

"TABLE OF CONTENTS"

- i. Place of origin in India/other country.
2. Socio-economic background.
3. Reasons for leaving original country.
4. Dates of departure and arrival to Southern Africa.
5. Name of ship and port of entry.
6. First place of settlement.
7. First occupation.
8. Subsequent places of settlements and occupations.
9. Marriage, birth of children.
- io. Social, religious, and political activities.

1983

P.M. RAMKALAWAN

14325

ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Map of India indicating the district of arcot

My great grandmother came from the district of North

Arcat in India. " The district of North Arcat lies between

12° 22' and 14° 11' north latitude and between 78 17'

and 80° 12' East longitude. It is bounded on the North

by the districts of Cuddapah and Nellore, on the East by

the districts of Chongalpat; on the South by the districts

of South Arcat and Salem and on the west by the Mysar territory.

The area of North Arcat, according to the annals of Indian

Administration for 1871 - 72 is 15146 square miles.

The population of the district as ascertained by a census taken

in July 1871 was 2007 667 people.

The aspect of the country, in the eastern and southern

parts is flat, but the western parts where it runs along

the foot of the eastern Ghats, as well as all the country

northwards from Trivellam to Tripoli and the Kerkambadi

Pass are mountainous, with some scenery. The highest

platform in the district is coal being 2000 feet above sea

level, with a maximum range of the thermometer in the hottest

weather of 88 degrees. The hills are composed of granite and

sienite and have little vegetation. There are patches of

stunted jungle here and there and portray a barren aspect, but

they abound in minerals, especially copper and iron ore.

The narrow valleys between the hills are very fertile, having

a rich soil and an abundant water supply even in the driest

seasons. The principal river in the district is the Polar,

which starts in Mysar and flows through North Arcat from

west to east past the towns of Vellar and Arcat into the

neighbouring district of Chongalpat, eventually flowing into the

sea at Madras. Although a considerable river in the rainy

seasons, the bed is dry or nearly dry during the rest of the

year. Other smaller rivers of the district are the Paini,

which passes near Chittur and flows into the Polar, the Sonamukhi and Chayaur. These streams are dry during the hot season, but in the rainy season they flow easily and replenish the numerous tanks and irrigation channels.

The principal roads in the district of North Arcat are the trunk road from Madras to Bangalore, running from east to west; a road from north-east to south-west from Madras through North Arcat to Caimbatar and a road running from Chittur to Arcat. The Madras Railway and the Great Southern Indian Railway also pass through the district.

Grain of many species and cotton are grown throughout North Arcat as well as sugar cane and indigo. Cotton cloth is manufactured and oil is prepared in large quantities for local consumption and for Export. For classification purposes the district of North Arcat has fifteen divisions or taluks:-

Chittur, Tripoli, Kaveripak, Sholingarh, Trivellam, Polur, Wandiwash, Satiward, Penmari, Satgarh, Caddapanatam, Arcat, Villar, Trivatur and Venkatagiri Kata. " ①

In India, caste and the community govern the village. Occupations are used to occur on caste basis. Mr Thulukkana, the father of my great grand mother, worked on the farms in Arcat which were concerned with the growing of cereals and other foodgrains. He worked for a monthly salary, just sufficient to cope with living. They did not possess any land and lived on land set aside for the workers. The land around their living premises were used to develop crops for their personal use. They possessed a few cattle, goats and some fowls. " The Homes that they lived in were generally built onto one another and the mud walls of their compound huts were continuous. In the front was a porch used for drying agricultural produce. Behind this was a main room and a general living room used for sleeping, eating and entertainment. Part of the space was used as a cattle pen. " ②

Thus, their financial and social position was a cause for concern and any situation that indicated promise was a proposition worth considering.

"The Indians came to Natal as a result of a triangular Pact between the governments of Natal, India and Britian with Britian as the dominant partner because of its control over the governments of India and Natal.. Natal was experiencing an acute shortage of labour and Law 14 of 1859 provided for government sponsored indentured labour from India. In terms of this law, the government of Natal was to advance all initial monies required to set the immigration in motion, but the employers of labour were to repay three fifths of the whole cost involved. The labourer was to be bound for five years. Thereafter he could enter into an ordinary contract of labour or not work at all and might change his place of residence. After ten years he was entitled to a free return passage to India or subject to the approval of the Lieutenant Governor, commute for a grant of land equal in value to the return passage and whether his approval was obtained or not, he was entitled to remain in Natal if he wished. "③ The actual reasons for the arrival of my great grandfather is unknown but it is probable that they were made to believe that there were great prospects awaiting them in South Africa. Bearing in mind their own economic position and that the trip to Natal was free with ^{the} possibility of returning to India free of charge made it an opportunity not to be missed. It also gave them the possibility of exploring new horizons and experiencing a new form of life. Thus they came as indentured labourers to work in the sugar cane fields. They left India with the full notice of the fact that they must re-indenture or pay a three pound tax whether an illiterate or low-caste Indian. Under Section 2 the immigrant agreed after expiry of contract to return to India or remain in Natal under new indentures of 2 - year duration with wages rates laid down for each year of contract. All indentures were entered accord-

