

NAME : D. C H E T T Y

NO. : I5257 E

SUBJECT : HISTORY III

TITLE PAGE:

Roots of THE

ABBOYE E

FAMILY

of

CHITTOR

T A B L E O F C O N T E N T S

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- 1) " It is a principle of International Law that no person can be sent away from the land of his birth against his will, unless as a punishment for some crime committed by him "
- 2) " It behoves all Legislators to bear in mind, that apart from the tint of their skin, Indians are imbued with the same aspirations for advancement as those of their rulers."
- 3) " Their colour should not be deemed sufficient to treat them as aliens, and if their rights be assailed, then properties forcibly taken away from them and their freedom restricted."
- 3) " The sooner we as Britishers realize that what cannot be cured must be endured."
- 4) " Any subject race must be allowed full opportunity for advancement and if such opportunity is deliberately and ruthlessly denied, discontent and serious trouble may result. "
- 5) " When her Late Majesty Queen Victoria was proclaimed Empress of India she made the distinct promise that all her Indian subjects would at all times be free to travel to and reside in any portion of her Dominion in like manner as all her other subjects."

Harold J. Stuart : The Indian Problem in South Africa
 (Introduction) p i and ii

A) INTRODUCTION .

The story of the Belvedere and the Truro still brings a great deal of nostalgia to the Indians who live in South Africa. The many stories told and still to be retold becomes spicier as each narrator adds to it his own variation.

The South African Indian looks like the traditional Indian from India. Although he bears great testimony to the place of his birth -South Africa the Indian in South Africa still maintains an Indian identity. This becomes very evident in religious and traditional ways of living.

Today, after 123 years the Indian population in South Africa numbers more than 850,000. This number is expected to exceed the million mark before the turn of the century. Our forebearers had little to be jubilant about. The tremendous strain, both physically and emotionally, was forcibly thrust upon them. They were able to bear these and more because of their faith in human nature and sheer perseverance. Their will to succeed and survive was foremost.

The landing of the first batch of Indian Indentured labourers at Point on Saturday November 16 1880 is a very remarkable event in Indian history. Most of the colonists were expecting to see a group of dehydrated and sleepy looking people. They were very stunned to see hordes of Indians young and healthy -laughing and jabbering.

On Wednesday 21 November Edmund Tatham -chief Immigration Agent visited the barracks with the idea of allocating the labourers to the various colonists. I I

The labourers came mainly from Calcutta and Madras. When the ship arrived at the Point this advertisement appeared in the Natal Mercury.

" All persons desirous of possessing coolie servants are requested to apply to the Immigration Agent, Durban, stating the description of servants required, and the name of agent for selection. The Immigration cannot take upon himself the selections of any servants nor can he forward any to their destinations. Selections will take place in his presence at the coolie barracks, when the master or his agent must be prepared at the time to enter into the contract of service required by law, to pay the amount of passage money, and to take away the servant.

All servants remaining in barracks after the allotment will be kept at the expense of their masters, "

E. TATHAM
Coolie Immigrant Agent

Immigration Office
Durban
November 27, 1860

"

2

1. B.D. Sanayassi and B. Chatarvedi : A Report on the Emigrants Repatriated to India under the assisted Immigration Scheme from South Africa.

Indian

2. T.P. Naidee and R. Chetty : Annual Settlers Issue, p 54

B. PLACE OF ORIGIN IN INDIA.

My grand-parents Abboyyee Veerasawmy and Doorghree Goorvadoo lived in the district of Saidepet, in the village of Chittor. Both belonged to the Gento caste. Pondee in Saidepet is about 145 kilometres from the main street (Bond Street) in Madras. On my 2 previous visits to India - in 1972 and 1981 I was able to visit my fathers and mothers families.

My grandfather - was the second son of Ramachandra Seenavasan Veerasawmy who was a coal shifter by profession.

At the very young age of 13 years Abboy was involved with the local police. According to my uncle, Mr A M. Naidoo, Abboyyee was involved in stealing a bunch of bananas from the station platform, at Chittor. His friends who had been with him were caught. They all pointed to him as the leader of their gang. His friends informed the police that Abboyyee was also the one who stole several bunches of coconuts from peasant farmers whilst they slept. Abboyyee was imprisoned for a period of 14 months at the Mylopore Prison.

At the age of 20 years he was injured while he was helping his sister Kalavanie who was grinding rice paddy. During this time Abboyyee was cared for by his mother Leelavawthie.

C. SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND.

Ramachandra's job as coal shifter earned him a monthly salary of 15 Rupees together with a ration of mealie meal, oranges, ghee, fish (dried and fresh) and 8 spades of coal. With this he was able to support his mother, Meenachee; his 3 daughters Logavathie, Lingavathie and Sarasvathie; his 4 sons - Gajandran, kasudevan, Abboyyee and Omnianathan. He rented a two roomed house which belonged to his wife's father Velusamy.

Living conditions in Madras were very tough. The predominating agricultural society was really hard pressed since the heavy rainfall in Chittor caused havoc to the crops and especially eroded the soil.

Ramachandra was able with the assistance of Logavathie and Gajandran to make wire bangles. They were able to sell these to the workers on the coalyards. The additional money earned was a great booster to the meagre salary earned by Ramachandra.

On many nights the sons had to sleep on the verandah not because it was hot but because the rooms were very overcrowded.

