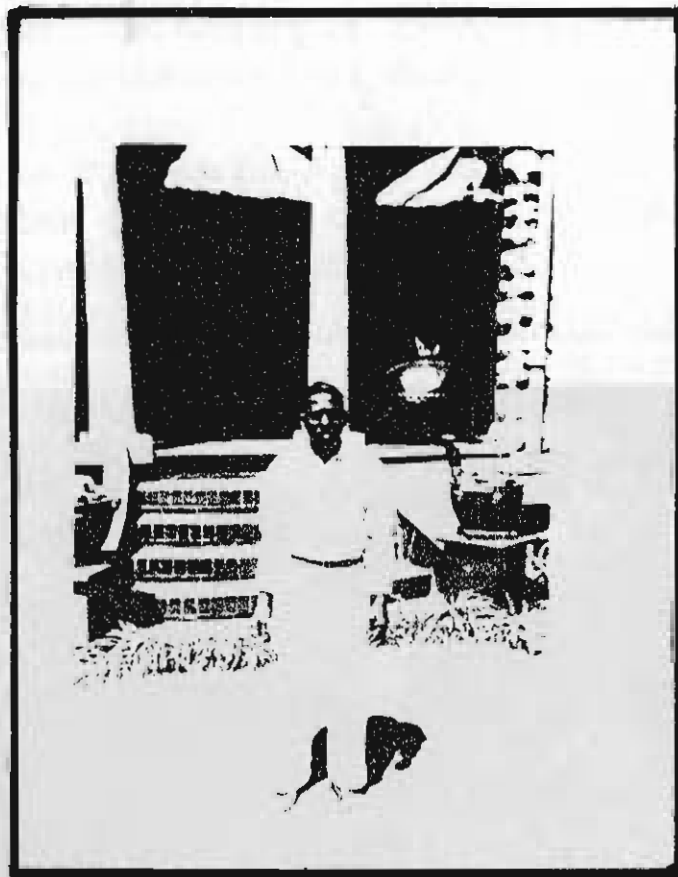


40 [The immigration of

B Gurriah to South Africa]

CHAPTER

PAGE



(1902 -)

1983

[V. NAIDOO] 701 540

12922

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CHAPTER

PAGE

MY SINCERE THANKS AND APPRECIATION TO THE FOLLOWING :

1. PROFESSOR S. BHANA, HEAD OF DEPARTMENT, DEPARTMENT OF
HISTORY, **1** UNIVERSITY OF DURBAN-WESTVILLE **8** HIS GUIDANCE
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3. MR. B. GURRIAH WHO KINDLY CONSENTED TO BE INTERVIEWED UNDER TRYING CIRCUMSTANCES TOWARDS THE COMPILATION OF THE PROJECT.
4. MR. HENDRY GURRIAH WHO READILY AGREED TO ACT AS INTERPRETER FOR HIS FATHER.
5. MISS VANI MOODLEY WHO WILLINGLY AND EFFICIENTLY TYPED THE SCRIPT.
6. MISS NIRA NAIDOO FOR THE PROOF-READING.
7. ALL THOSE WHO HAVE ASSISTED IN SOME WAY OR OTHER TOWARDS THE COMPILATION OF THE PROJECT.

