

FOREWORD

I wish to express my sincere indebtedness to Mr Chellan, Mr K. Beharie and Mrs Gauria Kaleo without whose assistance this biography would not have been compiled.

Mr Chellan was largely responsible for introducing me to Mr Beharie and his mother. He also assisted by playing the role of interpreter during my difficulties during the interview.

Mr Beharie has kindly donated two photographs and had co operated very willingly during the interview.

And finally Mrs Gauria Kaleo ought to be congratulated on providing the greater part of the information about her past history.

1983
RAMBOWEN
7289E

INTRODUCTION

The reasons for the arrival of indentured Indians to Natal

The initial responsibility for the introduction of Indians to the South African soil rests squarely on the South African Sugar industry which had its origin in Edmund Morewood's experiments at Albert (Compensation during 1852. Cane tops were being introduced from Mauritius - for, ¹On 22 June 1852 the Jane Morice arrived at Durban to discharge 15 000 cane tops from Mauritius."

The need for importing labourers from India arose because of the local Bantu's unwillingness to work on the plantations and moreover it had already been a practice in Mauritius to import Indian labourers. The discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand also affected the labour situation in Natal. It is stated that ²"the eighties brought revival to the Natal sugar industry due largely to the discovery of the Transvaal goldfields. Large numbers had left and there were only about 2 500 still employed on the sugar estates together with 6 000 Indians similarly engaged."

This state of affairs on the colony's plantation led to meetings demanding for more government action and increases in Indian immigration. J.R. Saunders and H. Milner interviewed Sir George Grey. While these negotiations between sugar planters and the government were taking place, William Campbell and Edmund Morewood were staunchly opposed to any scheme to introduce Indian labourers to Natal; yet it is rather ironic that I discovered my subject from an estate once owned by Mr Campbell's own descendants.

¹Valiant Harvest page 34 paragraph 2

²Valiant Harvest page 88

Originally the British Government consented to the petition for the introduction of Indians to Natal on the grounds that "coolies" from India would be converted through intermarriage to Christianity and that they would become permanent citizens.

After the first batch of indentured Indians had arrived in 1860 further immigration was petitioned even as late as 1911 because of the acute shortage of labourers due to the establishment of the gold fields and moreover large numbers of Indians who had completed their indenture, had left the plantations to seek their fortune on the Witwatersrand and the coal mines in Newcastle.

However the Immigration Acts came into force in 1913 and Asiatics were prohibited entry into the Union of South Africa. Since then a tremendous change has occurred. The South African Sugar Industry has grown into an industrial giant, but there has been a radical change in the attitude of Indians and Natives. In the case of the former, not all the descendants of that labouring class remained with the sugar industry, but have branched out into different avenues, some as clerks, traders, the professions and also in the fields of commerce and industry.³ "The African has realized from the pressure of increasing population in the locations the growing benefits of civilisation and the many advantages accruing to the wage earner."

³ Valiant Harvest page 134 paragraph 6

Reference Number: 29/2/2/4 (2)

COPY OF SHIP'S LIST OF INDIAN IMMIGRANT.

SERIAL NUMBER : 411
COLONIAL NUMBER : 118826
DATE OF ARRIVAL : 8TH FEBRUARY 1906
NAME OF SHIP : "SS UMZINTO"

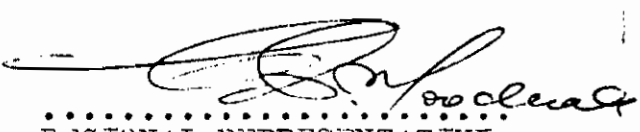
PARTICULARS OF REGISTRATION.

