

P R E F A C E

I have endeavoured to accentuate adequately the history of an indentured Indian labourer in Natal with particular reference to his prearrival history, his developments that led up to and after his arrival in Natal and his subsequent life history.

Much effort has been put towards compilation of this project which includes visits to the Durban Municipal Library, the Division of Indian Affairs, the homes of the Tungan Family and the Documentation Centre in our Campus. I have tried to give a very objective and factual account of my subject

MR. TUNGAN.

I accept full responsibility for the final product.

UNIVERSITY OF DURBAN WESTVILLE

J.C. THAMBARAN

(14083)

1983

A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T S

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provided by the following people:

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Mr. S. Kisten for providing me with relevant
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2. The Division of Indian Affairs for providing me
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4. Molly Gunpath for being so obliging in the
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U.D.W.

J.C. THAMBARAN

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T A B L E O F C O N T E N T S

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1. INTRODUCTION

The first Indians came to Natal as a result of persistent demands for cheap and reliable labour by a group of Europeans who had preceded them by less than 40 years. Although Natal was largely populated by about 90 000, ^{Zulus} they were not yet prepared to sell their labour for long stretches of time to the White man whose economics and values were alien to their own.

As a result of negotiations between the Governments of Natal and India, the first batch of indentured Indians arrived on the S.S. TEURO on 16 November 1860. Recruiting agents were used to select labourers for indenture. Many recruiters resorted to devious means so that they could attract Indians to Natal. Hilda Kuper maintains that stories of our ancestors in South Africa are often told by our grand parents and informants which forms part of the current mythology of South African Indian Life

Indians were told that 'gold grew on chilli trees', 'fruits were so plentiful that they hung uneaten from the trees' and 'hens laid diamonds'. Other agents resorted to 'coolie catching' ie. Young Indians/

Indians were kidnapped and put aboard streamers bound for Natal.

The response of Indians with regard to the indenture system was good because of conditions in India around that time. The main problem areas were poverty, famine domestic tension, urge to escape epidemics and other misfortunes. All the labourers recruited had to be physically fit and under 30 years. Therefore each indentured labour had to undergo a medical check up. Two thirds of the labourers came from the Madras Presidency, who were mainly Tamil and Telegu speaking. Others came from the Calcutta Districts viz:

Uttar Pradesh, Madaya Pradesh, Orissa, Biher and West Bengal.

Initially the indenture was for a period of 3 years, later 5 years. After which the labourer could take a free passage home or he may re-indenture for a further 5 years. After this period the labourer could either take a free trip home or accept a piece of crown land in lieu of the passage. While the recruiting was initially for the sugar plantations, it was soon extended to the railways, dockyards, coalmines, municipal services and domestic employment. The recruiting of Indentured labourers from India was stopped in 1911.

2.(a). LIFE/



Page 11

Late Mr. Poongavanum. A pioneer of Education in the District. A foundation member of the Moonsamy G.A.I. School Committee. Unhesitatingly placed his motor vehicle at the service of School Committee in the upliftment of the school.

2.(a). LIFE IN INDIA AND HIS ARRIVAL

My subject the late Mr Pungan also known as Mr. Poogavanum by friends and relatives was born in North Arcot in the Madras Presidency of India. the village in which he lived was called Thiruvathujur. He lived with his parents in a hut house. They owned two oxen and a wagon which was reflected as their wealth. Mr Pungan could be regarded as a wholesaler because he went about buying and selling leather to various people. They also owned a small peice of land which was cultivated with tobacco. Mr Pungan was tired of his monotonous way of life. He heard rumours that gold nuggets were picked up every where in Natal and thus people became rich overnight. He saw this as an opportunity for success, therefore he decided to come to Natal. He arrived at Durban Harbour on the 19 February 1907 in the S.S. UVDHLOTI. He was accompanied by his wife who came from a neighbouring district called Parasoor. Initially Mr Pungan wanted to work in the sugar fields but the authorities wanted him to be in charge of an ox wagon because he was well versed in transport. Eventually Mr Pungan had the choice of working in the Tea Farm.