Dedication

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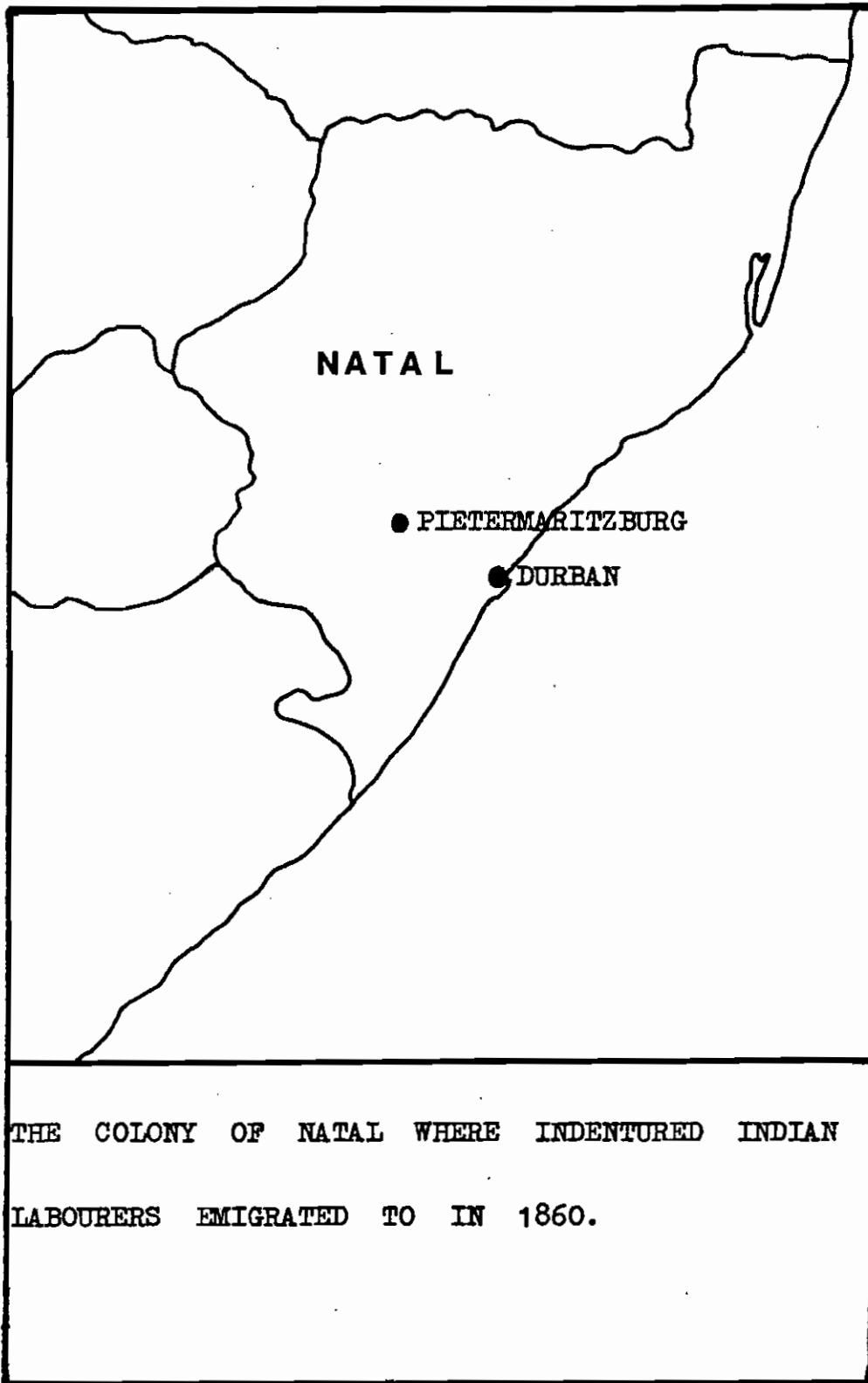
chapter 1

Britain annexed Natal in 1843 and British settlers living in this province found that the climate was ideally suited to the cultivation of sugar cane and thus began establishing large sugar plantations¹. Considerable labour resources were needed for this industry. The Bantu population of Natal were mainly herdsmen, and the men did not like working on the fields. The labour problems on the sugar plantations forced the British to seek other alternatives. Thus the idea was born to import labourers from India. Other sugar producing countries had grown rich with the help of indentured Indian labour². Why not Natal?

When the first Indian, Babu Naidoo, arrived in Durban in 1855, nobody had any idea that many of his compatriots would follow him to Natal.³

On 21 July 1860 the Legislative Council of British India passed Act Number 33 of 1860, clearing the way for the importation of indentured Indian labourers⁴ into the colony of Natal.

1. F.A. van Jaarsveld: Illustrated History, p.548
2. E.A. Walker: Cambridge History of the British Empire. Volume 8, p.561
3. C.F.J. Muller (ed): 500 Years, p.218
4. I. Machin and others: History is about change, p.88



The Indians did not emigrate to South Africa to escape any specific brand of persecution, political or religious, nor did they come in organized bands interested in creating any particular type of society.⁵ 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 misfortunes.

The Indian population in Natal had **arrived** for the most part as indentured labourers in a succession of shiploads since 1860. On one particular Friday afternoon, the 16 November 1860 the large barque "Truro" made the anchorage at Port Natal, and signalled the fact of her having a large number of labourers on board.⁶ They were mainly low caste Hindus from Madras and more than a third of those who arrived⁷ were women.

