

PREFACE

The project given by the History Department to the third year students was an interesting one which also provided the students with a golden opportunity to research their family roots. I am sure that by working on it, many students have widened their knowledge about their family history.

Although some were very fortunate to research their family, others were not so lucky to find someone in their family who had their roots in India. I, being one of those unlucky ones, encountered difficulties in finding someone who was born in India. Another difficulty was that I obtained mostly verbal information, some of which I could not verify. I also encountered difficulty in cross checking certain facts and names of places which I could not find on the map of India.

Although I researched into another family's roots, I found it very interesting and enlightening.

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It was impossible to do research on Paramamma in isolation without her parents, since she was an infant when she arrived in South Africa. Therefore I found it appropriate to include her parents in my study.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted to a large number of people for their assistance while I was working on this project. I would like to express my special thanks to the following people:

1. The subject of my project, Mrs Paramamma Samuel, who willingly conceded to provide me with information which I required.
2. Mrs Paramamma's daughter, Emily, who prompted her mother along with what she remembered.
3. Mr John, Paramamma's brother, who verified most of the statements made by her.
4. Mrs V Chetty, my sister, who willingly agreed to type out this assignment.
5. Shanti Timothy and Chloe for providing me with photographs and letters from descendents related to Paramamma, who live in India.
6. Finally, I wish to express my sincere thanks to Mrs N Govender who introduced me to Paramamma and her family, thus making it possible for me to find a subject for my project.

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INTRODUCTION



The person I chose as the subject for the project is Mrs Paramamma Samuel who was born in India in 1905. She is now 78 years old and is still alive and well. Her father was Mr Viriasamy and her mother, Sarah. She came to South Africa when she was about 1½ years old and thus she remembered very little of her early childhood. She only remembers what little she heard from her parents. Her brothers and sisters were all born in South Africa and so they remember very little.

Paramamma came to South Africa with her parents at a time when South Africa was recruiting Indentured Labourers from India. Her father came as an Indentured Labourer on a five year contract. She, like the majority of Indian South Africans, are the descendents of indentured workers brought to Natal between 1860 and 1911 to develop the country's sugar belt.

The pathetic and unreliable Zulu labour conditions which existed in the Colony of Natal increased the planter's desperate demands for Indian Indentured Labourers.

After protracted negotiations the government of India at last agreed on allowing Indian Indentured Labourers into South Africa, providing certain rigid conditions were carried out. Much of this was never adhered to as it was later discovered. Having eventually succeeded in persuading the Indian Government to make legal the recruitment and transportation of Indentured Labourers to the colony of Natal, Mr W.M. Collins then chartered a ship at Calcutta, the Belvedere, and another at Madras, the Truro, to carry the first labourers from India.

"The Belvedere left Calcutta on October 4, about nine days before the Truro but because of the 200 miles additional sailing distance it had to travel, the Truro reached Durban first and dropped anchor on Friday, 16 November, 1860. On the memorable day of November 17, a party of 341 Indians (including one birth during voyage) disembarked from the Truro. Head of the list - although it has never been confirmed whether they were the first to set foot ashore - were a couple by the name of Davarum and his wife Nagrum. They must have been of either Tamil or Malayalam origin." 1

Thus Indians first 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. While the recruiting was initially for the sugar plantations, it was seen to be sufficiently profitable to be extended to railways, dockyards, coal mines, municipal service and domestic employment.

"Apart from a period of eight years (1866-1874), indenturing continued until 1911. Though the promise of Crown land to those freed indentured who had served their ten years in South Africa had been withdrawn in 1891 while the offer of a free passage back to India remained open, the majority for own reasons chose to settle in South Africa." 2

By 1913 Indian immigration was generally prohibited by law. The result is that today, with a few exceptions like my subject Paramamma, Indian South Africans are South African Citizens by birth. Most of them did not sever their ties with India as in the case of Paramamma and her family.

¹ Indian Annual Settlers Issue, 1980, p. 17.

² H. Kuper: Indian People in Natal, p.2.

