

Coolitude and Origins of Modern-day Slavery in Bahadur's Coolie Woman

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Abstract

Through a close reading and historical review of Coolie Woman: The Odyssey of Indenture (2014) by Gaiutra Bahadur, this paper unveils how the abolition of historical slavery in 1833 in Britain paradoxically gives birth to modern-day slavery, which is considered as a serious crime against human rights, particularly labor rights as it not only does exploit labor of vulnerable individuals but also does it dehumanize them. The analysis of the text and existing research shows that labor exploitation now has not appeared all of a sudden; instead, it has developed from colonial systems of control. Using T. M. Scanlon's deontological philosophy, especially his principle of 'what we owe to each other,' this paper focuses on duty, respect and human dignity as the ethical basis as the solution of the problem. Additionally, analyzing how literary texts address such ongoing social inequalities, the study attempts to add a new ethical perspective to Labor Humanities and highlights the need for a more responsible and humane approach to labor rights rather than formulating merely the sets of laws.

Introduction

Gaiutra Bahadur's *Coolie Woman: The Odyssey of Indenture* (2014) revisits the history of indentured workers that began in the nineteenth century, following the formal abolition of chattel slavery in British colonies in 1833. Using archival research and personal genealogy, Bahadur reconstructs the experiences of an Indian woman named Sujaria, her great-grandmother. Facing starvation at home, Sujaria leaves her village in Bihar for Faizabad, where colonial agents, aided by local agents known as *arkatis*, ensnare financially displaced individuals. These recruiters lure vulnerable individuals, including hunger-stricken men, women, widows and children with false promises of high wages and safe return passage to India after five or ten years of service. In 1903, Sujaria becomes one of thousands shipped to British Guiana under this new colonial system.

Recruiters ship Sujaria, a pregnant 27-year-old woman, to British Guiana, some 14,500 miles away into an uncertain future. During the treacherous *Kala Pani* (black waters) crossing of the Indian Ocean, she gives birth to her son, Lal Bahadur, the author's grandfather. Unlike the recruiters' promises, the voyage descends into a nightmare of disease, sexual violence and brutality. Women and children, already vulnerable, face relentless exploitation. The ship, which Bahadur describes as a 'floating prison,' became a microcosm of the indenture system: a space where bodies are commodified, resistance becomes completely impossible and mere survival has become the only victory.

Upon reaching British Guiana, Sujaria and her fellow laborers find no opportunities as promised in India. Instead, they encounter harsh hostility as plantation authorities use brutal techniques to control them. They are enforced backbreaking labor under inhumane conditions. Moreover, they endure meager wages, filthy quarters and draconian punishments. Stripped of autonomy and cultural identity, they are denied the right to speak even in their mother tongue, Hindi and raise their children according to their traditions.

Recognizing such denial of fundamental human rights as a crime against humanity, Britain passes the *Slavery Abolition Act* in 1833, which becomes able to free enslaved African individuals in the colonies worldwide. However,

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this declaration paradoxically results in extreme labor shortages in the British plantations. In response, a new ‘voluntary’ labor system called ‘Coolitude’ begins, wherein workers sign contracts prior to their deployment. At this juncture, here raises a couple of critical questions, ‘did the Coolitude system really function for abolition of the historical slavery, or it functioned merely as a reconfigured form of the past system? For its meaningful answers, it requires a careful analysis of the narratives and archival records produced during the period.

Revisiting Sujaria’s story as a testimony to the Coolitude system reveals that the contracts function not as guarantees of freedom, but as a deceptive tool used to justify new system of labor exploitation. Although the agreements create an appearance of legality, indentured workers face physical and psychological abuse comparable to the brutality historically inflicted upon enslaved Africans. In other words, this slavery-like condition within new system actually shows just the continuum of the historical technique of labor control, which even continues today in an appearance of legality to which what many scholars call it modern-day slavery’.

By uncovering the origins of modern-day slavery and tracing its ongoing perpetuation, this research paper aims to highlight how past injustice has shaped present inequalities when it comes into the discussion of labor rights. In doing so, this paper actually aims to promote academic discussions of literature’s engagement with social injustice from the standpoint of ethical judgment. Moreover, this study seeks to benefit prospective workers and vulnerable migrant communities by encouraging them to be awareness of their labor rights so that they can enjoy their rights. Overall, bringing literary texts into dialogue with Labor Humanities, this paper may better serve the essence of how an interdisciplinary research helps understand social issues.

