent recruitment practices. In fact, from the 1860s to the collapse of indenture in 1920, loopholes and weaknesses presented opportunities for indenture ordinances to be evaded and manipulated. The main flaw was the poor contact and coordination among the British Crown, the colonial Indian government and the Caribbean planters. The British Crown was responsible for the supervision of the overall indenture system but relied on reports from colonial officials. The Crown was not directly involved in the day-to-day experience of the system and the Indian government was simply too weak to ensure a proper functioning of the indenture system. The Indian government held a paradoxical position towards indenture. It expressed

much enthusiasm in protecting Indian citizens from exploitation, favoring a myriad of legislation to achieve this goal. Yet, when pressured, the government adopted a neutral and benevolent policy towards indenture (see Cumpston 1956; Mangru 1987). As for the Caribbean planters, they took every opportunity to exploit the indenture system to their economic advantage. Their concern was to ensure that the Protectors of Immigrants was pleased with the general administering of the labour system. The likelihood of achieving such an objective was not difficult since the Protectors normally shared common interests with the planter class rather than with the individuals who depended on them for protection (British Parliamentary Papers 1871:183). Racism also permeated Caribbean plantation system, where colour determined one's social standing, and therefore the Protectors would have most likely joined the ranks of their fellow white planter class. Moreover, language and custom differences between the administrators and indentured workers presented communication challenges that prevented and eventually forestalled a smooth functioning of the system (British Parliamentary Papers 1874:24). It seemed that the administrators of the indenture system were merely interested in dividends and not in the general welfare or protection of those who came under their sway. The relationship between power and responsibility was distinctly disconnected (Roopnarine 2007:33).

In spite of this plethora of problems associated with the indenture, the shipping of Indians over the dangerous Indian and Atlantic Oceans continued. Unfortunately, detailed accounts on the conditions of Indian sea voyages to the Caribbean, particularly on ships *Hesperus* and *Whitby* (to British Guiana) as well as the *Mars* (to St. Croix) are distressingly scarce. Even when accounts did exist, they were not recorded by Indians passengers but by the organizers of indenture. The available information on the Indian sea voyage to British Guiana and Danish St. Croix therefore has to be carefully analyzed. One recent reliable source *Theophilus Richmond, The First Crossing: Being The Diary of Theophilus Richmond, Ship's Surgeon Aboard The Hesperus, 1837-8*, shows how planter John Gladstone employed Theophilus Richmond, a twenty-five-year-old medical doctor/surgeon, on aboard the ship *Hesperus* in 1837-1838 to transport 170 indentured Indians to substitute for the loss of enslaved labourers in British Guiana (Dabydeen et al 2007:xvi-xvii). The ship set sail on June 23, 1837 from Liverpool, England, travelled around Africa, and stopped in Mauritius on August 30. *Hesperus* then travelled to and reached Calcutta, India, on December 8, and eventually set sail for British Guiana, its final destination, where it

arrived on April 26, 1838. Another ship (see below on table one), the *Whitby*, left India and arrived in Berbice, British Guiana, on May 5, 1838 with 267 indentured Indians, a total of 437 for the entire colony. On the same table, the *Coolie Journal* (1863) shows that 321 indentured Indians were transported on the steamship *Mars*, which departed Calcutta in early March and arrived on Danish St. Croix on June 13, 1863. The point should be made that the figures in the table below, in particular, for British Guiana, may not be accurate since there is a discrepancy in the statistical data on the number of Indians leaving India and arriving in British Guiana. One record shows 417 instead of 437 Indians arriving in British Guiana. It is probable that no less than 400 Indians left India for British Guiana in 1838.