PLACE OF ORIGIN IN INDIA

Although the shiplist states that Paramamma Viriasamy was born in Madras, she was in fact born in the state of Andhra Pradesh, in a district called Guntur. Her father lived in Guntur in a village called Kollipara. After a few months following the birth of Paramamma, her parents left Andhra Pradesh to settle in Madras, where her father's elder brother lived. He was a pastor in a Madras Missionary Institute. He asked Paramamma's father to come and work in the missionary at Madras. Paramamma was born in Guntur in India in 1905. The actual date of birth is unknown. Before coming to South Africa their last place of residence was Madras, therefore the shiplist (attached) states that they came from the village, Choolay, in Madras.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

Paramamma's parents were Christians and they married very young. In Madras her father was employed at the Madras Missionary Institute as a 'sirdar'. The head of the missionary was an European woman who named Paramamma 'Prema' and baptised her. The Missionary spoke and taught in different languages. She taught Paramamma's mother in Telegu. They lived in a house consisting of one room which was provided by the Missionary. According to Paramamma, the Missionary was very kind to them and treated them very well. She also provided the baby with clothes and milk. Unfortunately, she left the missionary to be married in England, and so Mr Viriasamy was jobless. The family then moved to a 'depot' where they stayed for about a month. They lived in Madras for about three months before leaving for South Africa. Their condition of living in India was satisfactory according to what Paramamma heard from her parents.

REASONS FOR LEAVING ORIGINAL COUNTRY

They family originally lived in Guntur with Viriasamy's parents i.e. Paramamma's grandparents. There was a dispute between the in-laws and Paramamma's mother, so the family moved to Madras. In Madras her father heard many stories about South Africa from the recruiting agents who were canvassing for Indenturing Labourers to come to South Africa.

According to Paramamma's brother, John, his father was told that "money grew on chilli trees" etc. I cross checked this statement and found it to be true. According to H. Kuper, "Some recruiters told villagers of a country where 'chilli trees bore gold', 'money was easy'; 'food was plentiful'; 'fowls laid diamonds'; 'gold was picked up in the streets'." 3

Paramamma states that her father heard that there were more Christians in South Africa than in India. In Madras, where they lived for a short while, there were very few Christians and they were looked down upon by the other religions, especially Hindus. This also motivated him to come to South Africa.

Many people were driven to leave India by a variety of incentives- poverty, ambition, domestic tensions, restlessness of spirit and the urge to escape an epidemic or a misfortune. Some hoped to return after acquiring a certain amount of wealth. Mr Viriasamy, being one of them, later realized that he could never go back.

DATES OF DEPARTURE / ARRIVAL TO SOUTH AFRICA AND PORT OF ENTRY

Paramamma arrived with her parents in South Africa on 5-7-1906. The name of the ship was the SS 'Umkuzi' and the port of entry was Port Natal.

Paramamma states that she was the only infant who came on that ship. There was a woman who lost her baby during the early stages of her voyage. She used to become emotional and cry when she saw Paramamma, who reminded her of her baby. She also recalls her parents telling her that she was very ill on the voyage and she nearly die.

"A small proportion of women, who were accompanying their husbands, had children with them. Since the women were also indentured for labour, recruiters discouraged couples with more than one young child from joining." 4

³H. Kuper: Indian People In Natal, p. 10.

⁴Ibid., p. 4.

The conditions on the ships in which the Indentured Labourers came were terrible. "They were tightly packed, men and women, together, each person in an allocated space of three feet by six feet. There was illness and death, ship records for the years 1881-1882 showing 67 deaths on board, and all the time there was the anxiety of assault, especially sexual assault, not only from fellow immigrants, but also from the ship's crew." 5

FIRST PLACE OF SETTLEMENT

On arrival in South Africa, Mr Viriasamy and his family were sent to Mt Edgecombe where they had to work in the sugar plantations. "The Mt Edgecombe Mill started in 1859 and it exists to the present time. Captain William Smerdon was the founder of the Mt Edgecombe Sugar Estate. In 1878 the Natal Central Sugar Company Limited acquired Mt Edgecombe Mill and in 1895 it was taken over by the Natal Estates." 6

Paramamma's mother and father worked on the fields. There was one lady who looked after all the children whose mothers worked on the fields. They lived in the barracks which was provided by the Sugar Estate. It had only one room and there was no privacy. "The brick barracks were partitioned into single 10 ft. x 12 ft. rooms with a door and a small square as window, for family dwellings. There was no sewerage and no laid-on water supply." 7 Her father earned 10 shillings and her mother 5 s.

On the estates there were sirdars who checked on those who did not go to work. They were in charge of the workers and were sometimes very cruel. They forced the people to go to work even when they were ill. The workers were punished if they dodged-homes were searched thoroughly every day. "Some instances of gross ill-treatment came to public notice. There were cases of woman forced to work in fields in advanced stages of pregnancy." 8

⁵F. Meer; Portrait Of Indian South Africans, p. 10.

⁶R. F. Osborn; The Founding Of The South African Sugar Estate, p.220.

⁷F. Meer; Portrait Of Indian South Africans, p. 12.

