

HISTORY III RESEARCH PROJECT : ROOTS OF INDIAN IMMIGRANTS

RESEARCH SUBJECT : MR. NARAINSAMY REDDY

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MY GRATITUDE AND THANKS GOES TO MR.NARAINSAMY REDDY  
AND HIS FAMILY

| <u>TABLE OF CONTENTS</u>                                   | <u>PAGE</u> |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| I. THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT .....                            | I           |
| 2. PLACE OF ORIGIN IN INDIA .....                          | 5           |
| 3. SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND .....                         | 6           |
| 4. REASONS FOR LEAVING ORIGINAL COUNTRY ..                 | 6           |
| 5. DATES OF DEPARTURE AND ARRIVAL IN<br>SOUTH AFRICA ..... | 7           |
| 6. NAME OF SHIP AND PORT OF ENTRY .....                    | 7           |
| 7. FIRST PLACE OF SETTLEMENT .....                         | 7           |
| 8. FIRST OCCUPATION .....                                  | 8           |
| 9. SUBSEQUENT PLACES OF OCCUPATION AND<br>SETTLEMENT ..... | 8           |
| 10. MARRIAGE AND BIRTH OF CHILDREN .....                   | 8           |
| 11. CASTE .....                                            | 9           |
| 12. SOURCE LIST .....                                      | 10          |
| 13. PHOTO-COPY OF DOCUMENTS AND MAP .....                  | 11, 12, 13  |

introduce labour from territories east of the Cape of Good Hope but it did not state directly that it would import labour from India. Law 14 stated that labour will be introduced from India by the Natal Government.<sup>3</sup> Law 15 stated that any individual may import labour at his own cost from India. Every Indian immigrant had to serve an indentured period of 5 years in Natal. He may be free and unfettered after 5 years. Section 24 of law 14 provided that an immigrant is entitled to a free passage to India after 10 years residence in Natal. Section 28 Of law 14 provided that for the commutation of the free passage a land grant of equal value to the cost of the return passage will be granted to an immigrant.<sup>4</sup> Laws 13 and 15 were independent of law 14.

The first batch of Indian immigrants arrived on 16 November 1860 on board the Truro. There was an economic depression between 1866 and 1874. This resulted in no indentured labourers being imported. When there was an upswing in the Natal's economy, there was a need for labour. But the Indian Government intervened because of the grievances that the returning immigrants carried home. Immigration began when the Natal Government passed a law, 12 of 1872 which provided for the appointment of a Protector of Indian immigrants, medical officers in each district and free Indians could not be flogged for minor offences. There were three types of immigrants in Natal: free Indians, indentured labourers and passenger Indians who made up the trading community (this group was called 'Arabs' and the members were predominantly muslim).

The Indian immigrants were affected by a number of legislations and recommendations of commissions. Among them was the Wragg Commission of 1887 which recommended that only indentured Indians ought to be in the Colony. If that was not possible, African labour should replace Indian labour. The fear that the Indian invasion would surpass the white population. In 1891, Section 28 of law 14 of 1859 and Section 51 Of law 2 of 1870 were revoked and the granting of crown land to free Indians was stopped.<sup>5</sup> In 1893 Natal got Responsible Government. This was followed by the Binns-Mason Report on Indians in Natal, and this culminated in the introduction of the Immigration Law Amendment Act of 1895 which provided that a residential tax of £3 be paid by immigrants. It offered 3 options to the Indian immigrant: to return on the expiry of the service contract, to re-indenture for a further period or pay annually a licence fee of £3 for the right to remain in the Colony. At first it was payable by adults only but in