My great grandmother, Ellammal, and her parents left the Madras port aboard the S.S. Unfuli which arrived at the Durban harbour on the 23 June 1911. Before leaving the Madras port they had to pass the Protector of Emigrants who was there to ensure that no coercion was used on the emigrant. On board the ship they were part of approximately four hundred passengers. The total number of arrivals for that sugar season was less than 2,500.

After 1911 the situation was somewhat different to that of the early years of indentured labour. There was no longer an inexhaustible labour force from which industries could draw, so the impracticality of existing labour contracts was impractical. This resulted in the sugar industries, which were initially paying low wages, raised wages up to 50%. These were incentives for the labourers to remain in employment on the estates.

Once the labourers came ashore they were assembled by a police force and had to wait their assignment. Once assigned the workers walked to their places of employment, carrying with them their bedding and other little parcels. My great grandmother and her parents had to walk some fifty or sixty kilometres to reach Esperanza, the place of employment of Mr Thulukkana. My great grandmother at the time of her arrival was 9½ years old and was not assigned because law prohibited the assignment of children under 10 years of age. At that time she assisted by babysitting for the employers of her father, Reynold Brothers Limited. According to her she was not assigned and carried on with odd jobs and never had the opportunity of really working because before her father's five year contract could expire she was already married. Their first place of settlement was Esperanza which lies in the counties of Alexander and Victoria. The first task that they completed was the building of their

huts from the natural material such as grass and wattle.

Mr Thulukkana first served as a plantation labourer on the sugar cane fields in Esperanza. The working hours were from sunrise to sunset and after each days work the individual was too tired to do anything else. They cooked their meals from their ration of rice and mealie meal, in sufficient quantity to last lunch the next day and provide a hurried breakfast at dawn. The official issue of rations comprised of 7 pounds mealie meal, 7 pounds brown rice, 4 pounds dhal and 1 pound ghee plus 2½ pounds salt per month.

The living quarters were occupied free of charge and medical attention was to be provided free of charge. The living conditions deteriorated when employers took over the provision of housing. The labourers were then removed from the huts to barracks which enabled them to cultivate patches of land around them and organize themselves. Medical attention was inadequate or totally absent on the estates and living conditions generally hazardous. " The medical officer of health of the Umzinto area, reported that the state on pollution of the Estates, was so gross that 20 to 30 percent of the Indian population was suffering from Bilharzia. "④ There were other complaints from the workers that they were being overworked. They had to commence work at 4 O' clock in the morning and finish off at 8 p.m. daily. The chores that they had to do were to milk the cows in the morning, clean up the stables and other chores before going to the cane fields. There were also reports of punishment and mis-handling of labourers.

" Thus, on the 23 November 1913, about 200 workers on the Beneva Estate, about 2 kilometres from Esperanza struck work. On the 27 November a serious clash occurred between the labourers and police. These strikes were organized to support the strike on the coal mines of Northern Natal. Domestic labourers and

and municipal employees in some towns also struck work in sympathy, and so did the residents of Esperanza of which Mr Thulukkana was a participant. At Esperanza violence broke out with both the police, who used firearms and the labourers, who used sticks, being involved in the clashes which resulted in 9 Indians being killed and 25 being wounded. Serious charges of brutality were levelled at the police and India was aroused to action on behalf of the Indians in South Africa. The protests were part of the Great March of 1913 organised by Ghandi." ⑤

After his indenture expired Mr Thulukkana moved to other areas of employment of which my great grandmother does not remember. She however did not go with her father because she married at the age of 14.

However, although she married Nageshar, there are no official documents to prove that she was married. After her marriage she followed the Hindu customs and traditions because she was Tamil. After their marriage she moved with her husband to Dennybrook, Braemar, Daiyan, Saweti after doing farming for about 9 years on a land, he had leased. Prior to living in Saweti, Nageshar had worked in the farms of Dennybrook, Bulwer and Daiyan which are found on the way to Highflats. After her marriage Ellammal had not worked for anyone but assisted her husbands on the farms. They had nine children together of which one died prematurely:- Sookia, Sookmarie, Ramkalawan, Sewrani, Seokraj, Dhanraj, Ramsameoj, and Jeogoo.

