



This project is dedicated to all those settlers who amidst difficulties and trauma made enormous efforts in their contribution to the ~~whole~~ Indian Community as a whole.



1983

R. GOVENDER

16986



<u>Table of Contents</u>	<u>Page :</u>
Acknowledgements	1.
Introduction	2.
Socio Economic background	3.
Reasons for leaving original country	5.
Place of origin in India	3.
Dates of departure and arrival to Southern Africa	7.
First occupation and subsequent occupations	8.
Marriage, birth of children etc	10.
Social Activities	12.
Conclusion	13.

Maps, documents & pictures

1. Map of India	4.
2. Picture of Harvesting	8.
3. Picture of hawkers	9.
4. Copy of ship's list	6.
5. Document / certificate of Industrial service.	9.
6. photograph of great grandfather and family	11.

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My thanks are due to my father Mr R Govender and Mr T Pather who provided the transport whenever necessary and also to my mother who helped in contacting certain people. I am particularly indebted to Mr Rambali of Indian Affairs who helped me on different occasions and also Mr R Munsamy.

Finally, I would like to thank Sandra Meth for the typing and also members of staff of the department of History and of the library, University of Durban Westville.

R. GOVENDER.

Introduction:

Sugar planting in Natal started in 1851. Labour one must note was a key factor in its production, because in the earlier days planting and harvesting was done by hand. The available labour force (the Zulu) was reluctant to work on the Sugar plantations and if they did it was only for periods at a time. The Sugar farmers needed a constant work force and thus petitioned the Natal government in this regard. They suggested that like the sugar farmers of Mauritius and the West Indies, they should be allowed to import labour from India. Their representations finally led to negotiations with the government of India and in 1859 the Natal government passed Act 25 of 1859 which launched the scheme of Immigrant indentured labourers from India.

The agencies often took people who were already available in the ports of embarkment, Calcutta, Madras and Bombay. Some of them were cooks, footmen, washermen, grooms and coachmen, musicians, dancers and prostitutes. H Tinker states that "A great majority however were simple country folk who had been attracted to the big city in search of casual work as burden carriers - coolies in the basic ^{sense} ~~scene~~." So on 16 November 1860 the SS Truro from Madras docked in Durban with the first 341 immigrants on board. Ten days later the SS Belve ere arrived from Calcutta bringing with her 351 men, women and children. From then onwards a steady stream of indentured labourers arrived in South Africa until the scheme was abolished in 1911. At the early age of fourteen, Mr Narrainsamy Wellasholay came to South Africa. He is my great grandfather from the maternal side of the family.

Place of Origin In India:

My great grandfather came from Madras.

1. H. ~~Tucker~~ - ; ~~A new system of slavery~~ ^{from madras} an increasing number of tamil and telegu speaking people were recruited.

"By the time recruiting of labour for Natl was finally stopped in 1911, two thirds of the total number of 142, 670 recruited were tamil and telegu speaking hindus from the Madras Presidency a predominance which continues in South Africa to this day." ①

Socio Economic Background:

Caste: My great grandfather belonged to a caste called Malabar. (according to the ships hist) However K W Chitnis states that "Barbosa speaks of eighteen castes of Malabar." ② K.N.Chitnis talks about the Nairs, which was a caste of Malabar. In South Africa however, the surname ^{Naicker} ~~whichever~~ was added onto my great grandfather's name 'Nair' is used as a surname by South African Indians. The root 'Nair' means barbar. "Hilda Kupfer gives the traditional occupations of "Nayar" to be warriors, oil sellers, potters, herdsmen, barbers. It is properly from the same route that the common family names such as "Naicker", Naik or Naiken are derived. " ③

At first my greatgrandfather worked as a labourer in South Africa. His activities in India is not known. He was a very young lad so he may have been attending school. Apparently he did have some education, but the level of his education is not known. He thereafter went into farming, but this was done on a very small scale. Whatever products he grew he sold - He was therefore a peddler.

① Indian South Africans : Report no. 24 p 1.

② K.N. Chitnis : Socio economic aspects of Medieval India p. 63.

③ Anil Sookdeo : Indian Immigration in Natal with special emphasis
- " P. 43

Southern India and S



Reasons for leaving the country:

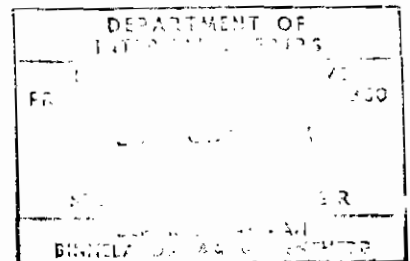
The reason for my grandfather leaving India is not known. However, he ^{is} believed that my ^{great} grandfather was accompanied to South Africa by his uncle and three other cousins. His uncle, Moorgason Nellasholay who, later, became a pioneer merchant, probably wanted his nephews to help him in his business. So, he probably urged my greatgrandfather to come to South Africa probably also telling him that there were greater prospects in South Africa. What is also interesting is that this uncle of my greatgrandfather also had other ulterior motives.

