

PREFACE

Right at the beginning I interviewed my grandmother (Luckia). After this I spoke to Parthab Kalloo who provided me with his parents indentured labour number. I then went to the History Department of the University of Durban-Westville to get the ships list. After this I researched the background of the indentured labourers. It was very hard to get information on my subjects. The birth certificate from which i got the indentured numbers was too tattered to photostat. Also while I got photographs of Kalloo Sheo I was unable to get any of Mullia Shunker. Since both my subjects were not educated there was an absence of any letters. I was not able to obtain any documents as these had been lost. But on the whole this project was a very stimulating and interesting one.

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The emigration of the Indians to Natal was not a spontaneous and uncontrolled movement of individuals seeking a better livelihood than their own country gave them. But rather it was part of an elaborate system, organised and controlled by the governments of Great Britian and India.

The Indians first came to Natal as a result of the presistent demands for cheap and reliable labour. In the 1850's the sugar industry faced an acute shortage of labour as a result of their failure to entice the Zulu nation to become their labourers. Thus the industry was looking for alternate sources of labour. The decision to import Indian labourers received its impetus from the great sucess story of sugar farming with indentured labour in Mauitius.¹

The first batch of Indentured Indians arrived in 1860 on contracts of service for a peroid of three (later five) years, and they continued to come at irregular intervals until 1866. There was a short break of eight years (1866-1874), because of a depression in the local sugar industry due to a fall in demand from Britian. After which from 1874, indenturing continued until its termination in 1911. Since the Indian Government saw the movement as a permanent migration, they therefore laid down that the emigrants were not to be forced to return to India. The Indentured Indians could after a period of ten years residence claim a return to India or, alternatively a grant of crown land. Also there was to be no differential laws against the Indians. Finally a certain proportion of women was to accompany every batch of Indian Immigrants into Natal.²

The Indians came to Natal, reacting to specific pressures in their homeland which induced them to migrate by the promise of future rewards. The Mutiny of 1857 created a turmoil throughout India. Many people were uprooted, losing land, livelihood and sometimes family,³

