

INDIA'S FIVE GREATEST PROBLEMS ARE :
LAND, WATER, COWS, CAPITAL AND BABIES.

(N E R H U)

THERE ARE TWO MAIN FACTS ABOUT INDIA:

RELIGION & POVERTY

(ALL-INDIA RURAL CREDIT SURVEY)

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

During the eighteenth century, the circumstances in India were extremely favourable to a British conquest: the disorder and lack of any political unity in the country, were an open invitation to an aggressor; but apart from the political confusion of the country, there were also deep social causes behind it's inability to effectively resist the invader.

How was it that English supremacy was established in India?

1. "The paramount power of the Great Mogul was broken by the Mogul Viceroys. The power of Viceroys was broken by the Marathas and their power was in turn broken by the Afgans; and while all were struggling against all; the British rushed in and was able to subdue them all. The country was not only divided between Mohammedan and Hindu; but between tribe and tribe; caste and caste; a society whose framework was based on a sort of equilibrium resulting from a general repulsion and constitutional exclusiveness between all it's members. Such a country and such a society, were they not the predestined prey of conquest?"

Such social conditions prevented any national consciousness among the people and they regarded the invader as a fatality against which they could do nothing except

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1. L. Hutchinson: The Empire of the Nabobs: A short History of British India, P. 103.

hope for the best. The Indian peasant during this period had no more idea of patriotism than his English prototype of the fifteenth century. The effect of the new economic policy of English capitalism in India was revolutionary. The English conquests also broke the framework of Indian society.

2. "They destroyed it by breaking up the native industry and by levelling all that was great and elevated in the native society".

The revolutionary process did not stop at the conquest. The destruction of Indian manufacture drove the craftsmen back to the fields where they were forced to produce the raw materials needed by the British Industry. India rapidly became converted from an independent and agricultural country to one subservient to the machine industry of another.

Negotiations initiated in 1856 by the Natal Government dragged on for four long years of anxiety and exasperation for the "Sugar Planters" in the colony; who having failed to induce the erstwhile warriors of the Zulu nation to become their labourers; were in dire need of reliable labour. The decision to import Indian labourers received its impetus from the great success story of sugar farming in Mauritius. Natal, along with several other British colonies

2. L. Hutchinson: The Empire of the Nabobs: P. 125

in South Africa, faced a similar labour shortage following the emancipation of slaves throughout the empire in 1834.

The first batch of Indians arrived in 1860 in the Truro on contracts of services for a period of five years after which they became "free" Indians. ^{Thereafter} They could remain in Natal, or get a free return trip to India; or they could re-indenture for a further period of five years; after which they had the option of a free passage back to India or a piece of land in lieu of the fare. Thus the Indians first came to Natal as a result of persistent demands for cheap labour by a group of Europeans who had preceeded them by less than forty years. While recruiting was initially for the sugar plantations, it was seen to be profitable enough to be extended to railways, dockyards, coal-mines, municipal services and domestic employment.

Because the great majority of immigrants were country folk, leaving their villages, often for the first time, they had obtained no preconcieved notions of the world other than by a chance contract with a returned wanderer. Transfer to the world beyond the village was an experience built upon accumulated sense of shock and alienation. The depot at Calcutta was strange enough, a place where one's life became submerged in a routine imposed from above and incalculable in it's consequences, but once on board the ship, there was a complete break from the familiar past. He now in the hands of strangers, Europeans, who controlled his future. But, the paternal care which could expect from the chain of British officials by whom he was handled, was blunted by their own experiences in the depots or on board the ships.

3. "After the first few years, almost all had become hardened by their work by having urge on the "coolies" who in their helplessness, often seemed incapable of making any effort for themselves".

It also needs to be pointed out that emigration was especially unacceptable to Hindus. They preferred the vagaries of a subsistence livelihood to leaving the motherland; and especially in the higher castes; a returning emigrant was regarded as a "pariah" and preemptorily out-casted. In any event, it was for those who did go, the intolerable conditions of their individual villages that provided the push factor.