In the earlier days 1800's to 1900's incestuous marriages were very common amongst the hindu speaking. It still occurs today but on a very small scale. It is believed that Moorgason Nellasholay brought his nephews to South Africa with the intention of getting his daughters married to his nephews. Moreover my greatgrandfather was later proposed and married to his uncle's daughter.

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

Serial Number	:	<u>163</u>
Colonial Number	:	<u>4102</u>
Date of Arrival	:	<u>11 OCTOBER 1864</u>
Name of Ship	:	<u>JOHN VANNER</u>
Place of Registration	:	<u>-</u>
Date of Registration	:	<u>-</u>
Number in Register	:	<u>-</u>
Name	:	<u>NARRAINSAUMY</u>
Father's Name	:	<u>NELLASHOLAY</u>
Age	:	<u>14 YRS</u>
Sex	:	<u>MALE</u>
Caste	:	<u>MALNBAR</u>
District	:	<u>-</u>
Thanna/Taluq	:	<u>MADRAS</u>
Village	:	<u>MADRAS</u>
Height	:	<u>-</u>
Bodily Marks	:	<u>-</u>
Name of Next-of-Kin	:	<u>-</u>
Relations Accompanied	:	<u>-</u>
Small Pox/Vaccinated	:	<u>VACCINATED</u>
Remarks	:	<u>-</u>

Certified a true copy.

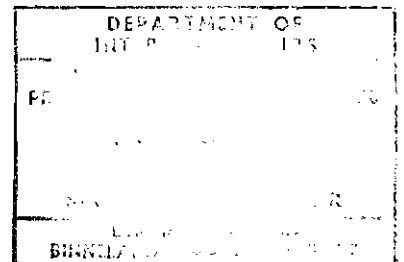


[Signature]
REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE

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

Serial Number	:	<u>162</u>
Colonial Number	:	<u>4101</u>
Date of Arrival	:	<u>11 OCTOBER 1864</u>
Name of Ship	:	<u>JOHN VANNER</u>
Place of Registration	:	<u>—</u>
Date of Registration	:	<u>—</u>
Number in Register	:	<u>—</u>
Name	:	<u>MOOREGASEN</u>
Father's Name	:	<u>NEL-ASHOLAY</u>
Age	:	<u>26 1/2</u>
Sex	:	<u>MALE</u>
Caste	:	<u>MALABAR</u>
District	:	<u>—</u>
Thanna/Taluq	:	<u>MADRAS</u>
Village	:	<u>MADRAS</u>
Height	:	<u>54 1/2"</u>
Bodily Marks	:	<u>—</u>
Name of Next-of-Kin	:	<u>—</u>
Relations Accompanied	:	<u>—</u>
Small Pox/Vaccinated	:	<u>VACCINATED</u>
Remarks	:	<u>—</u>

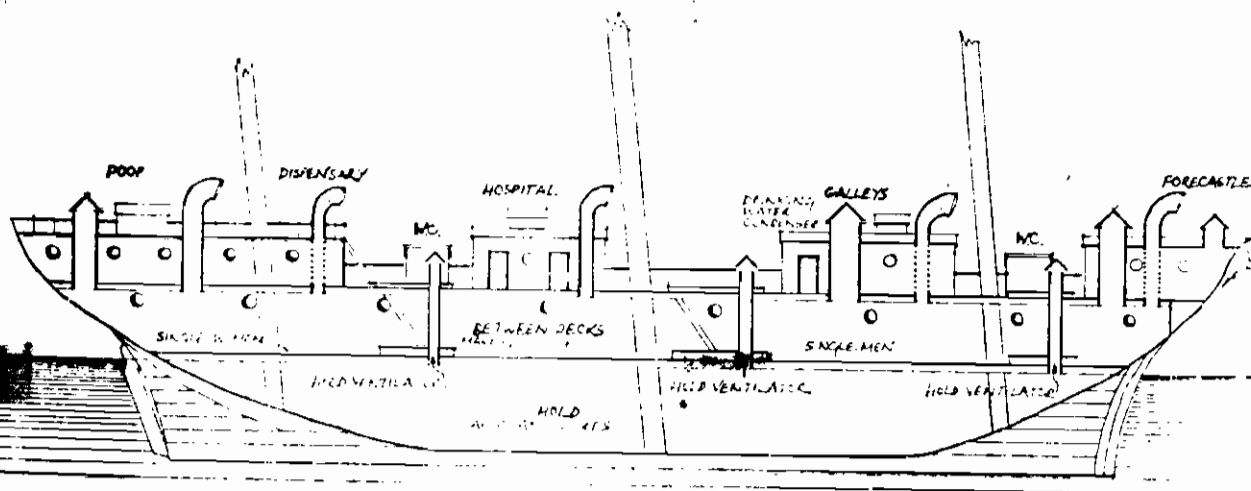
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REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE

