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1983

A. GOVENDER

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PREFACE

This article took me one and a half months to compile. During this process many problems were encountered. I was assisted by Miss Reena Nookia, Miss Nancy Govender, Standley Chetty and Soobramoney Ramsamy in trying to locate information. I first approached my parents for information and documents on my Grandfather, but only had the information available so I was unable to complete my ~~these~~ thesis. So I went to Belvedere Township after hearing that there's an old lady who was 115 year old. So I interviewed her as my subject for already she has been exposed to another student. So I decided to keep her Certificate of discharge~~s~~, a sample which I have displayed in page . Later I heard that there is a person in Mt.Edgecombe. My uncle Soobramoney took me there, unfortunately he was not from India, but his father was. He did not have the documents, so I decided to go to the Department of Indian Affairs. I took my fathers Marriage Certificated and was able to trace my Grandfather. My parents did not know much about my Grandfather for half the time he was drunk. So I decided to get some of my information from the books. In doing so I was faced with the problem of time where I had another ^ccourse which was very much demanding. Typing was a real problem and time consuming for I was unable to get anyone to type for me. I had to type the thesis myself, with a lot of faults which I think must be overlooked. On the other hand I enjoyed doing this thesis, for the first time I was exposed to such a survey. I came alive with the true facts of the conditions of the indentured labourers. I was exposed new friends old and young. Beside the problem of ~~communicating~~ communicating with them I enjoyed their jovial moods and childish behaviour especially considering their age. On the whole I really enjoyed doing this task.

MR A. GOVENDER

INTRODUCTION

It was early recognized that the mineral and agricultural potential of the colony was far too great. It was true to belief that Natal's true wealth consisted in its rich soil and pastures. On the Natal Coast a contest was brought between arrowroot, indigo, cotton, coffee, and sugar. Three of these were eliminated by disease or market conditions by 1860 but sugar and cotton, especially sugar forged ahead. For the cultivation, reaping and manufacture of sugar a certain type of labour would have to be acquired. The cultivation and reaping of an acre of sugar cane requires labour intensive methods. This labour force must be semi-skilled, to operate the crushing plants in the manufacturing season. In fact without a large and reliable number of capable hands sugar planting is a barren occupation. The type of labour that the sugar planters on the Natal Coast were looking for was totally absent in the colony during the 1850's.

Those natives that did work were far from satisfactory to the Natal sugar planters. Although they were strong and intelligent they were found to be impractised, because "by long traditional usage the male kaffirs are exempt from toil", normally living on the industry of the females. These people were irresponsible and unreliable. They had their own tribal interests and were unwilling to their homes for unstipulated periods. They had no sense of the binding nature of a contract and tended to work for a few months until they had obtained the money they needed and then left work. The sugar planters were unable to cope with such deficiencies. For them the production of sugar was an whole important source of income and for the country as a whole. As the Natal planters began to despair of obtaining their labour locally, some of them turned to the idea of importing it.

Though it took nine years to satisfy this wish, the idea spread along the Natal Coast and became supported by those sugar and cotton planters who were convinced that local labour was and could remain insufficient and unskilled. "At first the British Government showed little interest in the scheme, but eventually yielded to continued pressure from the growers. A legislation was passed in 1859 which resulted in an expansion of the requirements of South Africa."

This is a short account narrated by my parents and my grandfather, Ramesami. "I left India with my uncle who promised my parents that there was a land of fortune waiting on the other side and he hoped to get us rich withit. The village in which we were living was extremely poor and undeveloped. Many people left that place and went to South Africa to live. We left India on 27/03/1905 and reached the port of Durban on 4/06/1905. My uncle got the contracts made out and we started our work two days later.

The working conditions were terrible in the Durban estate, therefore we moved to the north coast and due to the expiry of the indenture we moved to Stanger. And after some time in Stanger I was able to get in contact with my brothers in Tongaat area, who at this stage acquired large parts of crown land. So I decided to abandon my stay in Stanger and live with my brothers in Tongaat.

In 1929 I was introduced to a young beautiful woman who I was to marry and have 17 children, 13 boys and 4 girls. The reason for me having so many kids is because I do not have any pleasure besides my wife and my drinking. Life treated us well on the estate as compared to India. My few younger brothers were able to gain some education and get a good job in the Tongaat Sugar Company.