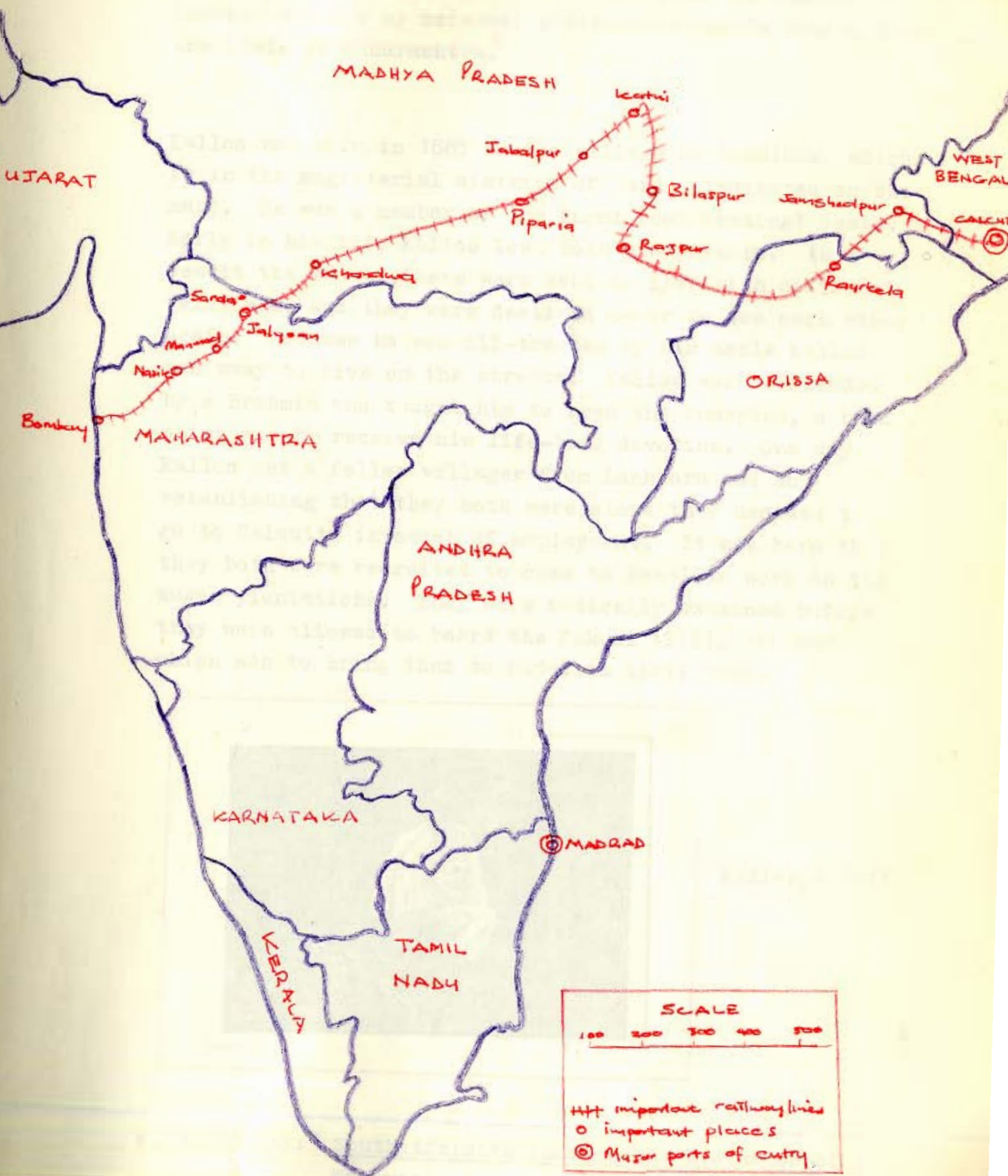
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1. M. PALMER: History of Indians in Natal, p.4.
 2. H. KUPER: Indian People in Natal, pp.1-5.
 3. H. TINKER: A New System of Slavery, pp.79-83.

therefore they readily accepted the chance of a new life beyond the seas. Also the emigrants came mainly from the most overcrowded agricultural districts of India, where crop failure could plunge sections of the village community into near starvation. Tinker says that, "there was a clear correlation between the years when departures were heavy and times when the harvest was poor." Thus in 1860-1 there was a famine in the North - Western Provinces and a high departure rate from Calcutta, 17 899 in 1860 and 22 600 in 1861. Similarly when South India was in the grips of an acute famine in the years 1874 - 1878, a total of 715 166 Madrassis emigrated overseas, 132 692 leaving the first year of the famine. Some Indians emigrated because this seemed the only way to earn a living. Therefore it can be seen that Indian Emigration relied mainly on the need of people to obtain relief from an intolerable situation.⁴

There was another group of Indians who followed the Indentured Indians to Natal , these were the so-called "passenger" Indians. They came out on their own expenses and without recruitment. Their main reason for coming was trade and in most cases permanent settlement. The indentured and passenger Indians had emigrated from different parts of India, and there were consequently cultural, linguistic, and religious differences between the two groups. Most of the indentured Indians came from the Madras Presidency, speaking the Tamil and Telegu languages, while a few were recruited from Calcutta.⁵

4. H. TINKER: A New System of Slavery, pp. 97-119.

5. E.H. BROOKES: A History of Natal, pp. 85-89.

MAP OF INDIA

The Calcutta emigrants belonged to a mixed bag representing the higher and middle ranging echelons of a class-structured society. Two such people are Kalloo Sheo and Mullia Shanker who are my maternal great-grandparents coming from the State of Maharashtra.⁶