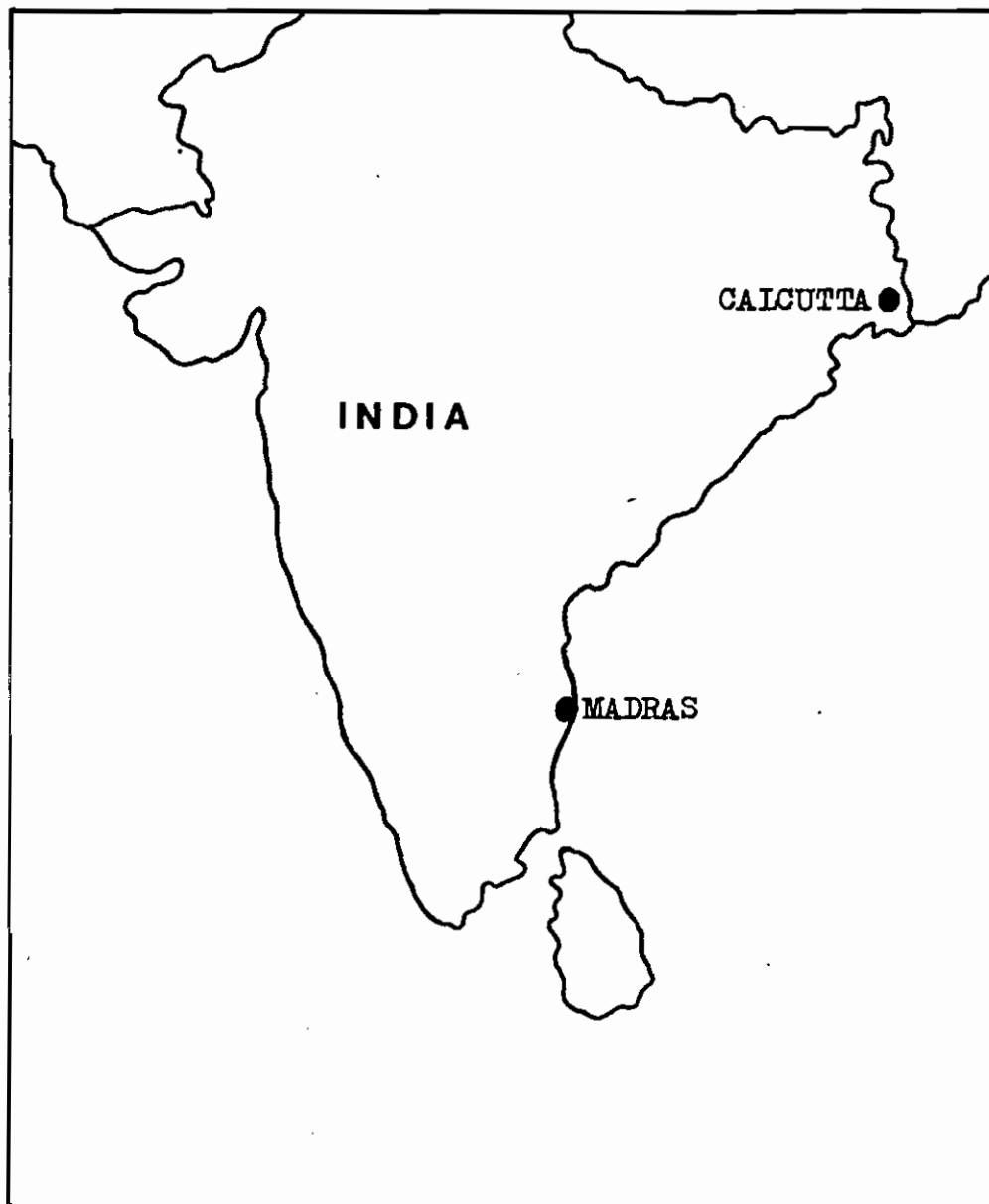
The labourers disembarked and were taken to the barracks by waggons. On Wednesday, 21 November 1860 at ten o' clock in the morning the indentured Indian labourers were allotted to⁸ the various parties who had applied for them. This was done by an immigration officer who was appointed at Durban. He **was** solely in charge of administering the whole scheme. In addition to allocating the labourers, he controlled the financial arrangements and also registered the labourers.

5. C. Shields: The Making of a Nation, p.50

6. Natal Mercury: 22 November 1860

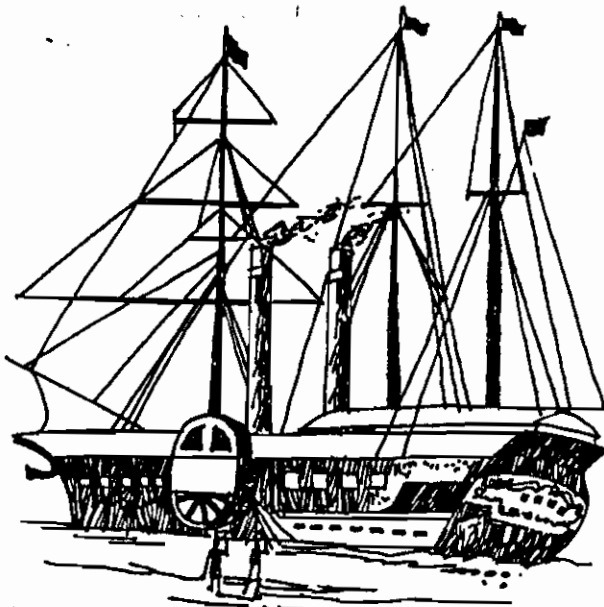
7. T.R.H. Davenport: South Africa: A Modern History, p.91

8. Natal Star: 24 November 1860



THE TWO IMPORTANT HARBOURS IN INDIA FROM
WHERE INDIAN LABOURERS WERE SHIPPED TO
NATAL.

On the 26 November 1860 the second ship bringing the Indian⁹ labourers, the "Belvedere" reached the anchorage.



THE TYPE OF SHIP WHICH BROUGHT
INDENTURED INDIAN LABOURERS TO NATAL.