I was also a member of the Brake Village Soobramoney Temple. Although the festival were very large I never got actively involved due to my drunkard habits. But I was never ^{ON} conscious of my Rdm. Socially we suffered just as many others who had the lack of facilities etc.

But we were able to keep our area as far as possible clean.
Economically we were a little well off ~~far~~. I had many
children and they were ~~evoking~~ working together with my brothers.
Politically I don't remember there being a strike, but what I
remember was is 1914-1915 when the lights went off, I think
it was World War or something.

SOURCE: MR RAMASAMI

B.M.25

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

Serial Number	:	549
Colonial Number	:	114040
Date of Arrival	:	4-06-1905
Name of Ship	:	S S UMZINTO
Place of Registration	:	_____
Date of Registration	:	_____
Number in Register	:	_____
Name	:	KAMASANI
Father's Name	:	CARIA SA
Age	:	12 YEARS
Sex	:	MALE
Caste	:	VAISHNA
District	:	S ARCOT
Thanna/Taluq	:	TINDIVANAM
Village	:	OLAKKOD
Height	:	4'10"
Bodily Marks	:	SCAR ON LEFT ARM AND RIGHT
Name of Next-of-Kin	:	UNCLE
Relations Accompanied	:	_____
Small Pox/Vaccinated	:	VACCINATED
Remarks	:	_____

Certified a true copy.

REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE

B-E 41

209998

REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA
ABRIDGED MARRIAGE CERTIFICATE

(Issued in terms of Act No. 24 of 1963)

Getrouwen hieruit onttrokken uit de huweliksregister

REPUBLIC VAN SUID-AFRIKA
VERKORTTE HUWELIKSCERTIFIKAAT

(Uitgereik in terms van Wet No. 24 van 1963)

Geërtanseer in wett. intek. uit die huweliksregister van:

HU: (A-D) Identiteitsnommer:
MAYN: Identiteitsnommer:

NONE

Surname
Van

RAMASAMI

First names in full
Volle voornamen

Date of birth: Day
Geboortedatum: Dag

Month
Maand

Year
Jaar

33YRS

Population group
Bevolkingsgroep

WIFE: Identity number:
VROU: Identiteitsnommer:

NONE

Surname
Van

MUNIAMAHI

First names in full
Volle voornamen

Date of birth: Day
Geboortedatum: Dag

Month
Maand

Year
Jaar

30YRS

Population group
Bevolkingsgroep

Date of marriage: Day
Datum van huwelik: Dag

04

Month
Maand

01

Year
Jaar

1929

Marriage solemnised at
Huwelik bevestig te

INANDA

By or without antenuptial contract
Op of sonder huweliksvoorwaardes

WITHOUT

(Official
date stamp)

(Ampelike
kantoordatumstempel)

1505/29

Secretary for the Interior
Sekretaris van Binnelandse Sake

G.P.S.

SOURCE : INDIAN AFFAIRS

B-1 20

15171

REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

VERKORTE SIERTIJSERTIFKAAT

ABRIDGED DEATH CERTIFICATE.

(Uitgereik krachtens Wet No. 81 van 1963)

(Issued in terms of Act No. 81 of 1963)

Gesertifiseer 'n ware uittreksel uit die sterferegister van:

Certified a true extract from the death register
of:

Identiteitsnummer
Identity number

Van _____
Surname

Wolfe voorname
First names in full

RAMASAMI (RAM: SAMY)

Gelwortedatum:
Date of birth:

Page
1048

Maand
Month

Year

44 000

Geslag
Sex

Bevolkingsgroep .
Population group

NICH STATED

Huwelijkstaat
Marital status

Datum van afsterwe: Dag
Date of death: Day

Dog
Day

Maand
Month

Dear
Yours

194c

Plek van afsterwe
Place of death

TONGAAT

Oorsake van dood
Causes of death

CIRRHOSIS OF LIVER CARDIAC FAILURE

O/R 2022/41

(Amptelike kantoor datum-
stempel)

(Official date stamp)

Sekretaris van Binnelandse Zake
Secretary for the Interior

G.P.-S.53858—1970-71—1 000 100 S

SOURCE: INDIAN AFFAIRS

[illegible]



- : C E R T I F I C A T E : -

I, ALLAN CYRIL STEAD, of Durban, Natal,
Acting Protector of Indian Immigrants, in and for the
Province of Natal, do hereby certify that MUKKIDIPALLI
SANIYASI, Indian Immigrant, No. 114633, arrived in Natal
on the 7th day of July 1905 and his indenture expired
on the 14th day of July 1910, and served under contracts
of re-indenture from the 3rd day of August 1910 to the
16th day of August 1914 and from the 1st day of August
1917 to the 1st day of August 1919, and was registered
married on the 29th day of January 1929, under Section
70 of Law 25 of 1891, to MUKKIDIPALLI KANNI, Indian
Immigrant woman, No. 114634, who arrived in Natal on the
7th day of July 1905 and her indenture expired on the
14th day of July 1910 and further served under contracts
of re-indenture from the 3rd day of August 1910 to the
16th day of August 1914.



