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1983

Y. THAMBARAN . (PART TIME-ATTENDING FULL TIME LECTURES)

17002

DEPARTMENT OF INTERNAL AFFAIRSCOPY OF SHIP'S LIST OF INDIAN IMMIGRANT

|                       |   |                                     |
|-----------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| Serial Number         | : | <u>8</u>                            |
| Colonial Number       | : | <u>146795</u>                       |
| Date of Arrival       | : | <u>02. 11. 1910</u>                 |
| Name of Ship          | : | <u>SS. UMZINTO '50+</u>             |
| Place of Registration | : | <u>-</u>                            |
| Date of Registration  | : | <u>-</u>                            |
| Number in Register    | : | <u>-</u>                            |
| Name                  | : | <u>ELLEN</u>                        |
| Father's Name         | : | <u>PONNEN</u>                       |
| Age                   | : | <u>18 YRS</u>                       |
| Sex                   | : | <u>MALE</u>                         |
| Caste                 | : | <u>PARIA</u>                        |
| District              | : | <u>N. ARCOT</u>                     |
| Thanna/Taluq          | : | <u>WALLAJAPET</u>                   |
| Village               | : | <u>PEHIPUTHUR</u>                   |
| Height                | : | <u>5'3"</u>                         |
| Bodily Marks          | : | <u>TATTOO MARK ON RIGHT FOREARM</u> |
| Name of Next-of-Kin   | : | <u>FATHER</u>                       |
| Relations Accompanied | : | <u>-</u>                            |
| Small Pox/Vaccinated  | : | <u>VACCINATED</u>                   |
| Remarks               | : | <u>-</u>                            |

Certified a true copy.

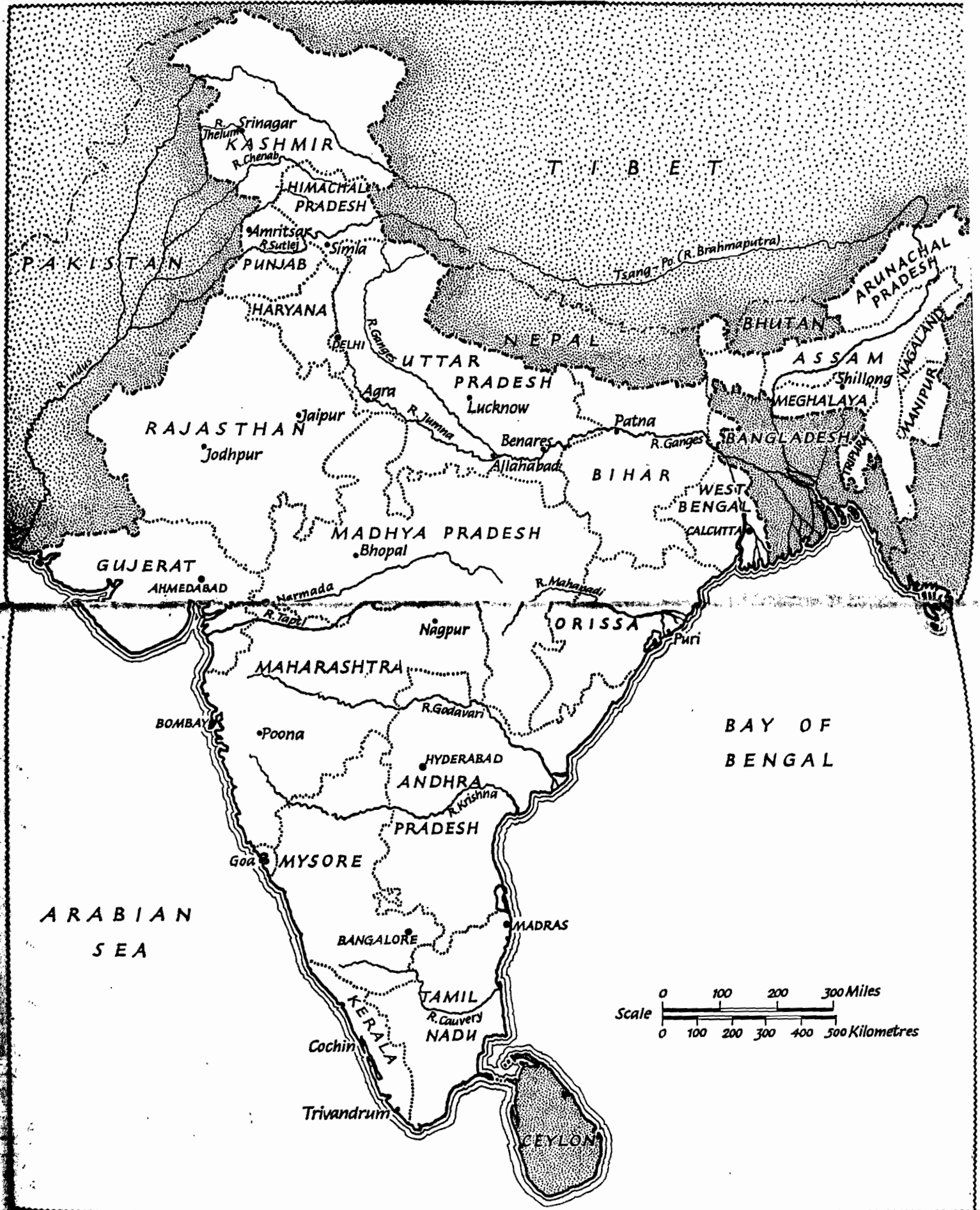
*[Signature]*

REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE



# MAP OF INDIA

m





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I WISH TO EXTEND MY GRATITUDE TO THE FOLLOWING PERSONS:

|                 |                 |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| T. CHOCKALINGAM | ( FATHER )      |
| GONAM           | ( AUNTIE )      |
| DOORSAMY        | ( INTERVIEWEE ) |
| KANOO FILLAY    | ( TRANSLATER )  |
| KASAVAN G.      | ( TYPIST )      |

P R E F A C E

Not much has been written about the history of Indians in South Africa. So this project, to a certain extent, produced a great number of problems, which were resolved through extensive research.

