

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to Mr. and Mrs. Francis and their son Basil for assisting me in this project and for allowing me the use of the relevant I.D. documents.

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1983

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PREFACE

⁵⁹⁴
 The title of my project is the "Indian Indentured Labourer" and his contribution to the alleviation of the labour crises in the Colony of Natal in the 1860's. ^{is a study of the life of Mr. Ramasamy Gunden.]} ⁵⁹⁴ When faced with this ~~as an~~ project, I saw this as an opportunity to gain some insight into the background of my family in South Africa. However, my family could not give me much information about my grandparents & early life in South Africa; for example, amongst others where he lived and the problems he experienced. Placed in this situation, I decided to trace the roots of my friends grandparents because his family had some knowledge of the early life of his grandparents. After interviewing members of my subjects family, I then went to Indian Affairs and the Pietermaritzburg Archives to clarify and get additional information about my subject.

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HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

During the late 1850's Natal was faced with a labour crisis. The natives were reluctant to supply the necessary labour for the development of farms and industries. Suggestions were made to bring down young Englishmen and Chinese labourers to work on these farms and industries. However, this was not viable. At this time Mauritius was getting their labour from India and the estate owners in Natal became aware of this. As a result the farmers, landowners and planters saw this as a solution to their problem and petitioned the government for the introduction of labourers from India. This resulted in laws 14 and 15 of 1859 being passed by the Natal Legislation Council; law 14 providing for the importation of immigrants at the public expense and for the ~~importation of immigrants~~ regulation and government of such immigrants, while law 15 enabled private individuals to introduce labourers at their own expense....1. Representations were made to the Indian Government and Act No. XXXIII of 1860 was passed by the Indian Council to extend the provisions of Act. No. 21 of 1855 to include the Colony of Natal. Thereafter, Natal officials were sent to India where they established immigration agencies at Madras, Calcutta and Bombay. Meanwhile, in Natal, by law of 1859, provisions were made for the appointment of a "Coolie Immigration Agent", who was to be in charge of the "Coolie Immigration Department."

Provision was made for the drawing up of the contracts between immigrants and their employers. ...A.1. Immigrants agreed to complete five years of labour at wages not less than ten shillings per month.

1. PIETERMARITZBURG ARCHIVES:PAPERS OF INDIAN IMMIGRATION

A.1. SEE APPENDIX.

At the end of three years they could purchase their exemption from service for the remaining period for five pounds. At the end of five years they automatically became free, and after ten years they were entitled to a free passage to India or alternatively to the equivalent of crown land. Food, lodging, clothing and medical attendance had to be provided by the **employer**.

Having eventually succeeded in persuading the Indian Government to make legal the recruitment and transportation of indentured labourers to the Colony of Natal, the Natal officials then chartered a ship at Madras, the Truro, to carry the first labourers from ~~Natal~~ India. The Truro reached Durban on Friday, November, 1860....2. From then onwards a steady influx continued for six years. During 1860 to 1866, 6448 Indian labourers were brought from India....3. Regionally it meant that 4785 immigrants arrived from Madras and 2663 from Calcutta. These labourers alleviated the labour crises in the Colony of Natal. Meanwhile, as early as 1863, a number of Indians had paid down their five pounds commutation fine, and had thus released themselves from any obligation to the government or the country. During the first five years of indenture, some 2226 of them left Natal without obtaining free return passages to which they were entitled. Although the Indian immigrants became "free in every sense of the word", on the expiration of their period of indenture, their movements were, however, restricted to Natal and they were "not allowed to leave the Colony without licence."

2. T.P.Naidoo and R.Chetty:THE SETTLERS (1860 - 1880), p.45

3. T.P.Naidoo and R.Chetty:THE SETTLERS (1860 - 1880), p.57

Thereafter, in 1866 a depression swept through Natal. The depression left the planter, who had formally competed eagerly, for Indian labour, trying to evade their contracts because they were unable to contribute their proportion of the costs. Partly due to the depression and partly because of complaints (by the first batch who went home) of ill-treatment of labourers and violation of the terms of indenture by employers, Indians were not brought into Natal between 1866 and 1874. However on the basis of the Natal Legislation Councils acceptance in 1874 of amendments proposed by the Indian Government, the latter permitted the resumption of immigration to Natal in that year and it was not until July 1911 that immigration finally stopped.