Literature Review

Scholarly engagement so far with *Coolie Woman: The Odyssey of Indenture* (2014) largely centers on its recovery of marginalized histories and its narrative innovation. Pramode and Mohan in their research article entitled “The ‘C’ Word: Testimony and Trauma in Gaiutra Bahadur’s *Coolie Woman* (2025) explore how Bahadur excavates the lived experiences of indentured women by highlighting gendered oppression, trauma, and diasporic identity through an interdisciplinary lens that blends archival research with postcolonial theory. They argue, “Gaiutra Bahadur in *Coolie Woman: The Odyssey of Indenture* has chronicled the stories of indentured ‘coolie women’ ... accentuates the voices of the voiceless” (p. 2). By this, they emphasize the testimonial power of Bahadur’s narrative in restoring the voices of those long silenced in colonial records.

Similarly, *Coolie Woman* has also been critically examined within the framework of Diaspora Studies. Prasad and Jha, in their research article entitled “Indian Diasporic Formations in Guyana, (2016)” contextualize the text within broader diasporic formations that emphasize how personal history reflects the collective experiences of Indian migrants and the plantation economy. They argue, “...we propose to analyze the specific dispersal of indentured Indians, particularly the female workforce, and the resultant diasporic formations in British Guiana” (p. 231). Their analysis highlights how Bahadur’s recovery of women’s lives reveals the structural forces of colonial labor, displacement and survival that define the larger communities of the Indian diaspora.

The Paradox of the Abolition in 1833

The transatlantic slave trade, which forcibly transported millions of Africans over three centuries, is now widely recognized as one of the most dehumanizing systems in labor history. In response to its brutality, Britain enacts the *Slavery Abolition Act* in 1833 that marks one of the first major legal efforts to emancipate enslaved individuals across the British Empire. The Act declares, “Whereas divers Persons are holden in Slavery within divers of His Majesty’s Colonies, and it is just an expedient that all such Persons should be manumitted and set free” (*Slavery Abolition Act*, 1833). After the act came into effect, enslaved individuals are legally declared free; yet, paradoxically, the colonies face severe labor shortages in their plantations, which makes them seek a new system that justifies their actions as lawful. Making the workers sign in the contract papers prior to their employment and shipping them to the distant colonies is what the colonial agents start by the time that consequently gives birth to a new slavery.

This paradox of abolition can clearly be observed in the analysis of historian Hugh Tinker (1974), who notes in *A New System of Slavery*, “The newly-freed Blacks departed... the Indians were bound in the form of apprenticeship named indenture. The legacy of Negro slavery in the Caribbean and the Mascarenes was a new system of slavery” (pp. 19–20). Tinker’s observation here indicates that the abolition did not end the slavery system, but it reshaped it into a new institutionalized form, the coolitude system.

Further, Carter and Torabully (2002), in *Coolitude: An Anthology of the Indian Labour Diaspora*, document the inhumane treatment endured by indentured laborers under colonial authorities. Recounting the experience of a worker

who arrived in Fiji in 1911, they note, “We were herded into a punt like pigs and taken to Nukulau, where we stayed for a fortnight. They gave us rice... full of worms. We were kept and fed like animals” (p. 115). This testimony reveals the systematic dehumanization imposed by plantation regimes under a new system of voluntary agreement. The clause, ‘we were kept and fed like animals’, clearly suggests that indentured workers were treated in the same manner as previously enslaved individuals. In this regard, the coolitude system indicates a calculated strategy of control that functioned as a successor to historical slavery.

Moreover, the contractual promise in the indentured system to provide safe return passage for workers is frequently violated by colonial authorities. They often avoided obligations by refusing to cover repatriation costs or obstructing journeys entirely. As Northrup (1995) notes in *Indentured Labor in the Age of Imperialism*:

Making the return voyage was a practical and financial impossibility. For example, early Indian and African migrants in Jamaica found it difficult to return home because of the absence of regular shipping, while most Chinese lacked the funds to pay the passage back from Cuba and Peru. (p. 130)

This betrayal exposes the inherent deceit within the indenture contract, which functions not as a guarantee of freedom but as a legalized mechanism of new bondage.