D. REASONS FOR LEAVING INDIA.

Rumours spread throughout Madras and Madurai up to Kanniakumarie about a far distant place where gold was very easy to acquire. Stories about gold grown on farms, complete hills of gold, pavements of gold and people collecting gold nuggets as they in India were used to pick cow dung. Everyone was very interested about what was happening.

Things really came to a crescendo when "reports" purported to be from those indentured Indians reached the Indian Mainline. These reports confirmed most of the previous reports and added that all the labourers were now rich.

At this time there were several licenced recruiting agents who getting young able bodied men and women to come to this god given place abroad. These Kanganis as the recruiters were called used kinds of ways to get their recruits.

3

H. Tinker: A New System of Slavery - The export of Indentured Labour overseas

Many of these Kangani's employed men and women to recruit. These unlicensed recruiters merely supplied the main agent with men and women. The agent did not enquire whether these people were decent, stable or eager to go abroad. The recruiting sub - agents visited back streets, harbour areas and at most of the times got personnel who did not care or to put it bluntly could not be bothered as they were oblivious of what was happening around them.

They were given simple instructions : get as many people as you can and make sure you get women. It was very evident that women were reluctant to come. Therefore these recruiters got lonely, sometimes divorced women to 'sign on '

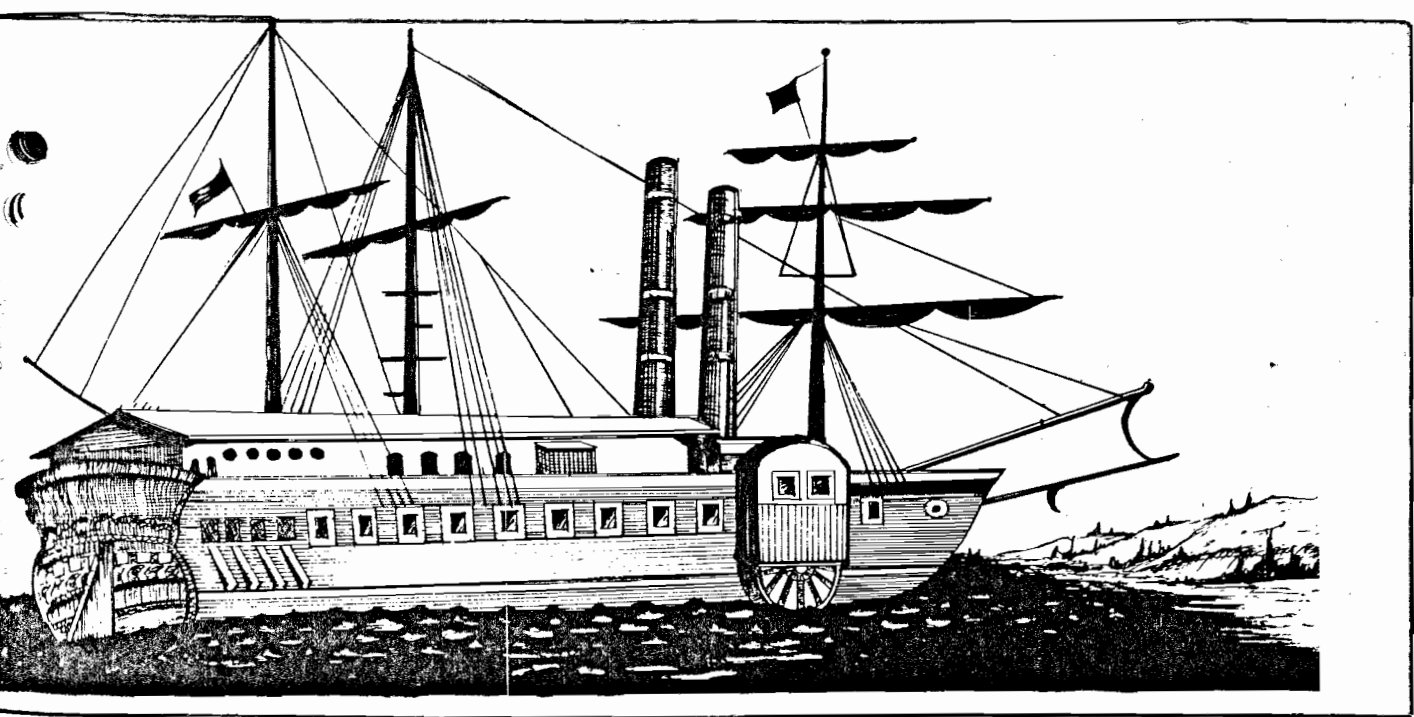
It was on one of these recruiting campaigns that Abbeyee was 'enlisted'. He was returning home from the local river when he saw a crowd gathering. When he enquired he was able to discuss the many questions that worried him about the gold.

Abbeyee was very eager to come. He did not need the pushing. He then to look for a suitable wife. He told his father that he wished to marry. His father was very happy. He quickly found his friend and co worker Champadasen Goodvadoo who had several daughters. Goorvadoo was the same caste as he was. A marriage was arranged and a few days later they were married to the great satisfaction of both parents. Nobody had any idea that Abbeyee was planning to go away. Mr Goorvadoo gave his daughter a brass bucket, some money and many sarries.