4. "The year from 1858 - 1869 saw emigration reach a peak. This was partly because of push factors in India as well as pull factors in the sugar colonies" .

In summary, Tinker says that emigration relied on push rather than pull factors. The need of people to obtain relief from starvation which was no longer tolerable. The emigrants came mainly from the most overcrowded agricultural districts of India, where crop failure could plunge sections of the village to near starvation.

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3. H. Tinker: A New System of Slavery: P. 117
 4. H. Tinker: A New System of Slavery: P. 97

During the period 1865 - 1866, there was famine in Orissa and Bihar. In 1874 - 1878, South India was also in the grips of acute famine. During 1860 - 1861, famine was also experienced in the North Western provinces of Calcutta.

Until 1911 when the Indian Government terminated the indentured system of immigration, scores of ships continued to deposit their human cargo onto the shores of Natal as the historic "Truro" had done in November 1860. There had, of course, been interruptions, occasioned by depression in Natal, but also because of the complaints of the first batch of returning Indians in 1871. Natal's dire dependence on Indian labour forced her to appoint a commission of Enquiry, the recommendations of which came to be called the "Coolie Commission Report". The Commission recommended the abolition of flogging as punishment, improved medical services and most important of all, the appointment of a Protector of Indian Immigrants.

Distinct from the indentured Indians was a second, smaller stream of immigrants, generally described as the passenger Indians; who entered the country under the ordinary immigration laws and at their own expense. The majority came specifically to trade or serve in commerce, and they opened up shops in backward rural areas, coal mine towns, African Tribal areas, and a few developed trade in European centres in Natal. European colonists steadily opposed the immigration of Indian Passengers. Eventually, their entry was limited due to the number of acts that passed that limited their rights to trade in Natal.

In summary, those Indians who came from India, and as long as they were in Natal; they were accepted as labourers and menials; but once they were free, they were identified with the passenger Indians as being potentially dangerous economic competitors. This fear is expressed in the numerous laws that restricted their entry into the country and limited their economic and political activities.

P R O F I L E

What should be remembered is that the passenger Indians who emigrated from India were not all of the elite merchant class. There were others who were much poorer and who arrived to South Africa at their own cost and for reasons of their own. Representative of this group of passenger Indians is Ramdew Ramdass Jokhu. He was born in Benares in India in the year 1871 and lived in a village called Burthera [For identification of Benares, please refer to map of India on Page 3]. His height was 5 feet 4.4 inches. He was of lower middle class socio-economic background and he was a follower of the Sanathan Dharam, a religious group that existed in India. The caste he was designated to was Lohar - which reflected his job as a blacksmith and working with iron. The above information was verified by comparing with information from the department of Internal Affairs.

5. "We advocate socialism and cling to caste" .

[NERHU]

From the dim, distant past, Hinduism has been the cradle of man's civilization. The basic Hindu social institution is caste. The caste system was an outcome of the division of labour in the food^{producing} system where manufacture of agricultural implements, pottery, weaving, etc., became necessary developments for living. Under this system, definite tasks were assigned to different groups of people. This division of labour in the socio-economic development came to be known as the caste system. A number of different castes existed eg. Kumbars, Dharjee;

5. A. Campbell: The Heart of India, P. 178

Lohar; Dhobie; Vanya, Khoree; Thakur; Chamar, Sonar, etc. Thakur is a surname used by Rajputs and Brahmins of North India. Chamar are workers in animal skins and cobblers. Lohars - people working with iron. Dhobie - Telegu speakers and refers to the washerman caste of North India. Sonar are the goldsmiths; Mala - the Telegu field labourers and village servants; Pallan - Tamil caste of agricultural labourers.

The caste system has been variously defined, ~~prvised~~, condemned and misinterpreted. While caste is a perculiarly Hindu phenomenon, Hinduism, however, did not invent the system. It has also to be remembered that the word "caste" itself did not belong to Hinduism. When the Portuguese came to India in the 16th Century, they found the Hindu community divided into many groups which they called castas, meaning clan or family. This word stuck and became the name for the Hindu social group.