Continuum of Coolitude in Modern Contexts

Slavery-like conditions have become a pressing global concern now within labor Humanities, where workers are frequently treated as disposable commodities rather than human beings with rights and dignity. Bales (2012), who used the phrase ‘modern-day slavery’ for the first time to denote all forms of labor exploitation in *Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy*, illustrates this reality through the example of Thai women. As he states, “Women in Thailand are things, markers in a male game of status and prestige. It is thus no surprise that some women are treated as livestock—kidnapped, abused, held like animals, bought and sold and dumped when their usefulness is gone” (p. 48). This observation highlights how vulnerable populations in the modern economy are reduced to tools to be discarded once their labor is no longer profitable. Such patterns indicate that contemporary labor exploitation is not a rupture from earlier coercive systems but rather their reconfiguration within global capitalism.

The persistence of these conditions is closely linked to their institutionalization through formal labor migration mechanisms. In many countries with limited employment opportunities, governments authorize recruitment agencies to supply workers to wealthier nations. According to the Department of Foreign Employment (DoFE, 2025.), Nepal alone has “1,672 licensed manpower agencies registered in the system.” While the primary purpose of these licenses is to facilitate ethical employment, practices often expose financially vulnerable individuals to deception and debt bondage.

One of the exemplary investigations of the issue can be studied in a report released from the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2002) , which exemplifies how recruitment agencies in Nepal remain irresponsible and unethical that simply prioritize profit over human dignity. As the ILO notes in *Overview Paper: Overseas Employment Nepal*:

The recruitment of foreign laborers has many problems. Reports of laborers being cheated by recruitment agencies appear regularly in Nepal’s media. Brokers and recruitment agencies have ruined many people from disadvantaged economic backgrounds. People struggle to gather money, either by selling whatever assets they have or by taking high interest loans. If they are cheated and they lose this money, they then face very hard times. (p. 17)

This report states that brokers and agencies in Nepal frequently cheat workers that they push them [worker] into a vicious cycle of debt bondage that mirrors the techniques of bound labor used on indentured laborers.

Currently, large numbers of Nepali migrant workers travel to member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) , Malaysia and even in eastern European countries namely Romania, Moldova and others for work in various sectors such as construction, domestic work and manufacturing. Yet, their migration is often marked by debt, wage theft and restrictions on mobility by confiscating their passports. These cases demonstrate how individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds are drawn into cycles of financial dependency. This problem has become especially visible during preparations for the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar. An investigation by a correspondent to *The Guardian*, Patisson (2013), Ram Kumar Mahara a Nepali construction worker reports:

We were working on an empty stomach for 24 hours; 12 hours’ work and then no food all night. When I complained, my manager assaulted me, kicked me out of the labour camp I lived in and refused to pay me anything. I had to beg for food from other workers. (Patisson, 2013)

Here, Mahara’s experience exemplifies how contractual promises can conceal conditions of coercion. Viewing

chronologically, the trajectory from deceptive recruitment to exploitative labor practices reveals a clear continuum of the coolitude system today.

Summing up, since most existing studies on *Coolie Woman: The Odyssey of Indenture* focus on the postcolonial and diaspora aspects of indenture, there has been no research so far that examines the coolitude system as a way of understanding the origin of modern-day slavery in global labor systems. This gap shows the need for a study that goes beyond reading the text as a recovery of lost history or a representative voice of the diaspora. Consequently, it is necessary to analyze how past systems of forced labor continue to influence and shape exploitative practices at present.

Discussion and Analysis of the Text

Coolie Woman: The Odyssey of Indenture (2014) by Gaiutra Bahadur serves as the primary text for this research paper. The work weaves together poetry, prose and visual imagery to reconstruct the lived experiences of indentured women. To examine these layered narrative strategies, this study adopts the method of close reading. Through careful attention to mood, imagery, narrative structure and tension, the analysis seeks to uncover how meaning is generated within the text itself and how its formal elements collectively illuminate the continuities between historical indenture and contemporary forms of labor exploitation. As Ane Ohrvik, Associate Professor in Cultural History at the University of Oslo, Norway, explains in her research article, “What is close reading? An exploration of a methodology”:

According to New Critics, literary texts, particularly poetry, should be closely examined, with a focus on the connotative and associative meanings of words, as well as the functions of figurative language such as symbolism, metaphor and imagery, viewing the text as ‘a coherent, unified, organic whole. (2024, p. 245)

Grounded in this methodological framework, this study analyzes how Bahadur’s linguistic, structural, and visual choices collectively construct indenture as a system that has an enduring legacy in the modern labor system.