62/933

P.-S.6596714—1959-60—10-200.

Revenue Inkomste 195 (D.I. 167.)



UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA.—UNIE VAN SUID-AFRIKA. N^o 0496

CERTIFICATE OF DISCHARGE.—ONTHEFFINGCERTIFIKAAT.

OFFICE OF THE PROTECTOR OF INDIAN IMMIGRANTS.
KANTOOR VAN DIE BESKERMER VAN INDIËRIMMIGRANTE.
DURBAN, NATAL.

14th JUNE 1962.



I hereby certify that
Hierby sertifiseer ek dat

MUNIAMMAL

Indian Immigrant No. 119304
Indiërimmigrant No. 119304
on the 12th APRIL 1914
pp die 12th APRIL 1914

and is released from his/her obligation to perform services in the Province under indenture.
en onthef is van sy/haar verpligting om ingevolge 'n kontrak diens in die Provinsie te lewer.

DESCRIPTION.—BESKRYWING.

Father's Name MUNIAN
Vader se Naam MUNIAN

Age 64 yrs (MARCH '02)
Ouderdom 64 yrs (MARCH '02)

Height feet inches.
Lengte voet duim.

Asst. Protector of Indian Immigrants, Natal.
Beskermmer van Indiërinnmigrante, Natal.

Left Thumb Print. Linkerduimafdruk.

Right Thumb Print. Reghterduimafdruk.

SOURCE: MRS. MUNIAMMAL - BELVEDERE

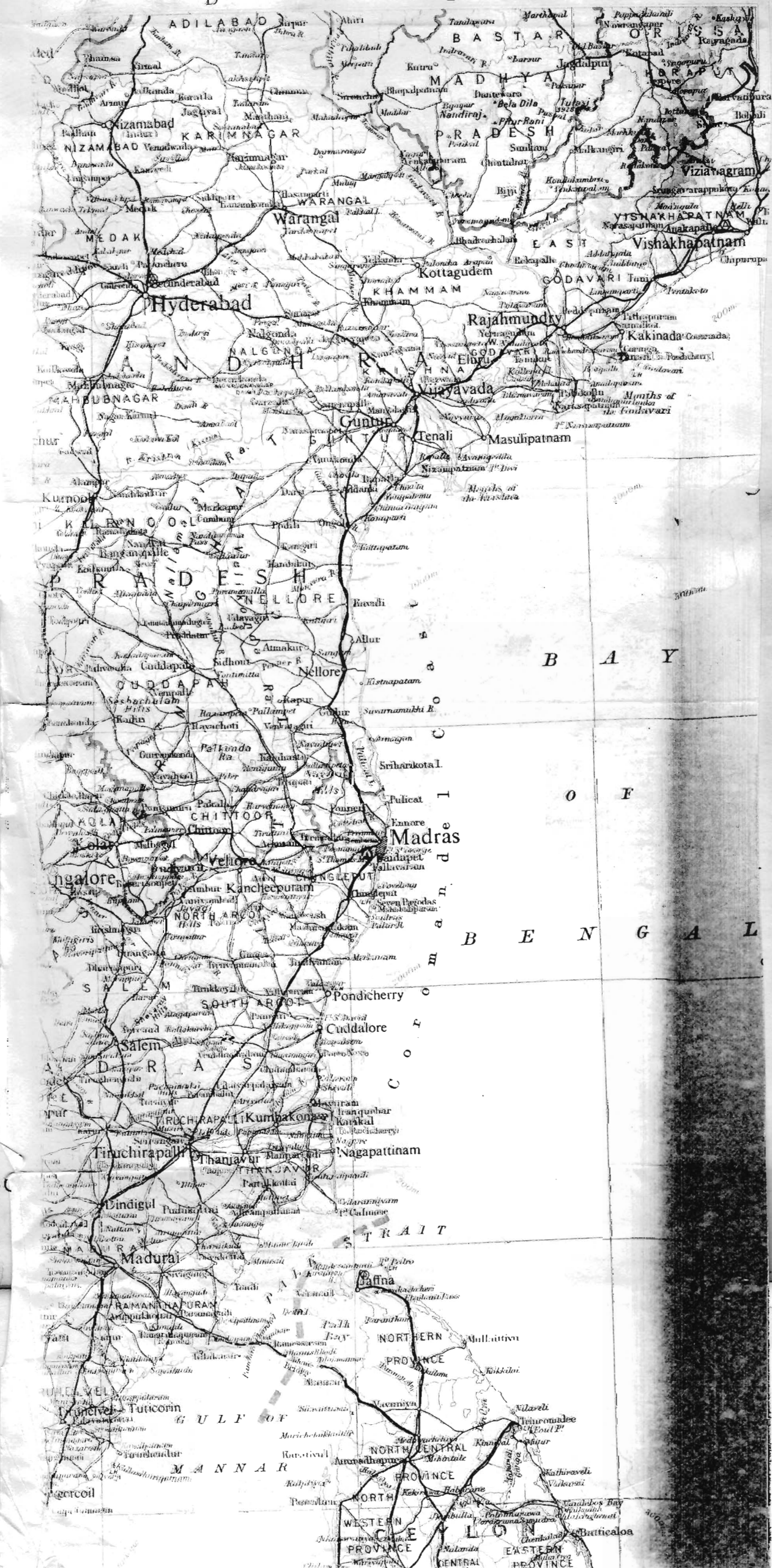
Handtekening van
Registrateur.
Signature of
Registrar.