3.B.Pachai: The South African Indian Question. 1860 to 1971. Page 5

4.B.Pachai: The South African Indian Question. 1860 to 1971. Page 5

5.B.Pachai: The South African Indian Question. 1860 to 1971. Page 8

6.B.Pachai: The South African Indian Question. 1860 to 1971. PAGE 9

1903, it was extended to apply to girls aged 13 years and boys aged 16 years. The Protector, himself, said that the imposition of the £3 tax led to severe hardship suffered by the indentured labourers. Narainsamy Reddy stated that they suffered financially, and it true of women, who earned 20 to 25 shillings monthly.<sup>7</sup> The Indians were disenfranchised by Act 8 of 1896. This was the culmination of the constant fear that the Indians would swamp the whites in Natal (the ratio of the population whites is to Indians was 38:1. The fear in terms of figures was a figment of the imagination on the part of the whites.) In 1896 (18 december), 800 'free' Indians arrived in Durban on board the Courland and the Naderi, among them was a person by the name of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. It was felt that Gandhi was responsible for the invasion. Stricter measures were to be introduced, and in 1897, the Natal Government passed the Immigration Restriction Act 1 of 1897.<sup>8</sup>

The Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902 did not affect the position of the Indians in Natal. However, Act 1 of 1897 was relaxed when a commission was appointed to examine a petition by the Indian Immigration Trust Board. Petition 1 of 1902 showed evidence that the application for Indian labour was high as 15 000 owing to the scarcity of African labour. At this time when labour was much needed that Mr. Reddy's father, Ramsamy Reddy arrived and took up his indenture for the Umzinto Sugar Company which started its operations in 1858 in the south coast. There was still a labour shortage. In 1903, commissioners were sent to India to ask for the relaxation of the recruiting laws but the Indian Government replied it could do so only if free Indians received better treatment, the £3 tax is waived after 10 years of residence and laws governing trading licences were amended. The Natal Government refused to comply with those conditions. In 1946 it was observed that Natal did not press the issue in 1903 because it did not want to embarrass the British Government which was under the attack of Indian politicians in India for not protecting the rights of Indians in Natal.

Narainsamy Reddy recalls that Gandhi's name was prominent among the Indian community. Gandhi was responsible in establishing the Natal Indian Congress in 1894 to protest against the attempted disfranchisement of Indians (1895 the Indians were disenfranchised). In 1903 (4 June), the first Indian newspaper Indian Opinion was published. Gandhi was responsible for Phoenix Settlement which was dedicated to those who served in South Africa. He was involved in the Indian struggle in the Transvaal where the Indians were affected by a number of legislations. The Satyagraha movement founded by Gandhi played an important role in the protest against withdrawal of licences to Indians in Natal. The protest had the desired effect as the Bill intended was not passed by the Natal Government but a commission was appointed to investigate Indian immigration. In the meantime the government of India proclaimed in the Government Gazette that as from 1 July 1911, immigration of labour would cease to Natal.<sup>10</sup>

7. B. Pachai; The South African Indian Question. 1860 to 1971. Page 48

8. B. Pachai; The South African Indian Question. 1860 to 1971. Page 9

9. R. F. Osborn; Valiant Harvest. Page 133.

10. B. Pachai; The South African Indian Question. 1860 to 1871. Page 57

The great march in 1913 by Gandhi and his followers into the Transvaal ended in the arresting of the leaders of the march. This march was in protest against the Immigrant's Restriction Act 22 of 1913. A commission under Sir William Solomon recommended the repeal of the £3 tax. This resulted in the Indian Relief Act 22 of 1914 in which the following were stated: Appointment of marriage officers to solemnise Indian marriages, abolishment of the £3 tax, and the granting of free passages to immigrants. Gandhi left on 20 July 1914 bringing to an end the goal the Satyagraha movement sought.

## 2. PLACE OF ORIGIN IN INDIA

Narainsamy Reddy originates from the village of Puthoor in the South Arcot District (state ) of India. This area is in the eastern seaboard of India more in the mid east. It was then a part of Madras Presidency (late nineteenth century). Up to the present day , the east coast is a busy sea route overlooking the Bay of Bengal. (Reference; map from D.Kumar's Land and Caste in South India.)