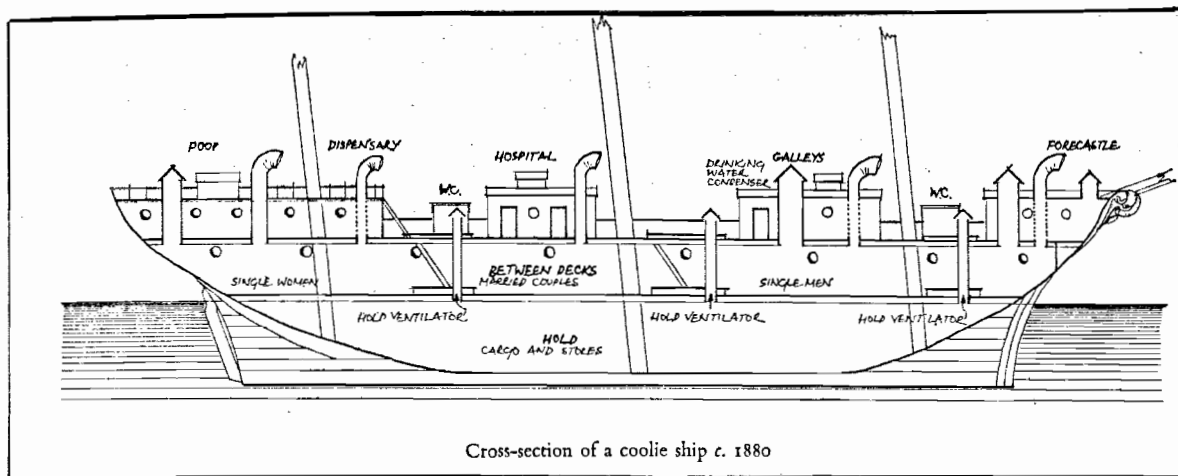
On the 27 May 1864 Abbeyee and his wife Doorghee left Chitter for Madras. They stayed in Madras for a few days. On the 2 May he boarded the sailing ship The Fairlie.

The Fairlie berthed in Point on the 11.6.1864.

A COOLIE SHIP LEAVING FOR SOUTH AFRICA.



CROSS SECTION OF A COOLIE SHIP SIMILAR TO THE FAIRLIE.



When the Indentured labourers landed they had to be allotted to a colonist who had applied. The Indian agent had advertised in the local newspaper. Abboyee and his party were allocated to G.C. Cato owner of the Cato Manor Estates.

They had to walk from Point Road to the Estate. While they were walking several Africans threw stones at them.

At the Estate they were addressed by the chief sirdar - many of the labourers did not understand any English.

They had to sign a contract which would bind them to the employer for a period of 5 years.

The sirdar warned them that the agreement meant that they were the sole property of Mr Cato for a period of 5 years and that if they escaped and were caught they would be very severely punished. The sirdar quoted several cases where labourers had tried to escape but were captured by other workers or employers and brought back. The treatment dished out to them after this was such that many of them wished that they had never tried to escape.

LIFE AT THE CATO ESTATE

The main activity at the Cato Estate was sugar planting. Large tracts of land was already under cultivation. The workers were led to an open field where they were told to build their huts.

These huts were to be made of dried cane or mealie stalks. They were allowed a couple of days to build the huts. Any improvements to the hut were to be done on Sundays.

The huts were small, crudely built without any provision to the health of its occupiers.

The Indian Protector had stated in a report...

" I do not know any estate on which the horse stable is not better than the coolie hut "

(MAN'S)
CONTRACT OF SERVICE WITH INDIAN IMMIGRANTS.

We It Remembered,

That on this 23rd day of April
in the Year of our Lord One Thousand Eight Hundred and Eighty-Nine
and Telucksing of Surinam Indian Immigrant
No. Bandhu appeared before me,
41698 Louis. H. Mason Protector of Immigrants,
and in my presence signed (or made his mark) to the following Contract of Service:—

The said Telucksing agrees to
hire the services of the said Indian Immigrant, and the said Indian Immigrant agrees to
render the said
his services in the capacity of General Labourer for Five Years, commencing on the
23rd day of April, in the Year of our Lord
One Thousand Eight Hundred and Eighty-Nine

And it is further agreed between the said Parties, that the said Indian Immigrant shall be employed as above for six days in each week, save as in such Law is mentioned, and that the hours of labour shall not be more than nine hours daily, between sunrise and sunset, with a break of at least an hour for

And it is further agreed between the said Parties, that the said Telucksing shall
pay to the said Indian Immigrant, as such servant as aforesaid, wages at and after the rate
of TEN SHILLINGS for the first year, ELEVEN SHILLINGS for the second year, TWELVE
SHILLINGS for the third year, THIRTEEN SHILLINGS for the fourth year, FOURTEEN
SHILLINGS for the fifth year, for the remuneration of the services of the said Indian Immigrant, and that such wages shall be paid on the first day of each month.

And lastly, the said Telucksing doth hereby bind and oblige himself to give, grant, and provide, to and for the said Indian Immigrant, and for such family as may be allotted, good and comfortable lodging, wholesome and suitable food, and proper medical attendance and medicines, during the period for which this present contract is made, and otherwise to observe and fulfil all the conditions and obligations of the Coolie Laws of the Colony so far as the same are applicable to this Contract and Agreement.

ENCLOSURE

Bandhu His X mark.