DURMAN.



SOURCE: MR. RAMASAMI

D	E	F
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ACT '49' OF 1859 AND THE RECRUITMENT OF INDIANS

' Indian Migration to South Africa was a selective process in which individuals and categories of people reacting to specific pressures in their homeland were induced to migrate by the promise of future rewards.² Immigration on the path of the Indian population was not spontaneous but rather an artificial movement promoted and fostered by the Europeans inhabitant themselves. The conditions for recruiting labour was generally very strict. Native recruiters under the supervision of a Emigration Agent appointed by the colonies recruited labour, contracts were made in the presence of the Protector of Emigration, who was appointed by the local Presidency government to supervise emigration which was allowed from 3 parts of India, Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. A minimum batch of women varying from 25 % to 50 % had to accompany each batch of emigrants. This emigration from India's was no haphazard matter of uncontrolled recruiting and shipping, but a systematic direction of a portion of India's surplus population to the development of the colonies. The Governor, Scott, did not want to be overridden with the problems of recruiting in ~~terms~~^{terms} of its expenses therefore recommended that prior arrangements be made with the Indian government to enable Natal planters to procure Indians at their own expense, subject to the conditions that are present in other colonies. They were prepared to offer rates and inducements at least equal to those in other parts of the world like the West Indies. The recruitment for many would serve an experiment. The employers were to repay the government three-fifths of the passage money on every Indian and the other expenses that is charged on him.

A Coolie Immigration Agent was to be appointed to be put in charge of the Coolie Immigration Department. He was to receive all moneys' due by the employers and hand them over to the Colonial Treasurer. Furthermore he has to keep a registrar of all Indians in the colony and to assign their services to employers. The Immigrants were to work for 5 years industrial service at wages not less than 10 shillings a month with the opportunity of buying exemption from the last two years of that service for 5 pounds. Five years after their arrival to the colony, they were free to work where they wanted to. Ten years after their arrival they were entitled to free passages back to India, but they did not wish to go back to India there was nothing in the law to compel them to do so, and if they wanted to stay in Natal the governor could, make them grants of crown land which was equal to the price of the journey back home. The Natal law further stated that the minimum wage would be 10 shillings a month for food and clothing. When the Act was passed Collins the Agent returned to Madras and started recruiting for his first ship. He experienced a number of difficulties which were to persist throughout the emigration to Natal. He recruited through the 3 main ports.

SHIP	PORT	SAILING YEAR	MALE
Truro	Madras	1860	203
Belvedere	Calcutta	1860	225
Lord George Bentricks	Madras	1860	159
Spirit of trade	Calcutta	1860	176
Tyburnic	Madras	1860	266

Most of the emigrants during the 1860's and 1861, Collins' drew from Madras. Later in the year a Natal agency was opened at

Culcutta under Hunt Marriott. Conditions of recruiting were more difficult in Culcutta. There were fully 30 agencies, most energetically competing with one another.