⁸Ibid., p. II.

Paramamma's mother became sick and did not want to go to work. She was pregnant and she knew that she would be forced to work, so she was afraid to go to work. Paramamma recalls how her mother hid in a trunk one day to escape the sirdar. Paramamma also hid in the trunk with her mother and was very quiet when the sirdar searched their house. The sirdar went away without looking into the trunk.

SUBSEQUENT PLACES OF SETTLEMENTS AND OCCUPATIONS

Mr Viriasamy also worked as a domestic servant for a white family. Later when the employer died he went back to work on the plantations. After five years had expired, Mr Viriasamy wanted to go back to India. When he went to the office to make arrangements to go back to India, they told him that they would give him a bonus in the form of gold sovereigns if he reindentured. This made him change his mind and so he stayed on while some went away. Some people wanted to return after acquiring some wealth.

There is a story, which Paramamma heard from her parents, of a man who wanted to save as much as possible to return to India that he lived on the bare minimum. He did not eat meat because he felt that it was too expensive. With his first wage he bought dried fish. He tied it above the fire-place and looked up at it everyday, thus satisfying himself by just looking up at it. He did that for five years till his contract expired. The day before his contract expired, he made arrangements to go back to India. He also decided to cook the dried fish and have a good meal before he left to India. The next morning he ^{was} found dead in his room. Therefore, we find that there were many people who accumulated wealth in order to return to India, but most of them did not fulfill their ambitions.

After fourteen years Mr Viriasamy went to work at the Esparanza Sugar Mill and thus lived in the barracks again." The Esparanza Mill was bought by Reynolds Bros. Ltd. It started in 1874 and exists to the present time." 9

⁹R.F. Osborn: The Founding Of The South African Sugar Estate, p.321.

PARAMAMMA VIRIASAMY

Paramamma was about ten years old when she started her first job as a domestic servant in Mt. Edgecombe. Her main task was to look after a baby and play with the other children. She worked from 8 am to 4 pm and the place of employment was far away from the barracks. She remembers that she had to get up very early, at about 6.30 am and walk to work every morning.¹⁰ "It was very cold in those days and it rained almost everyday." She did not wear shoes but her employers gave her an old pair of shoes belonging to their child.

She worked at many different places because if she did not like a job she left. The first place of employment was far away so her father stopped her from going to work. She says that most of the jobs she had was to look after children, and being a child herself, she was very playful and was more interested in playing with the children than going to work.

MARRIAGE, BIRTH OF CHILDREN, ETC.

When she was about sixteen years old a marriage was arranged for her. The boy lived in Durban. Paramamma agreed to the marriage and after three months they had a proposal. A year later she was married in the Esparanza Church. Her husband, Lutchman Samuel, was the only Christian in his family. His parents, who were Hindus, disapproved of his marriage to a Christian girl. Soon after her marriage she lived with her parents for about a year. Her first child was stillborn at Esparanza. She then moved to live with her in-laws at Magazine Barracks, in Durban. Her father-in-law was a very fussy man. After one year she moved to a small house in the centre of town.

Her husband then got a job in Sezela Sugar Mill, where he worked as a lab assistant. They lived in the barracks. Her daughter, Emily, was born in Sezela. She had many miscarriages after Emily was born and became very sick. After about seventeen years they moved back to Durban and lived in Ist Avenue.

¹⁰ Interview with Mrs Paramamma Samuel.

Two years later they moved to Merebank and lived in a tin house for about ten years. They moved again and this time back to town and lived in Ist Avenue again.

Mrs Paramamma Samuel now lives in Ridge Street, Shallcross. She lost her husband in 1976. Emily is the only child. Mrs Paramamma Samuel is very disappointed that Emily has not married and thus she has no grandchildren.

RELIGIOUS, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

Mrs P Samuel's parents were staunch Christians and so is Paramamma. She recalls the time when she was ten years old and there were no churches at that time. The service was held at home either in Telegu or Tamil. When she worked for an European family, in Mt Edgecombe, she went to the Catholic Church with them but remained outside to look after the baby.

She is now a member of the Holy Gospel Bethseda Mission. When she married and lived at Sezela, her husband opened a school to teach children English and also had classes in Telegu and Tamil. He also held Sunday service. Mrs P Samuel helped her husband.

Mrs P Samuel is an active member of the Durban Association Indian Aged, Shallcross branch. In 1982 she took part in Year of the Aged - Sports Olympaid. She received a certificate of participation in the Olympaid which was held at Durban City Hall on the 22nd of May 1982.