My great grandmother, Ellammal is currently living in Hazelwood Road, Umzinto and is around 84 years of age. She receives an old age pension and is a firm believer of her Hindu religion.

5. The International aspects of the S.A. Indian Question -
B. Pachan.

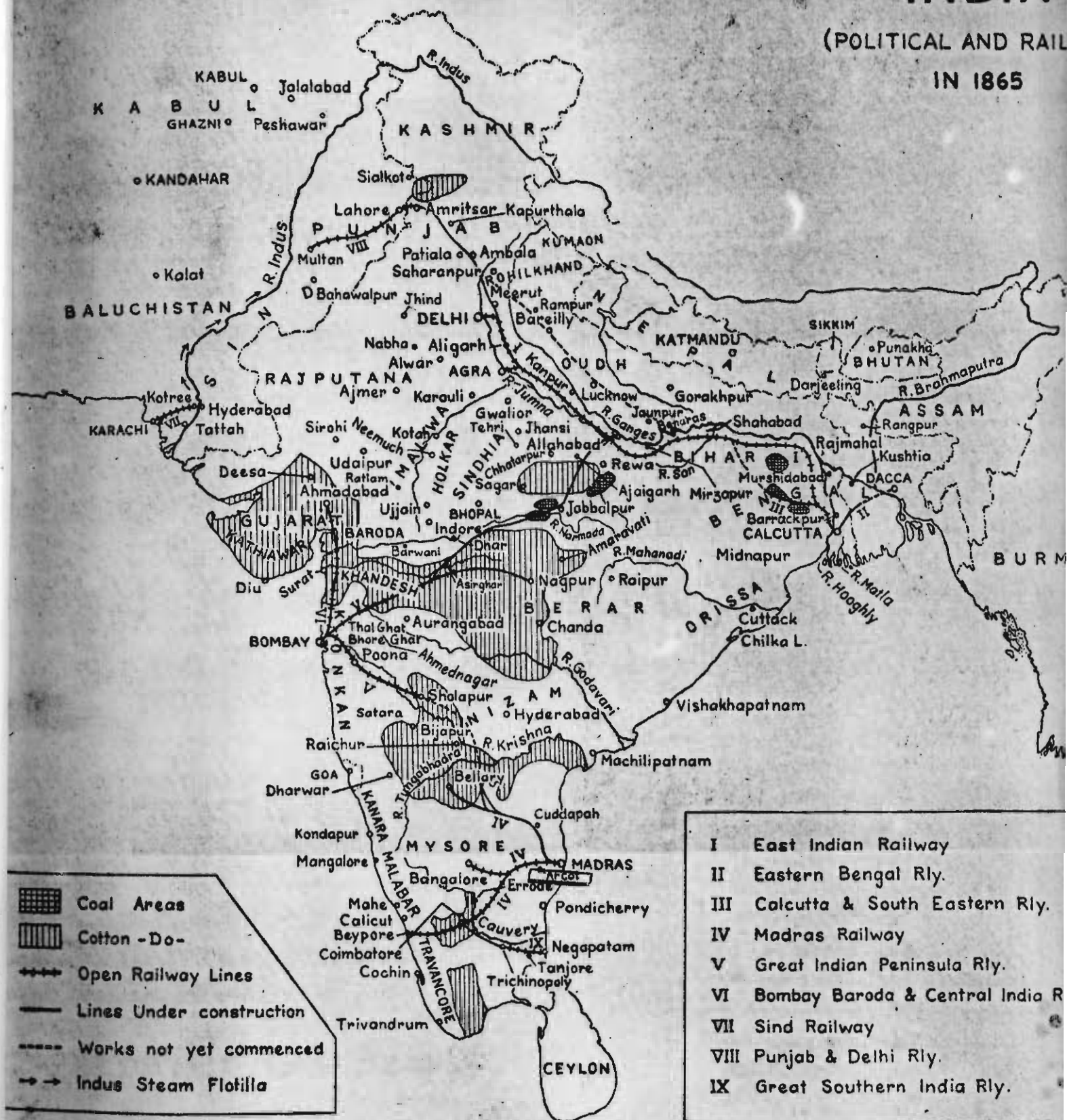
"S O U R C E L I S T"

1. Brookes E.H. and Webb, C de B - A History of Natal, Univ of Natal Press.
2. Meer Y.S. - Documents of Indentured Labourers.
3. Pachai B - The International Aspects of the South African Indian Question - G. Struik (Pty Ltd) Cape Town.
4. Spate O.H.K. - India and Pakistan - London, Methuen and Company Limited.
5. Bradlow, Edna - Indentured Indians in Natal and the 3 pound tax (article)

INDIA

(POLITICAL AND RAIL)

IN 1865



Outlines taken from Survey of India Map and details from India Office Library Records.