

NAME: D.K. PALAVAR) 701
544

REG. NO.: 13527

COURSE: HISTORY 111

⁵²⁰ The immigration of Mr Palavar to South Africa.

HISTORY 111 PROJECT

You are expected to do research into the circumstances surrounding the arrival of your grandfather/grandmother or great grandfather/grandmother.

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(1) ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

This research project is dedicated to my parents, Mr & Mrs Balavar, my aunties; Miss Rosy Palavar, Miss D. Palavar, my uncles; Mr M. Palavar, and Mr N. Palavar.

My appreciation also goes to Mr S. Pillay of Sprats Farm in Empangeni for his information which has been a great help to me.

My special thanks goes to Mr L. Sewpersad for typing out my project.

(11) INTRODUCTION

On 16 November 1860, the first ship Truro, carrying Indians to South Africa landed on the shore of Natal. These Indians came to Natal in a response from the Natal government in order to supply the labour needed for the sugar planters. It is recorded by historians that these indentured labours came at the wish of Natal colonists. The part played by these Indians in the building up of Natal is in no way insignificant and their role in the building up of Natal is also recorded in history.

It was chiefly through the hard work of our forefathers from India that the Sugar Industry in Natal prospered. The contribution of our forefathers to the sugar industry is -aptly summed up in a statement by the late Jan H. Hofmeyr, then Deputy Prime Minister of the Union in 1945, he stated:- "The sugar industry prospered mightly, and in the words of a leading South African historian, Sugar became King in Natal".

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(111) PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED IN CARRYING OUT MY RESEARCH

It must be mentioned at the outset that this has been a very interesting topic but however my task had not been a simple one. There have been many obstacles which hampered my progress in carrying out my research.

My first problem was getting to know people who had known my grandfather. At first I contacted family members. My father's eldest brother, Mr M. Palavar remembered very little about my grandfather. However he managed to give me a bit of information which I have included in my research. In fact my grandfather had told his children very little about his background in India.

I then tried to get documents which would help me in completing my research. I contacted family members for any documents which they might have of my grandfather's, however this proved futile.

I then managed to get a copy of the ship's list from the Department of Indian Affairs. This was of great help to me and my family, because it was for the first time that they had come to know the date of my grandfather's arrival to South Africa.

My grandfather's brother-in-law, that is, my grandmother's brother, Mr S. Pillay of Sprats Farm in Empangeni had given me information about my grandfather's background in India. However I could not verify this story of his and he was also unsure about the dates.

Information about my grandfather's district of origin was also difficult to obtain. The books in the library were not helpful giving information about North Arcot. The book, Who's Who, did not contain any information about my grandfather.

Another problem that I encountered was the concept of time and transport. Living in the hostel was made my task of contacting the people who had known my grandfather a very difficult one.

(1V) ORIGIN OF THE SURNAME "PALAVAR"

According to the late Mr Anangeri Govender of Empangeni who had known my grandfather stated that in North Arcot there were great rulers such as the Pallavas. These Pallavas were of Greek and Persians' descendants. These Pallavas mixed with the indian culture and the Pallavas were a great dynasty in India.

The Pallavas were constantly challenged by the Rashtrakutas of Malkhed. The Pallavas Kingdom fell from power in 973AD.

Therefore when my grandfather gave his children the surname Palavar, he was influenced by the Pallavas. Owing to pronunciation and spelling differences our surname is spelt as PALAVAR.

(V) ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEWS WITH MR S. PILLAY, MR M. PALAVAR, MR N. PALAVAR
AND MR K. PALAVAR.

According to Mr. S. Pillay, my grandfather came to South Africa in 1906 or 1907. I verified this date according to the Ship's List my grandfather came to South Africa on 28 December 1906.

Mr Pillay had met my grandfather in South African when my grandfather was courting his sister. When my grandfather came to South Africa he had not given his surname to the British Authorities because he had run away from home.

In India my grandfather's surname was Iyer. He was the only son in his family amongst three sisters. His family's occupation in Nwanier ie. the district in North Arcot, was garland making.

My grandfather being very young, was adventurous. At the tender age of 20 (twenty) he was very susceptible to luring talks. The grandiose ideas put forward by the recruiting agents in North Arcot influenced him to run away from his house and leave India. He did not come with relatives or friends. He came alone on board the ship, S.S. Umkuzi to South Africa.

At the recruiting office in North Arcot he only gave his first name ie. Govindraju, because he was afraid of being traced by his parents. In South Africa he gave the surname Palavar to his children.

On arrival in South Africa, the ship S.S. Umkuzi landed in Durban

From Durban my grandfather went to Pretoria. In Pretoria he worked for the Pretoria Railways. His stay in Pretoria was very often short, soon after that he went to Pietermaritzburg and then to Durban.