First and foremost my interviewee, Mr Doorsamy, failed to provide me with essential details, such as, the name of the ship in which the indentured labourer arrived, date of arrival, place of residence in India, subjects' occupation and so forth. The "Who's Who" editions too, were of no assistance to me, because my subject did not feature in any one of them. This made my task even more difficult.

However I resolved my problem, by visiting the Indian Affairs, this organisation provided me with a 'Ships list', which had all the essential details pertaining to my subject. I also made frequent visits to the Municipal Library in Durban, which was of a great assistance to me. Apparently, there was great difficulty in getting hold of documents, and letters, because the family refused to part with them. After negotiating with the family, satisfactory photo copies were made. Incidentally, the family letter from India is a recent one, but it does call back the past, to a certain extent.

In addition, Mr Ellen came to South Africa in the early 1900's. Most of the suffering and harsh conditions were faced by the settlers of the 1860's. By the 20th century, conditions of the Natal Estates Ltd. were improved and progress was noted. So I exaggerated a little by discussing 19th century conditions on the sugar estate.

I N T R O D U C T I O N

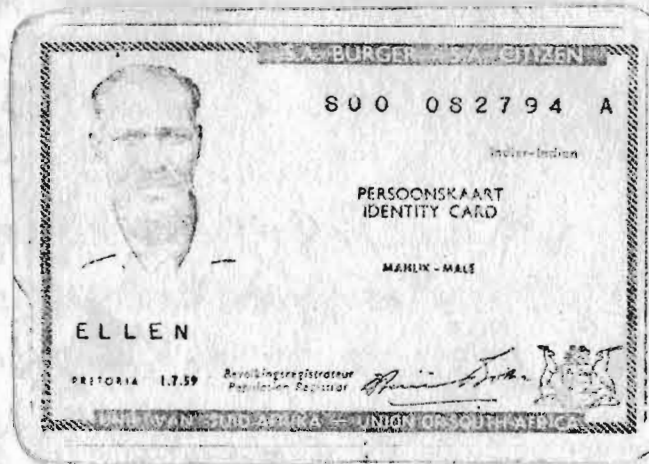
This study deals primarily with a biographical report of Mr Ellen, an Indian indentured labour, who arrived in Natal in 1910. The individuals early life in India, and his new life in South Africa are explained distinctly. I have also included in my assignment a comparative study between the 1860 immigrants and the immigrants of the 1900's.

Majority of the Indians, including Mr Ellen, were brought to South Africa to work in the sugar cane fields. In the early 1850's the Natal sugar farmers faced a serious labour shortage. The first definite suggestion that labours should be introduced from India was made in a letter addressed to the editor of 'The Natal Mercury'. It read, "... no further delay need occur beyond these preliminary arrangements which will devolve our government to make with the East India Company. Then let all parties interested meet together and concert at once practical measures for securing the great desideratum of our industry - an adequate supply of reliable labour".<sup>1</sup>

After much delay, the government of India agreed to allow indentured labours to come to South Africa. On November 16, 1860, the 'Truro' arrived with 340 labourers from Madras. The arrival of the first Indians, marks a significant event in Indian history, which will be perpetuated by all present and future Indian citizens of South Africa. If it was not for the 1860 settlers I would have not written this biography.

However the first ship was later followed by other vessels, chiefly among them being the 'SS UMZINTO' around which this whole biography of Mr Ellen revolves.

1. SS. SINGH: 'LOOKING BACK', in FIAT LUX, Vol. 7, No. 9, pl6.

TAKE OFF

Mr Ellen, son of Ponnen, came to Natal in 1910 as an Indian indentured labourer. At the age of 18, he boarded the 'SS UMZINTO'<sup>50</sup>, a ship which departed from the shores of Madras, a seaport and commercial centre in South India and capital of Madras state. The 'SS UMZINTO' reached the Natal shores on 2nd November 1910, and the port of entry was Durban.

The boat full of immigrants sailed for about 30 days. Other boats which arrived in the early 1860's sailed for as much as 60 days.

The situation on board were not to the Indian's satisfaction. The Indians were tightly packed, men and women together, each person in an allotted space of "three feet by six feet".<sup>2</sup> There was sickness and death on board the ship. In the years 1881 - 1882 the ships records indicated a number of 67 deaths on board. There was sexual assault on board, not only from fellow immigrants, but also from the ships crew. "On one voyage, the surgeon in charge was arrested for rape, attempted rape,<sup>3</sup> or indecent assault against female immigrants".

The ships list, provided by the Department of Internal Affairs, provides/.