She is a lover of animals and has four cats and a dog which keep her company because she is alone at home. She loves travelling and has been overseas about seven years ago with Pastor Rowlands. She has also been to Cape Town and Johannesburg. When she went overseas, she visited Greece, Jerusalem, London, Egypt; Israel, etc. She liked The Sea of Galilee the best because Jesus walked through the water and she went across it by boat. She used to go to church twice a week but now she only goes on Sundays.

CONCLUSION

Although many people came from India to settle in South Africa, they did not sever their ties with India. Many people still correspond with their relatives in India and also visit them often.

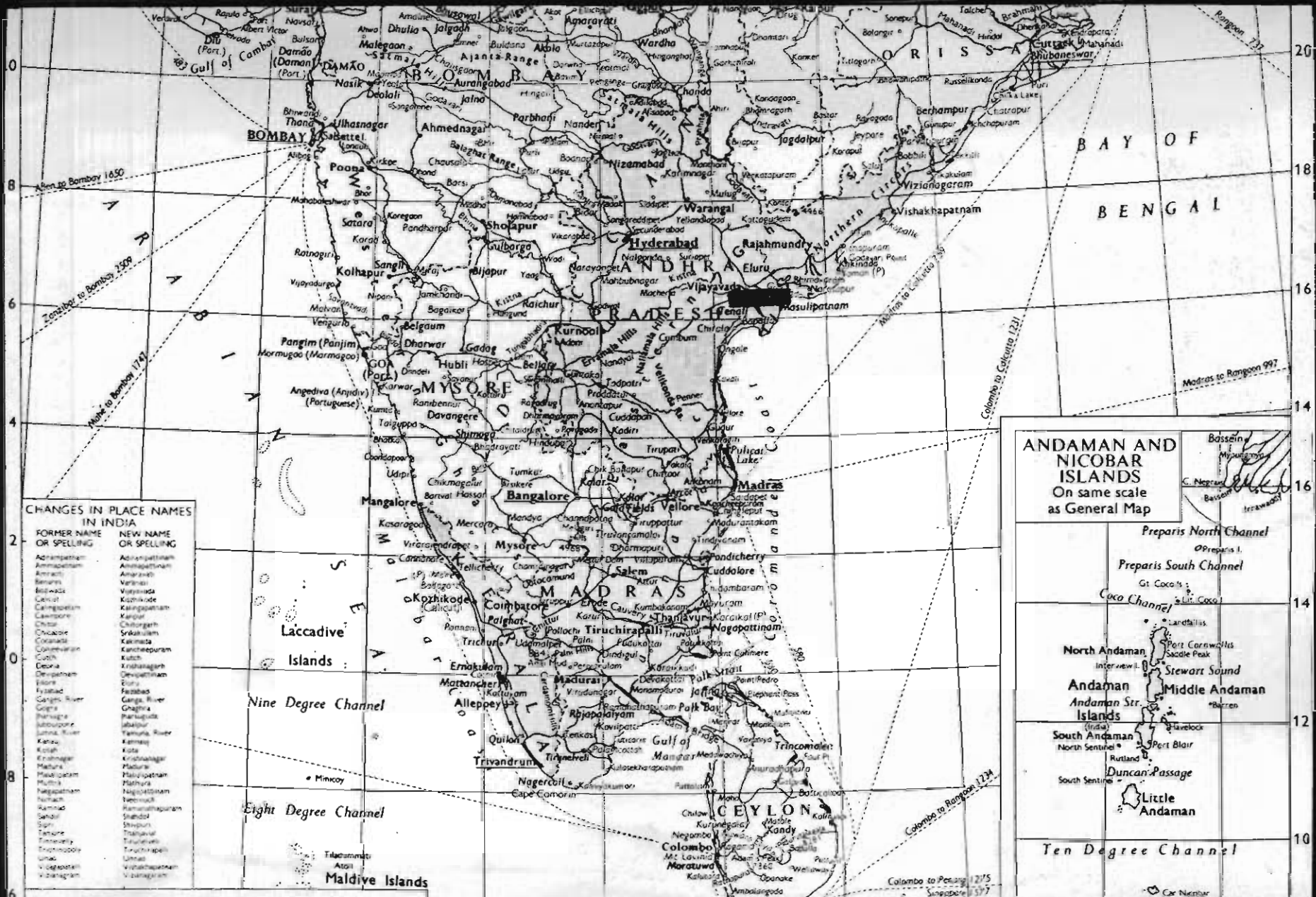
Paramamma's relatives visited their descendants in India last year. Paramamma's father's brother remained in India when her father came to South Africa. Now her father's brother's son lives in Guntur, in a district called Duggirala. His name is Soupathy and he is old but he does not work. He has three sons and two daughters, all of whom are married and do not live with him. His two daughters and a son are teachers. He lives with one of his daughters.