Initially, there was a fourfold division of society into the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Sudras. There was also a sub-group known as Harijans. The Brahmins were inclined towards study. The Kshatriyas were inclined towards fighting, defending and governing. In the Vaishya, the urge towards agriculture and commerce dominated. The Sudras lacked enterprize and was given the role of servants to other classes. The Harijans formed the lower layer of Hindu society. They were terrorized into working for the upper classes for a mere pittance. To-day, through a social minority, they consitute the largest segment of the population.

6. "Of Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Sudras, the duties are distributed according to qualities born of their own nature".

6. A.L. Basham: The Wonder that was India, P. 36

There is also the caste known as Paraiyas - commonly known as untouchables. The untouchables are generally regarded as belonging to the fifth class of Aryan society - the Paraiya, meaning "outcastes".

7. "The structural basis of Hindu society is caste. If and when caste disappears, Hinduism will also disappear".

An expulsion from the caste is the penalty inflicted on those who are guilty of infringing the accustomed rules or of any other offence that would bring disgrace on the caste. He is no longer in the ^society of men. By losing his caste, the Hindu is bereft of friends, relations and even often, wife and children will also forsake him than bear his miserable lot. Whenever he appears he is scorned and pointed as an outcast. Many people, thus, faced with such situations, often sought refuge in other countries where they tried to build up new lives.

On the basis of oral interviews, the information I received was that Ramdew Jokhu was married in India, but no further information about the family could be traced due to lack of valid records thereon. He was a blacksmith by trade. At the age of 18 years, he left India to come to South Africa. He came to South Africa because of lack of employment for blacksmiths in India and also because he was paid in kind rather than in cash for whatever jobs he did; ie., people paid by whatever they reaped from the soil.

7. A. Campbell: The Heart of India: P. 178

He took a train from Benares to Bombay after which he embarked upon a ship called WARORA in which he came to South Africa [Please refer to appendix 1 for further information for lists of ships arriving during the 1830's - 1890's]. The main centres or ports that concerned itself with emigration was Calcutta. Once on board, the Indians were allocated their places for the voyage. The single women were berthed in the rear of the ships. The married couples were accommodated amid the ships and sometimes the men were berthed on one side while the women and children were berthed separately. The single men were usually placed in the front portions of the ships. Travelling conditions were in most cases bad and the officials very ^{intolerant} ~~intderant~~. He arrived in Durban on 14 April 1890. [All this information was validated through information received by Internal Affairs or through computer].

However, when he arrived, he got no job as a blacksmith immediately. He instead found employment on the sugarfields in the Ottawa Estate. [This place of employment was proved correct through computer]. He worked on the sugarfields for approximately 10 years - 1890 - 1900.

Several plantations and cane crushing machinery were already in operation by the middle of the 1880's and it became apparent that if Natal was to prosper, sugar must be the mainstay of the new commercial development. However, sugar above all, depended upon a steady supply of labour and it was this factor that was lacking. Some form of cheap non-European had to be found. The native men were quite unaccustomed to regular and steady work, and did not

have the vaguest conception of what was meant by a contract of labour.

8. "Unless some steps are taken, and imposition of labour seems to be the only solution, the sugar industry cannot but fail".

The word sugar was derived from a Sanskrit word meaning "Sakara" which means grains of sand. Almost 122 years ago to-day, Indian labourers came to South Africa at the special request of the Government of Natal to grow sugar cane and produce the sugar which laid the basis of prosperity of the province. In the southern part of India, lived mainly Tamil and Telegu speaking Indians who were one of the first people to start cane producing. Once India was under British control, there was lack of employment and many of the canegrowers were brought to work in the canefields of Natal. [Please refer to the map of the Natal Coastal belt on page inserted, which depicts the numerous cane producing areas].