PLACE : JHANSI
DATE : 2ND JANUARY 1906
NUMBER IN REGISTER : NIL
NAME : GAURIA
FATHER'S NAME : GHANSA
AGE : 1 YEAR
SEX : FEMALE
CASTE : LODH

RESIDENCE

DISTRICT : JHANSI
THANNA : BARAGAVN
VILLAGE : JEONRY
HEIGHT : NOT STATED
BODILY MARKS : NOT STATED
NAME OF NEXT-OF-KIN : GHANSA
RELATIONS ACCOMPANIED : FATHER AND MOTHER
REMARKS : NIL

CERTIFIED A TRUE COPY:


.....
REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE,
DEPARTMENT OF INDIAN AFFAIRS.

DEPARTMENT OF INDIAN AFFAIRS
REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE PRIVATE BAG X4330
25 -02- 1974
DURBAN STREEKVERTENWOORDIGER
DEPARTEMENT VAN INDIERSAKE

A BIOGRAPHY OF GAURIA KALOO

Gauria Kaloo is a retired labourer of the Mullettes Estate, at cottage number 9, Second Avenue, Ghost Town, Mount Edgecombe on the Natal North Coast. Presently she is in receipt of an old age state grant of R83 per month, as well as a company grant of R16 per month.

She came to Natal in the company of her parents at the age of one year, although she contests that she was only six months of age. Her parents had lived in the "Jhansi District, Village of Jeonrye Northern India. There is no accurate date of the departure from India, but from evidence in ship's list, she travelled in the S.S. Umzinto which was the penultimate ship that brought indentured Indians to Natal. The ship landed in Port Natal on 8 February 1906. Her colonial number is 118826. Her father's name was Ghansha. There is no detail of any bodily marks or her height because she was still an infant at the time of her arrival.

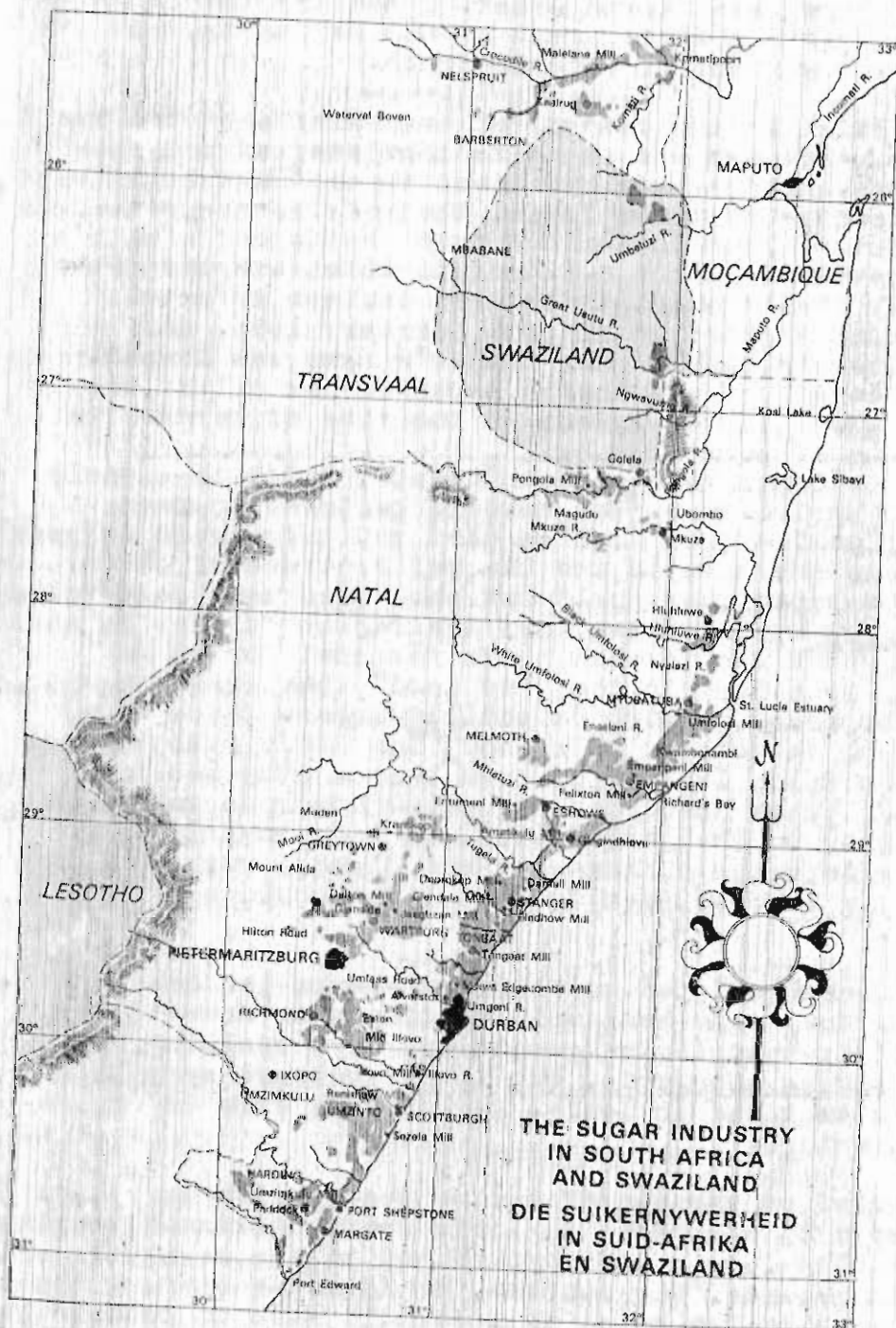
Her parents belonged to the "Lodh" caste, which is closely connected to agriculture. The name is believed to mean "clod-hopper" coming from "loh" - a clod and this could suggest that they were peasants in the Central Province of India. Thus being peasants they could not have been very well to do. I gathered from my interview that the reason for her father's decision to Natal was to seek their fortune; for it was rumoured by some that in the "new land" they were going to, gold could be found growing on chillie trees. There were yet others who associated this land with the Hindu mythological name of Lanka which is said to have been a city built of gold. Although these anecdotes may sound humorous today, but upon reflecting on the period 1905, we know that it was during the aftermaths of the gold and diamond rush in South Africa and the rumours seen in that light could not be very far fetched.