The preceding Agreement was signed by the above-named Parties in my presence, on the day and year above written, voluntarily, the same being, as far as I am able to judge, fully understood by them respectively.

L. H. Mason
Protector of Immigrants.

In the course of 11 years Cato formed around him a plantation of some 400 acres.

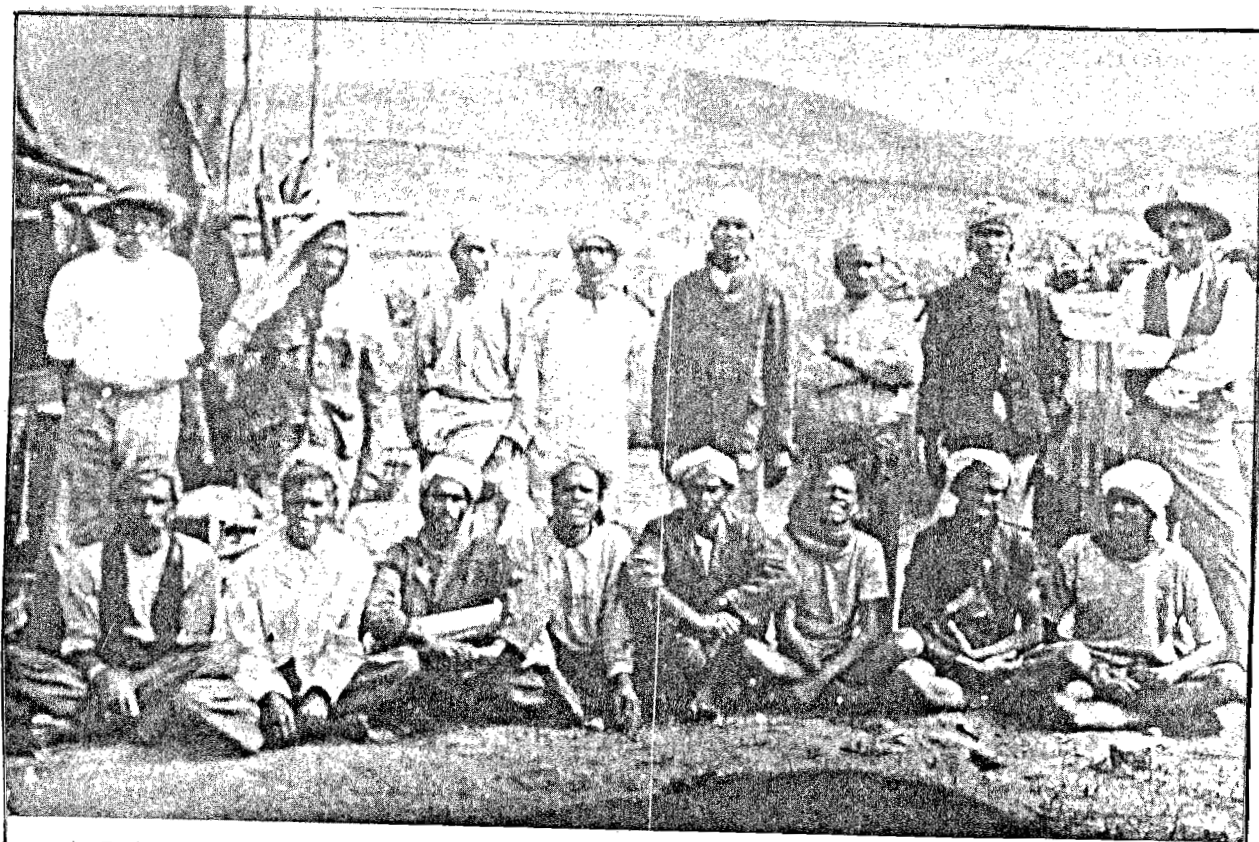
The Mill

A splendid high pressure engine was made by Messrs M'Onie. The mill was a great improvement over the other mills as no lime was used in the manufacture of the sugar.

The systems of using the conical pans for the reception of sugar from coolers was used.

Later a concrete or vacuum pan was used in the Cato Mill.

PICTURE SHOWING A GROUP OF INDIAN INDENTURED LABOURERS.



Early Indian Settlers on a Sunday off which was usually spent in visiting the labourers on the neighbouring farms

P8 1327

HOUSING

Sanitation at the Estate left much to be desired.

At the beginning a hole 2 X 2 feet was dug into the ground and this was to be used as a toilet. Later the labourers planted 4 poles around the hole and tied a sarrie around the poles

By the year 1901 several barracks were constructed.

The barracks or coolie huts/lines replaced the dotted shacks. This did allow the labourer some privacy from his master and they were able to start a small vegetable patch in front of their houses. In this way they were able to organise themselves into a community.

These barracks had no outlet for smoke - the walls and ceiling was black with soot. Very little provision was made for the health and personal well being of the labourer.