The conditions under which the workers ^{lived} lived and worked is depicted in a quote from Y.S. Meer:

9. The labourers on the plantations worked from sunrise to sunset and returned much too exhausted to consider their immediate environment. They cooked their starchy meals, prepared from rations of mealie meal and rice, in sufficient quantity to last till lunch the next day

8. M. Palmer: The History of Indians in Natal: P. 15

9. Y.S. Meer: Documents of Indentured labour : P. 7

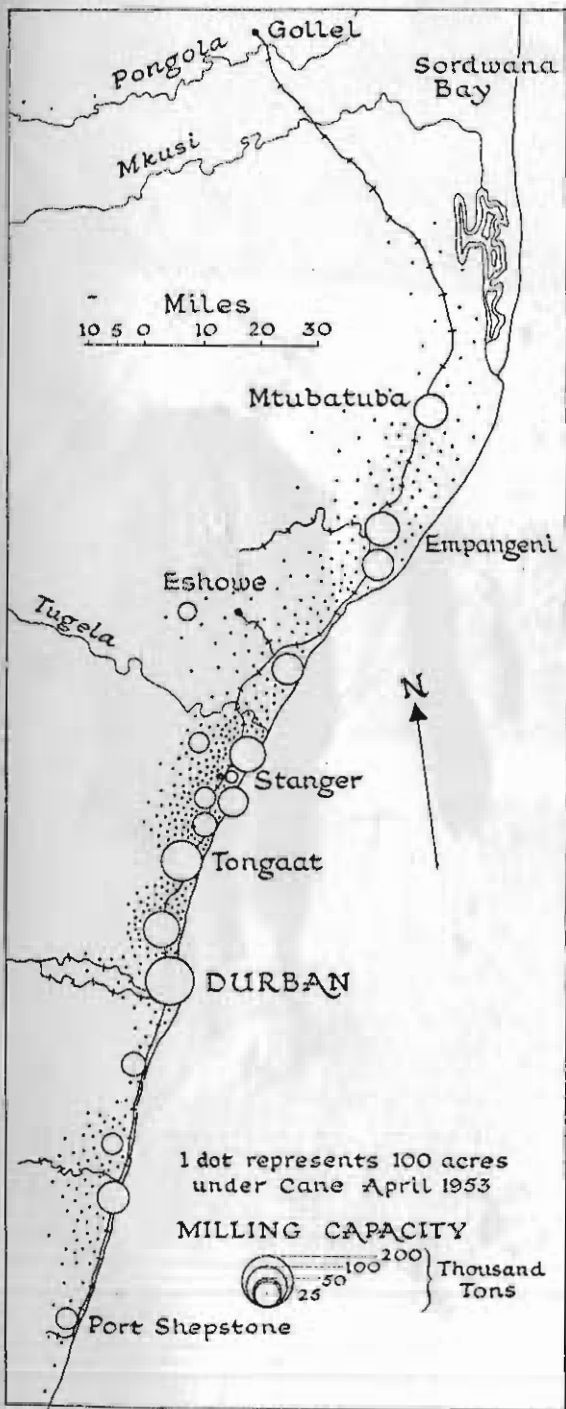
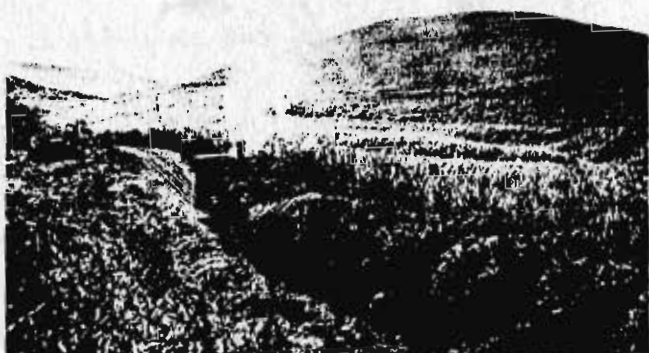


Fig. 65. The Natal sugar cane belt. The distribution of sugar cane production and of milling capacity.



