

1983
BARBARA
A MOOLIAN
16083

TABLE OF CONTENTS

⁵⁰⁰ [The immigration of Mr Nellannah Sullaphen
to South Africa]

PREFACE	1
INTRODUCTION	2
CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH THEY CAME	3
FATHERS BACKGROUND	5
HOW THEY CAME?	6
FATHERS ARRIVAL	6
SUBSEQUENT EMPLOYMENT	6
WHY OTHERS CAME?	7
HIS FAMILY	8
PORTRAIT OF MR SULLAPHEN	9
SUBJECTS' EARLY YEARS	10
HIS MARRIAGE AND SPORTING ACTIVITIES	11
LATER LIFE	12
MAP OF INDIANS IN NATAL 1951	13
MAP OF INDIA	14

PREFACE

The following project is an account of the exact situation and circumstances surrounding the arrival of the Indians in South Africa. In addition to this I have given a short account of the life and times of my subject under study, a Mr. Nellanah Sullaphen.

Since he was born in South Africa, I have had to give a brief account of his father who was an indentured Indian in South Africa.

Mr Sullaphen is related to me that he and my grandfather were brothers. I decided to study him because I find him a very interesting person. I feel that there are very few people who having reached the winter of their lives, can look back and list as long a list as Mr. Sullaphen.

These achievements are an indication of the dedication and love which he had shown towards his community and mankind itself. They are an indication of his having lived a fruitful and rewarding life.

The project on the whole lacks sufficient documentary evidence. The reason for this is that Mr. Sullaphen's documents (birth certificate, etc) have been catalogued in the Springfield College Documentation Centre. I have tried to gain access to them but unfortunately was unable to do so.

I would like to thank the following people for all their help and support which they rendered to ^{me} while doing the project:

My father, Mr. Ivan G. Moollan

Christopher Carelse

Owen Subban

Odette Dunn

Much appreciation, Barbara A. Moollan.

21 May 1983

INTRODUCTION

The country of Natal was acquired by the British Empire. It was a beautiful and on the whole a fertile strip of land lying between the Drakensburg and the sea. The coastal strip is subtropical and very fertile. The midland areas have a more temperate climate and are suitable for cattle rearing and the growing of maize and other cereals. There are also important coal deposits in this area, but the great disadvantage was the difficulty of transport. The coming of the railways in the 1870s meant a great revolution in the economic conditions of the country; much greater than else where.

The outstanding factor in Natal was the presence of large numbers of Bantu. The tribes still broken and disorganised by the wars of Shaka and the activities of the Boers but they numbered probably about two hundred thousand in 1880 and their existence made the settlement and development of Natal and South Africa as a whole quite different from that of Canada and Australia.

The Natives did not provide at that date a reliable labour force but they did provide workers of a kind. This was sufficient to establish the custom that all unskilled labour should be reserved for the and that the white man should confine himself to organisation and supervision and to skilled traders, a system already of course in operation in the rest of South Africa.

In this general arrangement the White man inevitably came to think of himself as superior and to expect that all rough manual work be done by Black or Coloured races. At all events he could not himself work in the fields even apart from the climate which in Natal coastal belt makes hard outdoor manual labour very unsuitable for White men. He would lose prestige and social standing by attempting it. Therefore the White Natalian did not expect to do the work himself but to make a living and some times a fortune by employing other people to do the hard manual labour under his direction.

The Europeans became accustomed to a system by which all the manual work was done by the Black skinned people who lived among them for a time, who existed in the midst of White community only as a source of labour and returned ultimately to their traditional

family home. In this way the stage was set for the coming of the Indians.

CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH THEY CAME

1 The coming of the Indians to Natal was not a spontaneous uncontrolled of adventurous individuals seeking a better livelihood than their home country gave them. It was part of an elaborate system organised and controlled by the Government of Great Britain and India. THE Indian Government was entirely conducted by the British at this time. It was however a separate Government with a degraded yet very considerable authority. Finally the British Government assented to the entry of Indian workers on definite contract and the government of India after lengthy negotiations with the Natal authority agreed to the terms of indenture.

The main provisions of the initial contract included free transport from India and agreement to work for ten shillings a month for three years, later five years and free food, accommodation and medical attention.

The first group of Indians arrived in Durban in November in 1860 to work as agricultural labourers in the colonies sugar estates. As far as it could the Indian government continued to care for its immigrants in the country of their destination. Each receiving colony had to enter into a separate agreement with the government of India. The wages and rations of Indians were specified and the receiving country had to appoint a protector of Immigrants whose office it was to see that the terms of the agreement were carried out, and to render any legitimate grievances of the immigrants.