Many recruiters made false promises of free land across the seas. The guilt of the Natal agents, especially Collins in not making their recruits aware of the conditions that waited them in Natal, was clearly shamed by the complaints made by returned emigrants in 1871. Some recruiters told villages of a country that chilli trees bore gold, money was easy, food was plentiful, fowls laid diamonds, gold was picked up in the streets and fruit hanging uneaten from trees. One man was told he would see the land of the devas. One cause of these abuses which the Indian government took no steps to remedy was that no contrast, detailing the terms of engagement was placed signed by emigrants. They were merely informed verbally by the recruiters and agents of the prospects that awaited them. "Under this system and uncritically inspired by the recruiters promises."³ Some were poverty-stricken while others were black sheep. From Madras the majority was classified as Malabars (Tamil low caste Coolies) and Gentoas (Telegu speaking). They were joined by the Vellalabs, Mudeliars, Pillai and Rajputs. The emigration to Natal were a heterogeneous collection, with wide differences of language, religion, and outlook. And differ as they did among themselves still more did they differ from the communities that were already established in Natal. There was a contention between the planters and the authorities over the question of the proportion of women should accompany the men. The planters regarded the Indian emigration as a migration of labour to supply the colonial deficiency and women could not do field work.

indentured replaced the slaves the migrant the labourer the indentured. The labourers on the plantation worked from sunrise to sunset and returned much too exhausted to consider their immediate environment. They cooked their starchy meals prepared from their daily ration of rice and mealie meal, insufficient quantity to last till lunch the next day and provide a hurried breakfast at dawn. There was no time to search out appropriate places for ablution and toiletry. On the fields the sahili did not like idle men. He worked them seven days a week which was very strenuous and difficult to cope with. But though they worked long hours they still had time to raise some vegetables at my house." The problem lies with the plantation owner for he exploited the labour resource and did not consider the social implications. The company in fact restricted the rations given to the workers by replacing rice with mealie meal. When complaints were lodged, they ie. the sidhars should say that mealie meal was better than rice. The women and children who were entitled to rations but never got it.

If the sahib grudged any person, he normally held back part of their salary, while some have lost their friends. Under Law 14 of 1859 those Indians convicted of illegal absences from work were subjected to fines if wages were due. Many of the Indians who did not comply with the fines were sentenced to imprisonment. This was not profitable to the estate owner for there was hardly any labour been made available. Therefore alternative measures were tried but was not accomplished until 1872. When an Indian absented himself from work without lawful cause for a day.

EDNA BRADLOW : INDENTURED INDIANS IN NATAL AND THE
3 POUND TAX , p 3

Their existence is a constant battle with starvation ending too often in defeat. Their difficulties is not to live human lives, but lives up to the level of their poor standard of comfort. The life in many parts of India is one of poverty, starvation and health problems. The indication of such cases were seen when the emigrants came to Natal. They were physically poor, diseased ridden. "The climate was at its extreme and often many people could not withstand the climate with the result they got boils on their body and skin peels".⁵

When the Indians came to Natal, their health was improved and this was partly due to Natal's climate. On many occasions informants indicated that the standard of living in Natal were much better than India apart from the false stories they heard from the recruiters about the riches of this land. These were very good reasons.

REASONS FOR COMING TO NATAL

The conditions in India were extremely difficult which permitted the Indians population an opportunity for leaving the country. Furthermore many escaped the caste systems and tried to gain status out of that "cruel system". Some came to Natal to gain wealth and adventure, while others came as field workers seeking job opportunities. Others came because they made a girl pregnant or escaping from their harsh mother-in-law. Some of the women that came, were in search for their husbands. A few escaped the climate in India which was unbearable. The indentured came as individuals, occasionally with kinsmen or friends.

The authorities on the other hand regarded Indian emigration as a migration of people which needed some social consideration. The Indian and British government admitted that the colonies should not be made to pay for the importation of women with the men but they insisted that certain number of women should accompany every hundred men. The Indian Acts covering emigration had eradicated serious abuses from the transport of emigrants from India to the colonies.