Table 1: Number of indentured Indians by ship to British Guiana and Danish St. Croix in 1863

Ships	Colonies	Men	Women	Children	Deaths	Total
Hesperus	Guiana	155	5	10	14	170
Whitby	Guiana	250	7	10	4	267
Mars	St. Croix	244	60	17	3	321

Source: British Parliamentary Papers (1839) XXXIX (463), "Correspondence relating to the condition of Hill coolies and of other labourers who have been introduced into British Guiana", 1-109. London, Colonial Office; & *Coolie Journal* (1863), "The distribution of Indians on Danish St. Croix", Danish National Archives, Rigsarkivet, Vest Indiske Lokalararkiver, Den Vest Indiske Regering. The *Coolie Journal* does not have any page numbers, and it is the only document on Indians to St. Croix.

After Indians were medically inspected for fitness to endure the sea voyage they were taken to a holding depot and from there to the waiting ships. Young men were placed in front, married men in the middle on the port side, married women on the starboard side, and the girls on the aft. The distance from India to the Caribbean is eleven thousands miles. The journey in nineteenth-century wooden sailing ships lasted about four to five months. Most ships left between August and March when the weather was more favorable. The outward ships from the Indian ports of Calcutta and Madras generally traveled through the Bay of Bengal and around the Cape of Good Hope and stopped at St. Helena to pick up fresh water and food if necessary and continued to the Caribbean islands (Laurence 1995:78-103)

Apart from abuse, Indian passengers encountered or were vulnerable to diseases such as cholera, typhoid, dysentery, scurvy, scorbutic diarrhea and beriberi which broke out very often on ships.

Surgeon Theophilus Richmond wrote repeatedly in his daily log about how cholera had struck Indian passengers on the ship *Hesperus* from India to British Guiana in 1837. On one occasion he provided a vivid account of a cholera victim.

I went immediately and soon discovered to my horror and consternation that I was looking on a case of genuine Indian Cholera, and cholera in one of its most aggravated shapes. The state of the poor creature tho' [sic] so recently seized was dreadful and his sufferings beyond all description: he was first attacked with violent and unceasing vomiting which was rapidly followed by spasm and cramps so powerful that they literally seemed to bind up his muscles into a continuous string of knots at once from excess agony alone (in Dabydeen et al. 2007:154-156).

Death was almost certain, as in the case above, when cholera struck on board the ships. The statistics in Table 1 show that 14 Indians perished on the ship *Hesperus* while the number of deaths on *Whitby* were four.

The reasons for deaths on board the ships were the poor state of the immigrants before departure; the inadequate medical arrangements to determine which Indians were unfit to undergo the risks of a long sea voyage; too many women and children; the neglect of proper sanitary precautions; the poor quality of water and diet; the inexperience of medical officers who were not able to communicate with Indians and who were unaccustomed to treating diseases associated with Indians. The colonial officials often pointed to economic distress among the Indian population for the cause of high death rates. They emphasized that poverty had a negative impact on the diet and well-being of Indians and that their enfeebled constitutions made them more susceptible to diseases and eventual death (British Parliamentary Papers 1866:22). The transportation of visibly pregnant women, children, and marginally healthy individuals, however, over high seas would have also added to the calamities on board the ships.

High deaths rates during the sea voyages from 1838 to around the 1860s forced the British Crown to impose a series of new rules and regulations on the ship's crew to ensure safe journeys across the Indian and Atlantic Oceans. The rules and regulations required sea-worthy ships, trained surgeons, cleaner water supply, proper ventilation, adequate deck space and ration, a make-shift hospital, and better treatment of indentured Indians (British Parliamentary Papers 1844:44-49). The Crew was also extended, comprising a diverse group of individuals of different nationalities and occupational backgrounds, ranked according to occupational status. The most important individual on the ship was the Surgeon-Superintendent followed by the Captain,

Third Mate, Compounders (mediators), Sirdars (headmen), Bandharries (native cooks), and Topazes (sweepers) (see Laing 1880; White 1936; Lubock 1955; Roopnarine 2010b).