Melancholic-yet-Empathetic Mood in the Text

Portraying the profound sorrow and displacement experienced by Indian women deployed into indentured labor, the narrative of the novel provokes a melancholic-yet-empathetic mood in its readers. The emotional resonance of this melancholy is mirrored throughout the novel, especially in verse no. 182, where the speaker laments leaving home and renouncing spiritual and cultural identity. The verse reads:

good from bad,
truth from falsehood.
It leaves no sense of dharma.
I left my land to come to Demerara,
where they wrote my name as coolie.
I left behind my hymns and the rest of religion.
I abandoned the paths of the Vedas much to my shame.
I degraded my karma through immoral acts. (Bahadur, 2014, p. 125)

Here, the phrases ‘it leaves no sense of dharma’ and ‘I degraded my karma through immoral acts’ powerfully convey not only the physical displacement of the speaker but also the spiritual, moral, and cultural uprooting. It shows how inhumane the indentured system was that it made the workers abandon their cultural and religious paths.

Also, Bahadur further intensifies the melancholic mood in prose lines. Describing the moment while crossing the Indian Ocean (*Kala pani*), where one-third of the migrants suffer deadly flu epidemics, she explains, “The journey was anything but a saga. Seasickness afflicted most. A majority aboard fell ill with mumps, measles, dysentery, hookworm, or fever” (p. 61). This assertion depicts physical suffering and uncertainty and evokes a deep sense of loss that allows readers to experience the human cost behind historical accounts of indenture.

Alongside this sorrow, Bahadur cultivates empathy by presenting the women as resilient and multidimensional individuals. Verse no. 184 painfully conveys a strong sense of empathy toward the indentured laborers which states:

On the island of Demerara,
All around there are police stations,
All around there are ill consequences.
Lord, where have you guided us Lost, wretched creatures.
Lord, where have you misled us.

Deceived creatures. (Bahadur, 2014, p. 125)

In the verse, the words such as ‘lost,’ ‘wretched’ and ‘deceived’ emphasize the workers’ vulnerability and powerlessness within an unfamiliar and oppressive environment. The reference to police stations and ‘ill consequences’ further implies constant surveillance and fear, which foregrounds the harsh realities they encounter rather than a hopeful future. With this, readers feel empathetic to the conditions of the workers in British Guiana.

Visualizing Suffering and Inequality

To make the suffering of the indentured workers tangible, Bahadur uses imagery vividly in the novel. Describing the inhumane living conditions of the workers, she states, “Immigrant quarters on sugar estates lacked latrines as well as privacy. Nor was there typically a source of clean drinking water. In the songs they ... narak (hell) and kasbi ghar (brothel)” (p. 84). Here, the words ‘hell’ and ‘brothel’, used for comparison with their dormitories that even lack basic facilities like drinking water and latrines, evoke the sense of extreme sorrow and the indignities or insecurities of daily life under the indenture system.

Similarly, Bahadur inserts a number of photographs directly and purposefully in the middle of the novel, starting the page numbers with negative counting such as minus one, minus two and so on. Reading the verses and prose lines of the novel, the audiences come across the pictures and make a pause to look into them. She keeps the pictures in an orderly manner that carries the main theme of the novel. For instance, pictures no. 22 and 23 on page no. -10 are arranged to show inequality between the colonial authority and the indentured laborers.



22. Portrait of George Maximilian Bethune, c. 1900 (Courtesy of Charles Bethune).



23. Postcard image of “Coolie Man,” c. 1900 (Michael Goldberg Collection, The Alma Jordan Library, University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago).

Figure 1: Unequal Status Between the Colonial Master and the Indentured Laborer (p.-10)

The image of a naked coolie standing beside a recruiter dressed in a tie and suit creates a stark juxtaposition that symbolizes the vulnerability of the coolies against institutional power. Clothing in these pictures becomes a metaphor for social hierarchy. The recruiter embodies order and power, whereas the coolie embodies marginalization and helplessness. This contrast makes the inequality of the indenture system immediately visible to the readers.

Likewise, photograph no. 8 on page no. -3 shows a large group of indentured workers gathered on the deck of a vessel that has recently arrived in Demerara. Many appear tightly crowded together, which suggests the difficult and uncomfortable conditions they endured during the long sea journey.