THE INDENTURED LABOURERS ROLE IN THE COLONY'S ECONOMY

"Opinion at both the official and unofficial level was ^{that} ~~at~~ the economic prosperity of the Colony laid in the presence of the Indian Labourers." ...4. This evidence proves that the Indian labourers were the backbone of Natal's economic prosperity. Apart from their hard work on the sugar estates, these ~~4~~ Indians with their industrious habits and comparatively few wants did remarkably well as cultivators. In numerous localities they converted waste and unproductive land into well-kept gardens, planted vegetables, tobacco, maize and fruit trees. During this period government officials praised the Indians for their remarkable work. It is undisputable that the Indian labourers contributed to the upsurge in the Colony's economy.

4. T.P.Naidoo and R.Chetty: THE SETTLERS, p.54

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LIFE OF MY SUBJECT

The late Mr. Ramsamy Gounden was born in India in 1882. He was the son of the late Mr. Kuppanna Gounden. Together with his family he lived in the Coimbatore district of the village Uthukudi.A.2. He was of the Gounden caste and was of Tamil speaking.

There were many reasons for leaving India. These included economic reasons, the drought, famine and the depression. According to his son whom I had interviewed, his late father was unemployed at the time of ^{on} leaving India. Therefore, his reason for leaving India could have been ^{of an} economic nature. On hearing about ~~of~~ the shortage of labour in Natal, he was most eager to come here, with the intention of getting a job.

Together with his brother, the late Mr. Gounden left the port of Madras aboard the Umlazi 22. He arrived at Durban Harbour on the 27th of June 1904.A.3.

When he arrived in Natal, jobs were available on the sugar estates, farms and the railways. My subject was prepared to take on any job and on 5 July 1904, he was assigned to a firm called G. North and Son which was situated in Northdene. My subject was employed in the capacity of a horse-groom, where he lived in the company barracks and earned ten ~~ba shi~~ ^{shi} shillings per month. His weekly ration was dholl, rice and sugar and his employer also gave him clothing.

A.2. and A.3.: ~~SEE~~ APPENDIX

Mr.Gounden married Dropathiamma, who was also an employee of G.North and Son. They had seven children, four boys and three girls. Of these, five children were born at Northdene. The late Mr.Gounden worked ^{here} for ten years.

After his contract expired, he moved to Kloof, where he leased a farm. He had twenty acres of land. At this place he two more children. On his farm he had cows and donkeys ^{and} he also planted vegetables and flowers. He also leased a stall in the Indian market where he sold his fresh produce consisting of a variety of vegetables and flowers. Finally, he built a comfortable house in Overport with his savings. He lived there until his death in 1967.

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CONCLUSION

We have noticed that the Indian Immigrants came to the rescue of the farmers, landowners and planters of the Colony of Natal. Prior to their arrival the labour situation was in shambles. The Colony of Natal failed to get other means of labour. The advent of the Indian immigrants alleviated the labour crisis and sparked off the economic prosperity that was to follow, even right up to the present day. The late Mr. Ramsamy Gounden was part of this labour force and thus contributed to the upsurge in the economy of the Colony of Natal. I owe my gratitude to the late Mr. Ramsamy Gounden and his colleagues for their diligent work and they have all the rights to be called pioneers.

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SOURCE LIST

1. Naidoo, T.P. and Chetty, R. : The Settlers (1860 - 1880)
The Indian Acedemy of South Africa, Durban.
2. Pietermaritzburg Archives : Papers of Indian Immigration.
3. Pather, S.R. : Centenary of Indians (1860 - 1870).
Cavalier Publishers, Durban, South Africa.

