

⁵⁴⁰ The immigration of Mr Gangoo Paran to South Africa.

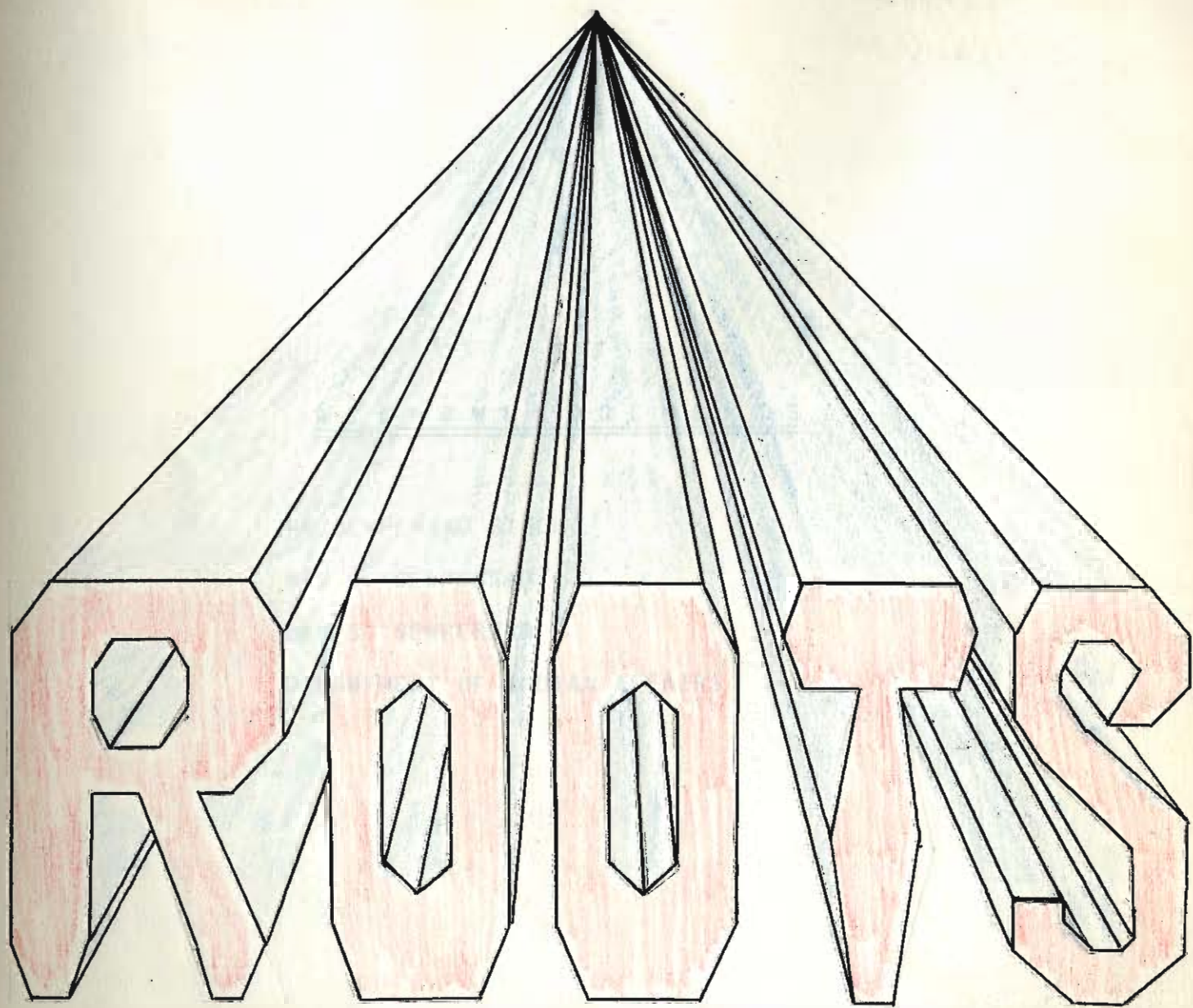
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