So we can see that the study helped some of the students to trace their family roots to India and probably found that they have relatives living in India now, something which they would not have otherwise done.

APPENDICES

1. Map of India depicting district of Guntur.
2. Map-main districts of recruitment-H. Tinker.
3. Ship List of Indian Immigrant-Paramamma.
4. Cassette-interviews with Mrs Paramamma Samuel and John.
5. Photostat of letter and photographs of descendants in India.
6. Aphotostat of an example of a contract of service with Indian Immigrants.

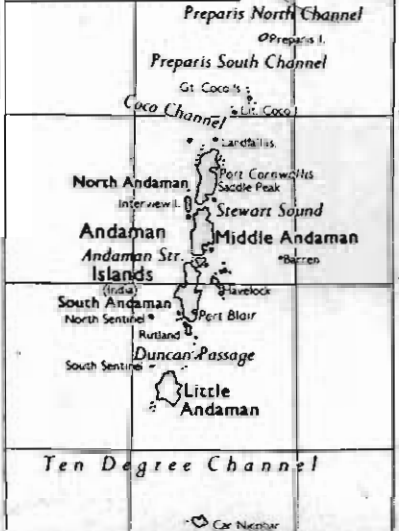
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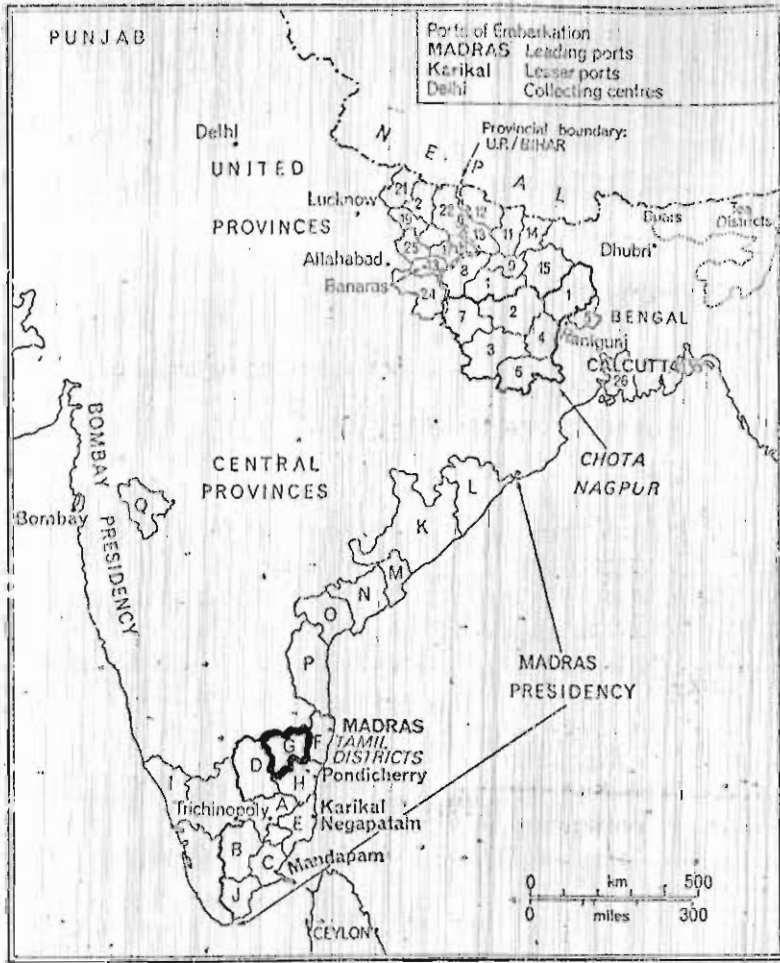
CHANGES IN PLACE NAMES IN INDIA