Dates of departure and arrival to Southern Africa :

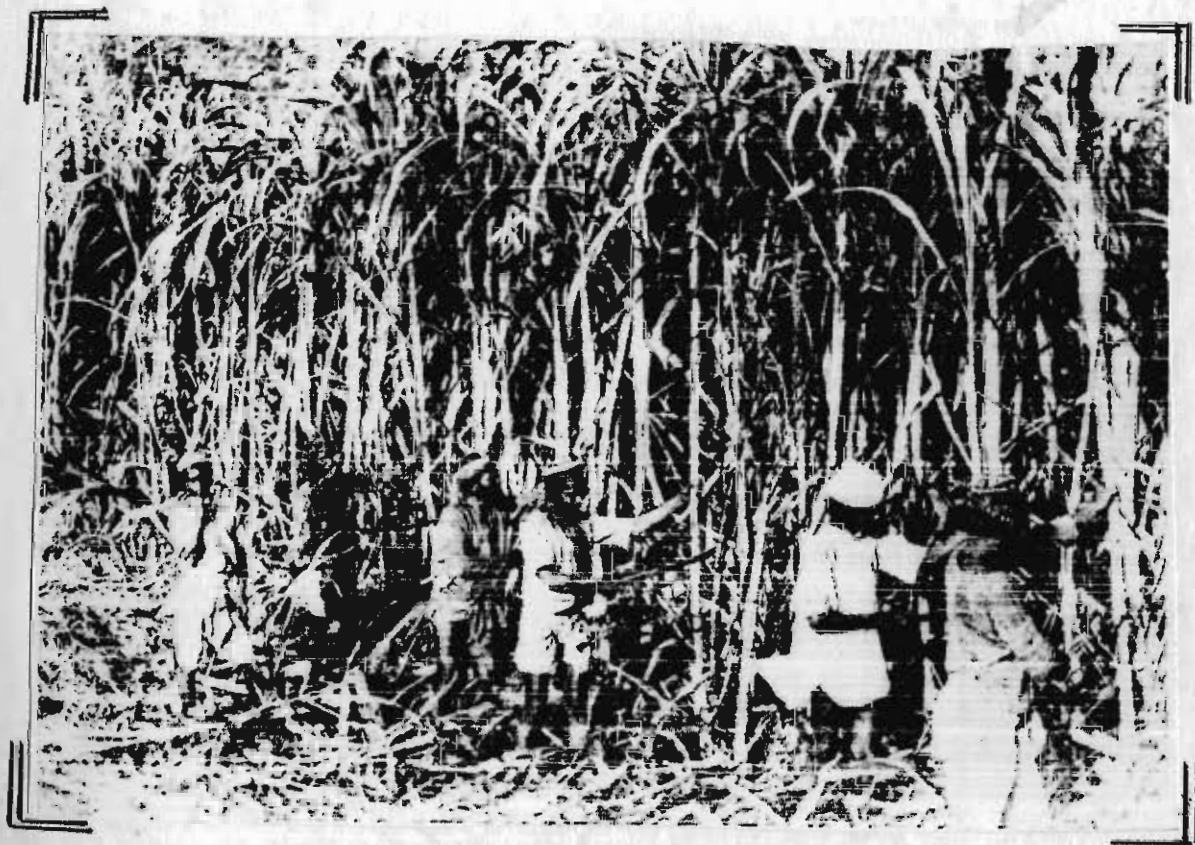
The date of departure is not known, however, it is believed that ships from Madras usually took forty to forty five days to reach South Africa. If we take this to be true then he probably left India in ^{late} early August or ^{early} late September 1864. He travelled to South Africa in the ship called John Vanner. Something that my father has remembered, that my grandfather had told him. While travelling by ship my greatgrandfather had many encounters. However one incident is remembered quite distinctly by my father. My greatgrandfather always related the episode that they had encountered with an enormous fish. He said that while they were on the ship they were circled by these huge fish. They were afraid because it seemed that the fish were about to attack the ship. Apparently, it was called the 'sword fish' but my greatgrandfather called it the 'warrior fish'.