Her parents were assigned under indenture to the Natal Estates and they were housed in compounds in Mount Edgecombe. She states that living conditions were appalling compared to today's standards, but it did compare very much favourably with those in India. Her parents came under the five year indenture.

She got married at the age of twelve years which is rather late compared to standards in India where childhood marriage still exist today. This was in 1918 and in the same year she lost both her parents. Her husband, Mr Kaloo Manohar, who was also an employee of the Natal Estates, did much to console her. In that year, she also started work as a labourer for the Natal Estates.

4. Caste and Race in India by S.S. Ghurje - fifth edition 1979.
* See map. p. 9.

5. See map. next page.



She states that they could not afford to live off entirely on her husband's earning with any comfort. She also states that working conditions were rather severe. She often had to work from dawn to dusk, having no idea of what time she started and finished work, all she does remember is that the sun was the only guide. They were only given one set of clothes for the year by the company which did not cater for the severe winter. Her monthly earnings included one pound and six shillings and ration which consisted of a quarter bag of mealie meal, one billy can rice, salt one pound of dholl and half a bottle (375ml) of oil. Housing was free.

After her marriage she moved into another cottage in the mill barracks where her only son Beharie was born on 10 July 1931. He was the fourth child. She has four daughters whose names are Rajpathy, Dularie, Dhanpath and Basmathiee.

Mrs Manohar lost her husband under tragic circumstances when Beharie was only three years old in 1934. It was Mr Manohar's job at Mount Edgecombe Sugar Mill to tip the sugar cane from the loco trucks into the carriers. Tipping of sugar cane was then done manually, where the person had to lever the load of sugar cane using a long pole. By sheer accident a whole load of six ton sugar cane fell on Mr Manohar who was literally crushed by the weight.

In spite of her misfortune, Mrs Manohar continued work, brought up all her children and got them married. In 1962 she was relieved of her duties when the company discharged her on pension. The company granted her a lump sum benefit of sixty rands and in addition a monthly grant of five rands which has increased to sixteen rands since last year. In 1964 she applied for a state grant which was successful and presently she is in receipt of eighty three rands per month.

