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HISTORY III

RESEARCH PROJECT

SUBJECT OF RESEARCH : MR ESSOP SULEMAN BADAT

PREFACE

This research project is designed in order to give us, the senior students, the opportunity of putting to good use the skills we have acquired in historical research. The main emphasis in this project is placed on trying to fill the gap about my own knowledge of an Indian pioneer's arrival in South Africa.

In an effort to find information I have consulted several publications of the Who's Who and also interviewed my subject personally on several occasions. I furthermore sought to verify the dates by looking through documentary evidence such as his passports. In order to ascertain that the information he supplied me with is reliable, I interviewed a number of his close relatives.

But in the process of gathering information I have been placed with the difficulty of acquiring much secondary information to assist me as he did not come as an indentured labourer. Unfortunately Mr E S Badat did not have many documents to provide me with.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

A topic of this nature undoubtedly demands a great deal of research. So in the field of research I am greatly indebted to Mr Essop Suleman Badat who was very co-operative in providing me with information. I am also thankful to my lecturers, Ms Mesthrie and Professor Bhana. I also thank my parents who assisted me in the financial sphere of this project.

Happy reading!

Thanking you

B GOVENDER

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INTRODUCTION

The subject of my research is Mr Essop Suleman Badat who belongs to a class of Indian immigrants who were the so called "free passengers" who immigrated to Natal under the ordinary immigration laws, paying their own passages.

Many of the "passenger Indians" had become market gardeners, securing the monopoly of supplying the Durban and Pietermaritzburg markets. "Other Indians entered commerce both as retail and wholesale merchants and were soon earning a better living than they could have earned in their homeland".⁽¹⁾

Mr E S Badat had come to South Africa with the hope of opening up a business for himself. Unfortunately he had been refused a licence on several occasions. As the licencing officer explained: "We do what we can to restrict further Indian licences ... A European licence is granted almost always as a matter of course; whereas the Indian licence is refused as a matter of course, if it is a new one".⁽²⁾

For this reason Mr Badat encountered a number of problems in business. It must, however, be noted that although many of the free passengers were rich, as expressed by M Palmer "They carried on large business, both wholesale and retail, lived in well appointed and well managed houses in various parts of the towns and their standards of living were quite equal to that of well-to-do Europeans",⁽³⁾ this was not the case with Mr Badat. His housing condition in South Africa was unsatisfactory and he was very poor, with no stable job.

Thus he went back to India in 1941 with the hope of acquiring an accrued amount owing to him by his family estate. Unfortunately this was all in vain. He married for the second time in Bombay in 1942 and returned to South Africa in 1944 together with his wife and children. However, it was during this period that he encountered

(1) A N Boyce: Europe and South Africa, P. 216.

(2) M Palmer: The History Of Indians In Natal, P. 86.

(3) M Palmer: The History Of Indians In Natal, P. 129.

the major of his problems because, according to the immigrant law, it meant that no children from India were admitted during the 1940's, especially if their parents had come earlier to South Africa. After solving this problem with the help of lawyers and Immigrant officers, he then established himself permanently as a South African citizen.



E. S. BADAT

PLACE OF ORIGIN AND HIS EARLY CHILDHOOD

Essop Suleman Badat was born in Surat in India in 1906. He was the first son of Ahmed Hafajee Badat and also a close relative of the prominent Badat family of Ixopo. He lived with his parents and one sister in Ward 5, 1623 Harapa, Surat. They lived on a property inherited from his grandfather. According to Mr E S Badat; "we lived very happy in our small double-storey house."⁽⁴⁾

He spent his early childhood in Surat acquiring a thorough knowledge of Arabic at a Union school. Hindi was also one of the languages he learnt as it was compulsory, amongst these the other languages he studied were Urdu and Gujarati.



A. H. BADAT

(4) E.S. Badat: Interview, Ladysmith, February, 1983.

GULF OF KUTCH

• LUCKNOW

• RASKET
• AHMEDABAD
• BARODA
NARMADA RIVER
TAPTI RIVER
• SURAT
• DAMAN

CALCUTTA

• NAGPUR

INDIA

BOMBAY
• POONA

• SHOLAPUR

• HYDERABAD

• VISHAKHAPATAM

KOLHAPUR

• DATAPUR

• MASULIPATAM

BANGALORE

• MADRAS

• SALEM

MAHURAI

CEYLON

HIS ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

A large territory had been granted to his father for which they earned five hundred rupees a year. On this land they had grown a large number of trees such as tamerine and guara. Tamerine had been cut and sold. During the mountain season in July, after school, Mr E S Badat found himself busy cutting grass which was sold to the rich horse owners. For a large bundle of grass they acquired thirteen rupees.