2. F.Meer : PORTRAIT OF INDIAN SOUTH AFRICANS, p. 10.

3. Ibid., p. 10.

Sufficient evidence or proof of Ellen's Particulars, such his colonial number, date of arrival, name of ship, place of residence in India, and other important details, ARE PROVIDED IN THE 'SHIPS LIST'.

#### PLACE OF ORIGIN IN INDIA

Ellen resided in North Arcot district, Tamil Nadu state, southern India in the Pālār River. To be a little more specific, he lived in the Pehiputhur Village. Arcot, however was a City in South Eastern India in the State of Madras. North Arcot lies inland, West of Madras City. North Arcot is mountainous in the West, but elsewhere it is generally flat. Of its rivers, all of which dry up during the hot season, the largest is the Pālār, on whose banks stand the towns of Arcot, capital of North Arcot and Vellore.

The old community is primarily noted for the activities occurring in and around it during the British conquest of India. Historically it was a capital of the Carnatic Kingdom. In the middle of the 18th century there was war between rival contenders for the throne, one being actively backed by the British and the other by the French. In 1751 the British forces were besieged at Trichinopoly, about 150 miles south of Arcot; to raise this siege Robert Clive and about 500 men attacked and captured Arcot. This victory caused a large number of attacking forces at Trichinopoly to abandon the siege and march on Arcot, which they besieged in turn. Thus the British force at Trichinopoly was saved. In 1758 the French captured Arcot, but in 1760, the British recaptured it. In 1780 the frequently contested city was taken by Haidar Ali, the muslim prince of India and ruler of Mysore. In 1801, the British finally gained full control of the whole Carnatic region, including Arcot.

This brief history on Arcot, provides the reader with an idea of the conditions that prevailed there during the 18th century. Thus one would/.

notice that Arcot was in constant turmoil, and this aggravated the citizens and made their position in Arcot uncertain.

#### SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACK-GROUND

It is however difficult to stipulate the profession or occupation, in which Mr Ellen engaged in, when he was in Arcot. The interviewee, that is Doorsamy (son - in - law of Ellen) could not provide me with this necessary information. Through research I have discovered that, "agriculture and weaving are the chief industries",<sup>4</sup> in Arcot. Also, "Rice was the major crop".<sup>5</sup> With this important information at hand, one could assume that Mr Ellen engaged in some type of agricultural farming, possibly rice planting. Incidentally this is only a supposition.

#### SOCIAL CONDITIONS IN INDIA

The complexity of the Indian economic and social system led to the rise of the caste system, that is, the various groupings of people according to locality, race, profession or religion. This system ranges from the Brahmans at the top to the Parias at the bottom. Incidentally, Mr Ellen is classified as a Paria. The Parias were the lowest cast and they also lived in a state of impoverishment. The families which constitute a caste cluster together in neighbourhoods. These castes have rules which cover social behaviour, marriage, occupation and ritual practices.

The caste system was torn apart, from the time when Indians were brought to South Africa. The caste system does prevail largely in India, but in South Africa it is on the decline, because of the influence of / ...

4 THE NEW UNIVERSAL ENCYCLOPEDIA . ? , p. 558.

5 COLLIER'S ENCYCLOPEDIA 1965 , p. 558.

Westernization, modern education, interaction with other races etc. When the Indian indentured labour arrived in South Africa, they no longer lived in separate groups, but they were all mixed up, and all were forced to work, which meant that alongside a Paria, a Brahman was also cutting the sugar cane.

#### REASONS FOR LEAVING INDIA

It is said that the Indian were deceived and brought into South Africa. The whites told them that 'money grew on chili trees', a figure of speech denoted that plenty of gold existed in South Africa. This news spread and influenced a great majority of Indians to immigrate.

One Indian writer says that, "They had come in response to glib tongue of recruiting agents who assured them of a better market for their traditional skills and lured them with tales of gold - paved streets and idyllic evenings of bow strings and drums and dancing feet".<sup>6</sup>

However to the Indians who arrived in 1860, it all appeared to be false, but his false tale, soon became true, when gold was discovered on the reef in 1886. The discovery of gold and diamonds added a great stimulus to the Indians. Mr Ellen, saw South Africa as a country which would solve his financial problems. He believed, in South Africa he would earn a much higher wages, which would enable him to support his family.

Jawaharlal Nehru said that in India there is no food problem, but a money problem. There was an abundance of food, but the money to purchase the food was not available. Simultaneously while these conditions prevailed, the Indians were promised a higher wage for their services in South Africa, and as a result many of them began to immigrate.

Through research, I discovered a second reason, as to why Mr Ellen may have left India for South Africa in 1910. Incidentally this could not necessarily be a primary reason, but in my opinion, it could have influenced him in some way. Nehru mentions that in 1905 there was a growth of commerce and industry. The growth of industrial conditions created a class of industrial workers who worked in the City factories. The Pressure on land, and semi - famine conditions of the rural areas drove many villagers to these factories. In these factories the wage was low and the cost of living was much higher, and the price of food was costly in the cities. The places where they had to live were wretched hovels, filthy, damp, dark and insanitary. The working conditions were also bad. In the village they had often starved, but they had their filling of the sun and the fresh air. There was no fresh air, and little sun for the factory worker. Even women and children had worked for long hours. Mothers with babies in their arms took to drugging their babies, so that they might not interfere with the mother's work.

Such were the miserable conditions which these industrial workers faced in the factories. This pressure, led many to immigrate to Natal where they were told they would get higher wages.