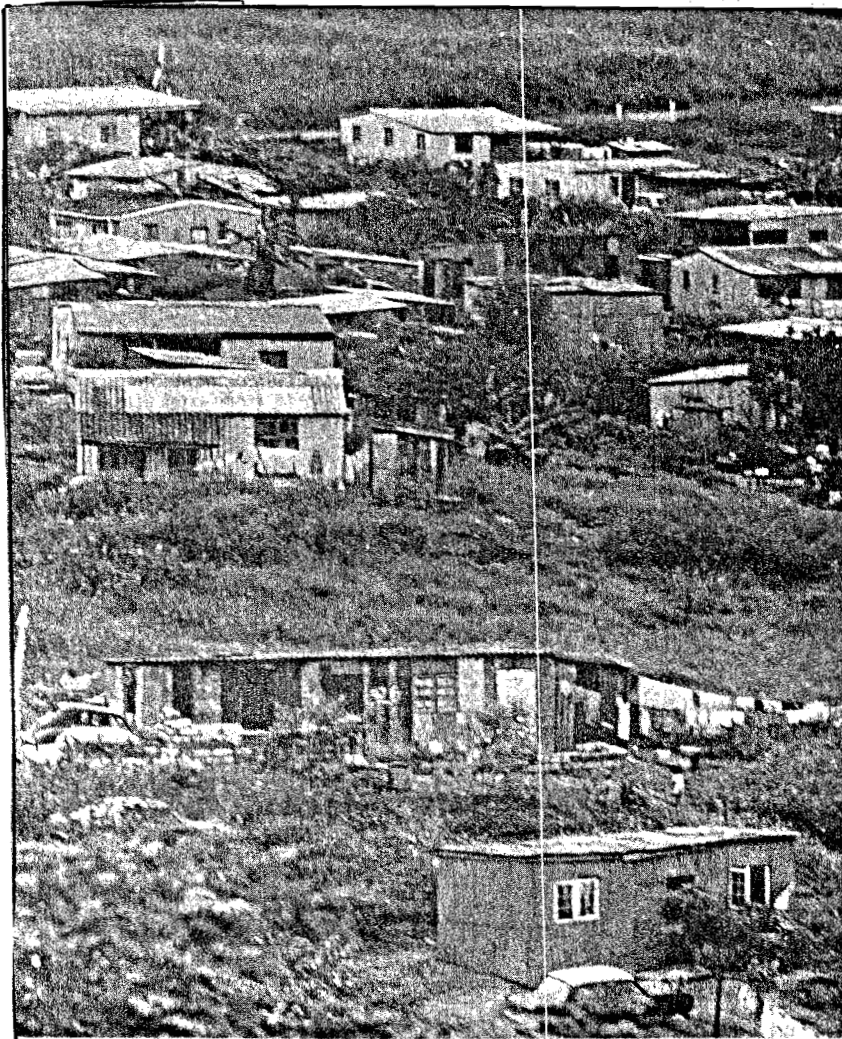
" A commission on investigating living conditions of Indentured Indian Labourers in 1885 reported that the water used by the Indians for drinking and culinary purposes is fouled by pollution. - water was highly impure containing much organic matter of animal origin and exposed to direct sewerage contamination. "

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Pictured above are the "barracks" erected in the early 1900's for Indian labourers. These "barracks" were, in later years, converted into homes for retired Indian labourers of the Natal Estates in Mount Edgecombe. The pensioners continue to live in these drab buildings which are to be demolished shortly to make way for the expanding Phoenix Township.

19 11 55
A SHANTYTOWN



From the early barracks Indians soon began buying or leasing land and building their own homes. This was the trend in the thirties. One such area was Avoca, north of Durban.



A TIN SHACK - SIMILAR TO
THIS - BUILT BY LABOURERS.

FAMILY

After a period of ten years of being indentured for two terms Abboyyee was discharged fro the Cato Estate.

COPY OF A CERTIFICATE OF DISCHARGE.

P 11 1525

NATAL. Duplicate
Certificate of Discharge.
SCHEDULE H. (SECTION 106).

No. 6021 1894 Oct. 1897

I HEREBY CERTIFY that Pooeia
Indian Immigrant No. 6021 has duly completed his term of indenture
of five years in terms of Indian Immigration Law No. 25, 1891, and is
released from his obligation to perform further service in this Colony under
indenture.

DESCRIPTION

Father's Name Sookela

Age 51 years

Height 4 Feet 11 Inches.

Bodily Marks Scar back of left hand

Date of Arrival in Colony July - 74

Ship Isuzu

Last Employer J. F. Churchill

OFFICE OF THE PROTECTOR OF INDIAN IMMIGRANTS.
DURBAN, NATAL.

J. A. McHugh
Protector of Indian Immigrants.

Abboyyee and his family now proceeded to Bayhead (Fynnland) area. The family comprised - 4 daughters 5 sons. The sons helped the father and soon became a very familiar sight as seine fishermen. They used simple seine nets. The fish caught was taken to the nearby barracks and sold to the labourers. With this money they were able to buy a second hand boat. From this time and for the next 4 years they were able to accrue a small but tidy fortune. The large hauls were then taken to the Indian Squatters market where they were easily sold.

At this point of interview I was able to learn that a tragedy presented itself. Mr Abboyy lost 2 of his sons when they drowned while fishing. When their bodies were recovered it was suggested that they be burned at the waters edge. This was not possible. The Indian Protector then suggested that they be buried at the local grave nearby.

Some time later he was asked to get a fishing licence and pay a fishing levy of six pounds a year.

It was at this point that the Abboyyee family moved from the Bayhead Area to the Malvern area.