Kalloo was born in 1885 in the village of Lanhiare, which is in the magisterial district of Sarda (indicated on the map). He was a member of the Kurmi (cultivating) caste. Early in his life Kalloo lost both his parents. As a result the two brothers were sent to live with different relatives, and they were destined never to see each other again. Because he was ill-treated by his uncle Kalloo ran away to live on the streets. Kalloo was befriended by a Brahmin who taught him to read the Ramayana, a book which was to receive his life-long devotion. One day Kalloo met a fellow villager from Lanhiara and on establishing that they both were alone they decided to go to Calcutta in seach of employment. It was here that they both were recruited to come to Natal to work on the sugar plantations. They were medically examined before they were allowed to board the Umkuzi XXIII, the ship which was to bring them to Natal in April 1906.



Kalloo - 1961

6. B. PACHAI: South Africa's Indians: The Evolution of a Minority, pp. 3-5.

My maternal great-grandmother Mullia was born in 1886 in the village of Omei, which is in the magisterial district of Karker. Omei is in the zillah of Jalgoan which is the administrative headquarters of Jalgoan district, Maharashtra state, Western India, on the Bombay - Nagpur road and the Bombay - Allahabad railway (this is indicated on the map). Mullia belonged to the Chamar (tanner) caste. At the age of twelve she was married. Because she was ill-treated by her in-laws she decided to runaway to her parents home. On the way she was met by a group of women who convinced her that working on the sugar plantations in Natal was better than going back home where her parents would not want her. Both Kalloo and Mullia had travelled by train across India to reach Calcutta, which represented a new home and a new beginning.

Kalloo came to Natal in search of employment and because he had nobody left in India. Mullia came because she was fleeing the tyranny of her in-laws. Had she remained in India she would surely have been treated as an outcast or burned at the stake as all deserting brides are treated in the thousands of small villages where old customs die hard. Kalloo and Mullia together with 576 other Indians boarded the Umkuzi XXIII at Calcutta in 1906 at the ages of twenty one and twenty respectively.

Kuper says that the vast majority of indentured labourers were between the ages of twenty and twenty five years. Before they were allowed to embark each volunteer was medically examined, the unfit were rejected and a detailed report was submitted on those who were accepted.⁷

On the arrival of the Umkuzi XXIII at Port Natal in April 1906 both Kalloo and Mullai were assigned by the Indian

7. H. KUPER: Indian People in Natal, p. 6.

Emigrant agent to the Umdhloti Central Sugar Mill Company in Mount Moreland, which is a few kilometres outside present day Verulam. On the arrival of the indentured labourers intended for this mill, all those who were not married were paired off and thus Kalloo and Mullia were destined to be husband and wife, before each had even uttered a word to the other.

Both Kalloo and Mullia's first occupation were labourers at the sugar mill. The Umdhloti Central Sugar Mill Company (Natal) Ltd was initiated by Mr W.F. Ashby, which was founded by the end of 1874. The Mill started crushing in 1876. The factory equipment consisted solely of a concreter plant, the largest put out by the makers, and the subject of much discussion among the Natal planters. In February 1876, Ashby was declared insolvent. A disastrous fire had come over from the Waterloo Estate and almost wiped out the Umdhloti cane interests. On 4 April 1878, the Umdhloti Central was reputed sold to Leonard Acutt for £4 000.

The records are not very clear but the general opinion was that Ashby could have carried on and made good the losses. The Blue Book for 1879 records that the Umdhloti Central Mill was managed by Courtney Acutt. Obviously although there is no record hereafter of the mill, it must have continued production because as late as 1906 when Kalloo and Mullia came to Natal, they were assigned to the Umdhloti Central Mill. In 1921 the Tongaat Sugar Company Ltd. purchased the Umdhloti Central Mill and Estates and closed down the mill. There is no record of the number of years that Kalloo and Mullia worked for the mill.⁸

8. R.F. OSBORN: Valiant Harvest, p. 216.

As a result of Gandhi's inclusion of the £3 tax, a burdensome levy on Indians into the Satyagraha Campaign and the subsequent strikes that followed in 1913 we see the passage of the