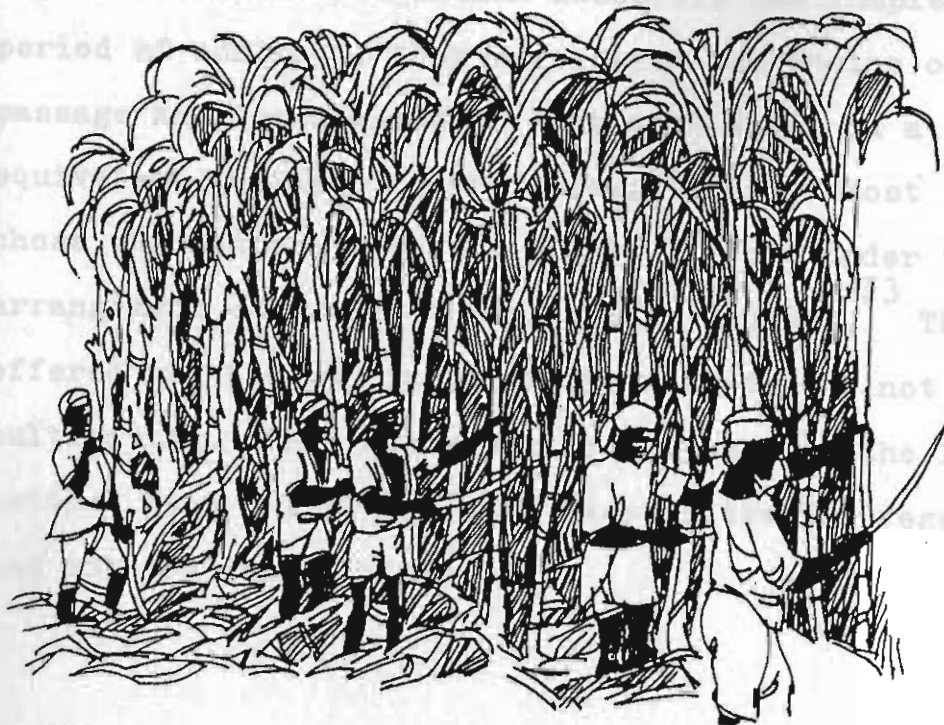
I. MACHIN and others : HISTORY IS ABOUT CHANGE, p.89

In addition to receiving a free passage to Natal the labourers were given free rations, simple accommodations and medical attention was also to be provided. The Indian labourers were allotted to masters for three years under indenture. The masters were to pay them ten shillings per month for the first year rising to twelve shillings in the third year.¹⁰

9. Natal Mercury: 6 December 1860

10. E.A. Walker: A History of Southern Africa, p.296

By 1865 there were 6 500 Indians in Natal. ^{II}



INDENTURED INDIAN LABOURERS WORKING ON A SUGAR
ESTATE. Boyce: Europe and South Africa, p.721

I. MACHIN and others : HISTORY IS ABOUT CHANGE, p.91

Complaints of ill-treatment led to the Indian Government prohibiting further immigration of Indian indentured labourers from India. When measures for better control of indentured Indian labour were instituted in 1874, immigration of indentured Indian labour resumed at a higher level and by 1911

II. Family Radio and TV: Supplement (12 May 1980), p. 2

when it ceased about 143 000 Indians had come to Natal and
^{I2}
 only about 27 000 returned to India.

After the indentured Indian labourers had completed their period of contract, they were given the choice of a free passage home or allowed to settle in Natal on a plot equivalent in value to the passage money. Most Indians chose the latter, although grants of land under this arrangement were made to only fifty Indians.^{I3} The land offered to them was far from the markets and not worth cultivating. They consequently disposed of the land and settled near the towns where they cultivated vegetables and sub-tropical fruits.

I2. F.A. van Jaarsveld: From Van Riebeeck to Vorster,
 p. 314

I3. A.N. Boyce: Europe and South Africa, p.721

chapter 2

Very few indentured Indian labourers continued working on the sugar estates. Most, however, continued working as agricultural labourers. One such person who continued working on the sugar estates was a young woman called Pardarum. She arrived in the colony of Natal on 28 December 1906^{I4} with her only son Bhimarapu Gurriah. Gurriah came to South Africa as a four year old boy. He was born on 1 January 1902 in a village called Bhimavaram which is in the district of Godavari.^{I5} This district is in South India. Gurriah belongs to the Dhoby caste and he is very proficient in the Telegu vernacular.

Prior to her arrival in Natal, Gurriah's mother worked mainly as a casual labourer in India, ie ironing and washing clothes. His father's occupation is unknown. When he was four years old, his father B. Pasupulu died in an epidemic and the only alternative left for mother and son was to seek their fortune elsewhere. Therefore she eagerly accepted the conditions which were being offered to indentured Indian labourers who were being shipped to Natal during that period. When Gurriah questioned his mother on why she was leaving India, she replied, "Son, if we have to live here in this village, we will have to face the hardships and poverty. Now that your father is dead, it will be difficult to feed the family."^{I6}

I4. Document I

I5. B. Gurriah: Oral Conversation

I6. Ibid.

Gurriah and his mother travelled by ship to Natal.