(b). THE/

DEPARTMENT OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS

COPY OF SHIP'S LIST OF INDIAN IMMIGRANT

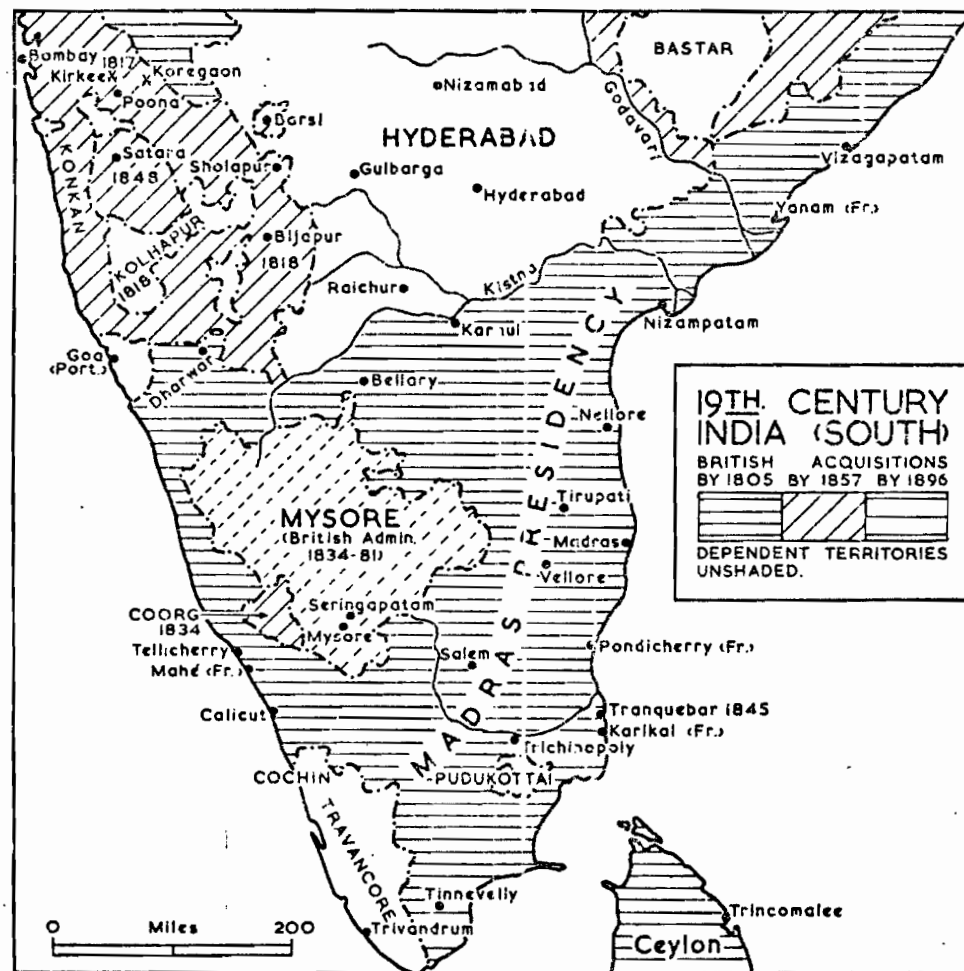
Serial Number	:	449
Colonial Number	:	130575
Date of Arrival	:	19.02.1907
Name of Ship	:	UMHLOTI 1ST
Place of Registration	:	-
Date of Registration	:	-
Number in Register	:	-
Name	:	PUNGAN
Father's Name	:	VELAN
Age	:	25 YRS
Sex	:	MALE
Caste	:	PARIA
District	:	N. ARCOT
Thanna/Taluq	:	ARCOT
Village	:	THIRUVATHIUR
Height	:	5'4"
Bodily Marks	:	SCAR BEHIND LEFT FOREARM
Name of Next-of-Kin	:	FATHER
Relations Accompanied	:	-
Small Pox/Vaccinated	:	VACCINATED
Remarks	:	

Certified a true copy.