According to Mr E S Badat; "we were financially secure even apart from paying a levy to the government."⁽⁵⁾ This levy had to be paid to the government because a part of the wall of their house extended slightly into the street.

REASONS FOR LEAVING THE ORIGINAL COUNTRY

In 1921 his father died. Having not completed his studies, he went to the school called Sarvaganict in Surat. His mother then became very ill. She lived in idleness until her grant was exhausted and was then forced to depend on the charity of close relatives. She found it impossible to find employment. At all events, his and his mother's position was in many cases very unfortunate. At the sudden death of his mother, his mother's sister, Mrs Mariam Jeeva from Pietermaritzburg, decided to pay his passage to South Africa. He left his large house in Surat to a group of sisters on a verbal agreement that they should pay a rent of 15 rupees a year. On the 1st January, 1921 he left for South Africa on board the ship Gokarapi. He reached Durban in March, 1921.

HIS FIRST OCCUPATION

As mentioned earlier, Mr E S Badat intended to open up a business. Unfortunately he had been refused a licence on several occasions. He eventually joined his uncle, Mr E M Amla, in partnership at a business in Wesselsnek. He soon realized that his monthly earning of two pounds

(5) E.S. Badat: Interview, Ladysmith, 1983.

was very little so he left for Ladysmith in 1924 where he worked for M A Goga as a shop assistant. It must, however, be noted that during this period (1925 - 1933) unemployment was very serious in South Africa and nothing was done for the Indian unemployed, as, according to M Palmer, "an attempt was made to secure that public and, as far as possible private unemployment should be given to civilized, i.e. "white" labourers. Indians were dismissed from the railways and the number employed by municipalities was restricted."⁽⁶⁾

When his brother had to leave to India for a holiday in 1931, Mr E S Badat had to manage his brother's shop in Dundee.

From the above information it is therefore very evident that Mr E S Badat had served for several years under various well-known business men; he is thus well-armed with the experience in business.

HIS FIRST MARRIAGE

While in Dundee he married Hawa Cassim Badat in 1931 and divorced her in 1933.

HIS SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES

He was in the forefront of every cultural and community activities in the districts of Dundee and Ladysmith. He was the Chairman of the Young Muslim Club in Dundee where he served them for a short while. He also played an important role in sports where he was director of the Royals. Mr E S Badat claims to be an outstanding cricket player.

OCCUPATION AS POSTAL AGENT

Once his brother arrived in South Africa in 1935 after his holiday in India, Mr E S Badat decided to seek a job elsewhere. He was soon employed as a postal agent at Drummond for a period of 5 years. After having saved enough money, he decided to go back to India in

(6) M.Palmer: The History Of Indians In Natal, P.330.

1941 to collect all accrued rent owing to him from the family estate;
thus leaving his job as a postal agent.

§ S. 75.

*Postgeld vooruitbetaalbaar.
Postage should be prepaid.*



*Vermeld in u antwoord asb.
In reply please quote
No. PWC/MB*

UNIE VAN SUID-AFRIKA.—UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA.

POSKANTOOR,
POST OFFICE,

D U R B A N.

12th March, 1941.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN.

THIS IS TO CERTIFY that E.S. Badat
satisfactorily performed the duties of Postal
Agent at Drummond for a period of five years.


POSTMASTER.

REFERENCE : POSTAL AGENT

HIS RETURN TO INDIA

He left South Africa in March, 1941 and reached Bombay in June 1941. On board the same ship was a girl called Amina Mohamed Chuptey, who later became his second wife. The marriage took place in Bombay in 1942.

During this period Mr E S Badat encountered a number of problems. Firstly, when he reached or entered India, he had been robbed of his Victorian coins because a Gujarati jeweller in India had taken them from him and later on telling Mr Badat that the coins are not recognised in India and that they were illegal because of British rule. All this being a lie, because Mr Badat trusted this jeweller and was left penniless for a while.