Further more the immigrant was guaranteed a return passage to India if he desired it or if he decided to stay in his new country he was to come under the same law as the other inhabitants and not be subject to any special or restrictive legislation, by reason of his alien origin. Naturally the exact details of the agreement between the two countries, India and her colony receiving the immigrants differed from place to place and they were by no means adequately adhered to, but the general principals remained. Indentured emigration was finally abolished in 1917.

Beginning in 1874 and for a period of twenty years the government of Natal contributed up to a hundred thousand pounds a year towards the transporting of Indian workers.

Not all these labourers returned to India when their contract expired. Given the choice of re-indenture and a free passage to India or freedom and a small plot of land they normally choose the latter. The offer of land was rarely implemented. Moreover beginning in 1902 the payment of an annual licence of three pounds was imposed as the price of remaining in the country as free Indians. But the sugar fields found it difficult to retain workers who were attracted by hire wages to transfer to coal mining or other employment. Continued indenture was therefore the only means of maintaining adequate labour supply of indentured labour. Meanwhile the number and the proportion of Natal born Indians were added to a growing supply of free labour and in 1904 they numbered nineteen thousand and constituted twenty two percent of the total population in Natal. (Map will show distribution of Indian population as in 1951)

PALMER - M : THE HISTORY OF THE INDIANS IN NATAL : OXFORD : UN. PRESS
LONDON : NEWYORK 1957 - PAGE 11

FATHERS' BACKGROUND

Nellanahs' Father was born in India. His name was Sullah Appanah. He lived ~~in~~ in the district of Gaujan in the village of Luhminadupeta in Madras in India. He was a hawker by trade and his fathers' name was S. Errepah. He belonged to the caste Mala.

1 A caste is generally considered the most important traditional social characteristic of Indians and it is the essential part of the background of Indian immigrants to South Africa.

Six criteria define it. A caste is a distinct and exclusive social unit, membership of which is acquired by birth and retained for life unless members are out-cast through breach of caste laws.

Caste are endogamous and each endogamous caste is generally sub-divided into exogamous groups.

Caste laws impose restrictions on social contact through eating, touching or association.

Caste members claim a common origin and/or common traditional occupation(s).

In any locality castes have positions of relative prestige of higher or lower.

The caste system has a religious sanction expressed through the dogmas of Karma (moral causation) and dharma (righteous conduct) which are reflected in the social position of the individual in his different incarnations.

It was for this reason that Mr. Appanah left India. During his youth he mixed freely with youngsters who was of a lower caste than he was. His parents objected to his acquaintances and friends, but this did not deter him. Eventually he married a woman who was of a much lower caste than he was. As a result of this marriage, he was cast out of his fathers' house.

When the government appealed for Indian immigrants in 1859 to come to South Africa, he immediately took the opportunity at the age of Thirty to start a new life for him and his wife and two sons.

1. KUPER H. INDIAN PEOPLE IN NATAL.

GREENWOOD PRESS USA 1960 P13

HOW THEY CAME?

Recuiting was in the hands of government appointed agents who received a capitation fee of about 3 pounds and later 6 pounds for each individual recruited. Some recruiters told villages of a country where "chillie trees bore gold". "Money was easy, food was plentiful, fowls laid diamonds and gold was picked up in the streets and fruit hung uneaten from the trees." One old man was told that he would see the land of the Gods.

HIS FATHERS' ARRIVAL

HIS father, Mr Appanah arrived in South Africa on the 13 June 1883 in Durban on a ship called John Dave I Voyage.

Conditions under which they travelled to South Africa made it virtually impossible for them to maintain social distance. Ritual pollution, especially of the higher cast was inevitable.

On arrival at their destination, they were housed in barracks '10 X 12 with no special accomadation for unamarried woman, no privacy for the married and no consideration for caste. On the basis of caste, the traditional division of villages according to cast was irrelevant.

SUBSEQUENT EMPLOYMENT

His first place of settlement was on a Natal sugar estate in Mount Edgecombe. There he worked for a Mr Marshall Campbell where he was reasonably treated. Mr Cambell's character and his value to the sugar industry and to natal in many other ways are the following remarks which appeared in the "Natal Mercury Leader" at Sir Marshall's passing in April 1917.

