

Colonization's Impact on Fiji, New Zealand, India and Cultural Intersectionalities

Colonization had a profound effect on the Maori, Indian, Fiji Indian and Native Fijian population, intersecting with the Auckland Sugar Mill's abusive relationship with the Fiji Indian sugarcane workers during Girit until the Independence of Fiji however commonalities exist between the Maori, Indian and Fijian language, culture and music for example Matariki's connection to Indian culture.

Praneil Chandra is an accomplished writer and historian, driven by his passion for uncovering the intertwined histories of India, Fiji, and New Zealand. Through his writing, which he extensively published on social media, blogs, and websites, Praneil delves deep into the history of the Girit system and its impact on these three nations. His personal connection to this history runs deep, as his great grandfather served as a six-year-old boy under the Girit system.

The Girit system's lingering issues, particularly the restrictive access to land for Fijians of Indian descent, have profoundly affected Praneil's life and that of his close family members. This firsthand experience has given him a unique perspective on the challenges faced by nearly all Fijians of Indian descent in Fiji today. The struggles have been so severe that many Fijians of Indian descent have migrated to New Zealand, unaware that New Zealand itself was involved in the colonial Girit system in Fiji. The opening of the Chelsea sugar mill in Auckland by the Colonial Sugar Refinery further solidified this connection, as it engaged in a slave-like Girit system in Fiji.

Praneil's exploration of history doesn't stop at the Girit system. He recognizes the profound suffering endured by the Maori people during colonialism in New Zealand, particularly during the land wars that followed the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi. These details remain the subject of ongoing debate and reflection. Praneil draws attention to these historical injustices and strives to foster a deeper understanding of their far-reaching consequences.

A remarkable aspect of Praneil's research is the discovery of deep cultural connections between New Zealand's Maori culture and the cultures of India and Fijians of Indian descent. He highlights the shared elements between Indian languages, especially Sanskrit, and the Maori language, reflecting a linguistic and cultural kinship. Praneil also explores the connections between Maori cultural practices like Matariki and musical instruments like the Putatara which is a conch shell

instrument common in India, Fiji and New Zealand Maori culture. Elements common between the Indian and Maori cultures are feathers, tattoo, carved jewellery, hand made costumes, dance, music, community connectedness, statue carving, community gathering places, the tongue gesture and spirituality.

With his thought-provoking and insightful writing, Praneil Chandra invites readers to delve into the complex histories of India, Fiji, and New Zealand, connecting the dots where these nations intersect and shedding light on the lingering effects of the Girit system. His work serves as a catalyst for dialogue, understanding, and the recognition of shared legacies that have shaped the present-day fabric of these diverse nations.

Praneil's latest research project is to perform a comparative historical linguistic study of the Maori and Sanskrit languages.

Indian, Fijian and New Zealand Maori Musical Instruments



Indian Shankh



Indian Bansuri



Fijian Davui



Pūtātara - Maori Trumpet



Bone Carved Kōauau - Maori Flute



Rata Nguru - Wood Nose Flute

Colonial Sugar Refining Company (CSR) in Auckland Sugar Factory, Fiji and Australia

New Zealand

Throughout most of the 19th century, all sugar products in New Zealand had to be imported; wishing to improve New Zealand's self-sufficiency, in 1882 the government offered a bounty to the first company to produce sugar locally. Already interested in business prospects in New Zealand, the Australian Colonial Sugar Refining Company had investigated possible sites in New Zealand and purchased 160 acres of farm land in Birkenhead. This was later expanded to 450 acres.

Australia

Founded in Sydney in 1855 as the Colonial Sugar Refining Company at the Old Sugar Mill, the company expanded into milling cane in Queensland and Fiji from the 1870s. It quickly became the most important miller and refiner in Australasia, with a virtual monopoly on Queensland and Fiji sugar production up to, respectively, 1989 and 1972. It also sold by-products of the sugar industry, from molasses to ethanol. In 2010, CSR sold its sugar and ethanol business, which had been given the name Sucrogen in 2009, to the Singaporean company Wilmar. As of 2015, the business is known as Wilmar Sugar.

Fiji

The decision to enter into the production of raw sugar and sugar cane plantation was due to the Company's desire to shield itself from fluctuations in the price of raw sugar needed to run its refining operations. In May 1880 Fiji's Colonial Secretary John Bates Thurston persuaded the Colonial Sugar Refining Company to extend their operations into Fiji by making available 2,000 acres of land to establish plantations.

Ships at the Colonial Sugar Company's refinery



Sugar cane from Fiji was delivered to the Colonial Sugar Refinery at Auckland, where it was processed into sugar. This 19th-century photograph shows ships anchored near the refinery.

The Colonial Sugar Refining Company was founded on 1 January 1855 by Edward Knox. It was formed in Sydney. It operated in Victoria, Queensland and New South Wales.