Some seventy years after he left Puthoor , Mr.Reddy visited the place he originated in 1974. However, he found that the village had changed in character , and his former residence has since been demolished. He had expected the changes because his visit was after many decades when he left Puthoor as young boy of seven years. His ship's list indicates his age as five years. He re- iterates that on landing in the port of Durban, the immigration officials had presumed his age to be five years. The deciding factor was his height as he states that he was very short and that the officials did<sup>not</sup> believe his father, Ramsamy Reddy. But he firmly believes that he was seven years when he left India, and that he was born in 1895,

The local residents were unable to help him as they informed him that many old residents had left the area since. However, he says he is not sure one family he met were his relatives for the meeting was brief and thus he learnt nothing of their connection to the family he had left behind seven years ago. To a very large degree Narainsamy Reddy was disappointed but he has resigned to the fact that after such a long period there was no guarantee that he would meet his relatives he had left behind in India. He has not regreted going to India to trace his origin because it was his long standing ambition to visit the place of his origin. When he was questioned whether he will visit India again, he chuckled and answered that he has no wish for another visit for he has seen India once and there is nothing else to look forwards to. Probably his attitude does suggest that since he has no trace of a family in India he does not want visit India again. His visit to India was made possible by his immediate family, especially his sons, Mr.J.N.Reddy (former chairman of the South African Indian Council Executive) and Mr.M.N.Reddy who is a prominent businessman and members of the Silverglen community. Mr.M.N.Reddy verifies his father's visit to Puthoor, South Arcot and agrees with his father's sentiment and his disappointment in not being successful in making some form of contact with relatives in India.

(Note: Mr.Narainsamy Reddy showed me photographs of his friends, but sadly he pointed out the fact that all of them are dead. The facts above can only be substantiated by official documents included in this research and by his family)

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### 3. SOCIO- ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

In India Narainsamy Reddy's family lived in an ordinary shack type of a house. His father eked out a living as a cultivator of crops. After his wife's death, Ramsamy Reddy formed an association with another woman whom he brought with him and Narainsamy to Natal.

Ramsamy Reddy was indentured to the Umzinto sugar company. The living conditions on the sugar estates left much to be desired for the workers and their families had to live compounds. After his indenture, Ramsamy Reddy and his son Narainsamy went to live in the railway barracks in Durban. Many families lived in these barracks as they were provided for the employees of the railways.

Narainsamy Reddy found employment with the railways until he joined Lever Brothers on the Maydon Wharf whom he served for some forty years.

Mr. M. N. Reddy remembers how his father obtained a leased farm from Mr. Stainbank (Stainbank Nature Reserve is named after him). Economically the Reddy family progressed gradually.

Both the sons of Mr. Narainsamy Reddy are successful businessmen. Mr. J. N. Reddy is the managing director of the New Republic Bank, owns a few business premises including the Sol Namara Hotel and the Pelican Hotel, and is on the board of directors in a number of companies among them the Standard Bank of South Africa. On the other hand Mr. M. N. Reddy, a rather modest person, opened a business complex in Silverglen Drive, Silverglen. Both sons own beautiful homes. Mr. Narainsamy lives his son, Mr. J. N. Reddy in Parkside Road, Silverglen. During the day, he assists his son, Mr. M. N. Reddy in his tea-room in Silverglen.

From his impoverished background, Mr. Narainsamy Reddy now can proudly look back at his achievements and that of his family.

### 4. REASONS FOR LEAVING ORIGINAL COUNTRY

Mr. Reddy states that his father decided to try the indenture system in Natal. Narainsamy's mother died before he left India and his father formed an association with another woman whom he brought with him to Natal. Further questioning revealed no other reasons for leaving India.

During the period of indenture in Natal, many other reasons were advanced for the Indians forsaking their mother country and coming on indenture to a strange land. One of the many reasons is India wanted to dump her surplus population. This was evident also in Mauritius where the first Indian indentured labourers went to cultivate the fields. There was mass poverty in India due to lack of job opportunities and over-population. But the lure of constant employment in Natal was an important factor in the arrival of Indian immigrants in Natal.

