

Government gave its consent to a scheme, which has proved advantageous both to employer and employee. By this system every precaution has been taken to prevent anything like a return to slavery, and to secure just treatment for the laborers. I must try as briefly as possible to explain how this is done.

There are agents from the colonies in India, who engage laborers, but those who are willing to go must first be taken before a magistrate in their own district, who registers their names, age and caste. Then they are examined by a physician and not allowed to go unless pronounced healthy and fit for work. Next, first-class vessels are provided for their free passage, during which they are well cared for. On arriving at the Islands they are again examined as to their health and ability to work, and then sent to the planters needing laborers, but families cannot be divided, and those coming from the same village are usually sent to the same estate. There every healthy man is required to work nine hours a day, 280 days each year, for which he receives 25 cents a day, lodging and medical care during sickness. The laborer on his part promises to work for the same master for five years, after which he is free to return to India if he chooses, but if he prefers to remain and work other five years, he can then either have a free passage back or an equivalent in money, and the majority do prefer to remain and become permanent settlers and land owners.

The first shipload of coolies arrived in Trinidad in 1845, and about two thousand come every year, so that there are now about eighty thousand of them on the island. Even during their term of service the condition of these laborers is probably far superior to what it would have been in India. Their little homes, built of bamboo and thatched with palm leaves, are shaded with bread-fruit, plantain, mango, and orange trees, their gardens produce yams and sweet potatoes, and from the fruit of the calabash tree they fashion cups and jugs. Many of the strange customs of their native land have to be given up, e.g., caste rules

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