The over - pressure or burden on land, as I have said, was a great problem in India, because far to many people have no other occupation. It is due to this, largely that India is poor. If these people were diverted from land and given other wealth producing occupations, they would have not only added to the wealth of the country, but the pressure on land would have been greatly relieved, and even agriculture would have prospered.

It is often said that over pressure on land is due to the growth of the population in India, and not so much to British poicy. However Nehru disagrees with this ideology. He says / .....

"it is true, <sup>that</sup> the population of India has gone up during the last 100 years, but so have the populations of most other countries. In Europe indeed the ~~the~~ proportionate increase, especially in England and Belgium and Holland and Germany has been far greater".<sup>7</sup>

In my opinion, the question of an increase in population in India was not a very significant factor, but it was more a question of impoverishment. The wars impoverished India to some extent, for all wars, mean destruction of wealth.

#### REASONS FOR 1860 SETTLERS ARRIVAL

Comparatively speaking, the 1860 settlers too, had their reasons for leaving India. Their reasons may possibly differ with reasons of the 20th century settlers, but this is largely due to the period and circumstances in which the individual is placed in.

India for a long period had thrived on her dominant position on World trade. Unfortunately in the mid - 19th century, Britain emerged as a powerful commercial and naval power. Just after the industrial revolution, Britain had a vast quantity of mass manufactured goods, which would supply her with much needed foreign exchange. As a direct result of this expansion, millions of Indians, skilled craftsmen and artisans found that they were producing the same goods, and as a result trade began to decline because of this competition. Thousands of India's peasant population were gradually reduced to poverty and they experienced famine.

The craftsmen, through the force of tragic circumstances bound themselves for a five year term to work for unknown masters in tropical plantations of the world.

<sup>7</sup> J. NEHRU : GLIMPSES OF WORLD HISTORY, p. 421.

Many were sent to the sugar plantations of Vasco da Gama's 'Natal'. On November 1860 the Truro sailed out of Madras, to Durban, to land Indian indentured labourers on the shores of Natal for the first time.

Another reason which prompted many Indians to leave India in 1860 was the SEPOHY MUTINY - a revolt in 1857 - 1859 of Indian soldiers against British rule. Sepohys native Indian troops mainly from Western provinces made up a substantial part of the East India Companies forces in Bengal in the middle of the 19th century. Many of the troops being Brahamns and Rajputs, resented British rule because it lacked in respect for their religious and caste prohibitions.

The immediate cause of the outbreak was the rumour of a new type of bullet greased with fat made from cows and pigs. The use of such grease would be gravely offensive to the Hindu soldiers to whom the cow was sacred, and to the muslim soldiers, who believed in the uncleanness of the pig. There was also more complex discontents. These included resentment towards the introduction of social changes, antagonism of many of the ruling class at their loss of power to the British, and unrest among soldiers for having been forced to serve in the wars outside India. Also many Indians resented the activity of Christian missionaries and the extension to India of Western Education and science, all of which seemed to be an attack on their traditional way of life.

The British crushed the revolt. In doing so they spread terror everywhere. Vast number of Indians were shot in cold - blood; large numbers were blown to pieces from the mouth of a cannon, and thousands were hanged from the wayside tress. One English General, Neill, who marched from Allahabad to Cawnpore, is said to have / .....

"hanged people all along the way, till hardly a tree remained by the roadside which had not been converted into a gibbet"<sup>8</sup> Also prosperous villages were rooted out and destroyed.

The horrors of the revolt and its suppression forced many Indians to immigrate to Natal. They felt that the British behaved too barbariously and treacherously. Nehru says, " even today, if you go to many of the villages in our province, you will find that people have still got a vivid and ghastly memory of the horrors that befelled them during the crushing of the revolt".<sup>9</sup>

So far I have discussed the reasons as to why the Indians came to South Africa, and this was explained in conjunction with the conditions that prevailed in India. Now let us look at the other side of the coin . By this I mean, what circumstances provoked the whites, in South Africa to press for Indian labour?

In the 19th century, the white-english speaking immigrants, who were farmers, shop-keepers and adventurers, were struggling to make a living in Natal. Some concentrated on cultivating sugar cane. The soil and climate was ideal, but they needed adequate and cheap labour. Then, one would ask, why did they not use Bantu labour instead? Well, the Zulus who settled in the reserves were cattle loving and military people who were unwilling to perform regular work for whites. Their lands and communal grazing grounds yielded them a sufficient livelihood. Furthermore, the discovery of gold and diamonds in the early 1870's in the Transvaal caused many native workers to drift away from the coast in large numbers.

8 J. NEHRU : GLIMPSES OF WORLD HISTORY, p. 415

9 Ibid., : p. 415

Many natives became wagon drivers, leaders, handymen etc, in the diamond and gold feilds. As agricultural field labourers, they had never been particularly successful, primarily because by tradition, to hoe and weed was considered to<sup>be</sup> women's work.

Now the mining fever spreading rapidly among the whites swept out of Natal the adventurous spirits among the natives too. The supply of labour for the sugar estates was depleted seriously; the Government heard the outcry, and in 1876 permitted further Indian Immigration which continued spasmodically as exigencies demanded, until 1911.