The Crown's regulatory efforts on transporting indentured Indians led to a decrease of deaths on board the ships from the mid-1860s. Only four out of 325 indentured Indians died on the Indian sea voyage from India to St. Croix. The low number of deaths was a remarkable improvement and represented a relatively fortunate sea voyage. The stark reality was that from 1840s up to the end of indenture in 1920, death rates fluctuated anywhere from five to 30 per cent of the 725,000 who crossed the Indian and Atlantic Oceans. This would mean that if we use the conservative five per cent to calculate the number of deaths, over 36,000 Indians perished on sea voyages between India and the Caribbean (Roopnarine 2010b:67). Despite improvements in transporting indentured workers between India and the Caribbean, deaths as well as births were regular events throughout the indentureship.

Within days of arrival in British Guiana and St. Croix, Indians were distributed to various plantations whose employers were responsible for their sojourned indentured service. Tables 2 and 3 show where Indians were indentured in British Guiana and St. Croix respectively.

Table 2: The distribution of Indians on various plantations in British Guiana in 1838

Plantations	Numbers
Vreed-en-hoop	70
Vriedestein	31
Anna Regina	49
Belle Vue	81
Waterloo	47
Highbury	128

Source: British Parliamentary Papers (1839), XXXIX (463) "Correspondence relating to the condition of Hill coolies and of other labourers who have been introduced into British Guiana". London, Colonial Office.

Table 3: The distribution of Indians to various plantations on St. Croix in 1863

Plantations	Numbers	Plantations	Numbers
Mount Pleasant	50	Golden Grove	16
Estate Diamond	25	Upper Love	15
Rattan	10	Fountain	15
Lower Bethlehem	64	Goodhope	25
La Princesse	10	Diamond	19
Lower Love	11	River	56

Source: Coolie Journal (1863), The distribution of Indians on Danish St. Croix, Danish National. Archives, Rigsarkivet, Vest Indiske Lokalkiver, Den Vest Indiske Regering,

Some interesting analyses can be drawn from the distribution of Indians to British Guiana and St. Croix. First, these Indians were put to work soon after arrival and denied any time to acclimatize or even learn plantation work. Some of them might have been accustomed to hard agricultural labour in their homeland but certainly not planting, weeding, harvesting, and producing sugar. This experience was different from slavery. African slaves were given an acclimatization period. For this and other reasons, some critics of indenture argued that the labour system was a modified system of slavery (Tinker 1974; Beaumont 1871). Second, these Indians were recruited from different regions in India with varying religions and social structures. Some of these differences were diluted during the sea voyage as Indians bonded together (*jahaji bhai/bahin*: ship brother/sister) to deal with more pressing issues such as abuse and survival (Samaroo 2000:19). However, it is probable that Indians were dispatched to various plantations irrespective of their cultural, caste, and religious identities or family background. This might have certainly affected family stability and undermined the hope of reconstructing family life in the Caribbean. Third, the distribution lists show an enormous gender disparity. Of the total 437 Indians brought to British Guiana, only twelve were women, while on St. Croix women constituted 60 out of a population of 321. This disparity might not have mattered since Indians were sojourners in the Caribbean, and single males and females would have most likely returned to a more favorable family environment when their contracts expired. Indian males, in particular, could have also formed unions with other ethnic groups in their new environment. This situation did not

materialize mainly because Indians socialized according to their conservative caste customs which frowned upon socializing and mixing with other ethnic groups and even with different castes within their own social hierarchy. As a result of this gender disparity, Indian males either remained single or competed for scarce Indian women, which led to jealousy and unwanted social ills such as wife-chopping and murder in their isolated communities. Statistics on the social ills of indentured Indians during the period under analysis are not available. But when indenture resumed in 1845 and continued until 1920, social ills, including wife murders, were a permanent feature of the labour system. For instance, in British Guiana, between 1885 and 1900, of 103 murders, 78 were women while 58 were wives (Mohapatra 1995:22). The inference here is that while Indian women held a subordinate status in India and that such a status was transferred to the Caribbean making them more susceptible to abuse, the likelihood that the seeds of social ills in Indian Caribbean plantation communities were planted during the first arrival of indentured Indians in British Guiana and St. Croix cannot be simply dismissed. The coercive and conflict-habituated plantation conditions would have no doubt exacerbated social ills in Indian communities. Of course, the authorities used the labor ordinances to enforce work discipline among the immigrants but not to affirm social justice. Actually, they paid no significant or serious attention to social ills in Indian communities but rather preferred to label them as Indian problems, which should be resolved by Indians themselves. This nineteenth century condescending attitude was a reflection of racial stereotyping of peasant-oriented Indians by European authorities and planters.