It must not be forgotten that Mr E S Badat had come to India with the hope of getting the occupants of his house in India to pay the accrued amount of rent. But they refused to pay and even refused to move out. As a result Mr Badat and his wife were left without shelter. Nevertheless, he lived in a small village in India which was littered by untidy and insanitary Indian shacks. According to Mrs Amina Badat, his wife; "Our shack was badly built with only two rooms".⁽⁷⁾ These rooms had minimum light and ventilation and stick for furniture.

THE BIRTH OF HIS CHILDREN

Mr M E Badat was the first son born on the 11th June, 1942 in India. The second son, Mr A E Badat, was also born in India on the 16th April, 1944. The third and fourth sons, A E Badat and S E Badat, were born in South Africa on the 12th December, 1947 and 29th September, 1949, respectively.

THE ENGAGEMENT OF LAWYERS

With the growth of his two sons Mr Badat was in no way prepared to leave his house to be occupied by outsiders, or, as the Indian community

(7) A. Badat: Interview, Ladysmith, March 1983.

used the term a different "caste".

So he employed a lawyer, Mr A Maraj, to handle his case but he failed hopelessly because the law was in favour of the present occupants of the house. As Mr Maraj told that according to the law, if one leaves one's house or premises unoccupied for a period then anyone else could come and occupy the vacant premises and they can automatically take over ownership even though you are the rightful owner of the property. Things did not seem to be working out for Mr E S Badat so as a result, together with his wife and his two sons, they left India by the Karagule in 1944.

On arrival in Natal he was faced with the worst of his problems.

THE PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED BY HIS WIFE AND TWO CHILDREN

The Immigration law prohibited the entry of children during the 1940's, especially if the parent had immigrated earlier to South Africa. The white community have been afraid to open the door too wide to Indian immigration as the whites told; "We are not a homogeneous population. We are a white population on a Black continent and the settlers in South Africa have for many years been actuated by the fear that to open the door to another non-white race would make the position of the few whites in South Africa very dangerous indeed."⁽⁸⁾ Thus the immigration law did not allow his two sons, M E Badat and A E Badat, to live in Natal. With the help of his friend, Mr E G Parak, the latter being a friend of the immigration officers, he arranged for his two sons to live in Natal for another two months. They were also given an extra month to live in Natal because an epidemic of small pox had broken out amongst his two children.

While they were allowed to stay in Natal, Mr E S Badat was clever enough to engage a lawyer called Mr A Garsen to handle the case concerning his two sons. After lengthy discussions they were granted permission to live in South Africa as South African citizens.

Due to the fact that he was unemployed he had been offered a job by

(8) M.Palmer: The History Of Indians In Natal, P.89.

his uncle, Mr M A Goga, as a shop assistant.

After many years of hard work and acquiring enough money, he purchaed a house situated at 54 Surat Road, Ladysmith.

Once Mr E S Badat's sons had established for themselves secure jobs, Mr E S Badat retired at the age of sixty-five, living on a pension as well as being assisted by his children. Presently Mr and Mrs Badat are living with their youngest son who is a building contractor here out at Ladysmith.

During my last interview with Mr Badat he told me that he is now too old to participate in any sort of public activities and due to illnesses, i.e. semi-blindness and hard at hearing. Being 76 years old Mr Badat feels that he had over worked himself during his early years, but nevertheless he is still fit and well with the exception of his sight and hearing.

CONCLUSION

From the preceding discussion we are thus able to conclude that Mr E S Badat had encountered a number of problems and endured a number of hardships.

Firstly, he had been refused a licence on several occasions. Like Mr E S Badat the position of many other "free passengers" were also jeopardised because the majority of the free passengers were also refused licences, as the whites were afraid of the trading ability of the Indians and their low cost of living. As a result the White community found it increasingly difficult to compete with the Indians. For this reason the Whites did their best to prevent the Indians from progressing.

The second problem he encountered was the prohibition of the entry of children in Natal in the 1940's. This immigration law affected Mr E S Badat and the majority of the other Indians.

After solving many of these problems he was still able to establish himself as a well-known person in Ladysmith because he was public spirited and was on the forefront of the local activities affecting the Muslim community. He was one of the many who formed large charity organizations. His tiring efforts brought many changes for the Muslims in Ladysmith.

Due to his old age, he broke away from all social and religious activities and today he is tremendously missed by the Muslim community.

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