They embarked on a ship at Madras, a southern port on the Indian sub-continent. The ship was the "Umkuzi".^{I7}

The journey was not a pleasant one as the indentured Indian labourers were subjected to many hardships on the voyage.

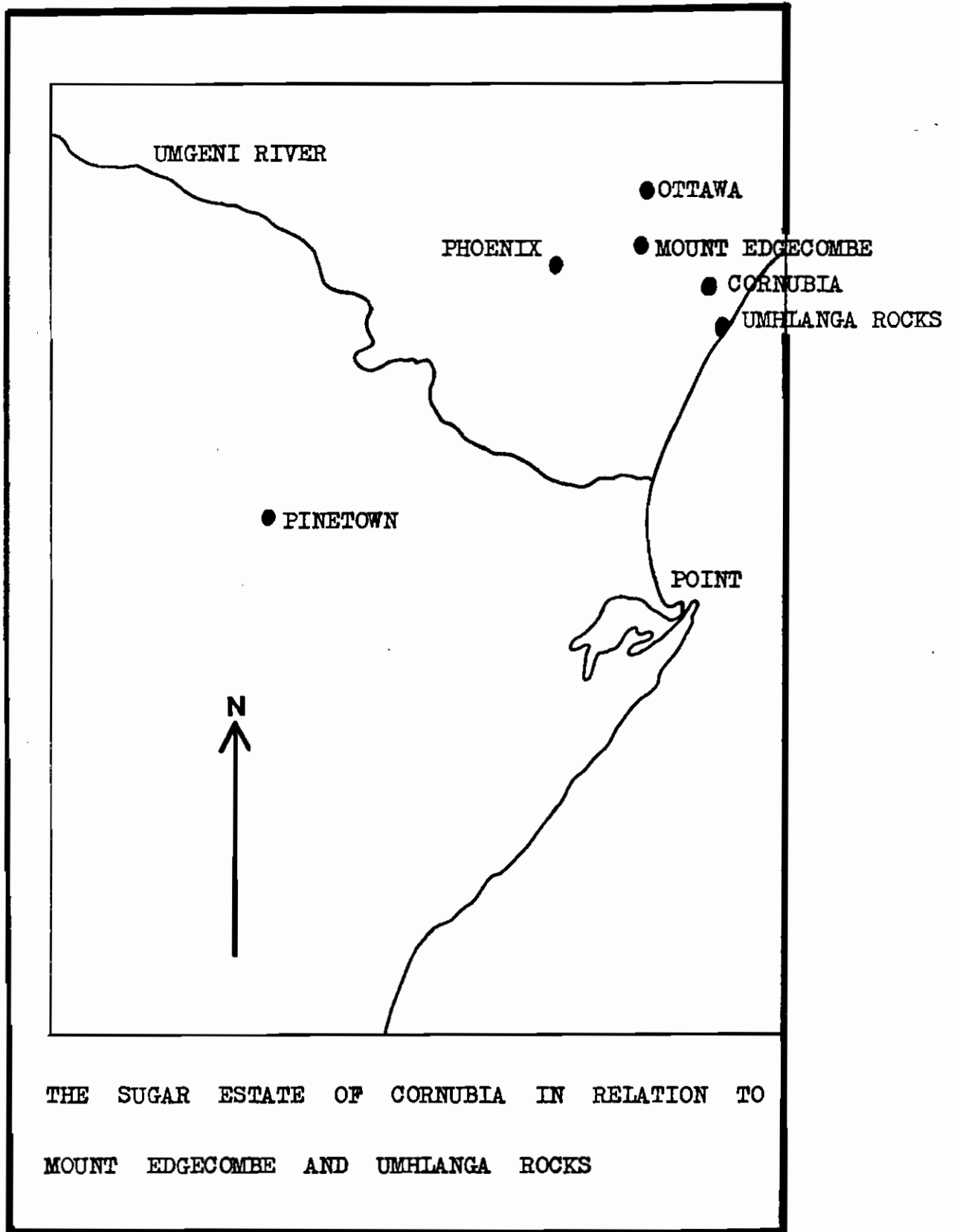
After a long but very unpleasant journey, the ship dropped anchor in Durban Bay on the 28 December 1906.^{I8} Gurriah stepped on foreign soil just three days short of this fourth birthday. They were transported by ox waggon to the barracks where indentured Indian labourers were housed before being contracted. Gurriah and his mother were assigned to the Natal Estates Limited, one of the many large sugar companies established in the coastal belt of Natal. This was on 10 January 1907. They were transported by waggon to Cornubia, one of the many sugar estates in the district of Mount Edgecombe.

Gurriah's mother was employed on the sugar cane fields. Her occupation was to pick sugar cane tops (seedlings) for planting. While working on this sugar estate she met Pariah^{I9} also an indentured Indian labourer from India. They did not marry legally but lived as man and wife. Their home was a room which was constructed out of mud walls, twigs, branches and boulders. This room was one of the many which constituted the barracks where the indentured Indian labourers were accommodated.

I7. Document I

I8. Ibid

I9. B. Gurriah: Oral Conversation



The one room served all the purposes of a home-kitchen, lounge, dining and bedroom. Toilet and bathroom facilities were a rarity for Indians during that period.