IV. PLANTATION EXPERIENCE, REMITTANCE, AND ABOLITION

The previous section established that there was a marginal improvement in the recruitment and transportation of intending indentured Indians from the British Guiana experience to the Danish St. Croix experience, twenty-years later. The British as well as Indian governments instituted a host of new regulations to guide indenture and while these measures were admirable they failed to protect Indians from manipulation and abuse from the management class. Investigation into the distribution of the indentured immigrant population showed a gender disparity and a disregard for family life from the administrators that eventually undermined opportunities for familial reconstruction and stability in both colonies. This section will extend the investigation of the British and Indian governments and Caribbean planters by

comparing and contrasting indentured plantation experience, accumulated indentured savings as well as the reasons for the abolition of indenture on both colonies. The section will also investigate the planters' treatment of indentured Indians and the circumstances and conditions that led to uneven savings among indentured Indians in both colonies. Other efforts will explore and expose the ill-treatment of indentured Indians and illustrate why indenture eventually failed in both colonies.

If we examine the conditions in which Indians lived and worked as well as the amount of wages they earned and eventually saved, we might be able to get a balanced view of their plantation experience in British Guiana and St. Croix. Perhaps one can conclude with reasonable justification that the above-mentioned circumstances were remotely different from what enslaved Africans endured during slavery. There are two possible reasons for this conclusion. The planter class, which was molded in the belief of a forced labour system for over four centuries, would have found nothing unjust about indentured labour. The indentured servants themselves bore a striking resemblance to the Africans they replace on the plantations. They were dark-skinned and supposedly inferior and therefore fitted the vital criteria upon which the plantation system functioned. There were, however, some unique characteristics of the indenture system which were not present during slavery, although the stains of slavery, especially in the domain of control, were not totally removed.

The core of the Indian Caribbean plantation experience began with signed labour contracts in their homeland. The contracts consisted of laws and ordinances which were not easily comprehensible to modern researchers, much less to the nineteenth century Indian peasantry. The majority of Indians who signed labour contracts, or were forced to do so, did not understand the labour requirements and obligations that awaited them in the Caribbean. Many were simply non-literate. Moreover, the contracts were largely developed and designed in the economic interest of the planter class. The contracts nevertheless contained enough incentives to draw Indians into indenture overseas. The contracts stipulated that Indians be bound for five years on a plantation with fixed wages and their passage paid for by their employers. At the end of the fifth year, they had the option to accept a bounty of \$40 in St. Croix and \$50 in British Guiana and re-indenture for another five years. Their employers/planters were expected to provide suitable housing, fringe medical care, minimal wages, and basic rations. Failure to meet contractual obligations resulted in fines and punishment for the

indentured Indians and planters. The planters, however, did not meet their expected obligations, and were not generally punished, unless their actions were severe. The planters' privileged position revealed the one-sided nature of indenture system. Their reluctance to live up to expected obligations was largely responsible for continued social conflict between themselves and indentured Indians.