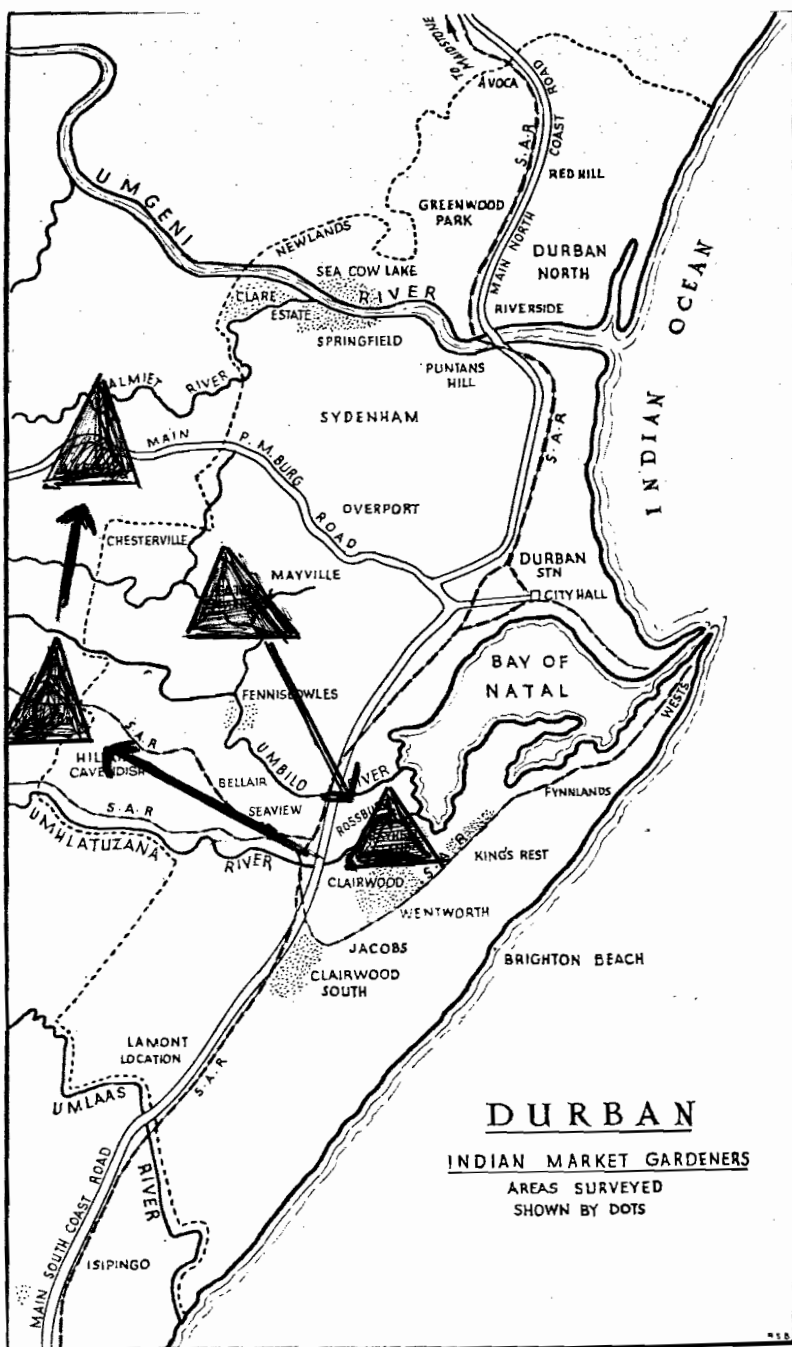


Indian labourers toiling to clear the Natal bush. Note that for every Indian working there seems to be a European overseer.

SEINE BOAT FISHERMEN BRINGING IN A CATCH



A Malvern the family leased about 50 acres from another Indian /Moslem family. They lived next to the ML. Sultan Family for a long time. On the farm they planted some tobacco and bananas

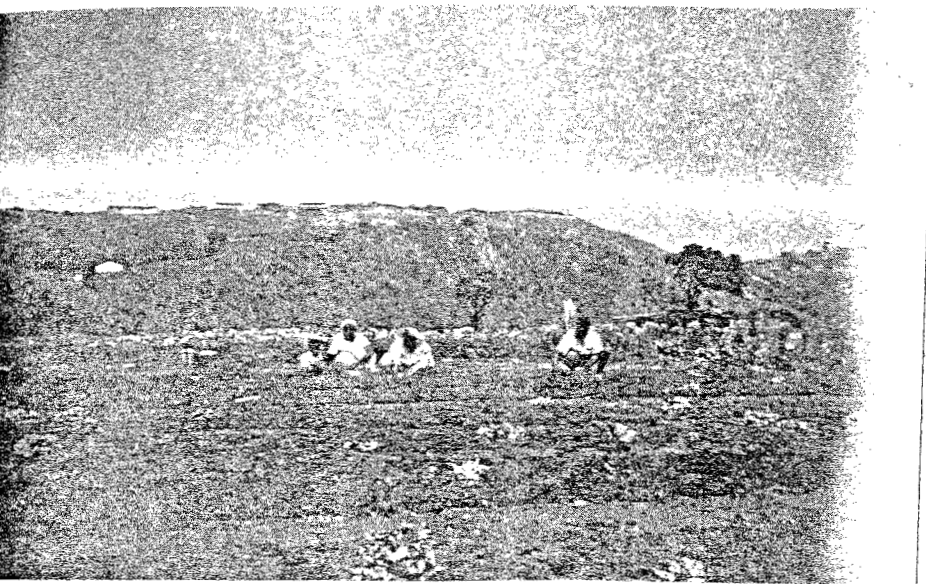


Map of market gardening areas covered by the survey

MOVEMENT OF ABOYE FAMILY
FROM CATO ESTATE → BAYHEAD
— MAWERN — WESTVILLE.