From this union between Pardarum and Pariah were born three children - two sons and a daughter. The sons' names are, Beemadu and Appalsamy while the daughter's name is Gullamma. All three of them are presently living in Mount Edgecombe being the parents and grandparents of many sons, daughters, grandsons and grand daughters respectively.

Cornubia, one of the many sugar estates of the Natal Estates Limited, was a ²⁰small village which comprised of about fifty families. No shopping, recreational or religious facilities were provided. There was also no educational facilities provided although there was a large number of children living there. Gurriah's mother earned a salary of ten shillings a month. She also collected ration on a monthly basis and this constituted mealie meal, dhall and rice.

There was a school in Mount Edgecombe which taught the three R's. Gurriah did not attend school and as such he received no formal English instruction. Gurriah worked for the Natal Estates Limited for a period of five years from 10 January 1907 (the day he was assigned to the Company) to 10 January 1912 (the day when he was released from his ²¹obligation of indentureship).

20. Ibid

21. Document II

Since they were released from their "contracts", Pariah, Pardarum and Gurriah decided to try their "luck" on other sugar estates. In the year 1913, when Gurriah was ten years old the family moved to Tongaat. His mother and step-father were now employed by Edward Saunders, who was the owner of the old sugar mill in Maidstone. It was in Maidstone, Tongaat that Gurriah had a taste of his first "real" occupation - that of grazing mules. While in Tongaat he attended vernacular school. The school was housed in a dilapidated old building.

It was here that he learnt to speak, read and write Telegu. His teacher and Guru was Ramsamy, who was ²²also one of the indentured Indian labourers from India. He, too, served his indentureship and now opened a vernacular school to eke out a meagre living.

Gurriah and his family lived in Tongaat for a period of eight years. In 1921 when he was eighteen years old, his entire family returned to Mount Edgecombe. He commenced work in the Natal Estates Sugar Mill in Mount Edgecombe. He worked in the laboratory and was in charge of boiling syrup. In 1922 Gurriah decided to terminate his services with the Natal Estates Sugar Mill as a laboratory assistant. He later found employment with Marshall Campbell and his occupation entailed washing, ironing and general chores.

On 13 January 1923 when Gurriah was twenty years old, he received his certificate of discharge from the offices of the

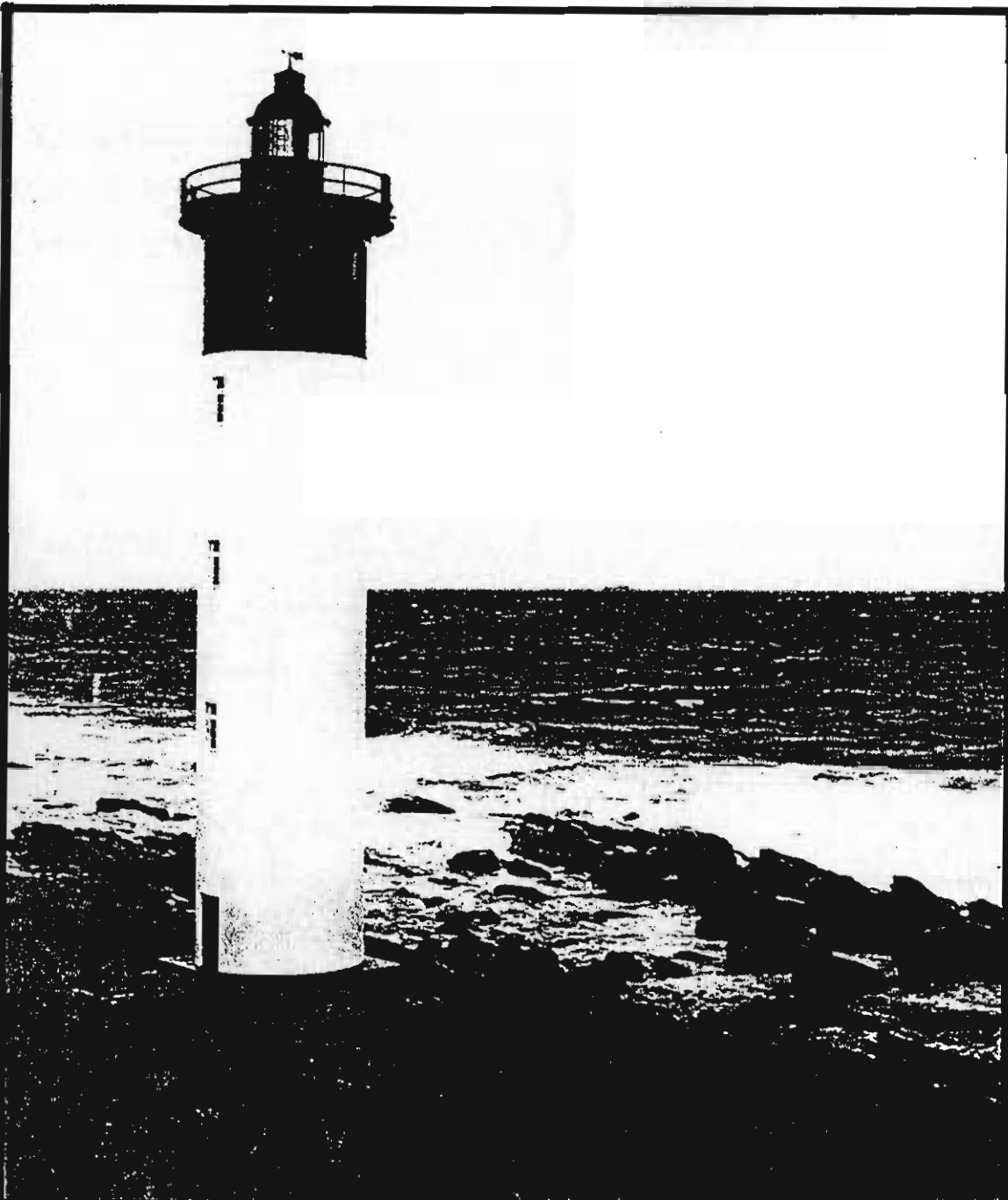
Protector of Indian Immigrant - a document which he received eleven years after his contract of indentureship was complete.²³