"Marshall Campbell was very early drawn into public life and for some decades he wielded a potent influence in affairs of state. He was never a party politition. He never accepted political offers but the value which successive adminstrators place upon his judgement and advice is shown by the number of Commissions of Enquiry upon which he was invited to serve and by the frequency with which his assistance in important nego-

1. KUPER H. INDIAN PEOPLE IN NATAL ; GREENWOOD PRESS USA 1960 P 20
2. PAL " " " " " nego-/.....P 21
3. OSBORN R. VALIANT HARVEST SUGAR ASSOCIATION 1964 P 244

Besides family upheaval, conditions in India at the time of recruitment were deplorable. In the nineteenth century, village life in parts of India was harsh and hard. The country was under-developed, stricken periodically by famine, ravaged by disease. Home industries had decayed with the importation of British goods and cloth. Peasants were in need of land and a few wealthy landowners batted on the misery of many tenants. Some 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. Our villages changed." In India twenty percent of the Hindu population belonged to the "depressed" castes and this submerged fifth suffered most bitterly in the struggle to make a living in the poverty ridden countryside and slums of the city.

The economic motive was seldom sufficient to any Indian leaving India. It was generally related to other experiences, more especially the nature and strength of family ties which explain why from amongst several brothers, only one would emigrate or why in a small community a entire family broke away or why having emigrated some remained and others returned.

WHY OTHERS CAME ?

Many Indians did not emigrate to South Africa to escape any brand of persecution, political or religious. Nor did they come in organised bands interested in creating any particular type of society, any new type of Utopia.

The indentured came as individuals occasionally with kinsman or friends, frequently with complete strangers. They were driven to leave India by a variety of incentives, poverty, ambition, domestic tensions, restlessness of spirit, the urge to escape an epidemic or other misfortune. Some hope to return after acquiring a certain amount of wealth, others realised that they would never come back.

Indentured Hindus from orthodox, caste conscious families knew that the work for which they were indentured and the life for which they would of necessity lead during indenture were prohibited by their caste states and by breaking through the prohibition they would become outcasts among their own kin.

titions was invoked by responsible minsters.

Marshall Cambell was a member of the Legislative Council in the old days of Crown Colony Adminstration. He represented the coast district of the upper house of the Natal parliment. During this period of responsible government he was elected senator for Natal.