Although the contracts stated that indentured Indians should be given suitable housing, the planters made no real attempt to meet this obligation. Instead, with the aim of curbing additional costs, the planters housed indentured Indians in abandoned slave dwellings where conditions were deplorable and degrading. The abandoned slave dwellings consisted of a series of flat one-room houses or huts that afforded no family privacy. These one-room houses were designed to accommodate two persons, but in British Guiana the one-room houses were used to accommodate seven to eleven indentured Indians. Similar circumstances of overcrowding were noticed in St. Croix. Six Indians were lodged in one room, and in one case a man and his wife and two single men were placed in one room. When one plantation manager was asked why so many Indians were lodged in one room, he said if Indians were given separate rooms then there would be none for incoming immigrants (Bengal Emigration Proceedings 1865:9). The one-room houses lacked any indoor plumbing, and so indentured Indians washed, cooked, and relieved themselves outdoors. Indentured Indians were subsequently not only exposed to but also suffered from a range of diseases such as chigoes, cholera, and dysentery. These diseases emerged mainly from unsanitary environments and poor hygiene (British Parliamentary Papers 1839:105).

The working conditions were equally bad. Indians were required to work nine hours per day six days per week excluding holidays. They were engaged in almost every aspect of sugar cane plantation work from weeding and molding to cutting and transporting the sugar cane to the factory. This was strenuous work that tested and taxed the temperament of even the most docile and disciplined indentured labourers. Some indentured Indians accepted indenture but others took militant actions that included strikes and riots. In response, the plantation management either fined or physically punished them. Testimonies from the Anti-Slavery Society, members of the plantation staff, and indentured servants in courts revealed that indentured Indians were severely mistreated in British Guiana and St. Croix. The most severe mistreatment involved flogging on the plantations as well as neglect in the hospitals or 'sick-houses'. These buildings were inadequately equipped with medical

supplies and poorly staffed. Several reports indicated that conditions at 'sick-houses' were heart-rending and frightful (British Parliamentary Papers 1839:90–99; Nath 1975; Dookhan 1977).

Not surprisingly, death rates in both colonies were high. Of the 437 Indians transported from India to British Guiana, 98 of them died during their five year contract from 1838 to 1843. This was almost twenty-five per cent of the population. The situation was marginally better on St. Croix. The British Consul's dispatch to the British Colonial Office showed that Indians on St. Croix suffered from poor health emanating from inadequate diet, overwork, ill-treatment, neglect, and diseases. Of 321 Indians who left Calcutta in 1863, 19 died on the plantations, more than six per cent during the first year (Bengal Emigration Proceedings 1865:8). In contrast, the death rate for the local labour force during the same period on St. Croix, which was experiencing a fever epidemic at the time, was five per cent. On Plantation Rattan, 40 per cent of indentured Indians died and, of these, three were young individuals. The colonial officials attributed high death rates on St. Croix to a shortage of well-qualified medical personnel. Only six medical doctors were on the island of 23,000 people in the 1860s (Roopnarine 2009:127). Not all of these deaths were connected to indenture. Some Indians committed suicide or drowned, while others deserted the plantation and were never found. The high death rates were considered excessive and were among the reasons why future allotment of indentured Indians to both colonies was stopped.

The poor treatment indentured Indian received in British Guiana and St. Croix raises and reveals some interesting questions and points. Why did Indians receive poor treatment in the Caribbean colonies? Was it because the planters thought that peasant-oriented Indians were treated worse in their homeland which gave them enough reason and justification to administer similar practices on their plantations? Actually, there is a modicum of truth to this generalization. The plantocracy believed that the punishment meted out to Indians in the Caribbean would not have constituted a serious offense in India and so why should they be held responsible for poor treatment of indentured Indians? Similarly, if peasant Indians were treated poorly in their homeland, why would they expect a different treatment in the Caribbean? The planter class claimed that fellow Indians were in the positions of leadership (overseers, managers and drivers) not them, and that Indians acted in a manner inconsistent with power and responsibility. Indians simply exploited other less fortunate Indians. But wasn't the planter class aware of the severe brutality on their

plantations? Furthermore, if they were not aware of ill-treatment on their plantations, it was probable that the heavy or high-handed behaviour of Indians on their fellow Indians was learned, accepted, or commended by their superiors, the planters, in the pursuit of the twin objectives of maintaining discipline and reaping economic benefits. Worse still is that it would seem absurd that a foreign entity such as the *Anti-Slavery Society* based in Great Britain would discover the mistreatment rather than the planters on the sugar plantations. Additionally, it does not sound logical that the mistreatment on their plantations would have escaped them.