8. Indentured men and crew on the deck of an indenture vessel recently arrived in Georgetown, Demerara, c. 1890 (MS AM 2211, Houghton Library, Harvard University).

Figure 2: Inhumane Transportation of Indentured Laborers to British Guiana (P.-3)

The physical arrangement in the image is also telling. Several men look barefooted or minimally dressed, which indicates a lack of adequate protection and basic necessities. Overall, this picture suggests the transportation of indentured laborers was entirely inhumane.

Similarly, image no. 21, on page no. -9, portrays a scene from a labor settlement in Demerara, where everyday life appears shaped by scarcity and limited infrastructure.



21. Postcard image, "Sunday Morning in Demerara," showing a barber at work in the logies, c. 1900 (Courtesy of Charles Kennard).

Figure 3: Inhumane Living Conditions of Indentured Laborers in British Guiana (p.-9)

A barber is cutting a man's hair outdoors on a simple wooden platform, rather than in a proper indoor facility. This suggests that basic services have been improvised due to a lack of adequate housing and sanitation. Also, the surrounding structures look dilapidated and temporary that suggests the settlement is designed just for utility rather than well-

being. Additionally, several adults are minimally clothed and barefooted, which indicates the effects of intense manual labor combined with insufficient nutrition. Finally, the environment appears muddy that possibly makes the workers be vulnerable to disease.

The First-Person Narration and the Fragmented Structure

Bahadur uses the first-person narrative technique to tell the story of her great-grandmother. This choice is not just a writing style; it is closely connected to the main theme of the novel. When she uses the pronoun 'I', as in the line, "How do I even begin to situate my great-grandmother in this odyssey?" (p. 63), she shows that she is personally involved in searching for and rebuilding a broken past, which validates her narratives as truthful and reliable. The use of 'I' makes the story feel real and honest because the readers observe her doubts, questions and efforts. As a result, Bahadur is able to turn her personal story into the collective stories of laborers of all times.

Similarly, Bahadur uses a fragmented narrative structure instead of following a straight, chronological timeline. She begins the novel with her own family's migration story from Guyana to the United States in 1981:

On 7 November 1981, my family left our village ... My mother, in bellbottoms, holding my baby sister, appears to pout. My father, in sideburns, his arm hanging over my mother's shoulder, looks cross. His eyebrows are knit. (p. 3)

This intimate family scene is immediately followed by the reflection, "My memories of Guyana are almost all set outdoors" (p. 4). The narrative then moves backward to the nineteenth century, when she recounts her father's knowledge of their ancestry: "His Will contained the place and year of his birth: The Clyde, 1903" (p. 10). This shifting from past to present and geographically between continents shows that the history of indenture is not simple or complete. Instead, it is composed of scattered memories and lost records that inform the narratives of exploitation. This complexity justifies why the subtitle of the novel refers to the 'odyssey' of a coolie woman.

Tensions Between Promise and Reality

At the center of the novel lies a painful story of broken promises made to the indentured laborers. Before leaving India, they are asked to sign a contract agreement ensuring good wages, easy work, and a better future in British Guiana. However, the promise is deeply misleading. Bahadur explains: "They promised work as easy as sifting sugar; and they exaggerated the gains to be had, inflating wages and conjuring lands of milk, honey and gold" (p. 38). The phrases 'lands of milk' and 'honey and gold' suggest how the recruiters deliberately used honey-tongued language to persuade vulnerable people.

In reality, upon arrival in British Guiana, the promise of dignity quickly dissolves into brutal practices where workers are deprived of their identity. Bahadur records this violence in Verse No. 14:

They beat us with a cane.
Lifting us over their heads,
They threw us on the floor;
In abusive language,
they called us *sala* and other names. (p. 44)

This verse reveals both physical brutality and verbal degradation. The image of being beaten with a cane—ironically a symbol of the sugar plantation economy—demonstrates how the crop that justifies their migration becomes an instrument of punishment. The act of lifting and throwing women onto the floor reduces them to objects. Moreover, the use of the abusive word *sala* intensifies their humiliation.

Additionally, another tension in the novel is observed as a human rights crisis. What is promised as short-term work turns into permanent separation from their homeland. She writes, "In any case, Sujaria never returned to India. One of her granddaughters remembers that she used to cry bitterly to see it again. But she never did. She may have accepted money or land in exchange for relinquishing her right of return" (p. 172). These lines suggest that vulnerable people are pushed to give up their rights; instead, the indentured system entraps them into a new form of bondage forever.