37. Sugar cane covering the hills between Gingindlovu and Eshowe. The contourwise clean breaks are to reduce the hazards of fire.



38. The light railway for conveying cane from the fields to the sugar mill.



39. The sugar cane harvest, Natal coastal belt. The cane is cut by hand by African male labour. Today few Indians are employed in the cane fields.

and a hurried breakfast at dawn. After supper, they slumped into dead sleep, to be taken out of it by the clanging of bells and the shouting of Sirdars, in the darkness of the night, about to break into dawn. There was no time to search out appropriate places for abulation and toiletry, and none provided, they improvised at the nearest point, their minds distracted all the time by the Sirdar's shouting and bullying".

When the cane stood high and mature, harvesting began, and the workers became dulled to all other sights and sounds ~~save~~ that of the cane. They bundled the cane and carried it upon shoulders "that never seemed to lose their fragility despite all the work they did".

Sugar ca-ne is indigenous to the coastal belt of Natal where it's luxuriant growth encouraged the early settlers to import cultivated varieties from established sugar producing countries with the idea of establishing commercial production. The cane is planted after the first good summer, usually from September to November. For both these operations, much labour, which even to-day is difficult to obtain, is required. Presently, all together 1100 Europeans and 5600⁵³⁴ non-Europeans work in the canefields. ~~Ten~~ Indians are employed to-day, most of the decendents of the origional planters or immigrants, now being involved in farming or commerce of their own account.

While working on the sugarfields he married a lady from Washbank. For information on this, I had to rely upon oral testimonies and the name of his wife was unable to be located. His first child, a girl was born in 1904. After working for about 10 years in the sugarfields, he was able to get employed as a blacksmith in the coal mines of Elandslaagte near Newcastle [I have inserted a map that depicts the coalmines wherein he worked]. Here he worked as a blacksmith from approximately 1900-1905. After working at Elandslaagte for about 5 years, he worked in the Cambrian Colliery in Danhauser. His second child, a boy was born in 1907. His name was Durgapersad Ramdew Mistrey. Most of the information provided here was based upon oral interviews. Attempts to check records of the mine workers at the Cambrian Colliery proved unsuccessful. The new assistant manager was unable to help us and said it was unlikely that there would be any records that would help, seeing that the thumb-prints of the workers rather than their names were used during that time. The Cambrian Colliery is now closed down, due to exhaustion of coal and their new set-up is at Dunacol, in Danhauser.

While the importance of gold and diamonds in the pioneer development of South Africa, is generally recognized, it is not always appreciated that the existence of coal, which could be mined cheaply, also contributed to the economic *advancement* of the country. To-day, coal is of ever great importance, for not only does it yield one of the raw materials of the iron and steel industry, but also provides the basis for all the major fuel and power developments in the country.

He lost his wife in 1910 and did not re-marry. In 1917, he returned to India to persuade his family in India to return with him to South Africa [Documents and passports related to his trip in 1917 is included in the appendix]. He was 46 years old at that time. His family refused to come with him, so he returned to South Africa. He used to send money with returning immigrants to be given to his family, but it is doubtful whether they received it or not.

PASSPORT REGULATIONS.

1. Applications for Indian Passports must be made in the prescribed form, a specimen of which is attached to these regulations, and submitted either direct or through the local authority—

(a) in the case of a resident in British India, to the Local Government concerned.

(b) in the case of a resident in a Native State, to the Agent to the Governor-General or Political Resident concerned.

2. The charge for an Indian Passport is Re. 1.

3. Indian Passports are granted to:—

(a) Natural-born British Subjects.

(b) Wives and widows of such persons.

(c) Persons naturalized in the United Kingdom, in the British Colonies, or in India.

(d) Subjects of Native States in India.

A married woman is deemed to be a subject of the State of which her husband is for the time being a subject.

4. Passports are granted upon the production of a declaration by the applicant in the prescribed form of application verified by a declaration made by a *Political Officer, Magistrate, Justice of the Peace, Police Officer not below the rank of Superintendent, or, Notary Public, resident in India.*

5. If the applicant for a Passport be a Naturalized British Subject, the certificate of naturalization must be forwarded with the form of application to the officer empowered to grant the Passport. It will be returned with the Passport to the applicant through the person who may have verified the declaration.