In spite of hardships, indentured Indians were able to remit savings to their homeland. Table 4 shows Indians remitted £18,448 or \$88,550 from five plantations in British Guiana in 1843 (British Parliamentary Paper 1843:33-37). In contrast, the information on savings Indians acquired on St. Croix is scattered and sketchy. On the so-called *Coolie Journal* list of indentured Indians on St. Croix, the remarks section shows very little information on savings. Actually, a number of Indians had no savings beside their names. For instance, on plantation Lower Bethlehem, only 14 out of 64 indentured Indians had savings deposited beside their names ranging from \$9.00 to \$50.00 or £2 to £10 (*Coolie Journal* 1863). The total amount of savings Indians took back with them on their return voyage from St. Croix to India in 1868 was just over \$12,000 or £2,500.

Table 4: Savings Indians acquired on five Plantations in British Guiana in 1843

Plantations	Number of Indians	Amount of Savings in Pounds
Highbury	68	8,536
Waterloo	21	3,888
Belle Vue	31	4,136
Wales	16	1,035
Vriedestein	9	853
Total	145	18, 448

Source: British Parliamentary Papers (1843), XXXV (404) “Correspondence relating to the return of coolies from British Guiana to India.” London, Colonial Office, 33–37.

The amount of savings Indians remitted to their homeland reveals the industrious side of some indentured Indians, who were determined to make the best of adverse circumstances. They were able to do so only

against tremendous odds because they were locked in a low plantation wage regime that offered them not more than 24 cents or one shilling per day for unskilled manual labour. This meant that their weekly income was around five shillings or \$1.20 and their monthly and yearly income were £1 or \$4.80 and £12 or \$55 respectively. For an entire five-year contract, they would have potentially earned not more than £60 or \$300.00. In 1843, on five plantations in British Guiana, the average savings were around £127 or \$609 for each Indentured Indian. In that same year on plantation *Belle Vue*, for instance, 31 Indians had total savings of £4,120 or \$19,819 an average of £133 or \$638 each. The highest savings on that plantation in 1843 were £427 or \$2,049 while the lowest was £10 or \$48 (British Parliamentary Papers 1843:33-37). Savings were much lower in Danish St. Croix. In 1868, the 250 (five died en route) ex-indentured Indians from St. Croix took with them back to India on average £10 or \$50 which means they saved £2 or \$10.00 per year on average.

Why indentured Indians in Danish St. Croix were less able to accumulate savings than indentured servants in British Guiana is open to speculation? One reason, as stated above, might have been that accumulated savings were poorly recorded in Danish St. Croix and therefore did not reveal the actual amount saved. Indentured Indians also were skeptical of the overall indenture system, including the banks. Some of them did not deposit their savings in government banks, fearing that they would not be able to withdraw them at their convenience. Instead, they stored their savings in bed mattresses or in tree holes which were not declared to the recorders. Even on their final journey from the Caribbean to India, many ex-indentured Indians simply concealed their savings from Port authorities and stashed them in their clothes, belts and private areas of their body. Other Indians used their savings to buy gold, which were not counted in the overall savings. The high savings accumulated, especially in British Guiana, did not come from indentured service. Rather, savings came from other occupations and engagement in petty capitalism such as the retailing of goods and services as well as money lending to fellow Indians at high interest rates. It is also probable that the high savings in British Guiana might have been a representation of an entire family rather than an individual, although the savings were listed in individual names. Alternatively, savings were low in both colonies probably because of fines imposed on indentured Indians for violating the labor contract; or indentured Indians might have lost working days to appear in court to defend themselves against accusations and infractions. The data seems to support this possibility in British

