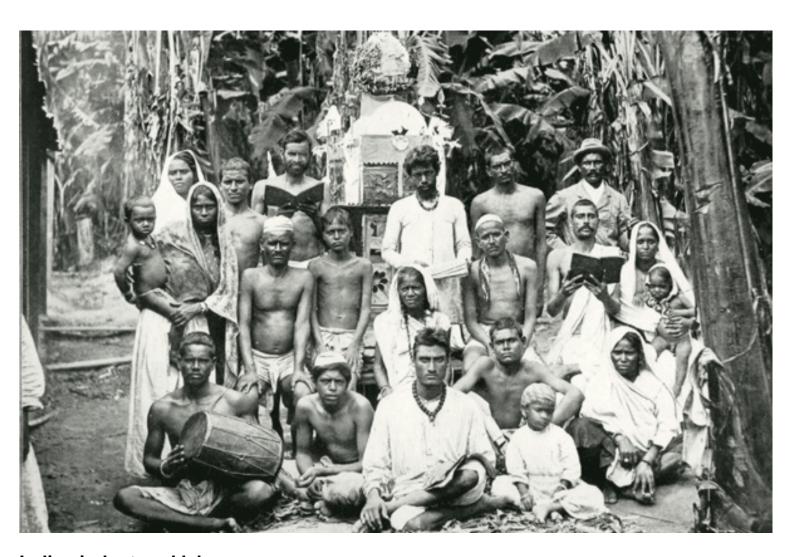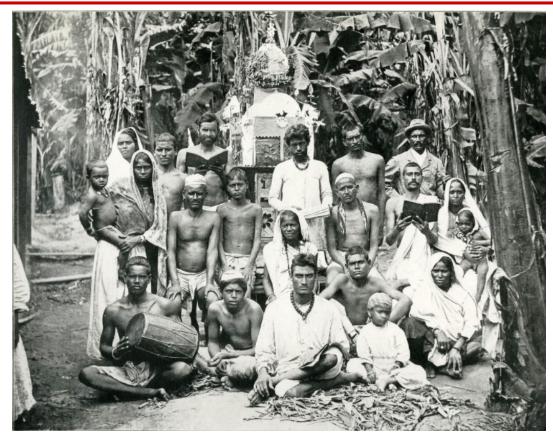# Indian indentured labourers

By IASToppers | 2023-11-11 15:45:00

Indian indentured labourers

Recently the **bicentenary** of the arrival of **Tamil indentured labourers** in **Sri Lanka**, was celebrated by **Sri Lanka** at an event called "**Naam 200".**

[ref-dhara]

What was Indian indenture system?

- The Indian indenture system was a system of **indentured servitude**, by which workers from British India were transported to **labour** in **European colonies**, as a substitute for **slave labor**, following the abolition of the **slave trade** in the early **19th century**.
- The system expanded after the abolition of slavery in the **British Empire** in **1833**, in the **French** colonies in **1848**, and in the **Dutch** Empire in **1863**.
- British Indian indentureship lasted till the **1920s**, which resulted in the development of a large **South Asian diaspora** in the Caribbean, South Africa, East Africa, Réunion, Mauritius, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Myanmar, and Fiji etc.
- India's population provided the **British Empire** a huge source of **cheap** and **mobile labourers**.

Condition of the Indian indentured labourers:

- Many labourers suffered from **debt** like situation due to **exorbitant fare** of transportation that was charged from them.
- As soon as they reached those unfamiliar lands, they were confined to **massive plantations** and **construction sites**.
- They have no access to **sanitation**, running **water**, **medical** facilities or **schools** for their children.

The Indian indentured labourers in Sri Lanka:

- The Sri Lanka was initially a producer of **coffee**, but a **fungal disease** caused the disappearance

of coffee from Sri Lankan plantations.
- As **tea** required more labours than coffee and surging demand of tea, Sri Lanka started growing tea and Britishers started transporting more Tamilian indentured labours to the plantation site.
- The colonial state made it arduous for them to assimilate into **Sri Lankan society**.
- The **Citizenship Act of 1948**, after the Sri Lankan independence, rendered them **stateless**.
- The **kanganies** were sub-contractors, labour recruiters and overseers who played a dominant role in the **recruitment**, **management** and exploitation of Indian labourers on plantations field.