## 5. DATES OF DEPARTURE AND ARRIVAL IN SOUTH AFRICA

Mr. Narainsamy Reddy is not clear on the date of departure from Puthoor, South Arcot, India. Normally ships took between one month and a few days to two months to travel from India to South Africa. The very fast steamers took about one and half months for the single journey. So the assumption can be made that the date of departure could be approximately early June 1902. He, himself, states that the journey must have taken about two months but he is not sure as he was very young at that time. The ship serial number of 242 was allocated to him. From his vague memory, he remembers the journey to be unpleasant and it was a relief to land at the port of Durban on 2 August 1902.

He was given a colonial number on arrival. All necessary details were taken. The colonial number allocated to him was 94 235. He still remembers how adamant the officials were when his father stated his age as seven years old. The officials stated that it was impossible for him to be seven years because he was very short and thus it was listed on official documents that his arrival age was five years (reference: ship's list). His father was indentured to the district of Umzinto.

## 6. NAME OF SHIP AND PORT OF ENTRY

The ship's list states that Narainsamy Reddy was ferried from South Arcot, India to Durban, Natal on 2 August 1902 as a passenger of the 'S.S. Pongola'. It was difficult to ascertain how many passengers were brought by the 'S.S. Pongola'.

## 7. FIRST PLACE OF SETTLEMENT

Narainsamy Reddy's father was indentured to the Umzinto Sugar Company in Umzinto in the south coast. The mill and estate was established in 1858.

The estate was vast and there were several compounds which housed the labourers. The labourers worked from sunrise to sunset every day except some Sundays. Every one received a ration of rice, mealie-meal, dhall, ghee and salt fish. The men received a wage of ten shillings a month whilst the women and children got half the amount the men received. Accommodation was free but the condition of the accommodation was terrible. One set of clothes was given to each labourer and medical attention was free.

After his period of indenture Ramsamy Reddy moved to Durban with his son, Narainsamy to the railway barracks.

## 8. FIRST OCCUPATION

Mr.Reddy states that on their return to the railway barracks in Durban he commenced his first occupation as a clerk in the railways.He met many prominent Indians that used the railway service, among them was Gandhi.He remembers that the non-europeans were unable to get a first class ticket.There were protests but the whites had their own way.

In the 1920's,the government introduced job reservation where only whites could apply for certain jobs in the railways and other government departments.Mr.Reddy left the railways in 1924 and commenced his second job as a clerk for Lever Brothers on the Maydon Wharf.

## 9. SUBSEQUENT PLACES OF OCCUPATION AND SETTLEMENT

The first place of settlement was in the south coast in Umzinto where his father was employed as indentured labourer on the estates of the Umzinto Sugar Company.After his indenture period in Umzinto, Ramsamy Reddy moved to the railway barracks in Durban.

They lived here for many years until Narainsamy Reddy married Kanigama.Mr.Reddy leased a few acres of land near the Cavendish farming area from Mr.Stainbank and lived in that area before moving to Silverglen.

## 10. MARRIAGE AND BIRTH OF CHILDREN

Narainsamy Reddy married Kanigama in 1923.She was the daughter of a fisherman from Salisbury Island.Their subsequent marriage resulted in the birth of seven children.

The eldest child was Sthrimadhi who was born on 9 September 1924.Then followed Jayaram (J.N.) on 24 October 1925.In all the family comprised of two sons and five daughters.

Jayaram Narainsamy Reddy has become the most prominent person in the family.The whole family is proud of his achievements. From a humble beginning as a shipping clerk,he rose to be the Chairman of the South African Indian Council Executive.Only recently as two years ago he relinquished his appointment to South African Indian Council.He opened a shipping firm as his first big bussiness venture.He since has acquired several bus inesses including a share in the first Indian bank, The New Republic Bank.His brother,M.N.Reddy owns a big shopping complex in Silverglen.The sister,Lutchmee also owns a shop in Chatsworth.The youngest sister,Dhanalutchmee is presently a teacher at the Witticlip High School in Chatsworth.

