

## Voices from Calcutta

Between 1837 and 1920, 1.3 million indentured labourers migrated from India to sugar plantation colonies in the Indian Ocean and the Caribbean. *Voices from Calcutta* shows how spokesmen from Calcutta – the capital of British India – disrupted this trade and influenced the lives of these migrants. It follows Calcuttans in their journey of debating, investigating and defending indenture, unfolding a complex web of letters, petitions, interviews and investigative reports.

As the indenture debates influenced lived experience on ships and plantations, and shaped the negotiation of subjecthood and labour rights for the British Empire's peripatetic labourers, they became a means by which elite Calcuttans negotiated their own position within the empire. This book locates in Calcutta voices of protest that fundamentally defined the contours of post-slavery labouring across the empire. Instead of simply emanating from Britain, to be dutifully followed in the colonies, labour legislation was informed by voices from those very colonies.

**Purba Hossain** is Lecturer in Modern History at the University of York. She is a historian of colonial India with an interest in how Indians negotiated life under colonial rule and contributed to imperial processes.

## GLOBAL SOUTH ASIANS

Throughout the modern era, South Asia and South Asians have been entangled with global flows of goods, people and ideas. In the context of these globalised conditions, migrants from the subcontinent of India created some of the world's most extensive and influential transnational networks. While operating within the constraints of imperial systems, they nevertheless made distinctive and important contributions to international trade, global cultures and transnational circuits of knowledge. This series seeks to explore these phenomena, placing labourers, traders, thinkers and activists at the centre of the analysis. Beginning with volumes that seek to radically reappraise indenture, the series will continue with books on the mobility of elite actors, including intellectuals, and their contributions to the global circulation of ideas and the evolution of political practice. It will highlight the creativity and agency of diasporic South Asians and illuminate the crucial role they played in the making of global histories. As such it sets out to challenge popular misconceptions and established scholarly narratives that too often cast South Asians as passive observers.

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# Voices from Calcutta

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Indian Indenture in the Age of Abolition

Purba Hossain



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*For ma and baba*

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## Abbreviations

APS	Aborigines Protection Society
BFASS	British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society
BIS	British India Society
BL	British Library, London
BS	Bangla <i>sambat</i> , or the Bengali calendar, starting in 593/594 CE
GG-MSS	Glynne-Gladstone Manuscript Collection, Gladstone's Library, Hawarden, Wales
IOR	India Office Records, British Library, London
NAI	National Archives of India, New Delhi
NL	National Library, Kolkata
SAGK	Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge
WBSA	West Bengal State Archives, Kolkata