As far as religious and social activities are concerned, she is a regular devotee at the Shree Em Perumal Temple which was originally built in 1875. The temple was rebuilt in 1921 and her husband had taken active part in its rebuilding. She still continues to attend the annual temple festival in April. Even up to this day her son offers his service free in the annual renovation of the temple, prior to the annual festival. A unique feature of this temple which has been declared a national monument, is that although it bears a South Indian name and it is widely claimed that this section of the Indian community are saivites, is dedicated to the deity Vishnu, because at the time of its inception, there were a large number of hindi speaking people residing at Mount Edgecombe and this section of the community are Vaisnavites. Even up to this day the temple committee consists of a mixed group of hindi and tamil speaking people.

Although Mrs Manohar had come as a uneducated, indentured labourer, nevertheless she has been greatly honoured, especially when she had been invited to the Indian Settler's gathering at the Orient Hall in Durban's Centenary Road. Where she, together with others had been photographed and her photograph features prominently in the front cover of Indian Annual Settlers Issue 120th Anniversary 1860-1980

5. See map on opposite page.

Mrs Manohar has already celebrated her eighty third birthday at her present residence and she is the proud grand and great grand parent of quite a few children who will probably also be proud of her if they had to read this account of her.



Mrs Kalee (in centre) celebrating her 83rd birthday.

TRANSCRIPT OF AN INTERVIEW HELD AT THE HOME OF MR.

K. BEHARIE

My name is Gauria, but my father called me Mitania. My father's name is Ghanes. I came from India when I was six months old. My parents came under the five year indenture. My father was poor. People spoke lies that gold grew on chillie trees in this new country. Some people told my father that this country we were going to, once belonged to Ravana and his city Lanka was somewhere there.

I started work ater I got married. My husband was Kaleo. I got married when I was twelve years. I started work at one pound and six shillings a month. They also gave me rations. They gave one pound dholl, a quarter bag mealie meal, one billy can rice, some salt and half a bottle oil. They gave me a free house. in the compound first, then in the mill barracks. My husband also worked for the Natal Estates at One pound and six shillings per month. I took up work because the money earned by my husband was not enough. We started work very early in the morning and finished late in the evening. They only gave us one set of clothes each for the year. We didn't get any coat or jersey.

Both my parents passed away just after my marriage. I have five children. One son whose name is Beharie and four daughters who are; Rajpathy, Dularie, Dhanpath and Basmathoe. My husband passed away when Beharie was three years old. A truck load of sugar cane fell on him.