Indian Relief Act in 1914. The £3 tax was abolished and the indentured labourers at the end of their contracts were to be free. At the expiry of Kalloo and Mullia's contract they settled in Temple Valley which is a kilometre outside Verulam. Kalloo's second and final occupation was for the South African Railways. He was the gate keeper at the Boom Gates in Verulam until his retirement in 1952 at the age of 67 years. The railway line has since been rechanneled over a new bridge which came into operation in August 1969⁹

Kalloo and Mullia had six children, his eldest Radhi was born in 1910, then Bagwanthie, Sukia, Luckia who is my maternal grandmother, Parthab their only son and finally Anaspathie their youngest daughter. All their children are still living, and they in turn have children and great-grandchildren.



Anaspathie, Kalloo,
Bagwanthie. (Duffs
Road)

Both Kalloo and Mullia were very religious but they did not participate in social and political activities. They were not well educated, Mullia could only speak Hindi and Kalloo was able to read the Ramanaya but had little education. So its not supprising that they had no political or social aspirations.

Kalloo and Mullia lived in Temple Valley until Mullia's death on 4 December 1959. Here after Kalloo lived with his fourth daughter Luckia in Cottonlands until the time of his death on 9th August 1970.

This brings me to the conclusion of tracing my maternal roots back to India. I think that all the indentured Indians were pioneers of the sugar industry. These strong, brave, young men and women came to Natal when she was experiencing an acute labour shortage, often leaving behind their homelands never to see it again. Today most of us are third or fourth generation South African Indians with little or no ties with India except in some cases ^{an} emotional one.

THE END

APPENDICES1. SHIPS LIST

Name of ship : UMKUZI XXIII
 No. on board : 578
 Date of arrival : April 1906
 Port of departure : Calcutta
 Port of arrival : Port Natal

Indentured labour no.

121672

Indentured labour no.

121235

Name	Kalloo	Mullia
Fathers name	Sheo	Sunker
Sex	Male	Female
Caste	Kurmi	Chamar
Feet	5	5
Inches	4	3
Village	Lanhiara	Omei
Thanna	Sarda	Karker
Zillah	Suirger	Jalgoan
Markings	Scar on right side of rib	Scar on left shin
Remarks	Vaccinated	Vaccinated
Employer	Umdhloti Sugar Co.	Umdhloti Sugar Co.

2. INTERVIEW WITH MY GRANDMOTHER (LUCKIA)

At the beginnig I asked her what she remembered about her Father and mother and after that I asked very few questions. "My father had only one brother. When they were very young they lost their parents. One brother was sent to live with his aunt and my father was sent to live with a distant relative. Father was ill-treated, he did'nt get enough food and he had to work very hard, so one day when he got a chance, he ran away from his uncle. He used to live and sleep on the streets and he eat what he could find or people gave him. He met a Brahmin who took him home and taught him to read the Ramayana. This was the only education he received. While living with the Brahmin, he met a fellow villager and they decided to go to Calcutta in search of employment. It was here that they both were recruited to come to Natal. My mother was running away from her cruel in-laws when she met a group of women who con vinced her into coming to Natal. When they arrived in Natal they both were assigned to work in the sugar mill. Since both my father and mother were alone the headman paired them off and that how they got married. Later on father worked in the railways."

3. INTERVIEW WITH PARTHAB KALLOO

"My fathers indentured labour no. is 121672 and my mothers is 121235. Father only worked for ten years in the mill." What did he do after this?

"He worked at the railways as a gate keeper in Verulam and he retired in 1952."

When did they die?

"Mother die on 4th December 1959 and father on 9th August 1970."

SOURCE LIST

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2. KUPER, H. : Indian People in Natal. Connecticut, Greenwood Press Publishers, 1960.
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6. TINKER, H. : A New System of Slavery : The Exports of Indian Labour Overseas 1830-1920. London, Oxford University Press, 1974.