Cross-section of a coolie ship c. 1880

First occupation and subsequent occupation:

My greatgrandfather worked on the Catox Manor sugar estate which belonged to George Catox. The sugar estate started in 1860. He worked for ten years, thereafter he could get a free passage to India or he could remain in South Africa. However, he became a voluntary abandoned free passenger on December 1874. After his marriage he acquired some help from his uncle, who through marriage was also his father-in-law. He was able to set up a small farm in Umgeni. Farming in Umgeni was done on a very small scale. Fruits and vegetables were planted with the help of his wife and thereafter ^{he} sold his products to nearby residents. It is said ^{that} he worked very hard because he not only helped on the farm but he also worked in the Lion Match Factory. After acquiring enough capital he set up a takeaway shop in Durban North in 1920. The exact name of the trading store, however, could not be revived. verified



Harvesting 1870.

This is a facsimile of the Certificate issued to Indians upon completion of five years of industrial labour. The document was referred to as "Certificate of Freedom" and failure to produce it rendered ex-indentured labourers to immediate arrest and imprisonment as vagrants. The Passes and the Certificates of Industrial Service were the two most important documents in possession of Indians in the early days.

NATAL

File 7.17801

Certificate of Industrial Service,

UNDER LAW 3 OF 1870, SEC. 56.

THIS IS TO CERTIFY that Maniamma
Official No. 30655 Father's Name Narayanassami
Indian Immigrant, having completed her indenture, is hereby released from
further Industrial Service.

DESCRIPTION

Age 9 years ^{13/54}
Height growing ³⁰ inches.
Bodily Marks nil
Date of Arrival in Colony April 23rd 1884
Ship Andoni XII
Last Employer R. Smith

DEPARTMENT OF IMMIGRATION,
DURBAN, NATAL.

May 2nd 1889

L. M. Curry
Protector of Immigrants.



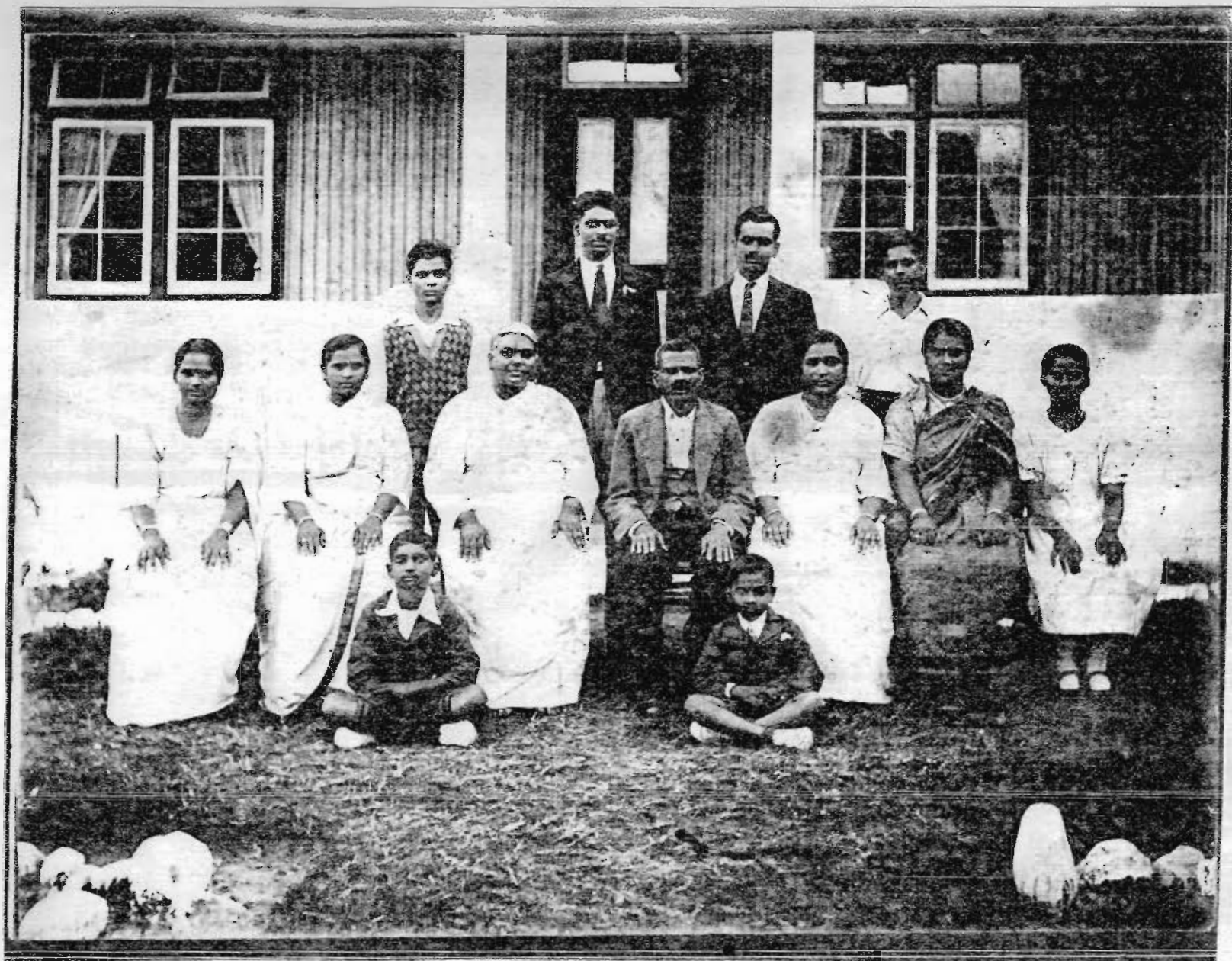
The first Indian Businessmen - hawkers of vegetables, fruit and groceries enter the towns - 1887