## II. CASTE

The ship's list makes interesting reading. One realises the amount of manpower that was used to obtain all the necessary information from the Indian immigrants. Among the various details found on the ship's list is the caste of each person, more especially that of my subject of research Narainsamy Reddy. He belonged to the Reddy caste (the correct spelling as it is used in India is Reddi).

In his History Honours research on Indentured Indian Immigration in Natal, he points to the fact that the Kapu were listed separately from the Reddi but are one caste group. The Telegu caste of the Kapu used the Reddi caste to which Mr. Reddy belonged. The Reddi were probably the most numerous single caste in South India, numbering two to three million.<sup>12</sup> Their occupations were cultivators, farmers and landowners. They were socially next to the Brahmans in many districts, and claim kinship with Ranthor clan of Rajputs (aristocrats). It is said that they were originally from the Indus Valley. They make up one of the four major language groups of the Dravidians in South India. The Dravidians fled North India when the nomadic Aryan groups were approaching the borders of India. They fled to the southern areas of India where they established the many states (districts).<sup>13</sup>

In South Africa it is significant, however, that caste does not play a role in the socio-economic lives of the Indians. The caste name, Reddy, is used as a surname like the various other caste names. The caste names originally came with the Indian immigrants as part of their Indian heritage. There is no evidence that caste of a person determines his or her social status with the Community itself.

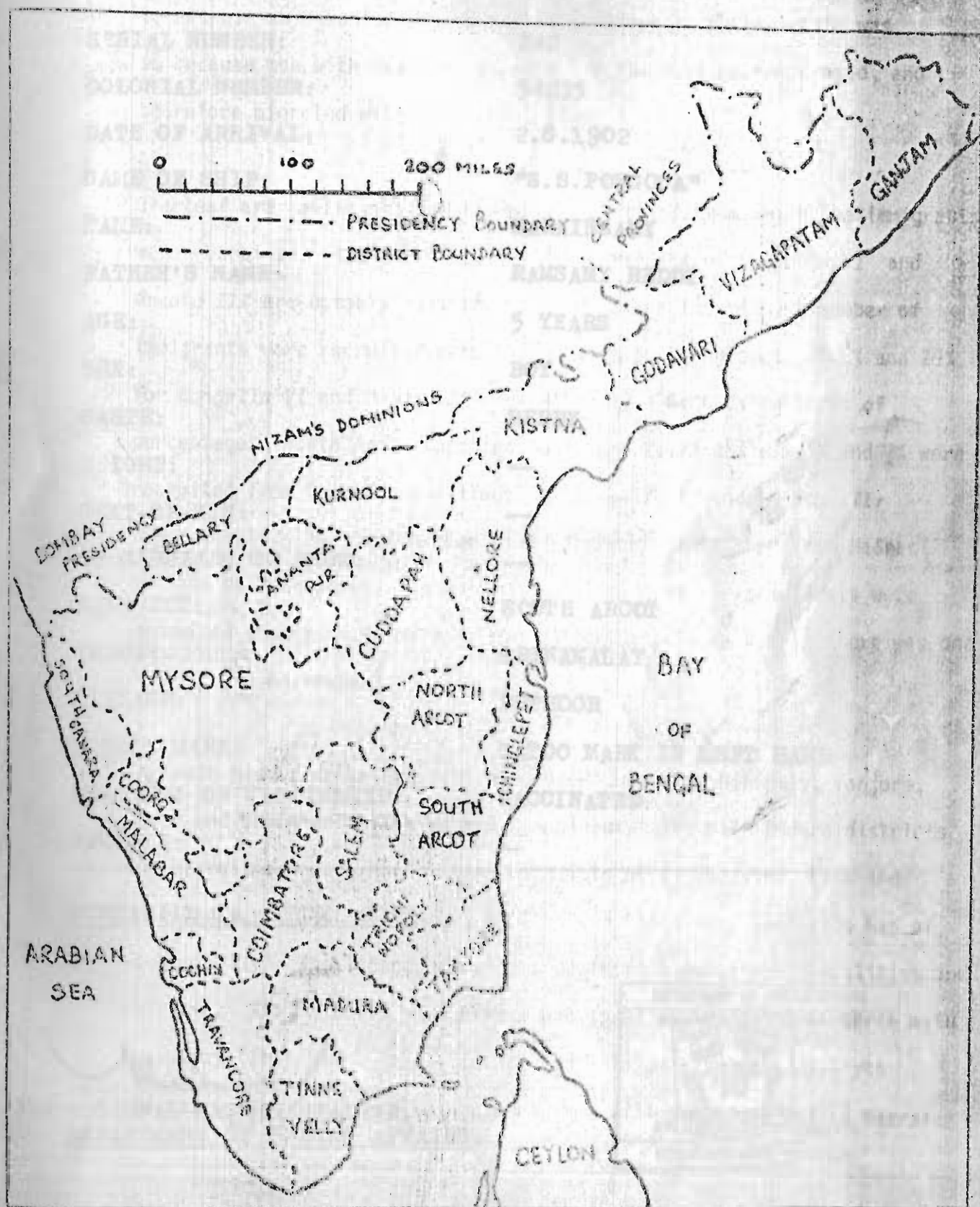
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12. A. Sookdeo: Indentured Indian Immigration in Natal. Page 41