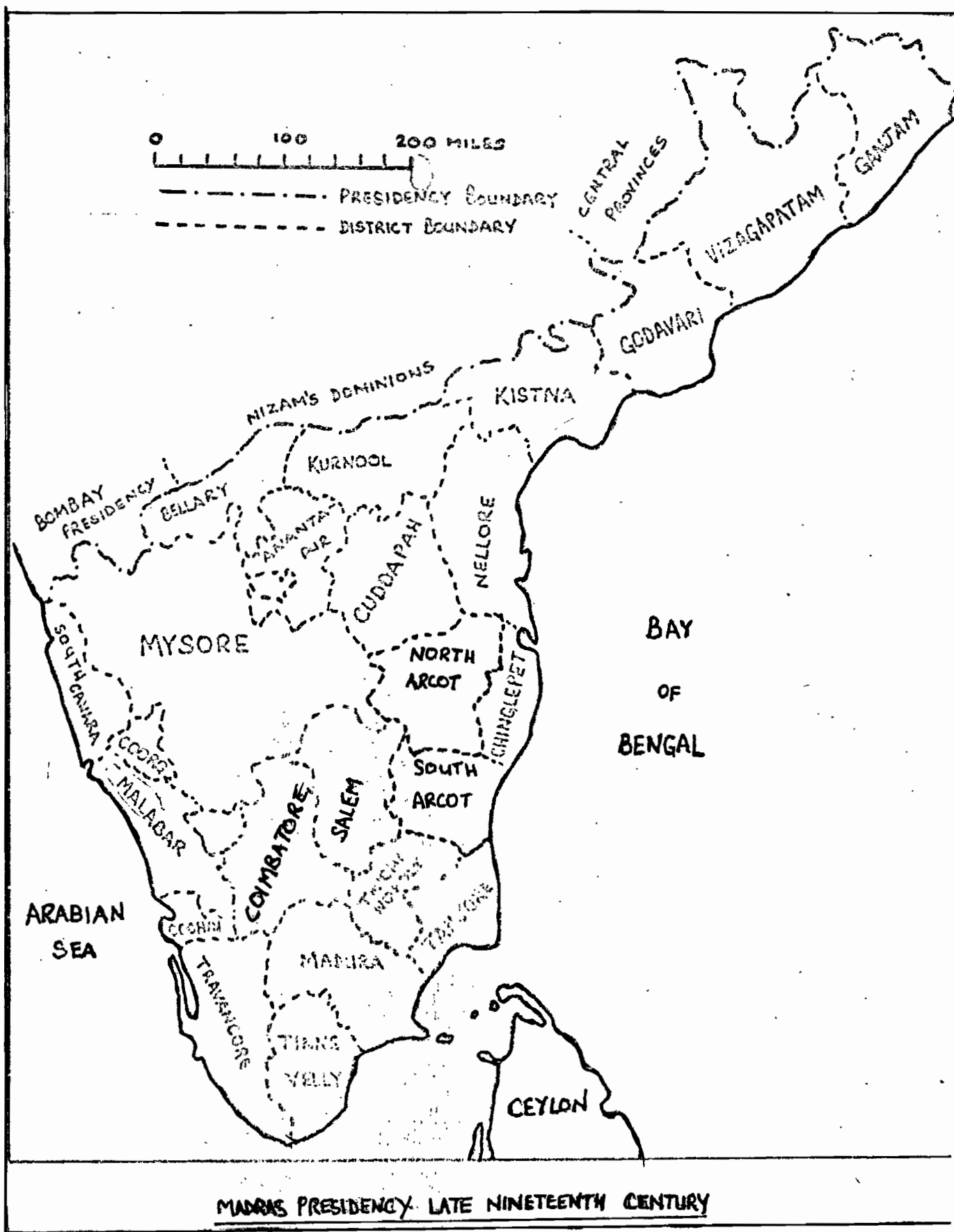
Qskl
REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE



Note on Maps 43 and 44.
The extension of British territory in the nineteenth century fell into two well-defined phases. Up to the time of the Mutiny, territories of Indian States were annexed either as the result of war or by application of the 'doctrine of lapse' in case of misgovernment or failure of direct heirs. After the Mutiny, and the consequent replacement of the East India Company by the British Crown, annexations at the expense of Indian States ceased, and further expansion was directed to establishing a satisfactory and defensible North-West Frontier. All unshaded states and tribal territories within the Indian border acknowledged British suzerainty at various dates, but remained autonomous.



Map 44



D.KUMAR :: Land and Caste in South India.

3. THE TEA ESTATE PLANTATION

They settled in Groenberg farm. Here they worked in the tea plantations which belonged to Mr George Armstrong. The farm was approximately 300 acres which was subdivided into plots. Tea seeds were imported from Ceylon which were sown in specially prepared beds. After about 6 weeks the plants were transplanted over large areas of the land. Water was obtained from the Umhlanga River for domestic and agricultural purposes. The tea factory was situated about 50 metres from the river. Also a large number of coniferous trees were planted to serve as windbreakers.

Mr Fungan and his wife worked on the tea plantations. There were approximately 400 workers employed on the tea farm. Mr Fungan was in charge of preparing the seed beds. The seed beds were made by about 6 to 7 rounds of light tilling. About 1500 seeds were sown in each bed. He also transplanted and maintained the trees. Generally he was confined to one particular type of job, on the farm. Usually the tea plants needed very little care. Occasionally fowl manure was used. Tea can be grown on soil of practically any texture, the lightest of sand to stiffest of clay.

A white/

A white manager^{was} in charge of the entire tea farm whose house^{was} built on a hill near the tea factory. The workers were housed in compounds called Kotris. They worked 6 days a week from 6 o'clock in the morning to 5 o'clock in the evening. A large number of women were employed especially for picking of tea, others were in charge of rolling, packing and sticking of labels. The tea bushes were plucked about 4 times a year. Each worker had to pluck about 40 lb's of tea per day. If more than 40 lb's were collected they received a bonus of 3 shillings for every extra pound. The average wage was 10 shillings per month, included were rations, viz: 2 lb dholl, (Tea) 2 lb rice, mealie meal, 1 bottle oil and salt.

Tea is made from the very young leaves and the unopened leaf buds of the tea plant. With regard to tea preparation, Harler says the following:-

"Tea can be prepared in several ways to produce black or green tea. To make the former leaf is usually withered and distorted by rolling or some vigorous procedure. The leaf cell juices are then exposed to the air to oxidize or ferment. The
(The?/9)
leaf/

leaf is then dried in hot air and black tea results. If the fresh leaf is heated in steam or a hot pan, the leaf odour is thereby destroyed so that fermentation does not take place on rolling and green tea results when the leaf is dried".⁽³⁾

The tea produced on the Tea Estate Plantations were marketed under the Five Roses label. The liquoring qualities and the flavour of a tea infusion are important, but the beverage is primarily drunk for its stimulating effects of caffeine.

Mr. Fungan being an intelligent and outspoken man fought for the rights of the workers. During this time Indian conditions in Natal were unstable which resulted dissatisfaction amongst workers and minor strikes. Mr Fungan was imprisoned together with his wife and child for 3 months. He was black-listed and in danger of being repatriated. According to my interview with his son Mr. Kisten, it was rather a corruption of names that led to his imprisonment. When Mr. Fungan and his family were released he did not seek employment in the tea farm. He ^{had} spent about 4 years working on the tea farm.