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HISTORY III

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INTRODUCTION

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The coming of the Indians to Natal was no spontaneous uncontrolled movement of adventurous individuals seeking a better livelihood than their home country gave them. It was part of an elaborate system organised and controlled by the Governments of Britian and India. The organised system of indentured Indian emigration came about chiefly as a result of the abolition of statery in Britian in 1834. The freed slaves in many areas refused to work and the planters were desperate for labour. The first indentured Indian labourers arrived in Natal towards the end of 1860. Early in 1865 a leading article in the Natal Mercury states "Coolie immigration after several years of it is deemed more essential to your prosperity than ever. It is a vitalising principle". But Natal authorities failed completely to realize that the conditions under which the Indians came to this country would inevitably result in the establishment of a permanent Indian population. From the beginning there seems to have been a good deal of misunderstanding of the objects and natural results of Indian coolie immigration. L.M Thompson criticizes lieutenant Governor Scott very severely for his acceptance of the Indians immigration plan and for his failure to foresee the inevitable consequences that Natal would become the permanent home of an Indian Population. L.M. Thompson states ¹" Scott's narrow vision must be condemned, because he failed to anticipate inevitable results, in hypothetical contingencies".

In the following project I have attempted to trace back the roots of my Great Grandfather on the maternal side of my family. I found this project very interesting and informative, but I regret to say that much of the information I have collected is subject to distortion because of the age gap between my Grandfather and his father. I have relied heavily on verbal information and although I have attempted to substanciate most of the material collected, I have had extreme difficulty in finding proof. Unfortunately, I do not have enough documents or pictures because of the large time space. I personally did not know my grandfather because he had divorced my grandmother before I was born. I must thank Professor S. Bhana and Ms U.S. Mestrie for giving me the opportunity to find a "lost" grandfather and better still to trace my roots right back to India.

1 M. Palmer : The History of the Indians in Natal, p12

PLACE OF ORIGIN IN INDIA

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In about 1877, in the small village of Paramitan-Jagat in the district of Rae Bareilly in Northern India, a son was born to Paran and his young wife Bibti. Paran and Bibti belonged to the Kori caste, according to which a child is named on the day after its birth by some women of the caste, a Brahman is asked whether the day auspicious and he also chooses a name. If this is the same as that of any living relation or one recently dead another name is given for ordinary use. At the time of the child's birth it was common belief that if people knew an individual's name given by the Brahman i.e. the "raas" name, they could come to possess that person's soul by some kind of trick, because of this Paran called his son "Gangoo" and not by his real name. Gangoo lived with his father and grew up in Rae Bareilly.

²Rae Bareilly : administrative headquarters, Rae Bareilly district, Uttar Pradesh State, Sai River, name for the Bhar tribe, it has a road and rail junction and an agricultural trade centre. Industries include milling of agricultural products and handloom weaving. The town contains a fifteenth century fort and other ancient buildings.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

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Gangoo was born in the Kori caste which was a Hindu weaving caste of Northern India. It has been suggested that the Kori's name has been derived from that of the Kol caste of whom they have by some been assumed to be an offshoot. The Kori's themselves traced their origin from Kabir, the apostle of the weaving caste. He, they say, met a Brahman girl on the bank of a tank, and, been saluted by her, replied, "May God give you a son". She objected that she was a virgin and unmarried, but Kabir answered that his word could not fail; and a boy was born out of her hand, whom she left on the bank of the tank. He was suckled by a heifer and subsequently adopted by a weaver and was the ancestor of the Kori. Therefore the caste say of themselves ³"He was born of an undefiled vessel, and free from passion; he lowered his body and entered the ocean of existence". This legend seems to be a mere perversion of the

2. Encyclopaedia Britannica 15th ed., VI p 427

3. R.V. Russell: The tribes & castes of the Central Provinces of India, p 547

story of Kabír himself, designed to give the Kori a distinguished pedigree.

The Kori's social status is very low, but they are not usually considered as impure. The principle occupation of the caste is the weaving of coarse country cloth. The material used by the Kori is the tread supplied by the Dhunia, and thus the weaver caste has risen imperceptibly out of that of the cotton-carder, in the same way as the cobbler caste has risen out the tanner. The art of weaving and plaiting threads is very much the same process as that of plaiting osiers, reeds and grass, and converting them into baskets and mats. This circumstances explains the puzzle why the weaver caste in India is at such a low social level. He (Kori), however ranks several degrees above the Chamár or Tanner, as among Hindus, herbs and their products (cotton being included) are invariably considered pure, while the hides of dead animals are regarded as a pollution.