As observed in the textual analysis, the legacy of slavery persists within modern employment systems that closely resemble earlier forms of bondage, characterized by coercion, restricted movement, withheld wages, or threats. Modern exploitation often remains concealed behind legal contracts, recruitment fees, complex supply chains and migration policies. According to the Walk Free Foundation (2023), "In 2021, an estimated 49.6 million people were living in situations of modern slavery, with 27.6 million in forced labor and 22 million in forced marriage" (p. 2). These alarming figures demonstrate that exploitation is not a relic of the past but an ongoing global crisis.

The analysis suggests that the persistence of modern-day slavery, despite numerous laws and directives against it, does not result from a lack of legal frameworks. Rather, it stems from the deliberate failure of those in power to implement these laws effectively. Instead of fulfilling their assigned duties, authorities often prioritize personal gain, allowing slavery-like conditions to flourish. Therefore, the solution to this problem may be found in ethical frameworks, such as those argued by philosopher T. M. Scanlon (1998). Scanlon posits that “an act is right if and only if it is justifiable to others on terms they could not reasonably reject” (p. 189). This suggests that an action is morally right when it is performed out of a sense of duty and can be justified to others. Such an ethical approach requires individuals in positions of authority to act responsibly and respect others as human beings with inherent dignity, rather than treating them as instruments for personal benefit.

Promoting the ethical value of ‘what we owe to each other’ requires coordinated and sustained efforts. Governments should strengthen and enforce labor laws; employers and supply chain actors should adopt ethical practices that respect workers’ rights; and human rights organizations must continue their roles in monitoring and advocacy. Ultimately, a combined sense of responsibility and ethical commitment from all stakeholders is necessary to minimize the harm caused by the continuum of slavery in the present day.

Conclusion: Coolitude as a Genealogy of Modern-day Slavery

The close reading of the novel and the historical review of the issue reveals that the indenture system operates as a reconfigured form of forced labor rather than a genuine alternative to historical slavery. Within this system, colonial authorities frame contracts as voluntary agreements to maintain colonial domination. Paradoxically, the indenture system gives birth to a modern-day slavery that reproduces earlier structures of coercion and surveillance. Bahadur (2014) observes, “Indenture ships were not slave ships, of course. Coolie vessels were four to five times larger than slavers” (p. 62). This comparison is significant; even if legally distinct, ‘coolie’ ships transported greater numbers of laborers through a more bureaucratically organized system that creates an intensity of exploitation that echoes the historical slavery.

Bahadur also shows that contracts signed by indentured workers promise fair wages, safe passage and voluntary employment. In reality, workers face harsh conditions, physical and mental abuse, and severe restrictions on movement. These contracts create an appearance of legality and consent but mask coercion and exploitation, reflecting how colonial authorities justified slavery under a new guise. The indenture system, or ‘Coolitude’, thus operates as a direct continuation of slavery and establishes the genealogy of modern-day labor exploitation.

This lineage continues in contemporary migrant labor systems. For instance, many Nepali workers in the Gulf and Southeast Asia sign formal contracts that guarantee wages, working hours and protections. Yet, these agreements often fail to safeguard basic rights. Workers experience issues such as debt bondage, wage theft, restricted mobility and unsafe conditions that mirrors the abuses faced by indentured laborers. The gap between contractual promises and lived reality demonstrates that legal frameworks alone cannot prevent exploitation; rather, ethical duty becomes essential. Philosopher T. M. Scanlon’s (1998) principle of “what we owe to each other” emphasizes prioritizing duty over self-interest and respecting human dignity as a means to address this injustice. By prioritizing duty over personal benefit, governments, employers and individuals may collectively reduce exploitation.

Future research can extend this analysis by examining indenture narratives across regions such as the Caribbean, Fiji and Mauritius. Interdisciplinary studies combining literary analysis, labor history, migration studies and economics can trace how historical patterns of forced labor continue to shape contemporary labor exploitation. Literary scholarship can reveal the ethical and social dimensions of these narratives by highlighting how stories of Coolitude illuminate systemic injustice. By linking historical, literary and ethical perspectives, researchers can deepen the understanding of modern-day slavery and propose actionable reforms grounded in human dignity and respect.

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