A few years later Mr Armstrong sold the tea farm to Mr E.M Paruk who worked the farm for a period of about/

about 15 years. He was forced to close down because imported tea was sold more cheaply. Mr. Paruk put the land on sale and majority of the Indians bought the land in required quantities. Therefore this area occupied by Indians today is called TEA ESTATE. Many of the Indians became sugar, vegetable and fruit farmers.

4.(a). THE/



HOUSE
THIS WAS THE MANAGERS' NOW OWNED
BY MR. S. K. MOODLEY



THE REMAINS FOUNDATION OF WHERE THE
TEA FACTORY ONCE STOOD



INDIAN WOMEN PICKING TEA ON THE TEA PLANTATIONS

4.(a). THE WATTLE COMPANY

Since Mr. Fungan was an intelligent man with a lot of potential he was able to obtain employment with a wattle company. Generally the work involved stripping bark from the wattle~~s~~ trees. The bark was loaded on trollies which was

 pulled by a locomotive to the tanning factory in Lower Inanda. Later Mr Fungan was given the post of a Sidar. He was in charge of a gang of labourers. He was also transferred to the main factory where he worked for a few years. He received about £2,10 a month including rations similiar to that on the tea plantations. Since the wages was good Mr. Fungan served about 12 Years in Wattle company.

(b). LAND OWNERSHIP

Around 1930 he purchased 130 acres of lease land from Mr. Groom. In order to bring about a settlement of Indians, he gave part of the land to friends and relatives. Mr Fungan started off as a vegetable and banana farmer. The crops grew well because of the handwork/

hard work put in by his family. They watered the crops by hand and fertilised them with sugarcane manure and fowl manure. Every week he sent his produce to an Indian marketing agent known as Highberry Farm whose warehouse was situated in Prince Edward Street in Durban. Often farmers sent in more produce than what they were paid for. The agent paid the farmers after long periods of time so that the money received by the farmers seemed substantial amounts.

In 1940 as a result of the prosperous farming Mr. Pungan was able to purchase 2 pieces of land, one about 30 acres and another 12 acres in the Tea Estate area. Since the price of sugar cane rose Mr. Pungan took to sugar cane cultivation. The Indian farmers were better able to cope because they were well versed in sugar cultivation. Mr. Pungan purchased a sugar cane quota of 200 tons for about £400 (800 rands)

5. ESTABLISHMENT/

5. ESTABLISHMENT OF MOONSAMY'S SCHOOL

In the 1930's Mr. Pungan's children were educated at the Wolmer Missionary School by Miss Olive Warner. Both Indian and Africans were taught side by side. Other teachers were Mr. Alpha, Z. Dube, Mr. Samuel and Mr. Kanoo Pillay. Mr. Kanoo was a Tamil teacher who taught Tamil songs to pupils. He also acted as interpreter to Miss Oliver Warner. The number of students increased and there were bitter feelings that Indian and African children were taught together. Mr. Matthews another teacher motivated for another school. The *enlightened farmers* Mr. P. Moonsamy, A.N. Moodeley. Pungan, K.L. Niacker. R. Shunmmugam with Mr. Vish and Joe Stevens made an Application to the Natal Education Department. Mr. P. Moonsamy accompanied by Mr. Muragas toured the Union of South Africa with his 'Studar baker', Vehicle, to raise funds for this building project. In 1939 land was purchased from Mr. Dharmia and Mr. Surie. The 1st block consisting of 3 classrooms were built in 1940. The school was extended in 1951 and in 1964 to relieve accomadation problems. Many parents rallied magnificiently to the call of funds. In addition to the necessary/

necessary classrooms a fairly spacious staffroom and kitchen was built. The school was named after Mr. P. Moonsamy, because he contributed the largest amount of money to make this building project a success.