Naturalized British subjects will be described as such in their Passports, which will be issued subject to the necessary qualifications.

6. Small duplicate unmounted photographs of the applicant (and wife, if to be included) must be forwarded with the application for a Passport, one of which must be certified on the back by the person verifying the declaration made in the application form.

7. Indian Passports are not available beyond two years from the date of issue. They may be renewed, in India only, for four further periods of two years each after which fresh Passports must be obtained. The fee for each renewal is Re. 1.

8. Passports cannot be issued or renewed on behalf of persons already abroad: such persons should be told to apply for Passports to the London Foreign Office or nearest British Mission or Consulate. Passports must not be sent out of India by post.

9. In the case of an applicant for a Passport being unable to write English, a transcription in English should be placed below the applicant's vernacular signature in the form of application. In the case of an illiterate person, a thumb impression should be substituted for a signature on the form of application, which should be certified by the person verifying the declaration.

PASSPORT.

These are to request and require, in the name of the Viceroy and Governor-General of India, all those whom it may concern to allow

Ramdeo Ramdas

to pass freely, without let or hindrance, and to afford him every assistance and protection of which he may stand in need.

Given at Bombay the 5th day of September 1917



By order of the Viceroy and Governor-General

*Deputy Secretary to the Government of Bombay,
Political Department*

This Passport is valid for 2 years only from the date of its issue. It may be renewed for 4 further periods of two years each after which a new Passport will be required.

RENEWALS.

1.

2.

Personal Status a British subject.

Any special peculiarities

Name	Age	Sex
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PHOTOGRAPH OF WIFE.



SIGNATURE OF WIFE.

॥ नमो देवस्यै ॥

DESCRIPTION OF WIFE OF BEARER.

OBSERVATIONS.

Age Profession

Place & date of birth

Maiden name

Height feet inches

Forehead Eyes

Nose Mouth

Chin Colour of Hair

Complexion Face

Any special peculiarities

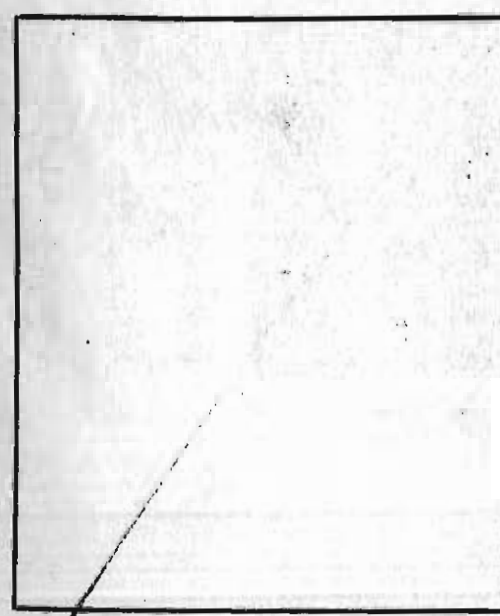
Valid for the journey to
Durban



PARTICULARS OF CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF 16 YEARS.

Name Age Sex

PHOTOGRAPH OF WIFE.



SIGNATURE OF WIFE.

Instructions for Officer filling in passport.

Under heading national status enter whichever of following may be appropriate:—

- (i) A British Subject.
- (ii) A Subject of the State of a Native State in India, and as such entitled to His Majesty's Protection.
- (iii) If naturalized in the United Kingdom under the provisions of the Naturalization Act, 1870, or if naturalized under the provisions of the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act, 1914.
- "A naturalized British subject, followed by the date of the certificate and the words "of (Spanish) origin."
- (iv) If naturalized in a Dominion or Colony or in British India under the provisions of Colonial or Indian laws only.

"Naturalized in (insert name of Possession followed by date of certificate and origin as above)

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