



Indian Arrival Day

30th May



Indian Arrival Day, celebrated on 30th May, commemorates the arrival of the first Indian indentured labourers from India to Trinidad, in May 1845, on the ship **Fatel Rozack**. The Fatel Rozack brought Indians to Trinidad and Tobago in 1845, the captain was Englishman, Cubit S Rundle. The owner of the ship was a Mogul merchant who resided in Calcutta. His name was Abdool Rozack Dugman. The ship was named after him. The ship left Calcutta on February, 1845 and landed in the Gulf of Paria on May, 1845 with 227 immigrants. The **Fatel Rozack** brought not only a new labour force to assist in the economic development of Trinidad, but also a new people with a new culture.

While this momentous event has been celebrated among the East Indian community in Trinidad and Tobago for many years, it was not until 1994 that it was made an official public holiday. It was called Arrival Day. In 1995, it was re-named Indian Arrival Day.

Indian Immigration to Trinidad spanned the period 1845-1917. During this period 143,939 Indians were transported to the island. The journey was long and arduous and living conditions were deplorable. After disembarking at Nelson Island, the arrivals were fed and rested for a couple weeks and then sent to the various estates that had requested them previously.

FASHION

The East Indians introduced new fashions and clothing such as the sari, choli, kurtah, orhni, salwar kameez, garara, dupatta, gangri, pagri, and dhoti. Jewellery included the nakphul, bera, churia, and baju band, to name a few.

The **Sari** is an unstitched length of fabric up to 9 yds in length and 18 to 60 in width with a decorated end panel draped in a wide variety of styles.

The **Choli** is a short blouse worn with the sari.

The **Orhni** is a veil which covers the upper part of the body.

The **Shalwar/Kameez** is a knee-length dress worn over tight fitting trousers and dupatta.

The **Dupatta** is a long veil.

The **Gangri** is a long, full skirt reaching down to the ankles.

The **Kurtah** is a long loose shirt, and the dhoti is a cotton loin cloth. Both garments are worn by men. The Kurtah is also worn by women in combination with the garara.

One ancient practice which has recently become a western phenomenon is the **Mehndi** (or Henna) which is the ancient art of body tattooing. Mehndi powder is made out of dried leaves from a shrub. Traditionally, mehndi is used to decorate the hands and feet of a new bride.



MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

The Indians brought their musical instruments with them when they migrated to Trinidad. A number of these musical instruments were previously unknown in the West Indies. The most popular musical instruments were the drums, of which there were several types:

Tassa - There was also the tassa drum which is made of clay covered with goat's skin. It is beaten with a pair of sticks.

Tabla - The tabla, which was introduced into India by the Muslims of Persia. It consists of a pair of drums - one large and one medium sized - which is played with both hands on one end.

Dholak - The dholak, which provided the rhythm for most of the folk songs. It is a cylindrical, double-headed drum which is beaten on both sides. The larger side provides the bass and the smaller side the tenor.

Bansoori - which is a bamboo flute with seven holes
Sitar - The sitar is an adaptation of the vina, with the sound board nesting on a gourd similar to a pumpkin. The face of the sitar is made of hand-worked teak over which there are seven upper strings and eleven to twelve lower strings which vibrate in resonance to the notes plucked on the upper principal strings.

Harmonium - the harmonium, which resembles an organ, and has bellows which pump wind into the reed compartment

Nagara - The Nagara drums have a leather face and a clay base. Like the tassa, they are beaten with a pair of sticks, and are played in Ahir dancing and at Biraha singing

Jhal - The former consists of a pair of cymbals held in the hand and struck against each other

In addition to the musical instruments they brought with them, the Indians fashioned a new instrument - the Dhantal. The Dhantal was a long steel rod which was adapted from the prong used to connect the yokes of the bullocks that transported the cane-filled carts on the estates. The metal horse shoe used on the estate horses and mules was used to strike the dhantal. In this way the dhantal became a new instrument for providing rhythm. Along with the music are various types of songs such as the hori, birhas, and ghazal which are sung on different occasions. There are also the various types of dances, which range from classical Indian dance to chutney.



CUSTOMS & FESTIVALS

The East Indians brought to Trinidad a wide range of festivals and religious observances. For East Indians - both Hindus and Muslims - these celebrations were important. They allowed the immigrants to hold on to the values and principles which had sustained them for centuries. They also served to make the harsh daily life more bearable. Events such as **Diwali, Eid-ul-Fitr, Phagwa and Hoosay** have, over the years, become part of the cultural fabric of Trinidad and Tobago.

East Indians who came to the Caribbean initially came from various regions in India, each with its own language and customs. However, by the late 19th century there was less diversity in language as the majority of immigrants originated from Uttar Pradesh. The inhabitants of this region spoke **Bhojpurī, a Hindi dialect**, which became the shared and unifying language for East Indians in Trinidad.

The indentured labourers brought not only their religion, food and clothing, but also the names of the places from which they came. They gave to the places they settled in Trinidad, the place names with which they were familiar. Hence the reason for village names such as **Fyzabad, Barrackpore, Chandernagore**, and many others.

FOOD & UTENSILS

The indentured labourers brought with them their own East Indian cuisine, complete with traditional seasonings and ways of cooking. Most important of their spices were the curries. In Trinidad and Tobago most Hindi words in common use today relate to the kitchen and food. Over time foods such as roti, doubles, saheena, katchowrie, barah, anchar and pholourie have become household names and are consumed by a wide cross-section of the society. Today, East Indian dishes are part of the national cuisine of Trinidad and Tobago. The table below lists some of the most popular East Indian sweet and savoury dishes as well as the most commonly used fruits and vegetables

East Indian Food

SWEETS

Khurma
 Peera
 Ladoo
 Goolab Jamoon
 Jellaby
 Sawine
 Goolgoolah (Ripe fig)

TYPES OF ROTI

Sada
 Dosti
 Paratha (Buss-up-shut)
 Aloopourie
 Dhalpourie

FRUITS & VEGETABLES

Baigan - Egg plant
 Aloo - Potato
 Damadol Tomato
 Dhal - Split Peas
 Nariel - Coconut
 Bhaat - Cooked Rice
 Tarkaree - Cooked Vegetables
 Ghee - Clarified Butter
 Bandhaniya - hadon Beni
 Carili - Bitter Gourd

East Indian Utensils