In the mid 19th century, the Durban Chamber of Commerce held a major conference on the labour question. The Meeting was well organised, in that leading personalities were asked to prepare talks on the subject to be read out, to all present. Taking one of these at random, which is brief, and was reproduced in the 'Natal Mercury' it read, "James Robbins Snr., Upton, Victoria. ever since my arrival here in 1815, I have been handicapped by the unreliability of native labour. The coolies fully meet the difficulty, being a much better class of labourers, and perfectly reliable. To do away with them would be, in my opinion the ruin of the country".<sup>10</sup>

Mrs W.R Hindson and Company of Clifton, Victoria County wrote : "We have ~~within~~ the last twelve months taken over this estate with the intention of planting 200 to 300 acres. We rely upon the Natal Government supplying us with a sufficiency of labour under the law now in operation. We would not for one moment think of going into to this or any other industry with Kaffir labourers. If Coolie immigration were /...

10 R. F. Osborn : VALIANT HARVEST - THE FOUNDING OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN SUGAR INDUSTRY 1848 - 1926, pp. 90 - 91.

stopped we should abandon our present undertaking and leave the country".<sup>11</sup>

As a result of this urgent need for Indian labour, a resolution proposed by S.F. Bening Field and seconded by John Kirkman to the effect that a continuous supply of labour must replace the drain away to the gold fields, was carried unanimously.

### RECRUITMENT

What method was adopted in recruiting Indian immigrants? The recruiters were licenced and immigration took place ~~through~~ a small number of ports only, chiefly being Calcutta and Madras. At the Ports, a special official was stationed, the Protector of Indian immigrants, whose duty it was to make sure as far as possible that the immigrant was "departing on his own free will, and that he had some idea of the contract he was entering".<sup>12</sup>

This system of recruiting Indians is subject to a lot of controversy. The information which I received through my interview about my subject was rather surprising. He (i.e. interviewee) said that, some of the people were just grabbed by their arms and pushed into the ship. Most of the people were in a state of confusion. From this piece of information one could deduce that some of the Indians were brought into Natal under force, and against their wishes. Possibly, therefore, so many of them returned to India. Many of the Indian immigrants came into Natal, not as a family unit, but rather as a divided family. By this I mean part of the family members remained behind in India.

Through conversation with other members of the Indian Society, I was made aware that some of the Indian men and women eloped to Natal, to escape from the family prejudices in India.

11 R.F. OSBORN : VALIANT HARVEST - THE FOUNDING OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN INDUSTRY 1848 - 1926, p. 91.

12 M. PALMER : HISTORY OF INDIANS IN NATAL, p. 5.

As you know, slavery was abolished, and indentured<sup>13</sup> an alternative system had developed. Under this system a man was bound to a master for a definite and lengthy period, and his wages was fixed at a low rate in advance. The indentured labourers were to receive ten shillings a month, rising annually by one shilling, rations and quarters. After a service of three years, later raised to five years, they automatically became free. At the end of ten years they were entitled a free passage back to India.

### BLACKBURN

Mr Ellen, landed on the shores of Durban and first settled in the Blackburn area which is situated on the banks of the Umhlanga River near the town Verulam.

Between the years 1874 - 1896, the Blackburn district had a central sugar mill. The Blackburn Central Mill occupied, "lot no 21, on the great Umhlanga River, a piece of land purchased at that time by Philip Jacob Jung and Jonas Burgtheil for 2 shillings per acre"<sup>13</sup> Seven years later this lot was sold to Charlotte Eve Rudolph for 50 pounds (i.e. R100) less than it cost the original purchasers. A year later Mrs Rudolph sold these 1,743 acres for 200 pounds R400, making a profit of 77 pounds. The purchaser was Joseph Blackburn, who divided the ground into lots in 1864 and laid out the 64 acre township of Blackburn. The ten lots realised about three pounds five shillings (i.e. R6,50), and were bought by intending coffee planters. Messrs. Turton, Flanders, Campbell, Turner, Couper, Smerdon, Adams and Saner, cultivated land on this original block. Coffee failed and gave way to sugar.

13 R.F. OSBORN : VALIANT HARVEST - THE FOUNDING OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN SUGAR INDUSTRY 1848 - 1926, p. 243.

In 1877 this land was valued at, from 6 pounds to 7 pounds per acre, exclusive of buildings and improvements. J.R. Couper, by this time Manager of the Glasgow and Natal sugar Company Ltd, which already possessed 3 good and by no means small sugar estates viz. Umzinto Lodge, new Guelderland, Delta, the latter on the Isipingo Flat, discussed the possibilities in starting a central factory at Blackburn. The discussions were successful and construction started, the mill crushing its first cane in September 1877. The records state that at its opening the mill had 2,210 acres contributing cane to it - the growers cutting and loading the millers transporting and crushing, and taking half of all the produce. The Company imported a weighbridge at the outset, hoping in a year or two to have worked out a system of buying the cane by weight.

The mill lay on the bend of the Great Umhlanga between the Blackburn road and the North Coast Road. Mr Morrison was the mill's first Manager. In October 1880 the Glasgow, and Natal sugar Company Ltd. went into liquidation, and, was offered for sale. Among the assets of the Blackburn Estate where tramways powered by steam, 600 tons of cane ready to be crushed, 350 acres ready planted. Eleven hundred acres of the Blackburn property were freehold with 500 acres leasehold. It was stated that a small fortune had been spent in perfecting the Estate and mill. The Estate changed hands for 12 000 pounds (R24 000), to "Garibald" Smith and Batten. At the end of 1896 Blackburn was purchased by the Natal Estates Ltd. only a year after the latter commenced operations. Alfred Townsend was Manager at Blackburn at the time the property was taken over by Natal Estate.