After the death of Marshall Campbell, Gurriah moved to Umhlanga Rocks. Here he worked for William Alfred Campbell son of Marshall Campbell. William Campbell was a renowned sugar pioneer, who settled in this area in 1850 on an estate he named Muckleneuk.²⁴ His occupation was the same - washing, ironing and general chores. While living at Umhlanga Rocks, Gurriah spent most of his time fishing. He had two favourite fishing spots. His most favourite fishing spot is where the present lighthouse stands on the beach. The other fishing spot is at the mouth of the lagoon. The most common fish caught were shad and salmon. He does not recollect or remember the biggest or heaviest fish he has caught.

It was while working in Umhlanga Rocks that he became married. His wife's name was Syamma. She was his first wife (Gurriah married again because his first wife eventually died of fever). Eight children were born of the first marriage - one son and seven daughters - and they are all alive. The son is presently living in Umgeni. The daughters are living in Umhlanga Rocks, La Mercy, Verulam and Avoca. After the death of his first wife he left Umhlanga Rocks and settled in Mount Edgecombe. He lived in the old Mill Barracks (as it was then called) near the ground. He was employed by the Natal Estates Limited Sugar Mill as a labourer.

23. Document II

24. V. Mayhew (ed): Illustrated Guide to Southern Africa



THE LIGHTHOUSE AT UMHLANGA ROCKS, ONE OF GURRIAH'S
FAVOURITE FISHING SPOTS.

Gurriah married the second time some time after the death of his first wife, but the second marriage was only registered after the birth of his second child, a daughter²⁵ on 17 July 1953.

His second wife's name is Chinnamma and she was born in Verulam²⁶ in 1926. Two children were born out of this wedlock; a son and a daughter. The son's name is Hendry and he is now thirty six years old. The daughter's name is Pushpavathie and she is now thirty years old.

DOCUMENT ----- REGISTRATION OF CHILDREN

HENDRY	Sex M	Date of Birth 22/10/47	Recd 27/4/55
PUSHPAVATHIE	F	Date of Birth 29/5/53	Recd 25/7/53 (VRM)

Both son and daughter are married. Henry lives in one of the many small townships created by Huletts - called Campbells Township. Campbells Township is in Mount Edgecombe and will eventually be incorporated into Rockford, the sixth phase of the giant Phoenix Indian township twelve miles north of Durban. Gurriah and Chinnamma live with Hendry and his three children.

25. Document III

26. Document IV



GURRIAH, HIS WIFE, SON, DAUGHTER-IN-LAW, AND
GRAND CHILDREN.

Pushpavathie, better known as Esther now lives in Ixopo with her husband.

In 1971 when Gurriah was sixty five years old he retired from the services of the Hulett - Natal Estates Sugar Company Limited. At the time of his retirement he was a sanitary worker. His wage was R3-75 a week. At the time of his retirement his health was sound. At present "real" old age is creeping and catching up on him. He also suffered a mild stroke a few years after his retirement. A teetotaler - he does not consume liquor nor does he smoke.

Gurriah visits are pertained to relatives and friends who are residing not far from Campbells Township. He commutes by car. Before being struck down by stroke, Gurriah used to attend football matches at the ground in Mount Edgecombe. He reads the vernacular; he also recites or sings in the vernacular. The stroke has put an end to all this.

He receives a Government Pension and a Company pension. Most of the time is spent at home with his grandchildren.

When asked to comment about the 1949 riots Gurriah remembers very little about it. He was forty three years old and during this riot period he was bedridden in Mount Edgecombe Hospital with influenza.



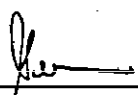
GURRIAH, HIS WIFE, SON, DAUGHTER, SON-IN-LAW, DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AND GRAND CHILDREN.