The reasons why the weavers rank so low may, perhaps be that the Aryans when they settled in villages in Northern India despised all handicrafts as derogatory to their dignity. These were left to the subject tribes, and as a large number of weavers would be required, the industry would necessarily be embraced by the bulk of those who form the lowest stratum of the population, and has ever since remained in their hands.

The weaver is the proverbial butt of Hindu ridicule, like the tailor in England. The following story illustrates their stupidity. A weaver bought a buffalo for twenty rupees. His brother then came to him and wanted a share in the buffalo. They did not know how he should be given a share until at last the weaver said, "You go and pay the man who sold me the buffalo twenty rupees, and then you will have given as much as I have and will be half owner of the buffalo". Which was done. The ridicule attached to the weavers occupation is due to its been considered proper for a women rather than a man, and similar jests were current at the tailors expense in England. Weavers in India are similar to the tailors in western countries because woven and not sewn clothes have been generally worn.

REASON FOR LEAVING ORIGINAL COUNTRY

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When the young Gangoo turned thirteen years old he was considered eligible to be married. His father with the help of relatives and a Bráhmaṇ found him a suitable bride and a small wedding ceremony sealed the marriage. Three years later a daughter was born to the Gangoo family.

Gangoo was a very ambitious and proud young man. He always wanted the best for his family. The caste system of India stifled his efforts to better his lot in life. In order to live prosperously he took up the trade of brickmaking for the upper class. He soon became skilled in brickmaking and gave up weaving altogether.

But the chief curse of the caste system was "untouchability", the upper caste did not regard the low caste Sudras as even human beings. They were treated with contempt. Their shadow defiled the upper caste. Their touch was unbearable. For Gangoo it was bad enough in being born into the lower caste but even worse he was ambitious by nature and this sometimes frustrated him even to the point of suicide.

After just turning twenty-two years old, Gangoo was slowly beginning to accept his position in life and the bitterness was slowly fading away. But then something happened which was to have a major effect on his life and which was going to change the course of history for Gangoo and his family. One day after working hard making bricks under a hot and hostile sun, Gangoo went to the well to have a drink of water and he was asked to stand aside because an upper caste group of people were standing beside the well and chatting. Gangoo, tired and thirsty refused to listen and shouted out loud that he was a man and not an animal and therefore he will drink the water and nobody was going to stop him. He was caught and flogged. When he went home bleeding and smouldering with anger his wife, terrified that he will seek vengeance, took flight, together with her daughter to a sister village.

Gangoo, disgraced by the fact that he had tried to hit back while being flogged and left alone without a family, decided that it was time for him to change.

to change/

Leaving the bitterness and hurt behind him Gangoo decided to fetch his wife and child and move to another village. On the way, he met a friend who told him about the land of gold called South Africa. He was told that the streets of this land was covered with gold and all he had to do is pick them up and he would be a rich man.

The decision was made. Gangoo was going to this place called South Africa. Leaving his friend with a message for his wife and child, Gangoo went in search of the recruitment office.

DATES OF DEPARTURE & ARRIVAL TO SOUTHERN AFRICA =====

Gangoo arrived at the port of Calcutta in high hopes of being rich. Before boarding the ship, an officer asked him some questions and gave him a number. They were then told a few things about South Africa which they did not understand. But this did not perturb Gangoo as he boarded the ship "S.S. UMLAZI XI". On his journey to South Africa he suffered from dysentery and the common sea sickness. The ship was not a bed of comfort but he tried to make himself as comfortable as possible. On board the ship he met many people who, just like him, were also coming to South Africa to make their fortunes. The "S.S. UMLAZI XI" arrived at the port of Natal on the 6th of February 1899.

LIFE IN SOUTH AFRICA =====

As he stepped down from the ship, Gangoo strained his eyes to see if there was any gold around him. Alas, he was gravely disappointed; there was no gold to be seen anywhere, only men, women and children scurrying around.

An officer asked him his name and what he could do. Gangoo replied that he could make bricks and he was then assigned to a certain Mr Bailey. Mr Bailey was the owner of the Red Hill quarry and the surrounding land.