P15

INDIAN MARKET GARDENERS



INDIAN FAMILIES WORKING ON A LEASED FIELD.

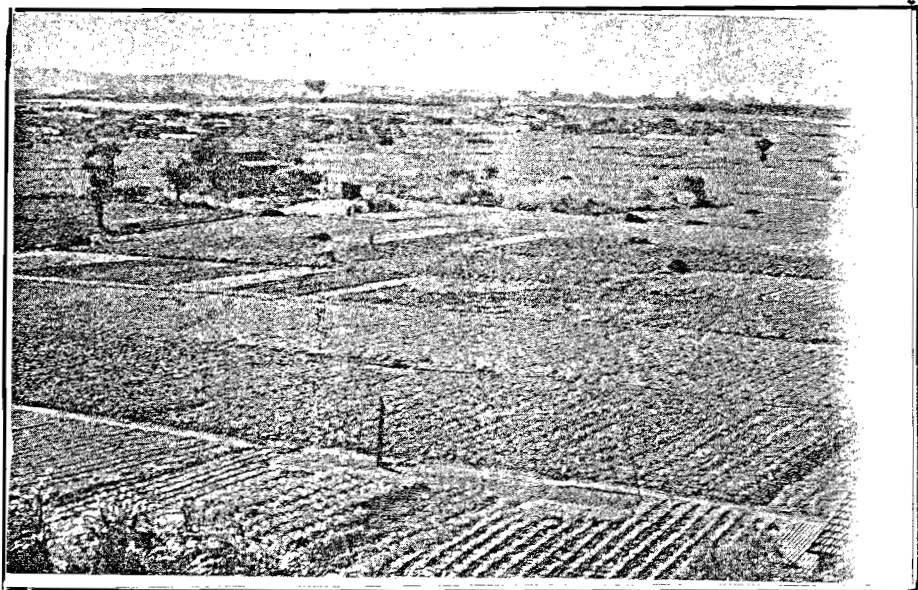




OUR PEOPLE CUTTING
CANE.



A FAMILY - AT THE
PINEAPPLE PLANTATION.



MARKET GARDENERS.

DISTRIBUTION OF SIZE OF GARDEN

Size of Gardens (acres)	Number of Gardens	Percentage of Total Gardens
0-25	18	6.5
0-50	64	23.0
0-75	21	7.5
1-00	74	26.6
1-25	8	2.9
1-50	21	7.6
1-75	5	1.8
2-0-2-9	33	11.9
3-0-3-9	22	7.9
4-0-9-9	11	3.9
20 and over	1	0.4
Total	278	100.0

Thus more than 63 per cent of the gardeners were operating on plots of one acre or less, and 87 per cent had less than three acres.

TABLE III
LAND OWNED BY GARDENERS

Area	Total Plots		Plots owned by gardeners			% of plots owned	
	Number	Acreage	Number	Acreage	Av. size	Number	Acreage
Wentworth	106	119.50	1	0.5	0.5	0.8	0.4
Bayhead	34	27.25	-	-	-	-	-
King's Rest	26	35.75	-	-	-	-	-
Clairwood	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
South	20	11.00	-	-	-	-	-
Stella Hill	10	53.00	9	48.0	5.3	90.0	90.6
Clare Estate	13	19.50	9	13.5	1.5	69.2	69.2
Springfield	55	102.00	-	-	-	-	-
Sea Cow Lake	14	27.25	7	15.25	2.2	50.0	56.0
Total	278	395.25	26	77.25	3.0	9.4	19.5

LEASED LAND.

LAND PARTLY OWNED AND PARTLY LEASED					
Area	Number of plots	% of total	Acreage	% of total	Average acreage
Stella Hill	1	10	5	9	5
Sea Cow Lake	2	14	6	22	3
Total	3	13	11	14	4

Of a total of 278 gardeners only 26 owned the land they cultivated, three owned part of 1 holdings, and the remaining 249 leased the land.

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Only 17 acres of the land leased was under Indian ownership.

It became very clear that Indian market gardeners who could not afford to buy their own land had to rely mainly on publicly owned land