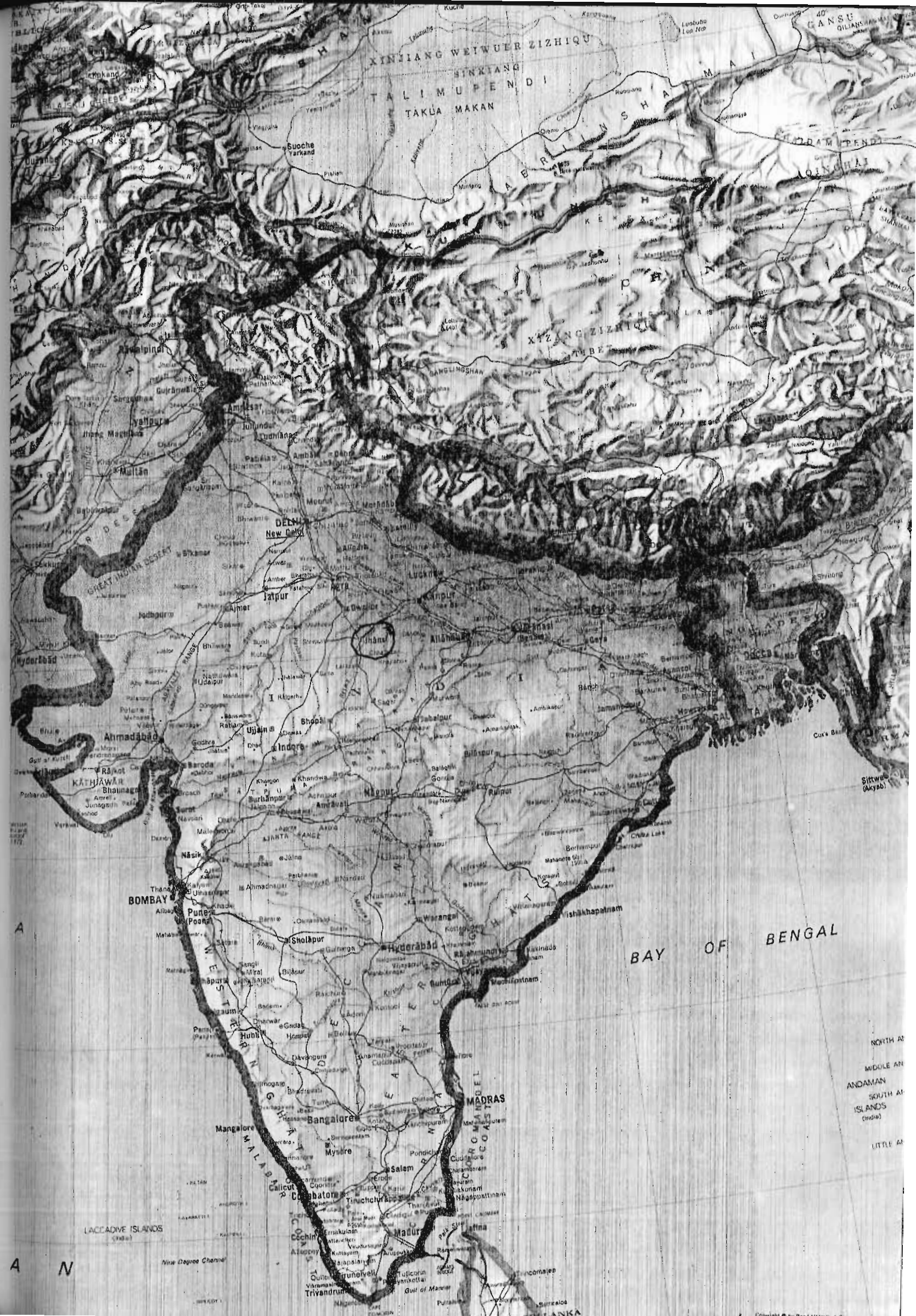
I lived in the main barracks in Mount Edgecombe, near the Shree Em Perumal temple and only fifteen years ago we moved to this present cottage. The house at the barracks saught on fire and all my documents got destroyed. My husband helped in the rebuilding of the temple. I attend the temple festival annually

During the 1949 riots I took shelter together with many others in the temple hall. I have celebrated my eighty third birthday at this house six years ago. Three years ago my son took me to Durban, where there was a large gathering of old people. They took my photograph.

I am now receiving old age grant. The Hulettes Company paid me sixty rands and at first they paid me five rands a month but since last year they have increased this to sixteen rands.

I have many grand and great grand children.

see photograph



CONCLUSION

This was a laborious but rather interesting exercise. During the course of the preparation of this document I was unfortunate in that I could not find much information about my own ancestors. I then had to try others and Mrs Gauria happens to be my fourth selection, for had to abandon a few others.

Another problem which I encountered was time, for looking for information was time consuming. My greatest difficulty in trying to get the information typed.. I had an access to a very old machine and myself being no typist I hope the quality of the typing will be pardoned.

REFERENCES

1. Valiant Harvest: Founding of the South African Sugar Industry
1848 -1926 -Robert, F Osborn
2. Indian Settlers
2. Indian Annual Settlers Issue, 120 th Anniversary-1860-1980
(published by Indian Academy of South Africa)
- Interview.