From Durban he went to Amatikulu, a place on the North Coast of Natal in Zululand. In Amatikulu he worked for Mr Hoffer on the Hoffer's farm. His job on this farm was postman, gardener and horse trainer.

His stay at the Hoffer's farm was short. At that time the Umfolozi Sugar Mill was built. My grandfather went to Umfolozi to seek work and he was subsequently employed at the Umfolozi sugar mill. My uncle Mr N. Palavar was not too sure about my grandfather's occupation at this sugar mill, but however he said that my grandfather was employed as an "induna" or "sirdar". My grandfather's stay at the Umfolozi Sugar Mill was cut short when there was a flood in Umfolozi. There was extensive damage to the sugar mill.

From Umfolozi my grandfather decided to move to Empangeni, which is on the North Coast of Natal and about 180 km away from Durban. In Empangeni my grandfather was employed on the farm, Wood and Raw, this farm is still in existence up to today.

My grandfather then married Saraswathi Pillay in 1917. After his marriage, he went to work for the Whitelock's farm in Empangeni. Today this is known as Scotts Property. On this farm my grandfather was employed as a horse trainer and "sirdar".

Still looking for better wages, my grandfather terminated his employment on the Whitelock's farm and went to work for the Morris Brothers in Empangeni. On this farm he was employed as a horse trainer and he was also incharge of the dairy.

My grandfather then decided to work for the Zululand Sugar Mill Ltd. This was in the year 1920¹⁸. In the year 1921 my eldest uncle was born. This last place of employment seemed to put an end to my grandfather's drifting habits.

At the Zululand Sugar Mill, he was employed as a drama tutor and a Tamil School teacher. For the next 28 years he stayed in his employment at the Zululand Sugar Mill. He took ill in 1948. He was sent to the King Edward Hospital for treatment and admittance. He died in hospital on the 18 December 1948.

My grandfather came to South Africa on the 28 December 1906 and died on the 18 December 1948. It was almost exactly 42 years that he lived in South Africa. He died at the age of 62.

From the union of my grandfather and Saraswathie, there sprang nine children. There are four sons and five daughters. The four sons are married and three daughters are also married. Two of the daughters are spinsters and are living with my younger uncle Mr Nyné Palavar.

(VI) CONCLUSION

My research had not been very fruitful because I did not have the time to contact most of the people had known my grandfather. However what little research I carried out has increased my desire to know more about my grandfather. I am sure that this research is not the end because I am positive that I can obtain more materials about my grandfather during the December vacations, When I will have the time and transport to really move around and contact the various people who had known my grandfather.

However what little I have learn't about my grandfather had been very interesting and stimulating.



MAP ENLARGED FROM D. KUMAR : LAND AND CASTE IN SOUTH INDIA ...

KEY



: NORTH ARCOT: place of grandfather's origin.



: PRESIDENCY BOUNDARY



: DISTRICT BOUNDARY



PHOTO 1: GOVINDRAJU

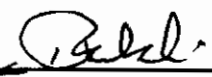


PHOTO 2: SARASWATHI

DEPARTMENT OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS(1X) COPY OF SHIP'S LIST OF INDIAN IMMIGRANT

Serial Number	:	<u>70</u>
Colonial Number	:	<u>128564</u>
Date of Arrival	:	<u>28 - 12 - 1906</u>
Name of Ship	:	<u>S.S. 'UMKUZI'</u>
Place of Registration	:	<u> </u>
Date of Registration	:	<u> </u>
Number in Register	:	<u> </u>
Name	:	<u>GOVINDRATU</u>
Father's Name	:	<u>BALAKISTNEN.</u>
Age	:	<u>20 YEARS.</u>
Sex	:	<u>MALE.</u>
Caste	:	<u>PARAI DASARY</u>
District	:	<u>N. ARCOT</u>
Thanna/Taluq	:	<u>GUDIYATAM.</u>
Village	:	<u>KAVANIER.</u>
Height	:	<u>5' 8"</u>
Bodily Marks	:	<u>MOLE ON LEFT SHOULDER BLADE</u>
Name of Next-of-Kin	:	<u> </u>
Relations Accompanied	:	<u> </u>
Small Pox/Vaccinated	:	<u>VACCINATED</u>
Remarks	:	<u> </u>
	:	<u> </u>

Certified a true copy.


REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE

(X) SOURCE LIST

1. Brandaw, S.: South African Indian-Who's Who, 3rd edition,
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2. Kumar, D.: Land & Caste In South Africa, Agricultural Labour
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3. Sing, M.: Medieval History of India, Vikas Publishing House,
New Delhi, Rashtravani Printers, 1978.
4. Ship's List - from the Department of Indian Affairs.