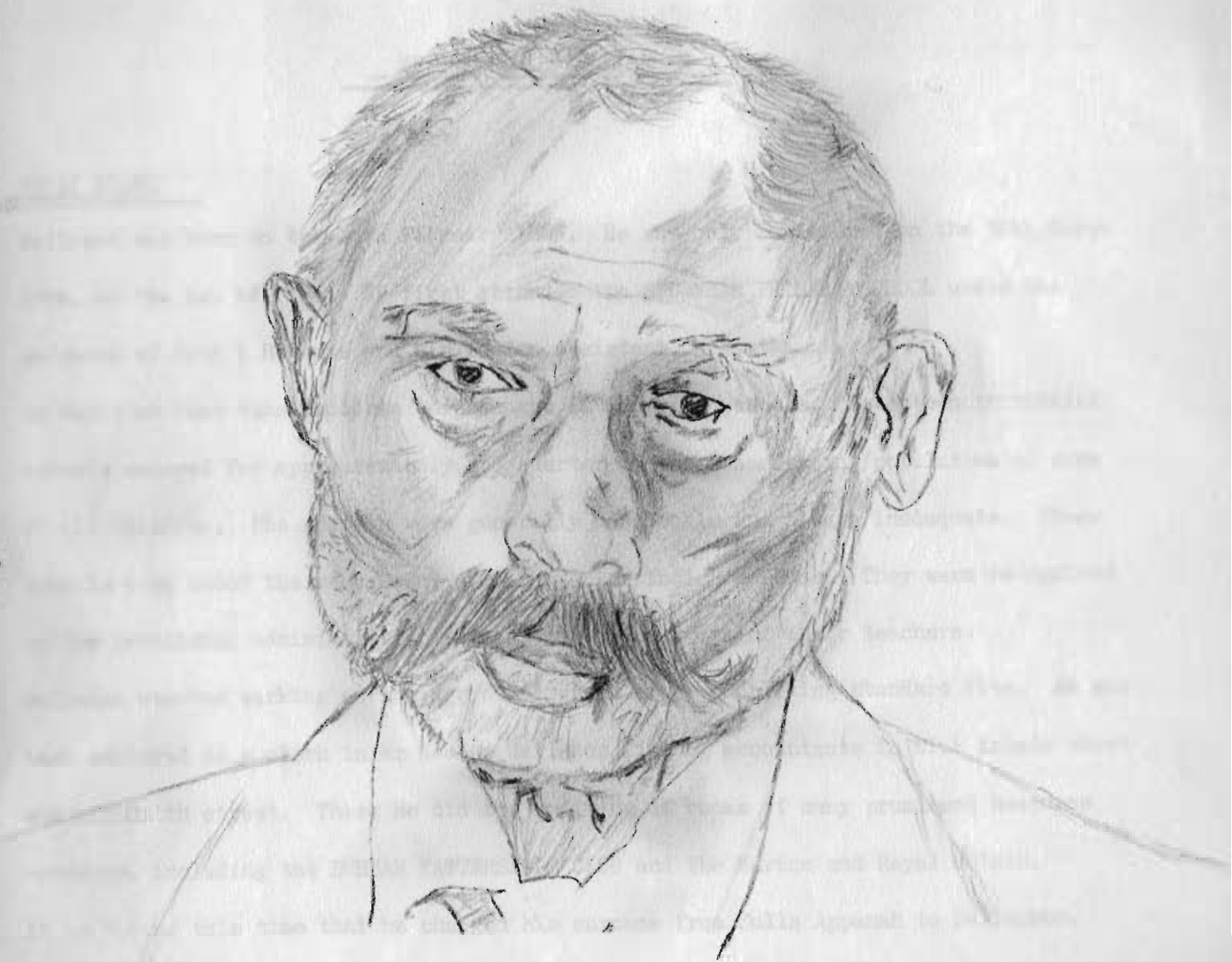
HIS FAMILY

He had five sons, namely Kurumado, Ramana, Nellannah, Shanadew, Rugoonan (who died at birth).

After his indenture had expired (five years), he purchased a large plot of land at two rand an acre in West Road, Overport. It was there that he lived until he was compelled to move out in 1965 when the property was expropriated under the Group AREAS ACT.

Nellana, his youngest son, said "It was a beautiful plot of land. My father measured out the plot which he gave to each of his four sons. When we had it properly surveyed, the surveyor found the divisions accurate to the square foot. When they moved into their new home it was completely surrounded by dense bush. There were no roads and he was the first to build dirt roads in Overport.

EXTRACT TAKEN FROM ARTICLE IN "GRAPHIC" ON MR NELLANNAH SULLAPHEN.
ON 20th FEBRUARY 1981. PAGES 8-10



PORTRIATE. OF MR. SULLAPHEN. 80 YEARS OLD

Barck
83

SUBJECT

MR NELLANAH SULLAPHEN

EARLY YEARS

Nellannah was born on the 14th February 1885. He was only registered on the 30th March 1890, at the age of five. He first attended the SYDENHAM PRIMARY SCHOOL under the guidance of John L Roberts and his Indian assistant, Nellathambi.

In Natal at that time children were taught in separate schools. Seventeen provincial schools catered for approximately one quarter of the school-going population of some 27 600 children. The schools were generally unsuitable and always inadequate. These schools were under the management of European or Indian persons. They were recognised by the provincial administration which paid the salaries of their teachers.

Nellannah started working at the age of thirteen after completing standard five. He was then employed as a clerk in Mr George Gatlands firm of accountants in Club Arcade which was off Smith street. There he did the auditing of books of many prominent business concerns, including the DURBAN TATTERSALLS CLUB and the Marine and Royal Hotels.

It is during this time that he changed his surname from Sulla Appanah to Sullaphen.

IT is believed that he met many important people because of his work. He even spent an afternoon with Sir Ryder Haggard, the novelist.

Mr Sullaphen worked there for twenty seven and a half years and only left when the firm closed down after the death of his employer. (A letter of recommendation will be included in the appendix).

He thereafter worked as a bookkeeper for A I KAJEE, for six months and later for Bassgo Produce in Warwick Avenue for five years. THIS shop was owned by his son-in-law. Nellannah Sullaphen retired at the age of seventy.

ALL INFORMATION GAINED FROM HIS DAUGHTER MRS EILEEN SULLAPHEN
REGARDING HER FATHER.

HIS MARRIAGE

He married a Mauritian immigrant, Elize Nadar, in 1913. The marriage produced four daughters:-

- | | |
|------------------------------|------------------|
| 1.) Joyce Sullaphen | 10 December 1914 |
| 2.) Phyllis Marie Sullaphen | 24 February 1917 |
| 3.) Eileen Simmond SULLAPHEN | 3 February 1920 |
| 4.) Ennet Sytona Sullaphen | 28 JANUARY 1926 |

and one son Earnest Anthony Sullaphen born 22.4.1922 and who died at the age of twenty (17.7.1942) of Asthma.

SPORTING ACTIVITIES

As a young man Nellanah was a keen sportsman and took part in cycling, running, walking, boxing, cricket, football and wrestling. He has a vast collection of trophies which he won due to his outstanding participation in the above activities. Among his collection of awards are two gold medals which were awarded to him for his winning two marathon races from Grey Street to Greenwood Park and back.