(MAN'S)
**CONTRACT OF SERVICE WITH INDIAN
 IMMIGRANTS.**

Be It Remembered,

That on this 23rd day of April
 in the Year of our Lord One Thousand Eight Hundred and Eighty Nine
 and Telucksing of Surbani Indian Immigrant
 No. Bandur appeared before me,
41698 Louis H. Mason Protector of Immigrants,
 and in my presence signed (or made his mark) to the following Contract of Service:—

The said Telucksing agrees to
 hire the services of the said Indian Immigrant, and the said Indian Immigrant agrees to
 render the said
 his services in the capacity of General Labourer for Five Years, commencing on the
23rd day of April, in the Year of our Lord
 One Thousand Eight Hundred and Eighty Nine

And it is further agreed between the said Parties, that the said Indian Immigrant shall be employed as above for six days in each week, save as in such Law is mentioned, and that the hours of labour shall not be more than nine hours daily, between sunrise and sunset, with a break of at least an hour for

And it is further agreed between the said Parties, that the said Telucksing shall
 pay to the said Indian Immigrant, as such servant as aforesaid, wages at and after the rate
 of TEN SHILLINGS for the first year, ELEVEN SHILLINGS for the second year, TWELVE
 SHILLINGS for the third year, THIRTEEN SHILLINGS for the fourth year, FOURTEEN
 SHILLINGS for the fifth year, for the remuneration of the services of the said Indian Immigrant, and that such wages shall be paid on the first day of each month.

And lastly, the said Telucksing
 doth hereby bind and oblige himself to give, grant, and provide, to and for the said Indian Immigrant, and for such family as may be allotted, good and comfortable lodging, wholesome and suitable food, and proper medical attendance and medicines, during the period for which this present contract is made, and otherwise to observe and fulfil all the conditions and obligations of the Coolie Laws of the Colony so far as the same are applicable to this Contract and Agreement.

Bandur

Bandur

His X mark.

The preceding Agreement was signed by the above-named Parties in my presence, on the day and year above written, voluntarily, the same being, as far as I am able to judge, fully understood by them respectively.

L. H. Mason
 Protector of Immigrants.

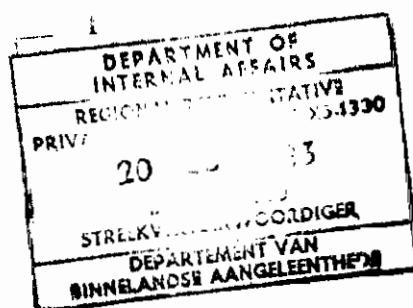
B.M.25

DEPARTMENT OF INTERNAL AFFAIRSCOPY OF SHIP'S LIST OF INDIAN IMMIGRANT

Serial Number	:	134
Colonial Number	:	104664
Date of Arrival	:	27-06-1904
Name of Ship	:	S.S. UMLAZI
Place of Registration	:	_____
Date of Registration	:	_____
Number in Register	:	_____
Name	:	RAMASAMY GOUNDEN
Father's Name	:	KUPPANNA GOUNDEN.
Age	:	22 YRS
Sex	:	MALE
Caste	:	GOUNDEN
District	:	COIMBABORE
Thanna/Taluq	:	COIMBABORE
Village	:	UTHUKUDI
Height	:	5'3"
Bodily Marks	:	MOLE ON LEFT COLLAR BONE
Name of Next-of-Kin	:	BROTHER
Relations Accompanied	:	_____
Small Pox/Vaccinated	:	VACCINATED
Remarks	:	_____

Certified a true copy.


 REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE



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I.D. DOCUMENTS OF THE LATE MR. RAMSAMY GOUNDEN.

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PEERSONSKAART
IDENTITY CARD

MANLIK - MALE

RAMSAMY GOUNDEN

PRETORIA 1.7.59 Bevolkingsregister
Population Registrar



PORT OF DEPARTURE FROM INDIA - MADRAS

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