Guiana (see below). The situation was somewhat different on St. Croix. Food for which Indians were charged 40 cents were supplied to the natives at 25 cents (Bengal Emigration Proceedings 1865:7). The comparatively high charges must have used up some of their savings. Savings from both colonies were high when compared to India even if they were below their expectations. The planters used these savings as evidence that the labour system provided opportunities for Indians to work and save as well as to remit savings to their homelands. They also pointed out that the wages Indians earned were higher than what they were accustomed to in their homeland and that the failure of other labourers to accumulate savings was due to their personal limitations.

The stark reality is that a majority of indentured Indians did not remit much savings at all. In British Guiana, on plantation *Vriedestein* of an initial total of 31 indentured Indians, only nine had savings at an average of just over £50 or \$240 each, which meant that for each indentured year, they had saved on an average £10 or \$48 (British Parliamentary Papers 1843:33-37). A similar pattern was recorded on St. Croix. The Indian researcher K. K. Sircar (1971) claimed that out of 245 returnees from St. Croix, only 149 had remitted savings while the remaining 96 returned penniless. Some Indians did not only return home penniless, but some were declared delusional and insane upon arrival in India. Equally troubling was the refusal of many returnees to go back to their villages. Despite some receiving a small allowance to return home, the fear of caste defilement and ridicule for abandoning their community for the Caribbean made them stay in the urban sprawl of Calcutta.

The British Crown was suspicious of the planters' favorable account of indenture and proceeded towards total abolition. The Crown was persuaded when *Friends of India* and the *British Emancipator*, the official organ of the Anti-Slavery Society of Great Britain, published reports of severe mistreatment of indentured Indians prior to leaving India and on two plantations in British Guiana. In 1839, the British Crown sent Mr. Justice Coleman to inspect and investigate the conditions on five plantations in British Guiana. Coleman found that, while the conditions on some plantations were unfavorable, the indentured Indians were cheerful and content as well as adapting well to their new environment. Coleman's investigation complemented the planters' view of indenture. A second envoy, under the leadership of Sir M. McTurk, was appointed by Court of Policy to report on the conditions under which indentured Indians worked. The report portrayed a distressing picture of indenture on two plantations in British Guiana. Indians were working and living in the tradition of slavery. They were

not only overworked but were given no medical attention. They were left to die on their own with their flesh rotten on their bones. Meanwhile, John Scoble, the Secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society, visited five plantations in British Guiana and found that the actual mistreatment of indentured Indians was concealed from the British Crown. He eventually wrote an impressive pamphlet exposing the harsh treatment of indentured Indians in British Guiana. He exposed how Indians suffered from sickness, overcrowding, physical punishment, distress, diseases, and death (Scoble 1840). On one occasion, overseer Charles Jacob, was accused of flogging labourers and rubbing salt into their wounds as well as extorting money from them. Jacob was eventually fined and imprisoned (British Parliamentary Papers 1839:75-125; Dookhan 1977). In response to the severe mistreatment, the British Crown and Indian government issued a prohibition against further importation of indentured Indians to British Guiana.

The abolition of indenture on St. Croix was somewhat different from that of British Guiana, although there were some similarities with regard to the harsh treatment of Indians on that island. One main problem was the costs of importing indentured workers from India, which fell on the colonial government and partly on the planters through loans. In twenty years between 1859 and 1878, overall immigration to St. Croix, which included other ethnic groups, had cost the Danish colonial government an estimated \$138,000 or £28,750. Of this sum, Indian immigration between 1863 and 1865 amounted to \$57,786 or £12,038 almost 42 per cent of the total cost (Jensen 1998:173–74). The cost of importing Indians to St. Croix in 1863 amounted to \$34,214 or £7,128.2s and returning them to India came to \$15,283 or £3,184.10s (Sircar 1971:145). Indian immigration was not only too costly, but also Danish St. Croix was financially too weak to sustain this immigration. Moreover, it was cheaper for the planters to import labourers from the surrounding Caribbean islands.