CONDITIONS IN INDIA BEFORE EMIGRATION TO SOUTH AFRICA

In the 19th century village life in many parts of India was harsh and hard, the country being under developed stricken periodically by famine ravaged by disease and subsistent in nature. Many hence industries have decayed with the importation of British goods and cloths. Peasants were in need of land, of which a very few wealthy landowners battered on the misery of many tenants. Several informants described this in simple language "We left at a time of drought and sickness. We had nothing to eat, we had no land nothing." Most of India's population belongs to a depressed caste, and they suffered most bitterly in the struggle to eke a living in the poverty widden country side and the slums of the urban ghetto. This does not mean however that in migrating to Natal plight of the Indian that came to Natal was far more acute before he came. 18 million people perished of famine in the first 80 years of the 19th centry. Millions of peasants are struggling to live on half an acre of land.

L.M. Thompson: ARCHIVES YEAR BOOK FOR SA, p 8

Some hoped to return often acquiring wealth but other never wanted to return. Some came to natal with aspirations set by the false stories told by the recruiters. Whatever the reason the Indentured has for bearing his mother land was sure but to create a particular society outside his motherland.

CONDITIONS OF THEIR TRAVEL:

Ships were examined and licenced by the Protector 12 superficial feet and 72 cubic feet being the individual allowance per adult. Scale of water and food for superior to the rations which they were to receive in Natal was prescribed. Medical officers and interpreters accompanied the ships. The voyage from Madras to Port Natal averaged 45 days, from Culcutta 54. The Madras Indians were usually in fairly good health and the death rate in Madras ships seldom exceeded 2 %. While on the other hand Culcutta Indians were less healthy. Cholera broke out at Belvedere shortly after it sailed and there were 24 deaths. Considering the discomfort which most travellers suffered on the sea voyage in those days was not worthy that the Indians did not complain, of the voyages. By these means that Natal planters were supplied with the labour they so dearly required.

THE ASSIGNMENT OF INDIANS:

Under Law 14 of 1859, the first assignment contract was valid for 3 years. Five years industrial service were to be performed by each immigrant, unless at the end of the third or the fourth year, he purchases his emancipation from the remaining one or two years at the rate two pounds ten shillings a year. If he did not purchase such emancipation he reassigned by two contracts each valid for no one year. On their arrival at the different ports they were like "fishes in a waterless lake", not knowing what to do, where to go, and who to be under. They were not allowed to go where they wanted to go for they knew nothing of the "land of the unknown". My grandfathers' experience was a terrible one "I found myself in the position of Shri Rama when he was abandoned to the Dankatha Forest, everthing around him was new new and he had to adopt himself in order to survive". Many of the indentured labourers were picked up by their owners and transported to the place of work.

THE TREATMENT OF INDIAN EMMIGRANTS

"Most of the Indians who migrated to Natal in this period were drawn from the lower strata of the Indian Society." Practically many of the Indians were illiterate and extremely susceptible to rumours. The arrival of Indians in South Africa was to cause an upheaval on many sociological problems. The Iranian Sociologists "Ali Shariati" writes "If we remove the concept of time from the history of a people and time has stood still in South Africa ever since the advent of the White man in respect of Labour, class, race relationship, the in.."

GAVIN MAASDERP : South African Indians, p15

THE employer was entitled to withhold two days wages, provided that he justified the fine if the Indian complained to the resident mafistrate. If no wages was due the sum was ~~deducted~~ from the future wages due. In future to leave the estate front where he worked, he had to obtain a pass from his employer, the very person who was interested in the refusal of such a grant. A number of Indians therefore went to he magistrates on errands of complaint without passes, and on their way they were convicted and imprisoned or returned to the estate, their complain unheard or ignored.

None of the magistrates spoke the Indian language and very rarely an immigrant spoke anything but his native tongue,. The interpreters presented different stories. The mafistrates were to visit the estates to check on the conditions of the Indians, but very few did so and many did not bother. The emigration and emigrants lacked the support and protection of a strong government. Therefore everthing depended upon the characters of the employers. Many were kind and patient while others hastily provoked by thestupidity, stubbornness and laziness of their servants, sometimes treated the Indians like a bull. Had the government taken a firm line in the first major case evil practices would have been checked, instead they grew to extremes, system of flogging etc.,. During the depression period employers reached the depths of exploitation. Coolies were afraid to go to the mafistrate to complain for the fear of the consequences to them on their return from making such complains. During this period many Indians were unemployed, while some were unfortunate enough to have been assigned to planters who were bankrupt, they lost thir jobs together with a aggregate of 215 pounds in wages.