In the early 1890 Smith and Batten were offered 70 000 pounds for the Blackburn Estate by George Armstrong and Sir George Albu, subject to Mr Alfred Townsend - continuing as Manager. Coincidental with this offer however, Townsend with his brother purchased the Sea Cow Lake Estate, /...

so that nothing came of the proposed sale of Blackburn. In 1895 "Garibaldi Smith" became convinced that the district had been ruined irretrievably by drought and locusts and offered the estate to Marshall Campbell for 20 000 pounds.

As was the practice in those times, Campbell handed Smith half a crown to clinch the deal, and then proposed that Natal Estates buy the property. But the London Board turned down the idea. Nevertheless Marshall Campbell was able to make local arrangements satisfactory to all parties, and Blackburn became part of Natal Estates about the year 1898. Some of the Mills machinery and buildings were moved to Mount Edgecombe.

#### SUGAR FIELDS

Mr Ellen being an employee on the Natal Estates Ltd., owned by William Campbell (brother of Marshall Campbell), first took to weeding in the sugar cane fields. He also engaged in planting and cutting of sugar cane.

Ellen was initially a general field worker of the sugar estate. The sugar cane was initially burnt then cut and loaded onto trucks. All this was done by hand. Well in the 1860's, Indians used to load the sugar cane onto wagons, drawn by horses. Bundles of sugar cane used to be carried on their shoulders, and their shoulders used to become sore. The hard work involved, adds to the unattractiveness of this way of life.



*Cutting cane.*

The above picture demonstrates how the Indians engaged in the cutting of sugar cane in Natal. Note the clothing that they wore. Even the sugar cane that was grown during that era was far bigger than the sugar cane we cut in this modern age.

If we look around us today, one would notice that Westernization and Modern Education has had a tremendous influence on the Indians. Majority of them are no more working in the cane fields, but they have progressed towards acquiring more suitable jobs. Many are businessmen, lawyers, doctors etc. The Indians are somewhat equivalent to the white man, in education and craftsmanship.

Mr Ellen initially earned a wage of half a sovereign (10 shillings) a month which was gradually increased to one sovereign a month. In 1915 the ruling wages for men on the sugar estate had risen to 35 shillings a month together with rations, which usually consisted of 8 lb rice, 10 lb millie meal, weekly, with supplies of dhol, ghee, and salt. Later in 1923, wages increased to 40 shillings a month with food, housing and medical attention. Indians were working in decrease numbers in the/...

cane fields, and somewhere employed in the sugar refining mills. Some skilled Indians earned 7 pounds a month.

But the 1860 settlers had a difficult time on the sugar estate. Labourers were fined a shilling a day for absence from work regardless of reason, heavily flogged for slight acts of insubordination and criminally prosecuted for being a mile beyond their place of employment. Some estates made them work from sunrise to sunset, including every holiday. In some instances harsh treatment came to public notice. "There were women who were forced to work in the fields in advanced stages of pregnancy, of being forced to strip to prove they were 'unwell'. Ramsamy, caught out of bounds, was tied to the rafters and lashed with a sjambok and then jailed for desertion. Illamal gave birth in the field while working because her employer would not release her, and a little girl of 16 was found dying anaemia on the roadside because she had not been examined on her arrival at Durban before being sent off 50 miles, to her place of employment".<sup>14</sup>

The Indians were harshly treated because they were regarded as an inferior race, this is my opinion. They were treated like slaves. In fact, I think the indentured system was a substitute for the slave system. Apparently it is believed that some employers withheld wages, or paid irregularly.

Coming back to the 20th century, in 1934, Indian growers cultivated 30 acres on an average and contributed 6% of Natal sugar cane. Average of yields by Indian growers was less than 500 tons, with an average yield of 15 to 20 tons per acre. Compared with the small European grower the Indian uses less Capital in the form of equipment and fertilizer,

but expends more labour and personal attention on his crops.

With the introduction of Indian Labour sugar cane production increased rapidly. This is seen on the table of figures which was taken from R.F. Osborne : Valiant Harvest - the founding of the South African Sugar Industry, 1848 to 1926. pp. 101 & 93.

#### HOME CONDITIONS AND DISCHARGE

Mr Ellen later became a sirdar on the sugar estate. A sirdar was the gang boss, who was in charge of all other workers on the field. He was allowed to have a sjambok. He was responsible for keeping indentured workers from resistance. Ellen used to admonish his workers verbally, but he did not use physical force, such as flogging and kicking etc.

Ellen was allowed to use a small plot of land on which to grow fruit and vegetables. Housing accommodation was provided, wooden and iron shacks in rows of double rooms, two rooms for each family. Lighting was absent and this added to the gloominess of their existence. Mr Ellen and his family were largely illiterate, and with a low standard of living such a family lived congestedly in a poor sort of temporary shanty without adequate water supply and sanitation - a favourable breeding ground for diseases such as deysentry. The housing conditions were later improved. The shacks were replaced by brick barracks.

Ellen worked for the Natal Estates ltd., from 1910 to 1915. In 1915 he was discharged, and he became a free Indian. After a service of 5 years Ellen received a discharge certificate, which is displayed on the following (p. 20a) containing the necessary particulars.

W34814

D.I.C.

UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA

CERTIFICATE OF DISCHARGE.

OFFICE OF THE PROTECTOR OF INDIAN IMMIGRANTS.

DURBAN, NATAL.