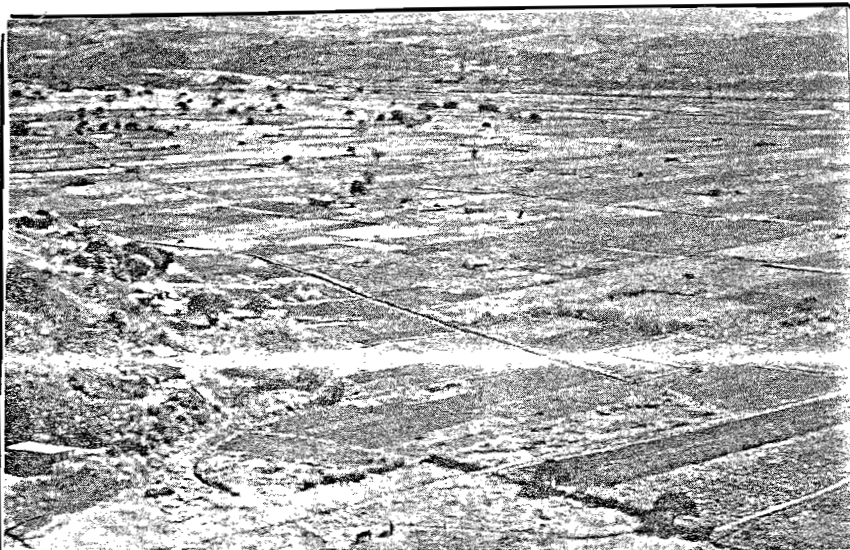


PLATE 1

Two views of market gardening land: *top*, Wentworth area, off Edwin Swales V.C. Drive; *bottom*, Springfield market gardening land to the south of the Umgeni River, viewed from the King George V Hospital.

At this stage two sons Arumugam and Gopal left home and went to settle in Westville. They leased two plots of land. Later they were able to buy the land.

They grew about 5 acres of pineapples on the leased farm. They sent most of the vegetables to Johannesburg and the Indian Squatters market.

Arumugam ~~applied~~ applied and obtained a licence to own a bus. 'Cosmopolitan bus Service'. He later owned three other buses. From the money obtained from the bus company he was able to buy a large shop. The business was a great success.

It was found that although the business seemed to prosper they suddenly were having difficulties to pay their creditors. The buses were the first to be sold.

It was found that much of the money was not banked in Arumugam's name but into the account of his uncle S.A.V. Naidoo. Arumugam then sold his 2 taxis. The shop was next to go. The Brothers still owned the farm and the houses.

In 1941 Abboyee Chetty died and 10 years later his wife died.

By this time the much hated Group Areas Act spread its icy claws out and the brothers had to sell the houses and land.

Arumugam and the others moved to the Durban Area - Sydenham where they bought the house of Dr Christopher at 115 Essendene Road.

Of the family only 2 sisters and 3 brothers survive

SIZE OF GARDENS BY DISTRICT				
Area	Number of gardens	Total acreage	Range in Acreage	Average acreage
Wentworth	106	119.5	0.25 to 3.5	1.1
Bayhead	34	27.25	0.25 to 3.5	0.8
King's Rest	26	35.75	0.25 to 3.0	1.4
Clairwood South	20	11.0	0.25 to 1.75	0.6
Stella Hill	10	53.0	0.75 to 25.0	5.3
Clare Estate	13	19.5	1.0 to 4.0	1.5
Springfield	55	102.0	0.25 to 5.0	1.9
Sea Cow Lake	14	27.25	0.5 to 5.0	1.9
Total	278	395.25	0.25 to 25.0	1.4

PROBLEMS THAT I HAD IN MY INTERVIEWING.

I met a number of old people and very subtly broached the topic of their origin and followed this with routine questions.

One such person was Mr G.P.P.Naidoo of Asherville who became very violent when I asked him about his parents and his home in Mayville.

He told me that similar questions were asked by people requiring homes.

Mr Keseval Padayachee of Shallcross became very abusive when I tried to question him about the past. He told me that the past was dead and That I Should leave It There.

Mr C.C.Naidoo was very helpful. He is a retired School Principal

CONCLUSION.

The trouble endured by our forebearers was great. One would have thought that after so many years of being the underdog there would be a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow

Even at the present moment the Indian lives by his wit He strives towards a goal and at times has proven better than the master.

In nearly all aspects where he allowed to participate the South African Indian has excelled. No wonder he is the envy of the other race groups.

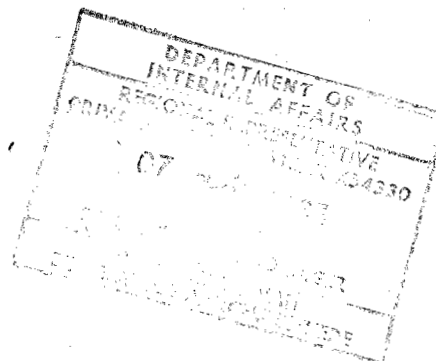
COPY OF SHIP'S LIST OF INDIAN IMMIGRANT

(AI)

Serial Number	:	102
Colonial Number	:	2712
Date of Arrival	:	11. 6. 1864
Name of Ship	:	FAIRLIE
Place of Registration	:	—
Date of Registration	:	—
Number in Register	:	—
Name	:	ABBOYEE
Father's Name	:	VEEKASAWMY
Age	:	27 YRS
Sex	:	MALE
Caste	:	ENTOR GEMOO
District	:	—
Thanna/Taluq	:	POONDIE
Village	:	CHITTOR
Height	:	5' 4"
Bodily Marks	:	FACE FORKED MARKED
Name of Next-of-Kin	:	—
Relations Accompanied	:	—
Small Pox/Vaccinated	:	VACCINATED
Remarks	:	11. 6. JAN 1874

Certified a true copy.


REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE



No 2713 (WIFE)

Name DOORGHEE

FATHER'S NAME GOORUADOO

AGE 19

SEX F

CASTE GENTOO

FEET 5

INCHES 1

WILK AGE CHITTOOR

THANNA POONDEE

DILWAH

MARKINGS

VACCINATED MARKS

REMARKS

wife of 2712

EMPLOYER.

SOURCELIST.

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