Mr Dungan was a founding member of the Moonsamy Government Aided School Committee. He unhesitatingly placed his motorvehicle at the service of the school committee in the upliftment of the school. He assisted in transporting bricks and other building materials to the school. It was also further intention of the School Committee to convert the school latrines to water borne systems. Thus over the years the school had developed to meet the growing needs of the community.

6. CONCLUSION/

WOLMER MISSIONARY SCHOOL

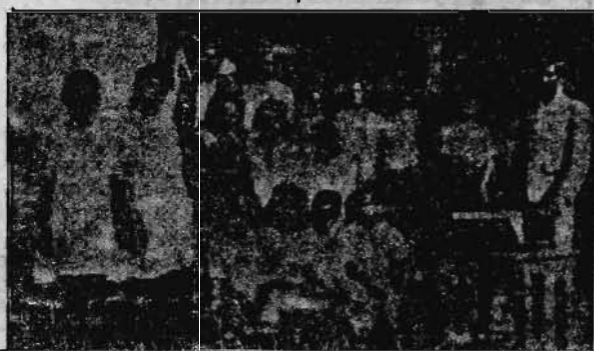
Humble Beginning



MISS O. WARNER WITH STAFF



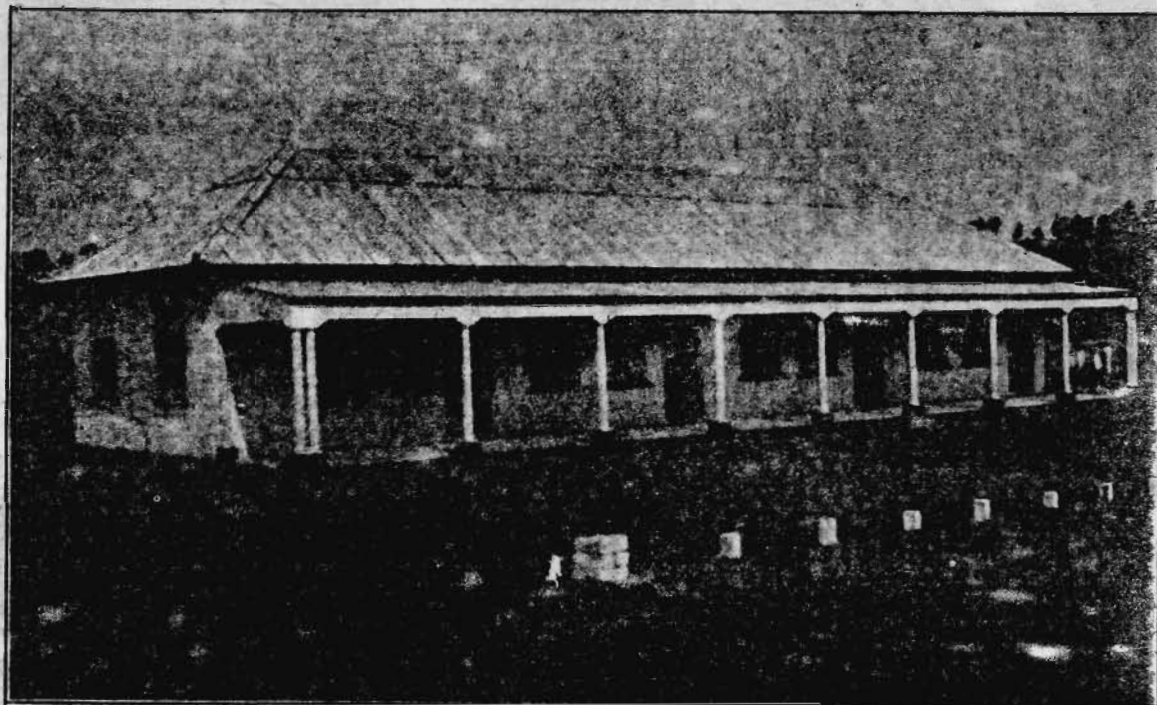
MR. MATTHEW, WITH MISS O. WARNER
AND PUPILS