I hereby Certify that

Ellen

Indian Immigrant No. 146795 duly completed his term of indenture  
 on the 14<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1915 in terms of Indian Immigration Act, No. 17  
 of 1895 (Natal), and is released from his obligation to perform further service in this  
 Province under indenture.

## DESCRIPTION

Father's Name

Dunn

Age

52 Years

Height

5 feet 3 inches

Bodily Marks

Tattoo mark on right fore-arm

## IMPRESSIONS:

LEFT THUMB.


 IMPRESSIONS:  
 LEFT THUMB. RIGHT THUMB.

 As John R. M.  
 Protector of Indian Immigrants, Natal.

Ellen and his family were too poor so that they could not afford money to purchase land. He was not reluctant to return to India either, because the conditions in India were not favourable. It was discovered that those who desired to return to India were given a bonus by the employer. A bonus of 100 pounds was given to a family of five, was a small fortune indeed. When these immigrants returned to India, they lived a life of idleness, and when the bonus money was spent, they took to begging. However, when this news reached the Indians of South Africa, fewer Indians applied for repatriation bonuses.

However the Indian tradition did not disappear entirely. Mr Ellen and his family engaged in various Indian and religious social activities. The Indians in the Blackburn district used to amalgamate and conduct their yearly prayer. Mr Ellen was a dancer in the Blackburn district. So, Ellen made an effort to promote and to give recognition to some essential aspects of the Indian culture, particularly in the field of music and dance.

#### ELLEN'S FAMILY

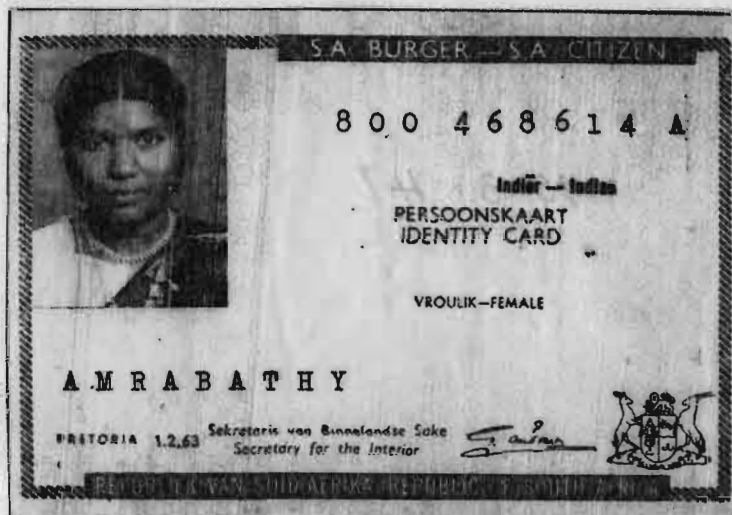
So much has been said about Ellen. What about his family? Mr Ellen it is believed, had a first wife, but unfortunately she was barren. So Mr Ellen remarried, Muniamma, who was born in South Africa. A picture of Ellen's second wife is displayed below.



Muniamma worked for the Natal Estates also. She used to weed in the sugar cane fields. She also planted sugar cane for the estate. The Manager of the Natal Estates Ltd, Mr C.R. Sheves, then took her to work in his home as a maid. She engaged in the usual work of a domestic servant, such as, washing, polishing, ironing, etc. She retired at the age of 65.

Mr Ellen and Muniamma were not lonely for long because they were blessed with two daughters. Their names are Dhanabagiam and Amrabathy.

Incidentally, Mr Ellen had only two children.



The above photograph is a representation of Amrabathy, Ellens daughter.

The certificate below belongs to Dhanabagiam. This is an illustration of her birth certificate, which is quite unique from our present day ones.

INLAND REVENUE.  
BINNELANDSE INKOMSTE.

132 Revenue/Inkomste 193. (D.I. 117.)

UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA.  
UNIE VAN SUID-AFRIKA.

BIRTH REGISTER  
No. 10/374

Nº 111810

**PASS TO INDIANS  
PAS VIR INDIERS**

Born in the Province of Natal.  
In die Provinsie Natal Gebore.

This is to certify that \_\_\_\_\_  
Hiernace word gesertifiseer dat dit \_\_\_\_\_

Colonial Born, is at liberty to dispose of \_\_\_\_\_ services.  
in die Kolonie gebore, vrystaan om \_\_\_\_\_ te verhuur.

Father's Name \_\_\_\_\_ No. \_\_\_\_\_  
Naam van Vader

Mother's Name \_\_\_\_\_ No. \_\_\_\_\_  
Naam van Moeder

Sex \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ Height \_\_\_\_\_  
Geslag \_\_\_\_\_ Ouderdom \_\_\_\_\_ Lengte \_\_\_\_\_

Marks \_\_\_\_\_  
Merke \_\_\_\_\_

Office Date Stamp.  
Kantoor Datumstempel.

Protector of Indian Immigrants.  
Beskermmer van Indiese Immigrante.

G.P.S. 126180-1955-6-109-100.

Both these girls, also worked in the fields. So we notice, that the whole family worked for the Natal Estates Ltd, and this paved the way for more opportunities for the children, because there was extra money.

Mr Ellen continued to work for the Natal sugar Estaes until 1960, when he retired. Incidentally after he was discharged in 1915, he reindentured to the Natal sugar estates. Ellen served in the sugar company for 50 years. Mr Ellen engaged in planting vegetables, in the small garden that was provided by the sugar estate, after his retirement. These vegetables which were planted, were chiefly for household use only.