13. E. Wright: (ed). The Ancient World .Page 293

SOURCE LIST

1. B.Pachai : The South African Indian Question 1860 -1971.  
(1971) C.Struik LTD. (Cape Town)
2. A.Sookdeo : Indentured Indian Immigration in Natal.  
Vol.I No.I. (History Honours research- UDW.)
3. E.Wright : The Ancient World.  
Hamlyn Publishers, London (1979).
4. R.F.Osborn : Valiant Harvest.  
(1964) Davis and Platt Ltd.(Durban).



enlarged from D. Kumar: Land and Caste in South India...

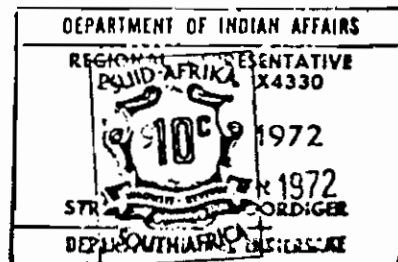
Reference Number: ...29/2/2/4(9)

COPY OF SHIP'S LIST OF INDIAN IMMIGRANT.

|                         |                         |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| SERIAL NUMBER:          | 242                     |
| COLONIAL NUMBER:        | 94235                   |
| DATE OF ARRIVAL:        | 2.8.1902                |
| NAME OF SHIP:           | "S.S.PONGOLA"           |
| NAME:                   | NARAINSAMY              |
| FATHER'S NAME:          | RAMSAMY REDDY           |
| AGE:                    | 5 YEARS                 |
| SEX:                    | BOY                     |
| CASTE:                  | REDDY                   |
| HEIGHT:                 | --                      |
| NEXT-OF-KIN:            | --                      |
| IF MARRIED; TO WHOM:    | --                      |
| DISTRICT:               | SOUTH ARCOT             |
| TALUQ:                  | TRINAMALAY              |
| VILLAGE:                | PUTHOOR                 |
| BODILY MARK:            | TATOO MARK IN LEFT HAND |
| SMALLPOX OR VACCINATED: | VACCINATED              |
| REMARKS:                | --                      |

CERTIFIED A TRUE COPY.

  
for REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE,  
DEPARTMENT OF INDIAN AFFAIRS.



INLAND REVENUE

UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA.

5/-

PASS TO INDIANS

No. 20200

Born in the Cape of Natal.

This is to certify that.....

is at liberty to dispose of his services.

Holder's Name.....

Sex..... Age.....

Marks.....

Height.....

OFFICE DATE STAMP.

Inspector of Indian Immigrants.

Shrinagar  
H. K. K.

Jagaram, Jay, Bala

Pranadama, Gul

Pranadama, Gul

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