

165 Years Since the Arrival of the First Indian Indentured Labourers in South Africa

16 November 2025, marks a deeply significant moment in our nation's history: **165 years since the first Indian indentured labourers arrived in South Africa** then the Colony of Natal aboard the SS *Truro* in 1860.

This anniversary is more than a historical date. It is a time to reflect with gratitude and reverence on the sacrifices, strength, and enduring spirit of the nearly **152,184 Girmityas** who would follow in the decades after that first landing.



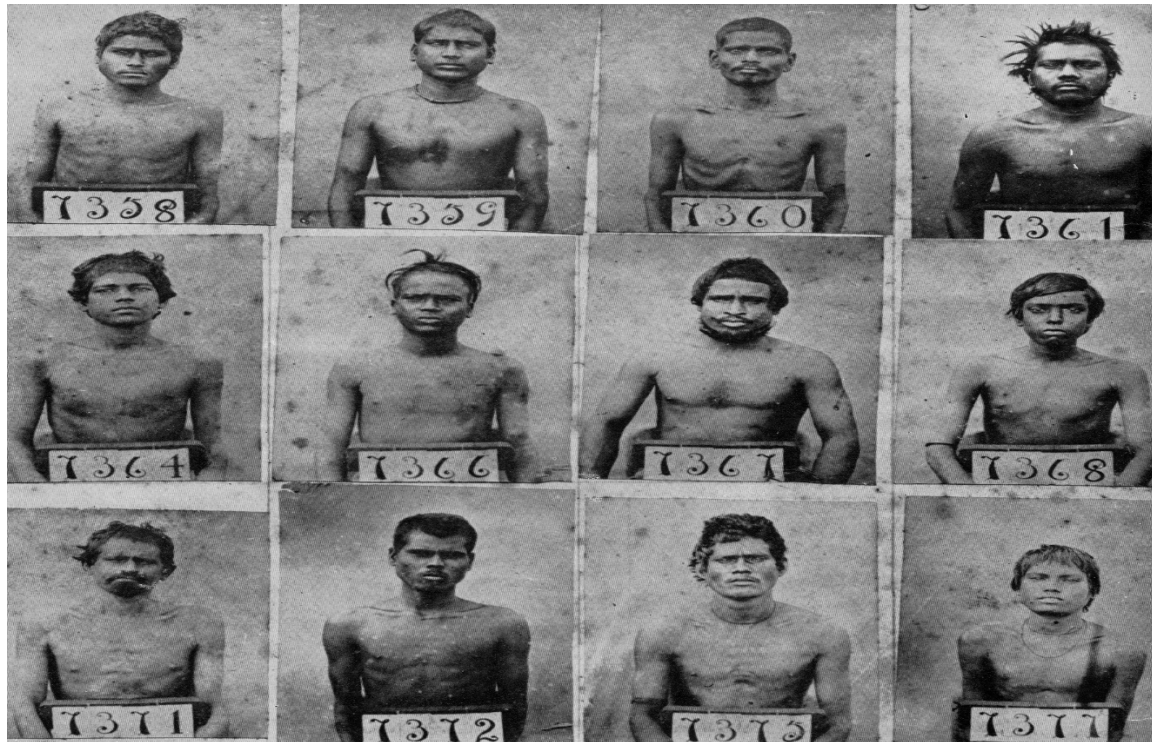
A Journey of Hardship, Hope, and Courage

The early pioneers left behind the familiarity of India its ancient heritage, vibrant culture, and communal bonds in search of economic survival. While many were drawn by promises of opportunity, they encountered the harsh realities of the indenture system:

- gruelling labour on sugar plantations,
- poor living conditions,
- restrictions on movement and rights, and
- an environment designed to break the human spirit.

Yet, they endured.

Through adversity, they preserved their languages, their religions, their food, and their traditions. In time, these cultural threads intertwined with the African landscape, giving rise to a community that remains distinctly Indian-South African resilient, diverse, and deeply rooted.



A Legacy That Continues to Shape the Nation

From those humble and painful beginnings, the Indian community has become an integral part of South Africa's social, cultural, and economic fabric. Their contributions span every sector, including:

- business and entrepreneurship,
- education and academia,
- medicine, law, and public service,
- the creative arts and cuisine,
- and the broader struggle for freedom and justice.

The arrival of the SS *Truro* marks the beginning of a history both beautiful and complex one shaped by endurance, heritage, and transformation.

Honouring 165 Years of Heritage

As we commemorate this milestone, we honour their legacy by recommitting ourselves to:

- **Preserving their stories**, ensuring the history of indenture is recorded and remembered.
- **Celebrating the cultural richness** passed down through generations.
- **Advocating for dignity, equality, and justice**, acknowledging that these were denied to the early indentured labourers.
- **Recognising the foundation they laid**, as we continue to build a community rooted in resilience and unity.