In May 1868 there were 260 of them in Durban barracks. Their plight was extra ordinary and they lived on government rations.

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HOUSING FOR INDENTURED

The living conditions of the indentured deteriorated when the employers took over the provision of houses. The barracks replaced the shacks. First they were provided with mud shacks of which they paid rent. Many of them experienced many problems in these barracks though it was a better place than their shack, but not as comfortable as the shack. They provided no outlets for smoke with the result the units became black and the air within was poisoned with fumes from burning braziers especially in winter. "Official observation produced such reports as there is much rubbish about the Coolie huts together with human excrement".[§] The authorities and employers should be blamed for such conditions for they provided no facilities. A commission investigating the living conditions in 1885 reported "personal observation justifies us in saying that on many estates the water used by the Indians for drinking and culinary purposes is fouled by pollution of the vilest description". The houses that the local and central government set aside for them was so appalling that it was even unfit for human habitation. The houses were generally small for the number of inmates. The lanes were too narrow and this arrangements necessitates are filthy in the extreme and there is no freedom of access for fresh air.

" It normally takes place for two or three days. The boy goes to a particular house in search of a girl. The only time he is allowed to marry and see the face of the girl is when he is married to her. The Boy's party usually invites friends, neighbours, and relatives to witness the wedding. The visitors were normally fed with white rice, brenjall and king soup. From the girls house to the place of marriage, drummers and dancers would accompany her. The boys party would be led by four escorts who holds a sheet above his head, signifying him to be the Raja (king). The marriage commences at a set time and also ends at a particular time. A number of sacrificial rituals would have to be performed before the wedded couple leaves the hall. After the marriage the boy goes to the girls house. For ~~(99)~~ 9 days the boy and girl does not ^{sleep} stay together. But on the 9th day boy and girl invited by people and they give them a bed with a white sheet on which they have to sleep on. "

On the following day the "middle wife" would check the bed and give results to the mother and father. This whole process was highly complexed and expensive. It was unlike any other marriages performed. The Indian community especially the Tamil speaking people followed this pattern very strictly. Marriages did take place in South Africa, but was not recognized by the government,. But after a struggle the government did recognize these marriages.

26
~~26~~

BIRTH AND DEATH RATES

Among the Indians that came to work in South Africa, very few had small families. In most cases there were family sizes extending to 8 or 9 in each case. The reason given for this is how many children would survive the economic plights they faced. Some fathers wanted their children to be the sole inheritor of his piece of land. By having one child he cannot assure himself that this child would survive. But by having many children, he is sure that at last or at least one might survive. On the other hand many families were subjected to economic depressions and by having large families they were able to get a larger income and fight their depression. One person says that "I think the cause of the Indian people having large families is due to the lack of education and recreational facilities made available to them. Many after returning exhausted from work having nothing else more attractive than their loving wives." Although the Indians were faced with the tax problems, but this did not affect the demographic structure of the community at all. Death rates were high in the many estates, espec.

27
especially amongst the new borns and old aged people. Many that came from India were at a older age than was expected, so faced with certian adversed conditions and strain and many died. But this did not drop the rate at which the population was growing. The whites is fact became very antagonistic against the rate of population growths fearedg of being swamped.

ECONOMICS AND THE INDIAN PEOPLE

As soon as their contracts of indentured expired of, many Indians branded out into other fields of economic activity. This faced by a growing Indian population which outnumbered thm by 1891 the white colonists, feared that they would be swamped and would lose polictical control as more and more Indians qualified for the vote and I_ndians with their different religious, languages, customs and dress were regarded as strangers and as unassimilable. Indians began to compete with whites in the supply of agricultural produce and oarticulary in trading and it was the arrival of the passenger Indians in 1870 and their success in trading which really changed the image of Indians from dependent labourers to potential competitors. Dr. Malan in 1932 stated that whites objected primarily to the presence of Indian traders. Kruger himself refused to take action against the Indians because he regarded them as useful to his people. There were certain economic restrictions that was placed in the Indians, this likited the ability of I_ndians to sell their labour in the best market, and indirectly disqualifed them from establishing business enterprises in the locations of their chioce. Many were poor and could not purchase land for themselves. Some faced the extremes of poverty. The general economic status of the Indians did improve as the time went on.