Ellen spent most of his leisure time fishing in Umhlanga River. He died in the early 70's.

Generally, the albourers had maintained little contact with their realtives at home. "In the eight years 1883 - 1890 an average of 345 letters and about 600 pounds per annum were sent to India by a population of approximately 30 000"<sup>15</sup> Mr Ellen too did receive letters from India, but very seldom did he reply, probably because the pressure that was exerted onto him by the white South Africans. When I talk about 'pressure' I am talking about the conditions which they had to face on the sugar estate. They concentrated more on food and shelter and possibly found no time to<sup>REPLY TO</sup> relatives. Incidentally a photo copy of one of the recent letters, will be found in the appendix of this study.

### CONCLUSION

So much has been said about Mr Ellen, his early life, his family, his occupation ens., but you the reader would notice that Mr Ellen came to South Africa in 1910, and the recruiting of indentured labour came to a halt in 1911. Thus Ellen was a late comer to South Africa. He came to South Africa when the Colony (Natal) was improving rapidly, as a result of the 1860 indentured labourers. Conditions also on the sugar esate was improving.

The Indian labourers came to South Africa, at a special request of the Government of Natal, to grow the sugar cane and produce the sugar which laid the basis of the prosperity of the province. Had it not been for Coolie labour sugar cane would not have thrived in South Africa.

Mr Sir Liege Hulett gave a final tribute to the Indians. He said, "as you will know... it was absolutely to save the colony from ruin that Indians were introduced. Nothing more or less. The Industries in this Colony began in a small way .... But the productive capacity of the country ... soon outstripped the available labour and the industries were on the point of absolute extinction until we applied to India for relief. From that day began the initial prosperity of Natal".<sup>16</sup>

Need one say more?

#### APPENDIX

I have included one of the recent letters dated 7 - 9 - 1971. This letter was addressed to P. Doorsamy, son in law of Ellen. The writer resides in the Gchchiputtur village of Tamil Nadu. Mr Arumugam, Kumarsamy is the writer. Arumugam happens to be Ellen's brother. Kumarsamy wants to know about his brothers health. He says that he has six children, three boys and three girls. The eldest daughter is ten years old, the second daughter is 9 years old and the third daughter is six years of age. The eldest son, Samy is studying.

The writer goes on to say that on 31 July 1956, one of his uncles had died. He says that the ceremony for the deceased uncle are all completed. However, he mentions that early letters were sent and there was no reply. Because of the absence of replies he stopped writing more letters.

Kumarasamy gives some advice to Ellens family, by saying that, when their children engage in any malpractices, they should be forgiven. He says, 'we' are humble people, and we must be kind and forgiving. He says that, with his clasped hands he bows down.

He does not want the family's wealth but he wants to know how they are keeping. He ends the letter by saying that his strength is deteriorating and that his sight is also not very good. He says to give his best regards to all .

By the way, this letter was written in Tamil. I was assisted by Mr Kanoo Pillay, who translated the message for me. However Mr Kanoo found it difficult to decipher the writing, because of the differences in the 'curves', and translation as a result, posed a problem. Anyway, I have given the essence of the message in the letter.



7-9-1971

உயிர் குழை schchi Pulture

தேவநீர். மரமர். வெண்ணு தாமி பி ர்ளி  
அவர்க ஓத்தும். - எமத்தினர் P. துணைகாமி  
அவர்க ஓத்தும், அகமையுந் துணைகாமி  
யத்தும். வெண்ணு தாமி அமர்வதில்  
அதன் 4 விடயம் (எமத்தினர்) உயர்ந் பிர்ளி  
த ஓத்தும். உயர்ந் மரமர். மரம். அவர்க  
ஓத்தும். என் னு மய. அகமையுந் துணை  
யர். மரம். அவர்க ஓத்தும் உயர்ந் அவர்  
வை என்னும் மரமர். (அம் மய அம்மர்.  
சுணைகாமி. அது அது. தமர். மரமர்  
உயர்ந் அவர் மரமர் A. தமர் காமி.  
நன்றியுடன். எழுதும் மரம். திந்தி. என்  
அம்மை. அம்மய அம்மயும். என் தமர்  
நாத்தம் மரமர். என் மரமர் தமர் மரம்  
மரம் திந்தியுடன் தமர் தமர். திந்தி.  
உயர்ந் தமர். தமர் மய. தேவதமர் மய  
மேலும். என் து 6. பிர்ளிதன் உயர்ந்.  
அதின் ஆன். துதன் தமர் 3ம். - வெண்  
துதன் தமர். 3. மேலும். திந்திதன்  
திவந்தின். வெண்ணு வெண். 10. வது பது  
திந்தி. 2. வது வெண். 7. வது. பது திந்தி.  
3. வது. 6. வது. பது திந்தி. 4. வது. வது  
யர். 2. வது. பது திந்தி. திவந்தின் வெண்  
தன். 1. 4. மயம். 2. மேலிந்திதன்.  
3. தேவத திந்தி. 4. மரம் தமர். 5. சம்புதமர்.  
6. பதுதன் தமர். ஆன்  
மரம் திந்திதன். 6. மரம். திந்தி திந்தி.  
மர். சம்புதமர். 1946ம் மரம் தமர் மரம்  
31. 6. தேவ. திந்திதன். உயர்ந் திந்தி

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SOURCELIST.

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