FORMER NAME OR SPELLING	NEW NAME OR SPELLING
Achamptnam	Achamptnam
Ammapattam	Ammapattam
Amrachi	Amrachi
Bansari	Bansari
Bilwada	Vijayvada
Celcut	Kanchi
Chingapatnam	Kalingapatnam
Chinsore	Kangra
Chital	Chitlang
Chitabre	Srikuliam
Chinnadi	Kaimada
Chinnavarin	Kanchipuram
Cochi	Kochi
Deoria	Krishnagar
Devapattam	Devapattam
Eluru	Eluru
Fyzabad	Fatehabad
Gangri, River	Ganga, River
Gangri	Gangri
Harshiga	Harshiga
Jabalpur	Jabalpur
Jalapa, River	Tamiraparani, River
Kara	Kara
Kota	Kota
Krishnagar	Krishnagar
Madrasi	Madrasi
Machapatnam	Machapatnam
Mutha	Mutha
Nagapatnam	Nagapatnam
Narasim	Narasim
Ramad	Ramad
Sahar	Sahar
Sari	Sari
Tatara	Tatara
Tinniveli	Tinniveli
Trichinopoly	Trichinopoly
Uman	Uman
Vijayapatnam	Vijayapatnam
Vizianagaram	Vizianagaram

ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR ISLANDS
On same scale as General Map



H. TINKER: A NEW SYSTEM OF SLAVERY
MAIN DISTRICTS OF RECRUITMENT



Main Districts of Recruitment

Note: each group is listed in order of concentration of recruitment

SOUTH INDIA

The Tamil Districts

- A. Trichinopoly
- B. Madurai
- C. Ramnad
- D. Salem
- E. Tanjore
- F. Chingleput
- G. North Arcot
- H. South Arcot
- I. Malabar
- J. Tutuvelly

Telugu Districts

- K. Vizagapatam
- L. Ganjam
- M. East Godavari
- N. West Godavari
- O. Guntur

P. Nellore

Bombay Presidency

Q. Ahmadnagar District

NORTH INDIA

Hill Coolie Districts

- 1. Santal Parganas
- 2. Hazaribagh
- 3. Ranchi
- 4. Manbhum
- 5. Birbhum
- 6. Singhbhum
- 7. Palamau

Bihari Districts

- 8. Shahabad
- 9. Patna
- 10. Gaya
- 11. Muzaffarpur

12. Champaran

13. Saran

14. Darbhanga

15. Monghyr

Districts of the United Provinces

- 16. Ballia
- 17. Ghazipur
- 18. Azamghar
- 19. Fyzabad
- 20. Basti
- 21. Gonda
- 22. Gorakhpur
- 23. Banaras
- 24. Mirzapur
- 25. Jaunpur

Calcutta Metropolitan Area

26. Twenty-Four Parganas

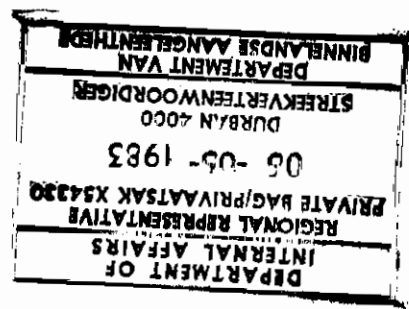
DEPARTMENT OF INTERNAL AFFAIRSCOPY OF SHIP'S LIST OF INDIAN IMMIGRANT

Serial Number	:	630
Colonial Number	:	124191
Date of Arrival	:	05:07:1906
Name of Ship	:	S'S' UMKUZI
Place of Registration	:	_____
Date of Registration	:	_____
Number in Register	:	_____
Name	:	PARAMAMMA
Father's Name	:	VIRIASAMY
Age	:	1 1/2 YEARS
Sex	:	FEMALE
Caste	:	CHRISTIAN
District	:	MADRAS
Thanna/Taluq	:	MADRAS
Village	:	CHOOLOY
Height	:	4'9"
Bodily Marks	:	_____
Name of Next-of-Kin	:	_____
Relations Accompanied	:	_____
Small Pox/Vaccinated	:	VACCINATED
Remarks	:	_____