" The Asiatic Land & Trading Amendment Act No 37 of 1919 28
in the Transvaal prohibited the ownership of fixed property
by companies under Indian control." 9 The Cape Town Agreement of
1927 between the governments of South Africa and India raised
high hopes of a substantial improvement in education, social
services and housing, but most of this was not fulfilled.
Finally the passing of a legislation to tax those indentured
labourers that remained in South Africa, caused much problems
amongst the Indians. Escombe says "tax had a different intention
namely to bring Indians under the conisance of the police
and it is also intended to be a tax to compel a man whether
he likes it or notto leave the country.
The Satyagraha movement included the tax question in their
struggle which brought most of the indentured labourers under
the abjectives of this embelm. Between two to three thousand men
were out on strike by October 25, 1913 when Gandhi privately
met the coal owners and other prominent commercial leaders in
Durban and appealed to them to persuade the government to remove
the tax. Some of their objectives were achieved but some were
not. The legislation reached its logical conclusion in 1950
with the passing of the Group Areas Act. This not applied through-
out the country and provided for the proclamation of specific
areas in which the various race groups could reside. The
political struggle towards a jest society is still p revailent
today. The Indentured labourers laid the foundation for
future political struggles and also the weapon of passiveness.

9) GAVINS MAASDORP : SOUTH AFRICAN INDIANS, p 42

HOSPITALS

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25 26

Medical treatment was either altogether absent on the estates or inadequate even though the law required employers of 20 or more Indians, to provide hospitals. By 1872 only one estate had provided a sickroom and by 1885 only three and these contained neither beds, bedding, medical attendants, laterines, urinals or toilets. The depot hospital was primitive in the extreme, no water basins or baths and only laterlines were put which were holes in the ground. There was no segregation of sexes, no separation of infectious diseases or lepers. A staff of one male nurse and a super-intendent was incharge of the hospital. They were unable to cope with the needs of the patients. The corpses were left to lie in the open which 'created a sickness in itself in the hospitals'. The equipment was insufficient and inefficient. In the railway hospital a plot form of trestles provided a mass bed and nursing was unheard of. Some say "If you got sick and went to hospital we die". So many concentrated on being healed by faith healers. The emigrants had to use their own money to go to hospitals and many could not afford this. The government and resident magistrates did very little to see that hospitals were built for the workers. Many Indians died before reaching the hospital because it was too far from their place of abode. The doctors normally arrive late to attend the patients and in some serious cases the patient dies.

It was ver difficult for the indentured labourers working on the estate to resist or protest against any injustices they faced. The estate owners normally choose a Sirdar ie. a "gang boss" who was responsible for keeping the indentured labourer together and also to see that they did not resist. If a indentured labourer resisted, he was posted to another area where he was deprived of his family. "But in 1862 on the shire estate the workers refused to work for they protested to go or they went against the working conditions, they preffered to go to prison. These minor political movements against the injustice of an alien societys' treatment on them." 10

But from 1906 onwards a great political movement started which was known as Satyagraha Movement (force of truth), but did not include the indentured labourers. It started as a result of the registration act passed on Indians. The resistance was restricted to the merchant class. But later broadened to include the marriage question immigration question and other issues.

A series of moves made by the whites which caused the Indians to protest. The Indians were at that period 1860 to 1914 very passive and shared no interest in what was done to them. But certain issues really provoked them to protest against the system. In 1926 white unemployment was politically unacceptable and hence a statutory colour bar was introduced. "By this legislation many Indians have lost their jobs and were replaced by the Whites"

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- 10) EDNA BRADLEY : INDENTURED INDIANS IN NATAL
AND THE 3 pound tax p 6
11) S. Bhana : The Telstey Farm : p 7

CONCLUSION

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The Indians that came to South Africa as indentured labourers were exposed to a lot of problems. Despite their effects to satisfy their tasks they also gained economic prosperity. The whites merely treated them as labourers but they put up a struggle to remove such a discrimination. They left a culture of peace in the minds of the whites in South Africa. They were helpful by assisting to improve the economy of the country as a whole. They were very useful to the whites economically. They were not barbarians but rather a civilized group with high ethics, morals and values. The indentured labourer did his work sincerely and honestly. They were a group of people who established in South Africa a new society under whose umbrella we took shelter. Although they may have caused a ill feeling between themselves and the Blacks they none the less accepted trade with the Blacks. Our forefathers should be praised and be known about for what they established for us in South Africa.

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