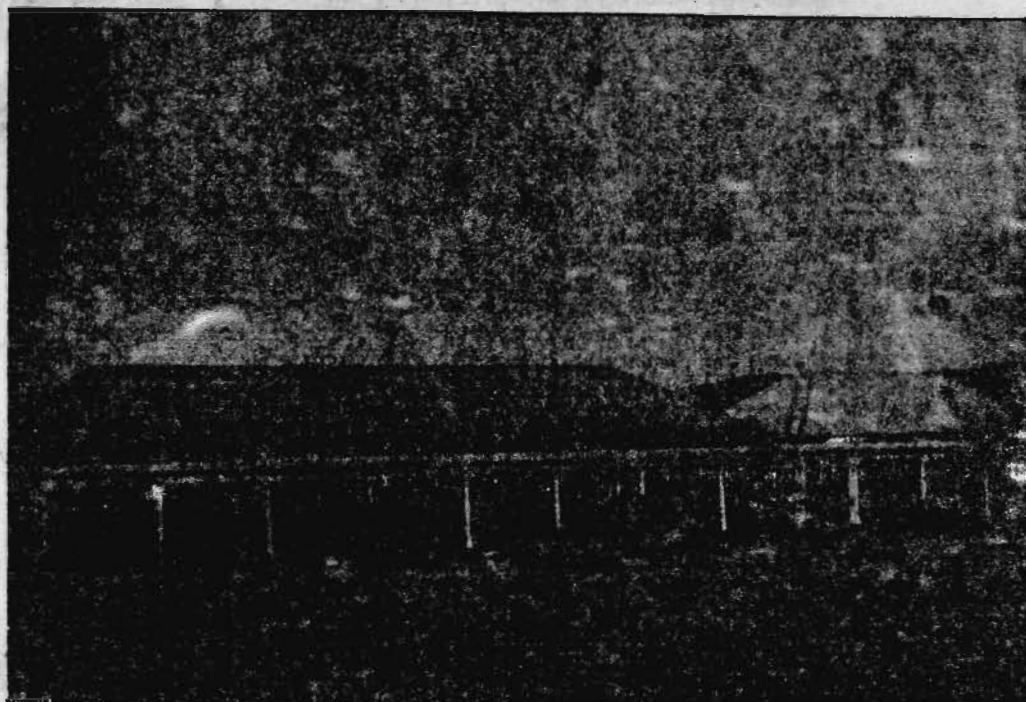
MR. KANOO PILLAY - TEACHING MUSIC
(TAMIL) 1931

MOONSAMY GOVERNMENT AID INDIAN SCHOOL

1st Block - 1940.



1st and 2nd Blocks - 1951.



MOONSAMY GOVERNMENT AID INDIAN SCHOOL

6. CONCLUSION

One of the grandson's Mr. Shunmugam Kisten who is a principal of Fairbreeze Primary School went on a tour to India last year (1982). He tried to locate his fathers relatives but unfortunately he was unsuccessful because THURUVATHUJAR had been expropriated by the Indian Government for the development of industries.

In his book THE SOUTH AFRICAN INDIANS WHO'S WHO, Manjoo maintains Mr Fungan was born in 1862 and he arrived in Natal in 1907 at the age of 25. According to my calculations Mr. Fungan would have been 45 years old when he arrived in Natal. With reference to the shiplist he did come in 1907 at the age of 25. This fact is further reinforced by the fact that all indentured labourers recruited had to be under the age of 30. Therefore his birth date is incorrect. A more accurate birth date would be 1882 rather than 1862.

Mr Fungan was a pioneer of education and farming in the Tea Estate Area. He had 5 sons and 5 daughters. One of his son's is a teacher, another retired and the rest are farmers. He died at the age of 77 in 1959.

7. SOURCE/

7. SOURCE LIST

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