Indian indenture on St. Croix was also abolished because of poor supervision and poor treatment of the labourers. The British Consul, who was stationed on St. Croix to look into the welfare of indentured Indians, inspected the working and living condition of the labourers. In his report to the British Crown, he recommended the following:

I regret that I cannot consistently with truth submit a more favorable report to your Lordship with regard to the immigrants [Indians]; but it appears to me the more necessary that the fact should be known to your Lordship, because I am given to understand that the government and emigration committee of this island contemplate sending to India for a supply of emigrants. Before this is done, I presume the proposed agreements will be submitted for approval to Her

Majesty's government, and in that case I would respectfully express the opinion that it would be desirable that not only the contracts should be differently and more carefully worded but that some measure should be adopted to secure the fulfillment of the engagement entered into, for the more numerous the immigrants, the less attention and care will probably be bestowed upon them (Bengal Emigration Proceedings 1865:9).

The bonded labourers themselves expressed a desire to be free from indenture. A majority of them did not commend or condemn indenture but were rather disappointed to have not extracted more from their contracts. When their contracts expired, more than two-thirds of them opted to return to their homeland. In 1843, ships *Louisa Baillie* and *Water Witch* departed British Guiana with 191 and 44 Indians respectively. 30 died on the return voyage while 60 remained in British Guiana for another five years (British Parliamentary Papers 1843: 33–37). In 1868, 250 time-expired Indians left St. Croix for India on the *Dorothea Melchior* while the remaining 30 renewed their contracts for another five years. After the end of second term in 1873, these Indians waived their rights to a return passage and accepted a cash bonus of \$40.00 each. They eventually went to Trinidad to return to India or to find alternative employment. The 250 ex-indentured Indians left St. Croix on 16 July 1868 and arrived in Calcutta on 16 December. The returnees were mainly young adults in their twenties and children who arrived from India or were born on St. Croix. This might explain the low death rate on the return voyage. The Protector of Immigrants at Calcutta reported four adult men and one woman died as well as four births on the voyage of whom three died. The Protector claimed that the former indentured Indians “expressed themselves perfectly satisfied with their treatment during the voyage and spoke highly of the kindness of commanders and officers” (*Coolie Journal* 1863).

V. CONCLUSION

A comparative analysis of the two failed indentured service experiences in British Guiana and Danish St. Croix revealed interconnected concerns and contradictions. The most fundamental was that the authorities decided to abolish slavery but were poorly prepared to deal with post-slavery labour challenges. To save the sugar industry, they allowed indenture as a substitute for slavery. Yet there was not an organized plan in place on how indenture would function. Consequently, the first experiment with indenture in British Guiana and St. Croix operated in the tradition of slavery or slavery in disguise. In desperation to satisfy the demands of a so-called labour shortage, the planters initiated and negotiated for the arrival of roughly 400 and 300 indentured

servants for British Guiana and St. Croix respectively. In the former colony, neither the British Crown nor the colonized Indian government was actively involved in the movement of Indians. The planters were left alone to pursue their objectives. In the latter colony, the movement of Indians was regulated by a series of rules, mainly because of the abuses in the first experiment with indentured Indians to British Guiana. Nonetheless, this article finds that indenture was poorly supervised and indentured Indians were mistreated in both Caribbean colonies. The planters tried to conceal the mistreatment, abuse, flogging, exposure to disease, deaths, and withholding of wages from the British Crown and Indian government. However, private investigation and inspection on the living and working conditions of indentured Indians exposed the evils of indenture. In response, the British Crown and Indian government abolished indenture in both colonies after the first five-year contract expired. At the end of the five years of service, more than two thirds of the time-expired indentured Indians return to their homeland demonstrating their disappointment with indenture. The indentured labor was resumed in British Guiana in 1845 but not on Danish St. Croix.

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