Marriage, birth of children etc:

My greatgrandfather was married to Bagiyagi Naiker. It is believed that she was a very hardworking and devoted wife and mother. If she was not weeding and planting, she was busy caring for and giving advice to expectant mothers. My greatgrandmother was a nurse in her own special way. She helped many pregnant woman to bring their children into the world. She was called a "bag nurse". My greatgrandmother, herself bore eleven children, six boys and five girls. So one could see that life was difficult for both my great grandparents. Amidst many problems and difficulties in caring for their children they still had time to engage in many other activities.

Social Activities:

My great grandfather always thought of the India Community as an important sector in South Africa. He therefore felt that Indian children should be educated in all spheres in life. He also played an active part in prayer meetings and other social activities.



Mr. Narrainsamy Nellashley and his family.

Religious Activities:

Mr. Wellasholay Maicker played an active roll in religious activities. He was a member in the Shri Gengamen Temple or the First River Temple. He helped in the planting of trees and flowers to beautify the temple ground. This temple right up to this day is noted for its eye catching peacocks. It is believed that he used to buy mealies for the peacocks. In the earlier days people of the temple sat on the floor and in a folded legged position they proceeded in conducting their meeting. Apparently my great grandfather suggested having benches and tables. He also taught tamil in the Shri Kurmar Reddy School. Although he could speak English he insisted that his children speak to him in Tamil. He always encouraged the use of the vernacular. My great grandfather did not rely on any mode of transport. He always felt that if he walked he would definitely reach his destination, Thats exactly what he did, he always walked sometimes for miles on end. What is also interesting is that his breakfast consisted of a glass of milk and almonds. Four days out of the week he adhered to a strict fast, whereby he abstained from meat. This ceartainly helped him to keep fit and stay healthy. He finally died of a heart attack.

Conclusion:

When this project was first introduced to us, the majority of the History III students saw it as being a burdensome. We were all afraid of the outcome, I guess so, because this project is perhaps the first of its kind, which we were to engage in.

Moreover, interviewing people about their past, consulting reports which were not at all familiar and taking trips to the Department of Indian Affairs and Martin West Building which were now queues, did at first pose problems. It was also very difficult to obtain any documents of my great grandfather. It is believed that most of his documents were lost in the floods. My subjects son was very ill at the time that I went over to interview him. However, he did manage to relate something about his father. He could not remember exact dates. Another problem that has been encountered is that I was not able to verify certain information that I had obtained. Nevertheless, amidst the many problems, I feel that such a project was thoroughly rewarding and fulfilling. I also feel that such a project has definitely helped me discovering and learning about the actual movements, conditions, life patterns and the plight of my ancestors. I maintain that this project was one that succeeded in widening the minds of students. I am sure that they now look to their ancestors as being people who should be given much praise and admiration.

Source List :

1) Anil Sookdeo

Indentured Indian in Natal

With special emphasis on the
1890's and caste structure amongst Indians.

2) Mary Philips

Passage from India

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3) K.H Chitnis

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4) Robert F. Osborn

Valiant Harvest

H.D.A. Published in Durban by the
South African Sugar Association 1964.

5) Tinker, H :

A New system of Slavery.

6) Mason, L.H :

Supplementary Report of the Protector of
Immigrants ; Pietermaritzburg ; P. Daves
and Sons, Govt Printers , 1891.