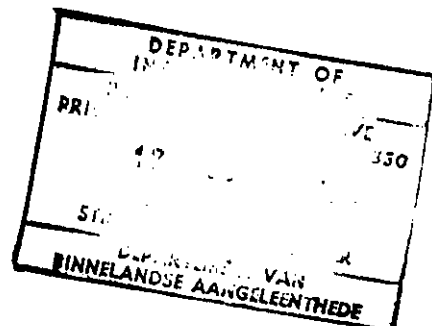
B.M.25

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

Serial Number	:	<u>332</u>
Colonial Number	:	<u>128823</u>
Date of Arrival	:	<u>28 DECEMBER 1906</u>
Name of Ship	:	<u>UMKUZU</u>
Place of Registration	:	<u>—</u>
Date of Registration	:	<u>—</u>
Number in Register	:	<u>—</u>
Name	:	<u>BHIMARAFU GURRIAH</u>
Father's Name	:	<u>B. PASUPULU</u>
Age	:	<u>4 YRS</u>
Sex	:	<u>MALE</u>
Caste	:	<u>DHOBY</u>
District	:	<u>GODAVARI</u>
Thanna/Taluq	:	<u>COCANADA</u>
Village	:	<u>BHIMAYARAM</u>
Height	:	<u>—</u>
Bodily Marks	:	<u>—</u>
Name of Next-of-Kin	:	<u>—</u>
Relations Accompanied	:	<u>—</u>
Small Pox/Vaccinated	:	<u>✓ VACCINATED</u>
Remarks	:	<u>—</u>

Certified a true copy.


 REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE



814-10/11/21-10-200

MOUNT EDGECOMBE

R.C.S. 40/5/50

D.I. 98

W 10343

UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA.

33905

CERTIFICATE OF DISCHARGE.OFFICE OF THE PROTECTOR OF INDIAN IMMIGRANTS,
DURBAN, NATAL.

I hereby Certify that B. S. Gurnah 13th January 1923
 Indian Immigrant No. 128823 duly completed his term of indenture
 on the 10th January 1912 in terms of Indian Immigration Act, No. 17
 of 1895 (Natal), and is released from his obligation to perform further service
 in this Province under indenture.

DESCRIPTION:

Father's Name B. S. Gurnah
 Age 20
 Height 5 feet 10 inches
 Bodily Marks Linear scar below right ear

IMPRESSIONS:

LEFT THUMB.



RIGHT THUMB.



C. J. Robinson
 Protector of Indian Immigrants, Natal.

gistered marr

innamma I. I.

583/Dea d/7729

culam on 17th

53.

MA STRATE/VERU

Registered in Bangalore
18/3/53
128623
12/7/53

REGISTERED MARRIED TO

B. GUARAH

No. *II* 128623

(Under Law No. 25/1901 / Act No. 22/1914)

DURBAN.

Date *17/7/53*

Sgt. J. K. JACOBS

REGISTRAR OF INDIAN IMMIGRANTS
 MARRIAGE OFFICE

Magistrate Durban

d1v

PERSOONSNR. 800/306658
IDENTITY No.

V 1238 2162/2888

G.P.-S.1512677-1961-62-500-200. S.

W 10343

FEE PAID.
BEDRAG BETAAL.



21200

Revenue/Inkomste 196.

REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA.

A COPY FROM REGISTER OF BIRTHS OF INDIAN IMMIGRANTS IN THE
PROVINCE OF NATAL—SCHEDULE F. LAW No. 25 OF 1891.

(This certificate is in the form of the entry as finally amended.)

REPUBLIEK VAN SUID-AFRIKA.

'N AFSKRIF UIT REGISTER VAN GEBORTES VAN INDIËRIMMIGRANTE IN
DIE PROVINSIE NATAL—SCHEDULE F. WET No. 25 VAN 1891.

(Hierdie sertifikaat is volgens die inskrywing soos finaal gewysig.)

1 No. Nr.	2 When Born and Where. Wanneer en waar gebore.	3 Name. Naam.	4 Sex. Geslag.	5 Parents' Names. Name van ouers.	6 Parents' Official Numbers. Offisiële nommers van ouers.	7 Indentured or Free. Ingeboek of vry.	8 Father's Occupation. Beroep van vader.	9 Parents' Residence. Woonplek van ouers.	10 When Regis- tered. Wan- neer geregi- streer.	11 Remarks, Signature of Registrar, etc. Opmerkings, handtekening van Registrateur, ens.
2973 1929	1926 Penase Verulam.	Chinnamma	F.	Chinnasamy Knavathy	80638 Dead 71229	Free. CP	Labourer	Penase.	TH May 1929	Handwritten signature

Certified a true copy.
Gesertifiseer as 'n ware afskrif.

H. Ramani
Protector of Indian Immigrants.—Beskermer van Indiërimmigrante.

Durban 19

24 FEB 1962

DURBAN

* Parents' Population Reg. No.
Ouers se Persoonsnommer

Father
Vader

Mother
Moeder

31

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