Gangoo was taken to Avoca where he met Mr Bailey who later became his great friend. Gangoo was indentured to him for three years only. Mr Bailey was a compassionate and understanding employer he gave Gangoo a piece of land to live on and cultivate his own vegetables.

Gangoo worked hard at his task of brickmaking. He dug the clay from the quarry and made it into a slab to cut out the bricks individually. The bricks were then left in the sun to dry and thereafter they were fired using timber fuel. Everyday Gangoo went home so tired, that he did not have the energy to clean his house or cook his food. Mr Bailey suggested he take a wife but Gangoo refused to hear of it. He missed his wife and child and longed to return to India. Unfortunately he fell ill and there was nobody to care for him.

The people working with him in the quarry decided it was time for him to re-marry. After much persuasion Gangoo eventually agreed to marry a young girl of about 13 years old. Gangoo married his second wife Buthwa with little ceremony. The young bride nursed him back to health, cleaned his house and cooked his food.

Buthwa, like Gangoo, yearned to go back to India. She had not come to South Africa voluntarily, her sister had quarreled with her husband and left him to come to South Africa tagging little Buthwa along. After her sisters contract had ended she returned to India leaving Buthwa behind. Buthwa was then adopted by a childless couple.

In 1903 Gangoo's indentured labour contract with Mr Bailey came to an end. He was not in the best of health and therefore he did not reindenture. Mr Bailey helped him by leasing out land to him for two pounds a year. There was no contract signed for the lease of the land. The land was leased out on the basis of trust and friendship. Gangoo now had 10 acres of land in Avoca.

Gangoo now subleased this land to fellow Indians for 1 pound a year. As the years went by Gangoo wanted to buy the land from Mr Bailey but he could not because of the legislations at that time which prevented Indians from owning land.

BIRTH OF CHILDREN

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In 1911 Gangoo and Buthwa's first son was born. He was named Ramsumer, he was followed by the second son 2 years later, who was named Sewpersad. Sewpersad was followed by Haripersadh in 1915 , Sukdeo in 1919 and Budhree in 1921

Ramsumer worked as a clerk in a chemist in Durban, Sewpersad became a businessman and shopowner, Haripersadh became a Chiropodist (first Indian Chiropodist in South Africa).

Sukdeo worked as a Tile maker. Budhree died at the age of 8 years old. Unfortunately they had no daughters. Gangoo had tried to get in contact with his family in India but his efforts was in vain .

SOCIAL, RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

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Once in South Africa the Indians were not subjected to the caste system which was like a yoke around their neck. Gangoo was seen only in terms of skilled labour and not as a low caste Indian. The absence of the caste system in South Africa gave Gangoo the opportunity he had been waiting for all his life. He could now build up his position in society and he did not have to be wealthy in order to succeed in life.

The Indians in Natal in the early 1900's did not have much of a social life. Most of their spare time was spent working in the garden ,talking to neighbours and playing with their Grand-children.

Gangoo evaded the three pound tax as much as he could, but as the years went by he was able to pay the tax. Gangoo was able to achieve one of his objectives in life i.e. to be well off and not steeped in poverty. The Gangoo family did not move house, they were able to build a brick house in the present North Coast Road in Avoca.

Gangoo was a devout Hindu and prayed regularly. He brought his sons up strictly and according to the Hindu custom. He was careful not to mention the caste system to his children. He brought them up believing that they belonged to a high class society.

Gangoo did not delve in politics, whatever he thought about the politics of South Africa he kept to himself. When Gandhi came to live in Phoenix, Indians were not allowed to travel first class in trains and therefore Gandhi used to walk to town. He passed Gangoo's house on the way and Gangoo used to point out Gandhi to his sons.

Gangoo's life came to a quiet end on the 11th March 1948. He died at a ripe old age of 71 years. Many years later Buthwa followed her husband. She died on the 11th March 1962. It is sad that none of the sons carried the Gangoo surname. The name Gangoo was buried with Gangoo, it seems appropriate because "Gangoo" was not the name chosen by the Bráhmán in India.