In 1909 he won the ten mile and twelve mile road races in one hour and two minutes, and one hour and six minutes respectively.

These are excellent times when one realises that the races were run on dirt roads.

Out of his love for sport developed Mr Sullaphen's dedication as a sports administrator.

He was elected as treasurer and secretary of the Durban Football Association, as well as the secretary of the group which established Currië's Fountain.

1 "When we first used the place it was a swamp," said Mr Sullphen, "together with the other committee members we persuaded the town council to drain the place to establish playing fields. We used to have a football field which also served as a race track for a motor cycling club, recalls Mr Sullphen.

Among others he was secretary for the Durban Sunday League and the Durban Cricket Union. He served as secretary for more than ten years in Curries Fountain till he was forced to retire because of ill health.

LATER LIFE

During the first world war 1914 to 1918, he was secretary for First and Second Company and for Indian Bearer Corps. Assisting him was Mr Lazarus Gabriel. Together they raised funds to send comforts to Indian soldiers.

Mr Sullphen was also associated for many years with the Durban Sports Ground Association. One day he and several of his fellow sports administrators were arrested and put in jail for breaking the law against Vagrants.

In those days there were no buses or trains available for non-whites and the sports administrators used to meet after work. The meetings would quite carry on until well after nine o' clock and the curfew came into effect. There was a war going on and Indians were not allowed into streets after nine o' clock.

Because they could not raise the bail of ten shillings one of the group offered to write out a cheque to cover the bail, while the White sergent accepted this and they were released.

When the case came to court they were acquitted. When the magistrate questioned the sergent as to how he could have accepted a cheque from a vagrant, he could not reply. They subsequently laid charges against the Crown and were awarded damages of four pounds ten shillings each. A gold watch and chain was bought with the money as a memento.

As a result of their arrest, Mr Sullphen and his friends approached the Municipality to provide transport for Non-Whites. Out of this arose the concession whereby Non-Whites were allowed to occupy the three back rows of seats at the back of the trams. At the turn of the century Mr Sullphen and many others established the Sydenham Hindu Youth Movement Society (SHYMS). Other founder members were Mr G O Lalla

V W Thambadod/.....

V W Thambadod, Billy Subban, S Ramthal and a few others (who are not mentioned).

The meetings were held at the residence of Mr S J Lallas. The SHYMS still exists today. The members purchased a plot of land in Essendene Road, Overport and erected a hall and a school. The foundation stone was laid by Mrs Sarogini Naidoo during her visit to this country.

They used to raise funds in those days to run their annual Deepvalli Sports day.

THEY also arranged sports events for the benefit of many dignitaries who came to Durban. They also had a special sports programme to entertain Mahatma Gandhi when he came on his farewell visit to Durban. Mr Sullphen recalled, "I met this great and wonderful man who was filled with awe. He was so rich spiritually."

HIS FINAL YEARS

Three months after his wife died in 1959 Mr Sullphen went totally blind and remained so until the cataracts were removed surgically in 1966. It was owing to his blindness that his employment had to be terminated. In his last years he went to live with his youngest daughter, Eileen, a spinster in Clayton Gardens. It was here that he spent reading and doing cross-word puzzles. He died in 1979 at the age of 94.

1. THE GRAPHIC 20 FEBRUARY 1981 p8-9

CONCLUSION (SORRY ITS NOT TITLED), THE TITLE IS UP

It is until this day that approximately eighty percent of the Indians who arrived from India, remain, (their descendants). They have risen from almost slavery to one of the wealthiest nations in this country.

Not only have they excelled in wealth but also in education and in politics. Today, the Indians who came here as workers have their own political organisations and are busy fighting against the injustices of the country. An example of one of their political organisations is the (SAIC) South African Indian Council.

They have become such a large part of the South African nation that they have their own universities, hospitals, schools, temples, mosques etc.

What I most admire about these people is that they came from the east with their culture and heritages, but refused to become assimilated into the South Africa society, instead they have rather accommodated everyone else and held onto or kept their ancient traditions. Very few if any have become totally westernized. This just shows what calibre of people they are. Whatever they have achieved in this country whether it be education or politics, they did not get it for nothing, they had to work for it and in the end fight for it. That's what makes them different from the other nationalities of South Africa. They are extremely unique group of people who are bound to go ahead but in the end achieve their aims. I have thoroughly enjoyed tracing back to my roots. I found it fascinating learning about these wonderful people.

THE INDIANS IN NATAL - 1951