In 1882 the company began sugar production in Fiji with crushing at the Nausori mill.

In 1886, the Rarawai mill in Fiji, built by CSR for the New Zealand Sugar Company, began crushing.

In 1894, CSR's Labasa mill in Fiji began crushing. In 1903, Lautoka mill in Fiji began operations.

In 1906 the remaining Kanaka workforce were deported from Australia.

In 1915 the Colonial Sugar Refining Company (Fiji and New Zealand) Limited was formed to take over the assets of the company outside Australia.

This subsidiary was liquidated in 1923 and the assets returned to CSR Co Limited. In the same year, the Queensland state government signed an agreement with CSR to refine all of that state's sugar production. In 1920 the indentured labour of Indians in Fiji was canceled on Government decree. CSR introduced a tenant-farming system in Fiji in 1924 as a possible solution to its labour problems. The company bought the Penang mill, Fiji, in 1926.

In 2010 Sucrogen formed, comprising of CSR Mills, Ethanol and the Sweetener Group (Sugar Australia & New Zealand Sugar Company) CSR

Sucrogen was sold for A\$1.75 billion to Wilmar International Limited in 2010.

Wilmar International is Australia's largest manufacturer and exporter of raw sugar, the largest producer of molasses, and the largest generator of renewable energy from biomass.

It owns three sugar refineries in Australia and New Zealand, in a joint venture with Mackay Sugar Limited. Sugar Australia and New Zealand Sugar businesses manufacture a range of sugar and sweetener products under the CSR and Chelsea brands.

Fiji Sugar Corporation (FSC) - Timeline

- 1862: The first sugar produced in Fiji was made on the island of Wakaya by Mr. David Whippy.
- 1870: Sugar had displaced copra as the country's main export-the position it has held to this day. An early boost to the sugar industry came from Ratu Cakobau, who was worried about a decline in Fiji's economy because of internal strife and cotton's failure.
- 1871: Ratu Cakobau offered 500 pounds sterling for "the first and best" crop of 20 tons of sugar produced from locally grown cane.
- 1872: Brewer and Joske erected a small experimental sugar mill in Suva, followed by a larger mill a year later. About 640 acres of cane were planted on the site now largely occupied by the City of Suva.
- 1879: British Government brought indentured laborers from India to work on cotton, coffee, sugar and other plantations. Most of them stayed on when sugar became the main crop and more Indians came to Fiji until the indenture system ended in 1916.
- 1880: The Colonial Sugar Refining Company, a well-established Australian company, started in Fiji in 1880, and it brought more resources and experience than previous entrepreneurs. CSR's first mill commenced operating at Nausori in 1882. In the following years four more mills were established.
- 1886: CSR's Rarawai Mill on the bank of the Ba River
- 1894: Labasa Mill on Vanua Levu
- 1903: CSR's largest mill commenced crushing at Lautoka
- 1916: Plantation workers became very scarce. To solve the labour problem, several schemes were tried before the small-farm system was developed. Indian farmers were settled on farms averaging 4.05 hectares, with the farmer and his family doing most of the work.
- 1926: Penang Mill, founded by the two Wilmer brothers in 1881 at Rakiraki was acquired by CSR from the Melbourne state Company
- 1961: CSR Company Ltd formed a Fiji subsidiary, South Pacific Sugar Mills Ltd (SPSM)
- 1972: The Fiji Sugar Corporation was incorporated in Fiji by an Act of Parliament in 1972 to take the milling activities with effect from 1 April 1973.
- 31 March 1973: SPSM Ltd shares were offered to the people of Fiji and only a small number (2%) of shares were purchased by the public. Following an award by Lord Denning on the sharing of proceeds with growers, which was deemed to be unacceptable, CSR Ltd withdrew from the Fiji sugar industry. The Government bought CSR's interest in the company for \$10 million.

Ballad of the Stonegut Sugar Works

This is a poem from James K. Baxter called 'Ballad of the Stonegut Sugar Works' about when he worked at the Chelsea sugar refinery in Auckland in 1969. Hone Tuwhare found the job for him, but he was soon fired. The poem is reproduced from the 'independent socialist' magazine *New Zealand Monthly Review of* Dec./Jan. 1970. The sugar works is still open, although many of the jobs have been mechanized.

Oh in the Stonegut Sugar Works

The floors are black with grime

As I found out when I worked there

Among the dirt and slime;

I think they must have built it

In Queen Victoria's time.

I had the job of hosing down

The hoick and sludge and grit

For the sweet grains of sugar dust

That had been lost in it

For the Company to boil again

And put it on your plate;

For all the sugar in the land
Goes through that dismal dump
And all the drains run through the works
Into a filthy sump,
And then they boil it up again
For the money in each lump.

The bricks are held together by dirt
And the machines by rust
But I will work in any place
To earn myself a crust,
But work and never bow the head
As any grown man must.