INFORMATION RECEIVED FROM HISTORY DEPARTMENT

NO. 76330

NAME OF SHIP	UMLAZI XI
PORT OF DEPARTURE	CALCUTTA
DATE OF ARRIVAL	FEBRUARY 1899
NO. OF SHIP	482
NAME	GANGOO
FATHER'S NAME	PARAN
AGE	22 YEARS
SEX	MALE
CASTE	KORI
FEET	5
INCHES	6
VILLAGE	PARAMITAN-JAGAT
THANNA	JAGATPORE
ZILLAH	RAE BARELI
MARKINGS	SCAR ON RIGHT SIDE OF JAW
REMARKS	VACCINATED

INFORMATION FROM INDIAN AFFAIRS

B.M.25

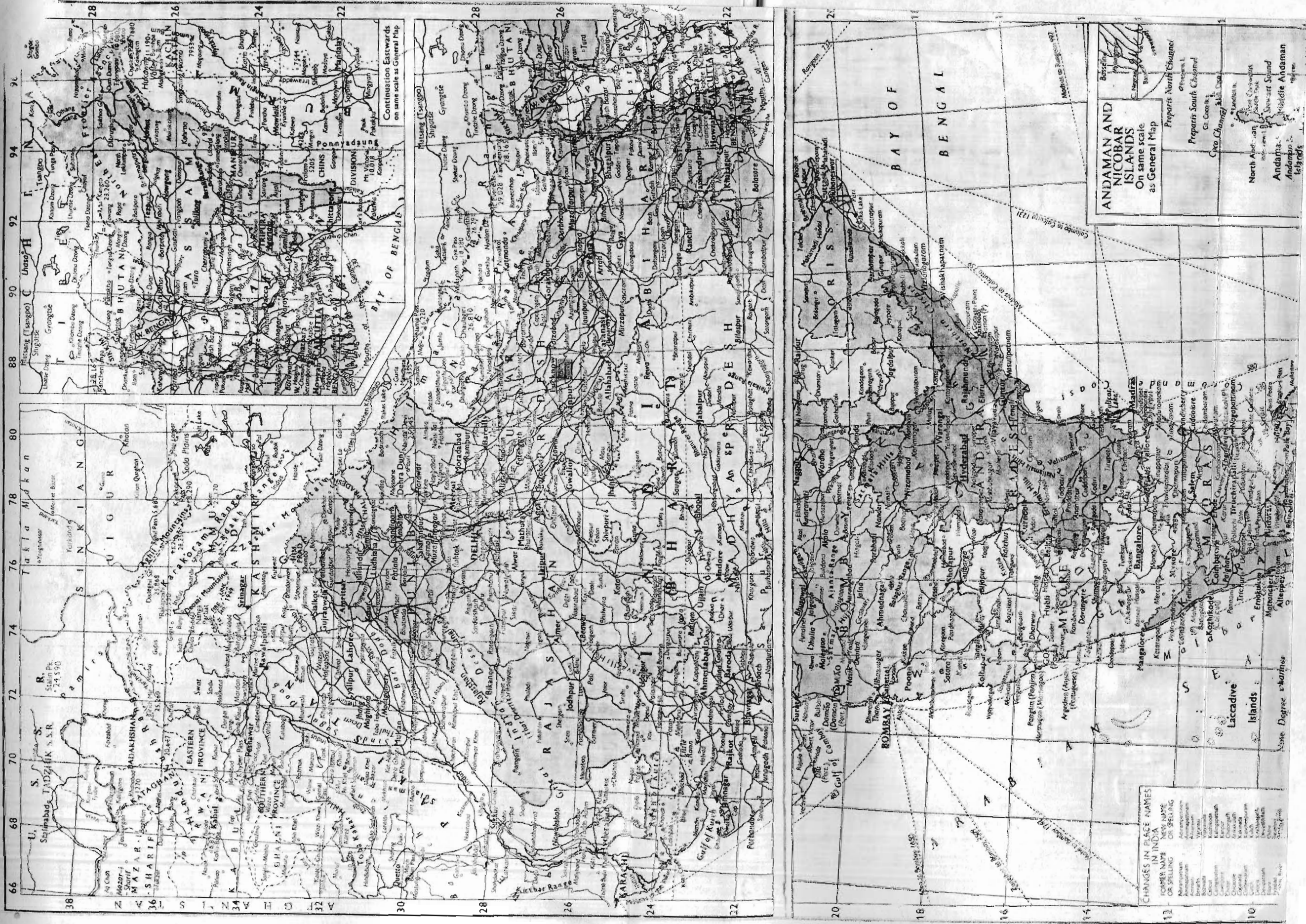
DEPARTMENT OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS

COPY OF SHIP'S LIST OF INDIAN IMMIGRANT

Serial Number	:	174
Colonial Number	:	76330
Date of Arrival	:	6-2-1899
Name of Ship	:	S.S. UNLAZI
Place of Registration	:	
Date of Registration	:	
Number in Register	:	12
Name	:	GANGOO
Father's Name	:	PARAN
Age	:	22 YEARS
Sex	:	MALE
Caste	:	KORI
District	:	RAE BARCH
Thanna/Taluq	:	JAGAT PUR
Village	:	PARIA DICKTAN JAGATPUR
Height	:	5'6"
Bodily Marks	:	SCAR RIGHT JAW
Name of Next-of-Kin	:	
Relations Accompanied	:	
Small Pox/Vaccinated	:	VACCINATED
Remarks	:	

Certified a true copy.


REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE



ILLUSTRATIONS

File NO 110318

9/66/578

B.M.D. 158.
(On Inkomste 209.)
(Old Revenue 209.)

A 56128

REPUBLIEK VAN SUID-AFRIKA.

REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA.

VERKORTE GEBOORTESERTIFIKAAT.

ABRIDGED BIRTH CERTIFICATE.

Uitgereik kragtens Wet No. 81 van 1963.

Issued in terms of Act No. 81 of 1963.

Gesertifiseer 'n ware uittreksel uit die geboorte-
register van:—

Certified a true extract from the birth
register of:—

Van _____
Surname

Voornamen _____
First Names

Geboortedatum _____
Date of Birth

Geslag _____
Sex

Distrik van geboorte _____
District of Birth

Ras _____
Race

Inskrywingsnommer _____
Entry Number

Registrateur, Assistant-registrateur, Distriksregistrateur.
Registrar, Assistant Registrar, District Registrar.

Plek
Place

DISTRICT REGISTRAR

DURBAN

Datum
Date

8 -9- 1966

G.P.S. 7429156-1966-86-5,000. S.

BIRTHS AND DEATHS

25c

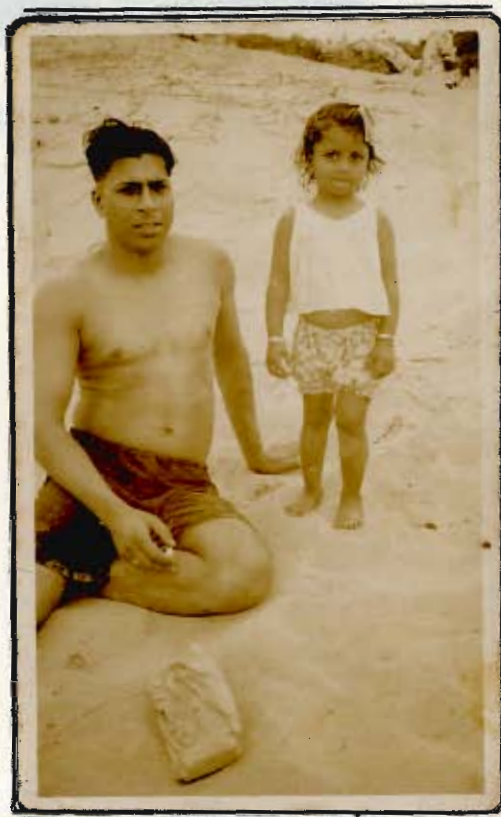
Moet uitgereik word slegs ten opsigte van
persone wat voor 1/1/1960 gebore is.
To be issued only in respect of persons born
before 1/1/1960.

Mr Sewpersad's birthcertificate that helped
trace Gungo's roots.

I L L U S T R A T I O N S



Ganghoo and Ruthwa (extreme left)



Ganghoo's second son, Sewpersad

I L L U S T R A T I O N S



Brickmaking in India

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