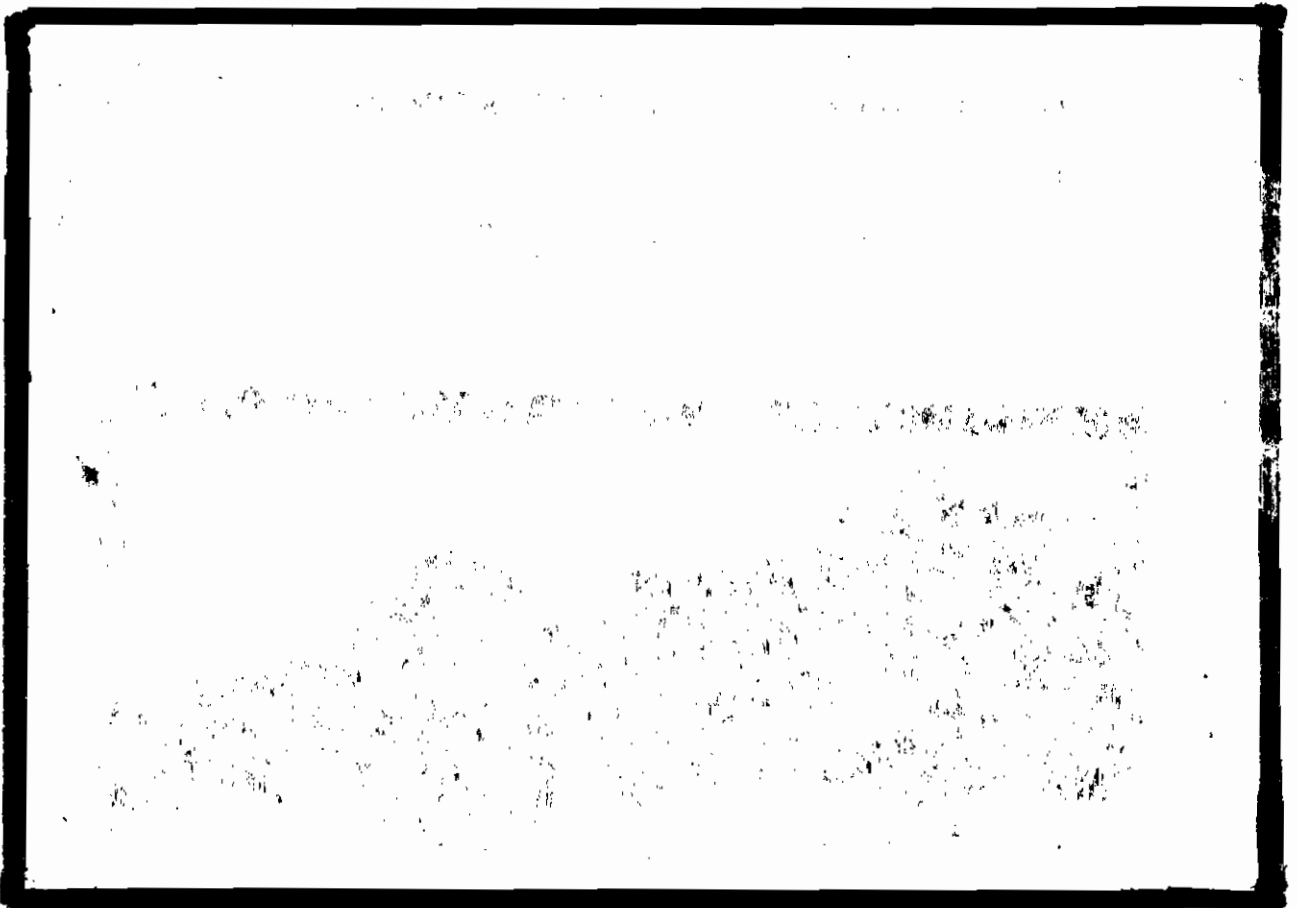
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 REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE



CASSETTE- INTERVIEWS WITH MRS PARAMAMMA SAMUEL AND HER BROTHER JOHN



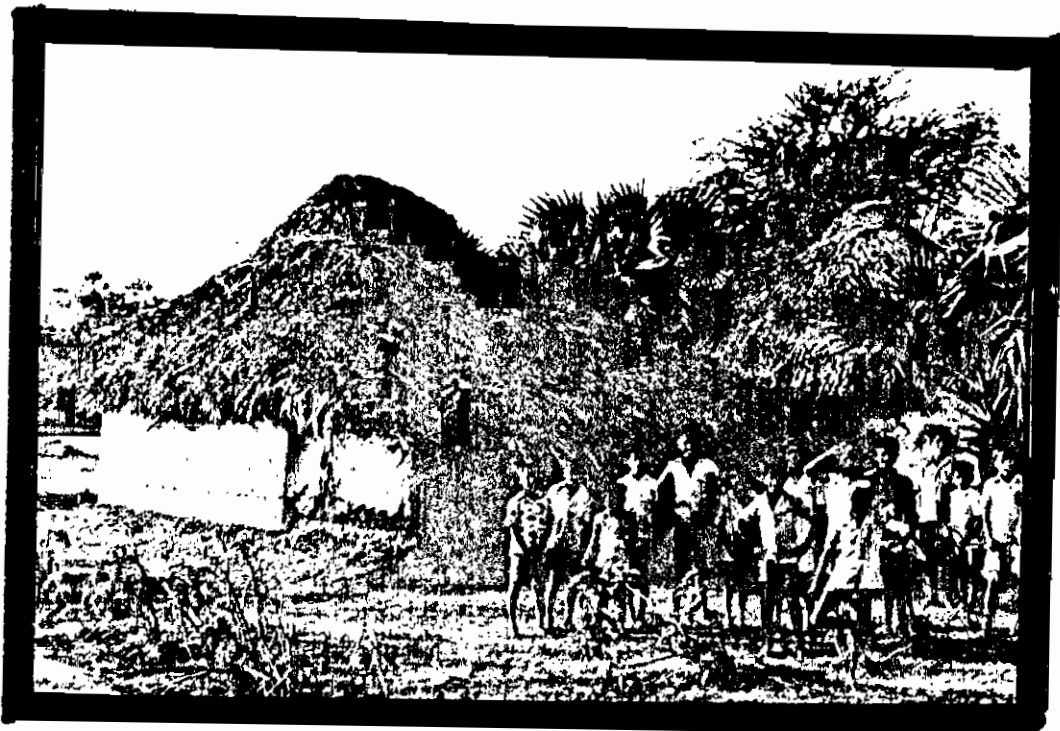
PHOTOSTAT OF LETTER AND PHOTOGRAPHS OF DESCENDENTS IN INDIA

Dearest cousins, aunty and uncle.

I am safe here by the grace of god. Received your letter to days back. I have finished my exams. Next year I will go to 8th class. Which class are you studying. How is cousin love. We are having two months summer holidays. How are you spending your holidays. do you have any friends. How is aunty and uncle you have not written anything about aunty. whom we have not seen. We are daily enjoying your songs ~~now~~ and then. What is uncle's job. When you will come to India. why dont you come and ~~come~~ study here. We dont have any photos of our two other aunty send your family. mother and father are spending to love to all of you

With love your cousins susmitha (youngest)

This is a letter from one of the descendents in India. It was written by Soupathy's granddaughter. Soupathy is my subject's father's brother's son.



This is a picture of the village of Guntur as it is now.



In this picture you can see a descendent related to Paramamma who lives in India. On the left is Soupthy, who is her father's brother's son. He is seen here with Shanti, Paramamma's cousin, who visited him last year.



This is a picture of the city centre in GUNTUR . Soupthy's daughter can be seen in the centre with her daughters, who are twins, on either side of her.

AN EXAMPLE OF A CONTRACT OF SERVICE

(MAN'S)
CONTRACT OF SERVICE WITH INDIAN IMMIGRANTS.

We Remembered,

That on this 23rd day of April
in the Year of our Lord One Thousand Eight Hundred and ~~Eighty~~ Ninety
and Jelucksing of Surabhai Indian Immigrant
No. Bandra appeared before me,
71095
Edw. H. Mason Protector of Immigrants,
and in my presence signed (or made his mark) to the following Contract of Service:—

The said Jelucksing agrees to
hire the services of the said Indian Immigrant, and the said Indian Immigrant agrees to
render the said Jelucksing
his services in the capacity of General Labourer for Five Years, commencing on the
23rd day of April, in the Year of our Lord
One Thousand Eight Hundred and ~~Eighty~~ Ninety

And it is further agreed between the said Parties, that the said Indian Immigrant shall be employed as above for six days in each week, save as in such Law is mentioned, and that the hours of labour shall not be more than nine hours daily, between sunrise and sunset, with a break of at least an hour for

And it is further agreed between the said Parties, that the said Jelucksing shall
pay to the said Indian Immigrant, as such servant as aforesaid, wages at and after the rate
of TEN SHILLINGS for the first year, ELEVEN SHILLINGS for the second year, TWELVE
SHILLINGS for the third year, THIRTEEN SHILLINGS for the fourth year, FOURTEEN
SHILLINGS for the fifth year, for the remuneration of the services of the said Indian Immigrant, and that such wages shall be paid on the first day of each month.

And lastly, the said Jelucksing
doth hereby bind and oblige himself to give, grant, and provide, to and for the said Indian Immigrant, and for such family as may be allotted, good and comfortable lodging, wholesome and suitable food, and proper medical attendance and medicines, during the period for which this present contract is made, and otherwise to observe and fulfil all the conditions and obligations of the Coolie Laws of the Colony so far as the same are applicable to this Contract and Agreement.

Jelucksing
Bandra His X mark.

The preceding Agreement was signed by the above-named Parties in my presence, on the day and year above written, voluntarily, the same being, as far as I am able to judge, fully understood by them respectively.

Edw. H. Mason
Protector of Immigrants.

SOURCE LIST

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