And though along those slippery floors
A man might break a leg
And the foul stink of diesel fumes
Flows through the packing shed
And men in clouds of char dust move
Like the animated dead.

To work beside your fellow men
Is good in the worst place,
To call a man your brother
And look him in the face,
And sweat wash the sweat away
And joke at the world's disgrace.

And sweet on Auckland harbor
The waves ride in to land
Where you can sit at smoko
With the coal heaps close at hand
And watch the free white gulls a while
That on the jetty stand.

But the Clerk and the Slavedriver
Are birds of another kind,
For the clerk sits in his high glass cage
With money on his mind,
And the Slavedriver down below
Can't call a slave a friend.

Instead they have (or nearly all)

The Company for a wife,

A strange kind of bedmate

That sucks away their life

On a little mad dirt track

Of chiseling and strife.

But work is work, and any man

Must learn to sweat a bit

And say politely, 'O.K., mate',

To a foremen's heavy wit

And stir himself and only take

Five minutes for a sh*t.

But the sweat of work and the sweat of fear

Are different things to have;

The first is the sweat of a working man

And the second of a slave,

And the sweat of fear turns any place

Into a living grave.

When the head chemist came to me
Dressed in his white coat
I thought he might give me a medal
For I had a swollen foot
Got by shoveling rock-hard sugar
Down a dirty chute.

But no: 'I hear your work's all right',
The chemist said to me,
'But you took seven minutes
To go to the lavatory;
I timed it with my little watch
My mother gave it to me.'

'Oh thank you, thank you', I replied
'I hope your day goes well'.
I watched the cold shark in his eye
Circling for the kill;
I did not bow the head to him
So he wished me ill.

The foreman took another tack,
He'd grin and joke with us,
But every day he had a tale
Of sorrow for the Boss;
I did not bow the head to him
And this became his cross.

And once as he climbed a ladder
I said (perhaps unkindly) -
'I'm here to work, not to drop my tweeds
At the sight of a Boss; you see,
The thing is, I'm not married
To the Sugar Company.'

As for the Company Union,
It was a tired thing;
The Secretary and Manager
Each wore a wedding ring;
They would often walk together
Picking crocuses in spring.

You will guess I got the bullet,
And it was no surprise,
For the chemists from their cages
Looked down with vulture eyes
To see if they could spot a man
Buttoning up his flies.

It's hard to take your pay and go
Up the winding road
Because you speak to your brother man
And keep your head unbowed,
In a place where the dismal stink of fear
Hangs heavy as a cloud.

The men who sweep the floors are men
(My story here must end);
But the clerk and the slavedriver
Will never have a friend;
To shovel sh*t and eat it
Are different in the end.

Praneil Chandra

Praneil Chandra is the President, Speaker and Host of Manukau Indian FM - A New Zealand based 24/7 charitable online Indian cultural radio station.

He has a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Auckland majoring in Computer Science and Statistics with formal training in Philosophy, Music, Politics, Mathematics, Psychology, Management and General Sciences. He is a multi-talented, multi-disciplinary individual.

Praneil is a Girit researcher. His family history is deeply rooted in the Girit system, a slavery like period of indentured labor that brought many Indians to Fiji under the British colonial rule. His 6 year old great-grandfather - Patan served Girit in Fiji.

As a singer, songwriter, and harmonium musician, Praneil's expertise lies in Indian cultural music. His performances are characterized by his soulful renditions and mastery over the harmonium, creating a captivating and immersive musical experience.

Praneil is an avid artist practicing mainly in Rangoli, Drawings and some Henna Design. Additionally, he excels in Yoga, Archery, as well as other sports like cricket and soccer. He has received professional training in Yoga, has a Gold Medal in Archery and has played in numerous youth teams in the sport of Cricket and Soccer.

He is a highly accomplished and experienced individual with a rich background in web development, radio station automation, and corporate software career. With a strong track record of success, Praneil has showcased his expertise by creating the website <https://manukauindianfm.nz> from scratch, researching and engineering a fully automated radio station on the homepage at <https://manukauindianfm.radioca.st/stream>, and building a successful commercial web development company in Auckland. Praneil's career trajectory and professional profile on LinkedIn reflect his exceptional skills, leadership abilities, and commitment to excellence.

Praneil is a talented and versatile individual with a passion for creating captivating videos and exploring the exciting world of augmented reality (AR). With a keen eye for detail and a creative mindset, Praneil has made significant contributions in video production, particularly in capturing music events and travel experiences. Additionally, Praneil is venturing into the realm of augmented reality, driven by a desire to push boundaries and create immersive digital experiences.

He plays a vital role in coaching young school students in Digital Technologies. Through small group sessions held both within schools and outside, such as competitions, students receive focused guidance and support. This initiative not only enhances their understanding of Digital Technologies but also fosters collaboration, creativity, and prepares them for the digital age.



Praneil Chandra

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