

# Comparative Cultural Rights in Select Texts on Indo-Guyanese Plantation Diaspora

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## Abstract

Culture is lived and practiced in the quotidian it certainly played an important role in the determination of Indian indentured labourers' and the subsequent indentured Indian diaspora's individual or group rights which were [and are] necessary to enable them to better negotiate the systems under which they found themselves. But it does not explain how their collective similarity of behaviour posed challenge [if not threat] to the all too authoritarian institutions like indenture labour system, British colonial plantocracy, patriarchal inviolability and the 'illegitimate democracy' in independent Guyana .

The primary objective of this research is to find out how the Indian indentured labourers in British Guiana and the subsequent Indo-Guyanese diaspora in independent Guyana claim cultural rights in negotiating agency to better adapt to the systems that tried to assimilate them as disenfranchised community devoid of any voice to protest. In this thesis I have tried to analyze selected texts written on the Indo-Guyanese plantation diaspora which are both archival resurrection and imaginative representation of the lived experiences of the early Indian immigrants and their descendents in order to find out the palimpsests of cultural identities and belonging. Attention has also been paid to literary representation of the historical phenomenon of twice migration of the Indo-Guyanese population to England and North America to understand its implication in my study of comparative cultural rights.

The principal argument that I want to make is that colonial plantocracy in British Guiana and elsewhere sustained itself through institutionalizing certain social structures as whole systems which operated on the binary logic profit and loss. This binary of profit and loss is supplemented by an imperial rhetoric of cultural superiority which assumes authority to provide solution to all the problems of the marginalized communities through the process of integration which most often boils down to a cultural transition of these minority categories. But this rhetoric is ruptured by the occasional assertion of cultural rights in the realm of the everyday by different marginalized categories within these social structures.